Effective teaching means every student is actively learning; interacting with others and responding to the instruction. How is this done?

This quick reference guide offers 15 practical and easy-to-use activities for getting all students all aboard and learning.

The strategies are grouped by response patterns: i.e., written, partner, whole group, and action responses so that you can best tailor their use to your teaching purposes.

What can you expect by using these strategies? Increased student participation and the heightened probability that no child will be left out, or left behind.

Learning is not a spectator sport.
Written Responses

Quick Writes/Quick Draws

Steps:
1. Teacher gives a prompt and students write or draw.
2. Allow 3 minutes or less for students to quick write/draw.
3. Teacher gives signal. (“Finish your sentence/picture. Put down your pencil and look up when you’re done.”)
4. Students share work with others. Teacher monitors discussion and asks questions that encourage elaboration of thinking.

Sample teacher talk in the classroom:
- Write 2 questions about yesterday’s story and be ready to ask them of your partner.
- Write what you think will happen next in the story.
- List 2 synonyms for _____.
- Write a sentence for one of our vocabulary words. Leave a blank for the word and switch papers with your partner, then fill in the blank. Talk with your partner about the clues in the sentence that helped you figure out the missing word.
- Write three words that use r-controlled vowels.

The key to effectively using these strategies is in knowing which participation structure works best with the learning objective. It’s like having tools in a toolbox. All of the tools are worthwhile but some are better used for certain learning goals. The same holds true for student engagement strategies.

Before you select one of the strategies, ask yourself these questions:

- In this lesson (or component), what must my students know and be able to do?
Planning for Active Engagement

- In this lesson (or component), what must my students know and be able to do?
- How can I help my students become active participants in this learning?

We’re providing you with post-it notes to use with the 15 strategies. We encourage you to tab your core reading TE where you think a strategy would work best in helping your students become active learners.
It doesn’t matter what you teach if they don’t learn it.
Roundtable

Steps:
1. Teacher asks a question or gives a topic/problem.
2. In groups of 4, all 4 students simultaneously respond to the question by writing or drawing (or using manipulatives.)
3. Teacher signals when time is up (or students may turn over their papers/put pencils down.)
4. Students then pass their papers one person clockwise.
5. Each team member continues to add to what was already on the paper.

Sample teacher talk in the classroom:
- Write a conversation between 2 ball players using at least 3 antonyms and 3 compound words.
- Write a synonym or definition for your vocabulary words.
- List 4 words (or draw a picture) that start with the /s/ sound.

Think-Write-Pair-Share

Steps:
1. Teacher asks question.
2. Teacher signals wait time.
3. Every student writes a response to the question.
4. Teacher signals for paired students to share their written responses.
5. Students may add to their initial quick write after talking with partner.
6. Teacher calls randomly on pairs to share either their individual responses or partner response.

Sample teacher talk in the classroom:
- Today we will be working with our Question of the Day in pairs with your whiteboards (or paper and pencil.)
- Write 2 ways in which the wolf was like the hunter.
- Write any similarities you can find between this story and the one we read last week.
- Using your own words, write a definition for ________.
- We have been working on the CVCe long vowel pattern this week. Write down as many words as you can using this spelling pattern with the long “a” sound until I say “stop.”

Written Responses
## Partner Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Buddy Buzz</th>
<th>Inside-Outside Circle</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>(students share what they already know and solidify instruction)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Steps:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Students are paired up. (AB partners)</td>
<td>1. Teacher or students write content relevant questions on index cards.</td>
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<td>2. Teacher gives a prompt or asks a question.</td>
<td>2. Students stand in 2 concentric circles. The inside circle faces out; the outside circle faces in.</td>
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<td>3. A tells B their response. Listening partner either holds up one finger for each correct response or paraphrases partner’s response.</td>
<td>3. Inner circle partner asks question, outer circle partner gives answer.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Teacher gives signal and B tells A their response.</td>
<td>4. Partners switch roles and repeat step 3.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Teacher monitors the discussion and active listening.</td>
<td>5. Teacher gives signal and students in the outer or inner circle rotate to the next partner.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Teacher signals whole group to come together and then randomly calls on partners to share responses. <em>(Teacher can use “Roving Overhead” to record responses to share with whole group.)</em></td>
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**Sample teacher talk in the classroom:**

- A, *tell your partner why you think Amelia Bedelia acts the way she does.*
- B, *tell your partner three things you think Jacob might do next. Begin your sentence with “I predict...”*
- B, *tell your partner what comes to mind when I say the word “fun.”*
- A, *tell your partner three sentences about things which “astonish” you.*
- B, *tell your partner three things you think Jacob might do next. Begin your sentence with “I predict...”*
### Show Me

**Steps:**
1. Teacher tells students the appropriate response signal (thumbs up, show the number of fingers, stand up, etc.)
2. Teacher asks a question and gives wait time.
3. Teacher signals “Show Me” and students respond.

**Sample teacher talk in the classroom:**
- Thumbs up if you think it is true (or if you agree), thumbs down if you think it is false (or if you disagree) that Jamie is a good friend to Harriet.
- Stand if the word I say has the same beginning sound as /mud/. Or: hold up a finger for each sound you hear in the word /r/e/d/.
- Hands on your head if these two words are synonyms (the same). Touch your toes if they are antonyms (opposites).
- Tap each sound you hear on your whiteboard.

### Action Responses

**Response Cards**

**Steps:**
1. Students write responses in each corner of a square piece of paper. (A-B-C-D, 1-2-3-4, Yes/No, Agree/Disagree, or use whiteboards.) OR: use prepared response cards.
2. Teacher asks questions.
3. Students privately select number/letter/word answer from response card.
4. On teacher’s signal, students hold up response card with selected corner pointing up.
5. Teacher monitors responses for student understanding of skill or strategy. Note unsuccessful responses. Give constructive feedback.

**Sample teacher talk in the classroom:**
- I am going to read two words out loud. Let me know if you think they have the same middle sound.
- How many syllables do you hear in the word, “enormous”
- Maria is a very clever character in this story. Would you want her as your friend? Yes or No?
- Mudge is a loyal dog. Do you agree or disagree?
- I have written four definitions on the overhead, choose which one you think matches the word, “energetic.”
Action Responses

### 4 Corners

**Steps:**
1. Teacher has labeled each corner with a content relevant number, name, word, or phrase.
2. Teacher calls “4 Corners” and students are given think time to make a choice.
3. Each student writes the name/number of a corner on a piece of paper and turns it over without talking.
4. Teacher signals “4 Corners” and students get up and go to their chosen corner.
5. At the corner, they find a partner and discuss the reason for their choice.
6. Teacher randomly selects partners to share with whole group.

**Sample teacher talk in the classroom:**
- If you could be a character in this story, who would you be and why?
- Choose one of the posted four words and use it in three sentences that are at least eight words long each.
- Choose one of these 4 phrases from our story and tell who said it and what clues you used to determine your answer. What are some other things this character might say?

### Talking Chips

**Steps:**
1. Students are in groups of 3-4.
2. Each student is given the same number of chips (or index cards, post-its, etc.)
3. Each time a student talks, s/he places a chip in the center of the table.
4. Students listen and take turns talking.
5. When a student has used up all of their chips, they no longer talk.
6. The group talk continues until each student in the group has used all of their chips.
7. Teacher monitors student talk, takes notes and shares individual comments with class by using Roving Overhead.

**Sample teacher talk in the classroom:**
- Talk about what you’ve learned about dogsled racing in Alaska after reading our story.
- What parts of being a cowhand would you most like and dislike? Talk in your group about your reasons.
- Boys and girls, today our Vocabulary-Writing Connection is what you would do if you ever found a stray animal. Before you write, talk in your group about the animal and tell what you might do if you had to take care of it.
- Discuss in your groups the Question of the Day. Be prepared to share your responses.
| **Think-Pair-Share**  
( best suited for reflection and processing) |
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Steps:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Teacher asks a question</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Teacher signals for wait time as students think of their answers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Teacher signals and pairs share answers with each other.</td>
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<td>4. Pair decides on one response.</td>
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<td>5. Teacher randomly selects several pairs to share their response with whole group.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sample teacher talk in the classroom:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Think about another word (a synonym) you could use for “big” in this sentence: “Clifford was a very big dog.”</td>
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<td>• Explain to your partner how the focus strategy “compare and contrast” helps you to be a better reader.</td>
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<td>• Think of a kid-friendly definition for the word “reluctant.”</td>
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<td>• Think of at least 3 words that rhyme with “rent.” Turn to your partner and share.</td>
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<td>• Write the word chunk “ight” on your whiteboard. I’m thinking of a word that rhymes with “ight” and means the opposite of daytime. Partners share answer. (Continue with other word clues.)</td>
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<th><strong>Pairs Compare</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Steps:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Group of 4 divides into 2 sets of pairs to do a graphic organizer, worksheet, or writing activity.</td>
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<td>2. One partner completes his/her section or problem while the other coaches and checks partner’s work.</td>
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<td>3. If they agree on the answer, “coach” gives praise.</td>
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<td>4. If partners disagree on the answer, they ask the other pair in the group for their answer.</td>
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<td>5. Partners switch roles. Repeat steps 2-5.</td>
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<td>6. When work is complete, pairs in team compare their work.</td>
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<td>7. If they agree, they do a team handshake.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. If they disagree, they talk it through and try to figure it out. If no solution is reached, all 4 hands go up and members from another team (or the teacher) can help.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sample teacher talk in the classroom:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Here is a graphic organizer to help us put the events of our story in order. You and your partner will fill in what happened first, then, next, and finally. When you are done, compare your work with the other pair in your team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In Pairs Compare today, each of you will circle pictures that start with the /s/ sound. Draw 2 more. Then compare pictures with the other pair on your team.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Read the clues. Then find the matching word on our “Words to Remember” Wall. Write it in a sentence.</td>
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**Partner Responses**
### Whole Group and Team Responses

#### Numbered Heads

**Steps:**
1. Number off students from 1 to 4.
2. Ask a question or give a problem.
3. Students lean forward (put their heads together) to discuss the answer. They must make sure that everyone on the team knows the answer.
4. Randomly call out a number from 1 to 4 (use a spinner, toss a die, or draw popsicle sticks.)
5. On each team, the student whose number was called writes an answer on the team’s response board and places the board face down. (variation: the student simply stands and verbally shares the answer.)
6. When the signal is given, the designated students stand and hold up their response boards to show their answer. Check each team’s answer for accuracy.
7. Repeat with additional questions. Give team points for correct responses if desired.

**Sample teacher talk in the classroom:**
- What things in the story let you know the setting, or where and when it takes place?
- What do you think is the main problem for the characters in this book?
- What sound do you hear at the beginning of these three words: “quiet, quarter, quit.”
- Which one of our vocabulary words would you use to finish this sentence: Grandmother was __________ to see her sister after so many years.

#### Mix-N-Match

**Steps:**
1. Teacher gives a card to every student.
2. Teacher calls “Mix” and with card in hand, students get up from seats to mill around the room trading cards with others as they pass by.
3. After students mix a bit, teacher calls “Freeze” and all stop. No more trading.
4. Teacher then calls “Match” and students find partner that has matching card.
5. Students with match move to outside of room to allow more room for those still looking for a match.
6. After all students have found their match, teacher calls “Mix” and they start again.

**Sample teacher talk in the classroom:**
- Find the person who has a word card that matches the definition on your card.
- Find the person who has a picture of something that starts with the letter sound on your card.
- Find someone who has a synonym/antonym card that matches your word card.
- Find someone who has a matching answer to the question on your card.
## Choral Response

**Steps:**
1. Teacher says a prompt/asks a question.
2. Teacher signals wait time.
3. Students cue teacher to show they are ready. (“Eyes on me” or “Thumbs Up when you know...”)
4. All respond together.
5. Teacher gives constructive feedback.

**Sample teacher talk in the classroom:**
- Our focus strategy for today is sequencing. What are we working on today everybody?
- Let’s review our high frequency words for this week together on the overhead.
- I’m thinking of a word that begins with “p” and means an animal you keep in your home. What’s the word?
- Let’s begin with the word “ship” and replace the beginning sound with /r/. What’s the new word? Now let’s replace the ending sound in “rip” with the sound /d/. What’s the new word?

## Book Bits

**Steps:**
1. Teacher decides what students need to know after reading story.
2. Teacher types up story events (one per sheet-large font) or writes facts on sentence strips (one fact per strip).
3. Teacher gives each student a sentence strip (or randomly select students to read a fact sheet).
4. Students go to front of room and line up in sequence.
5. First student reads event/fact slowly. Then the next student reads until all events or facts are presented.
6. Students reread sentence strips/fact sheets, this time with excitement, (or quickly, etc.)
7. On a third round, all join in.

**Sample teacher talk in the classroom:**
- I wrote a key event/fact from our story on each of these sentence strips. Today we’re going to put these events together and read them aloud a few times so that we can better understand what happened and why.
- Think of our story last week and make a connection to this week’s story. Write your answer on a sentence strip. I’ll call on groups to come to the front of the room and read their answers.
- Now that we’ve reread these sentences several times, let’s go on a word hunt for our vocabulary words in the sentences. (or, let’s look for words that have the /ou/ sound.)
- I see two antonyms in these sentences. Let’s go find them.

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## Whole Group and Team Responses