

Stand Up and Share

General Description: In a quick, efficient way, all students in a class share their thoughts on a selected topic. Though it may be used at any time during instruction, it's particularly good as a closing activity.

Purpose: To gauge the general thinking of a class; to engage all students with the topic at hand; and to promote listening and speaking skills.

Preparation: No specific preparation needed.

Steps:

1. Give the class the prompt or question, and ask them to stand when they have the answer in their mind. Example of a question- "What critical fact about the education of English Learners have you learned so far in STEP?"
2. When all students have stood (and are consequently ready to respond), explain that you will select one person to share her/his response aloud, and then sit. If that thought is the same one that others were going to share, or very similar, then those students should also sit. All students who sit snap their fingers as they lower themselves into their chairs. If those remaining standing feel that, despite having a different response in their mind, they'd like to snap their fingers in recognition of the merit of the idea that was just shared, they may do so while remaining standing.
3. The teacher selects another person to state their response to the prompt. Again, that person sits, as do others who had very similar thoughts. Finger snapping also continues.
4. The process repeats until all students are once again sitting.
5. Optional- You can record the thoughts of the group on a chart paper.

Connection to EL Students: This structure takes into account the uncertainty sometimes felt by EL students about speaking in front of a the whole class. If EL students opt to share their responses aloud, this structure allows them time to think and mentally rehearse their statement before producing it aloud. On the other hand, if EL students are as yet very reluctant to speak in front of a large group, they can still participate by actively listening, but opt out of oral sharing by sitting when another student responds.

Think-Pair-Share

General Description: A cooperative group structure that pairs students with a partner to exchange information. Serving as a contrast to typical classroom question-answer routines (i.e., one student responding to a teacher's question or request) Think-Pair-Share increases the probability that all students will participate.

Purpose: To engage all students with the topic at hand, and to promote listening and speaking skills.

Preparation: Before you use "Think-Pair-Share" for the first time with your students, demonstrate the process in front of the whole class. Call up a student to be your partner in the information exchange and run through the steps below.

Steps:

6. Arrange students in pairs.
7. Ask the question, or raise the topic, to the whole class. Example- "Think about the following: What feelings do you recall having as you were learning a second or foreign language?"
8. Give students quiet time to think.
9. Ask students to turn to their partners and take turns sharing the information. (You may want to remind students here about using quiet, group-work voices.)
10. Optional- You may ask for volunteers to share out to the whole group the information exchanged in pairs.

Connection to EL Students: When they are interacting with native English-speakers in this cooperative structure, EL students have access to English input (listening to their partner) and English output (speaking to their partner), both important for L2 acquisition. Speaking in a one-to-one situation, in contrast to a group, can help decrease EL students' nervousness or reluctance related to their oral performance. Also, when the purpose of the activity is to build knowledge regarding the topic, regardless of the language, teachers can pair EL students sharing the same L1, and they can discuss the concept or information in their shared native language.

Affinity Diagram

General Description: Students write information in response to a prompt and collaboratively categorize their responses on a class chart.

Purpose: To graphically organize information generated by the class about a specific topic; to engage all students with the topic at hand; and to promote listening, speaking, writing skills, along with cooperation.

Steps:

1. Pose a question or prompt to the students. For example, “What do you consider your greatest challenge as a teacher in meeting the needs of English Learners?”
2. At tables in groups, students have a few separate square post-its in front of them, and write each response they generate on a separate post-it.
3. First categorization: In their group, students share the post-its that they have written, sticking together those that belong to a common category. Students generate titles for each of their categories.
4. Second categorization: One group is assigned to carry over their post-its to another group. The two groups collaborate to see if they have categories in common and can combine their post-it lists. If there is time, a third categorization—joining the two groups with another two—can take place.
5. Whole Class Share: The teacher asks someone from a combined group to share their largest category (longest list of post-its), and place it on a chart in the front of the class. The teacher labels the category with a marker, and asks if other groups have the same or highly similar categories, and affixes those to the original one. The teacher continues alternating groups until all post-its are attached to the chart in categories.

Connection to EL Students: This structure has many features of an “information gap” activity— a typical activity in communicative language teaching. All students have part of the information, but no one has all. It is only through listening and speaking interactively that students can accomplish the task. Further, the graphic organizer that is the end product of this activity can help support EL students with the content at hand. It is among the most effective kind of graphic organizer because the EL students were actively engaged in its creation.

Give One, Get One

General Description: Using a blank grid, students first generate ideas in a response to a teacher prompt, and then elicit information from other students in a collaborative structure.

Purpose: To engage all students with the topic at hand; and to promote listening and speaking skills.

Typical classroom uses: Tapping and building up student background knowledge before a unit of study; eliciting important information from students after their reading or classroom activity.

Steps:

1. Hand out a grid with 6-8 squares to each student. (Alternately, the students can fold a paper into a grid.)
2. State the prompt or pose the question. For example, “What are the best ideas you know for encouraging students to write?”
3. Ask students to first individually generate responses to the prompt, putting each response in a separate cell in the grid. Set a minimum number of cells to be filled, e.g., 3-4.
4. Direct students to mingle with others and collect 3-4 more ideas, each from a different peer. In return for each idea they collect, they give one of theirs.
5. When the students have filled the required number of cells, or completed their grid, they return to their seats.
6. The teacher facilitates the sharing or compilation of ideas by charting them on a large paper or overhead transparency.

Connection to EL Students: This structure has many features of an “information gap” activity which is typical of communicative language teaching. In these activities, one student has information that the other needs, so in order to accomplish the task one has to be a clear speaker, listener. Further, many studies of EL students have found that student interaction promotes more development in English than teacher-fronted instruction.

Constructive Controversy

Phase 1: Preparing Positions (10 minutes)

Each pair works together to prepare its side of the debate. Review the materials that are useful for the role you are playing. Use these materials as well as your own experiences as students and as teachers. Individually, be prepared to present a brief statement of your position. Review each other's presentations.

Phase 2: Presenting Positions (20 minutes)

Each side presents its position. While one side presents, the other side listens carefully and asks clarifying questions.

Caution: Do not begin to discuss the substance of the controversy. Ask only questions for clarification and understanding. This is not yet the time to express your personal opinion of the arguments being made.

After presentation of both sides, switch sides! Each person must take a role on the opposite side of the debate and attempt to present the case. The presentation may review what has been said, but may also add more points.

Phase 3: Coming to Consensus (20 minutes)

As a group, try to come to a consensus as to what you think about tracking. This position will not be one side or the other, but should be a compromise. In other words, the position must have some practical implications for educators who are in the midst of this controversy and have to make sense of it all in their classrooms. Summarize your group's consensus on a poster or in a 3 minute presentation.

Phase 4: Wrap-up and Reflection (20 minutes)

Groups will present their positions to one another. Take note during the presentations so that you can compare and contrast the conclusions reached by the other groups. We will discuss the results of these comparisons and will reflect on group processes.