

# Student Engagement Strategies: *Every Student, Every Time*

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*How*



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# Why

Imagine a classroom where every student was attentively involved every second of every day. You might be thinking, “Right...never in my dreams....” However, there are countless tricks for keeping students focused that have been discovered and developed by fellow teachers over the years. When we only call on individual, “quiet hands” only a small portion of our students are engaged while the rest are either relieved to be left off the hook, or disappointed that their input was not considered.

Here is a toolkit of strategies for you to incorporate into your teaching moves. Consider taking on one new strategy a week. Make an anchor chart to remind students of the procedures to reduce transition time and keep the learning flowing.

# How

## Spoken Engagement

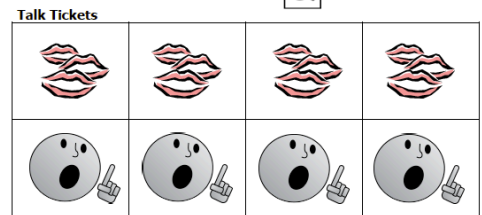
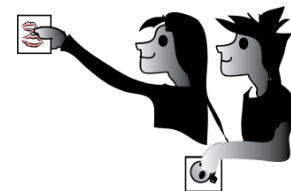
### Talk Tickets



Any small object such as a paper clip, bingo marker or paper ‘ticket’ can be used as a ticket to talk!

The ticket buys you a chance to talk during a small group discussion.

Each student receives the same number of Talk Tickets at the beginning of a small group discussion. As students enter into the discussion, they place one token in the middle of the table. When students run out of tokens, their talk time is up. They then can only make additional contributions **after** the others in the group have used up their tickets.



Talk Tickets encourage participation in two ways: They restrict dominant students from monopolizing the discussion, and they encourage reluctant students to share more of their ideas.

(For this presentation and a full page of Talk Tickets” see our website [www.knoxeducation.com](http://www.knoxeducation.com) Here’s the link.

[https://www.knoxeducation.com/sites/main/files/file-attachments/ccss\\_talk\\_tickets\\_for\\_teachers.pdf](https://www.knoxeducation.com/sites/main/files/file-attachments/ccss_talk_tickets_for_teachers.pdf)

## Think Pair Share

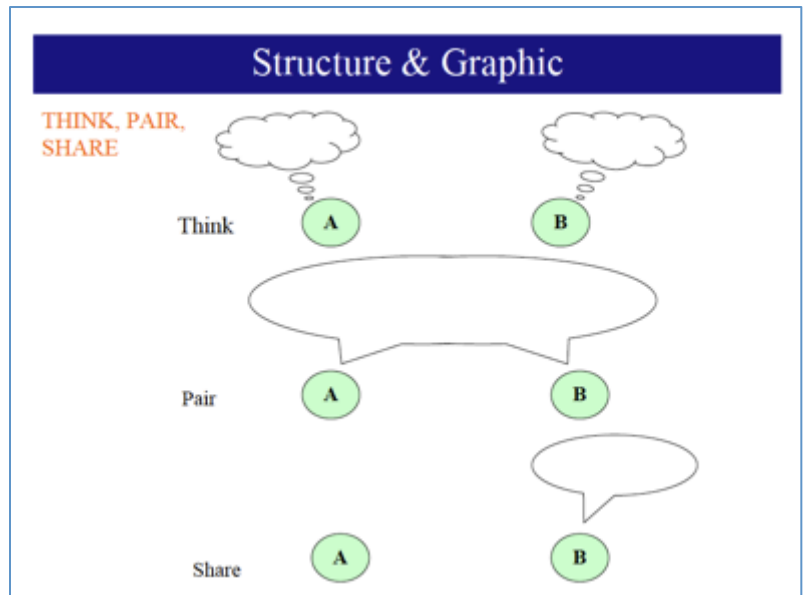
Students think about a topic suggested by the teacher.

Pairs discuss the topic.

Students individually share information from their discussions with the class.

The link on our website:

[https://www.knoxeducation.com/sites/main/files/file-attachments/cooperative\\_talk\\_cards\\_2014\\_0.pdf](https://www.knoxeducation.com/sites/main/files/file-attachments/cooperative_talk_cards_2014_0.pdf)



## Numbered Heads

Students number off within each group.

Teacher prompts or gives a directive.

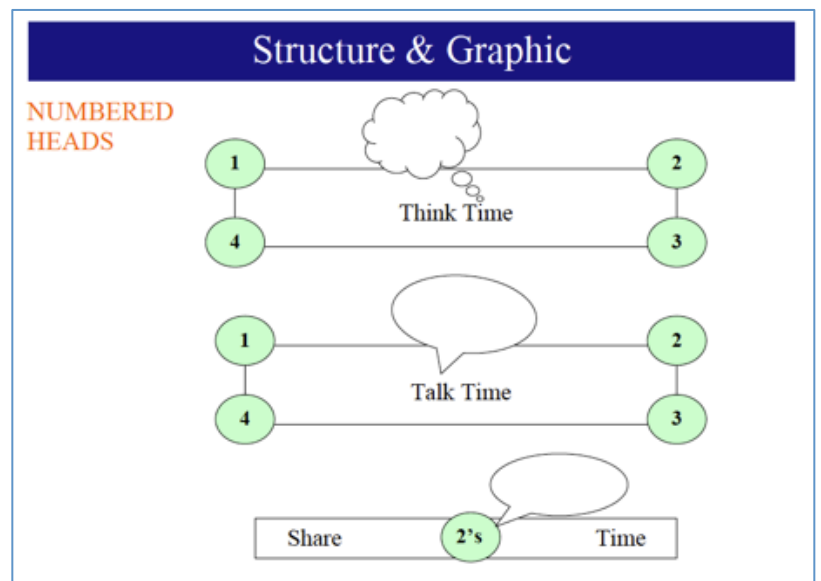
Students think individually about the topic.

Groups discuss the topic so that any member of the group can report for the group.

Teacher calls a number and the student from each group with that number reports for the group.

The link on our website:

[https://www.knoxeducation.com/sites/main/files/file-attachments/cooperative\\_talk\\_cards\\_2014\\_0.pdf](https://www.knoxeducation.com/sites/main/files/file-attachments/cooperative_talk_cards_2014_0.pdf)



## Choral Response

**Choral Response** is a technique where all students **verbally respond**, in unison, to a teacher's questions. It increases each student's frequency of active response during group instruction (Heward, 1994). Unlike traditional one-student-at-a-time response modes (e.g., hand raising), choral response provides every student with an opportunity to actively respond to every question posed during instruction.

Teach the students a signal to let them know when you want them to respond chorally. This may be a hand gesture, or a simple verbal, "Let's all say\_\_\_", or "On the count of \_\_\_let's say\_\_\_." Listen carefully to their response and if there are errors in pronunciation of content, model for the students/reteach, and then try again. You may also try "subgroup" response. For example, "All the girls, row one, or table three..." may respond while others listen in."

## Echo

Use **Echo** when students are sharing their own ideas or opinions to encourage students to listen to each other. Ask a question such as, "*What do you think is the most important way that coyotes adapt to their environment?*" Direct the students to listen to their peers respond. Then say, "ECHO". The students then repeat the response with the student's name first, " \_\_\_\_\_ *said she thinks Coyote's strong sense of smell helps them the most.*" Help students focus their listening by reminding them to turn and look at the speaker as they are sharing. You can signal this by saying "Track \_\_\_\_\_ (Student's name)."

## Read as I Write

When creating shared writing charts in front of students help students stay focused on the print as it is written down (or typed up on the screen) by saying, "Read as I Write". Have the students orally share or repeat the phrase or sentence first, then as a teacher DON'T REPEAT the response as you are charting, instead direct the students to read each word as it appears.

## Equity Sticks

**Equity Sticks** are a class set of sticks (tongue depressors work well) on which the names of the students are written. The teacher pulls from the **Equity Sticks** randomly to choose students to respond to a question, or for a task to ensure an equal chance of participation. Equity Sticks help reduce any possible bias by the teacher as well as keep students engaged because they are not sure if they will be called upon. In classrooms with English learners or diverse skill levels it's important to let students "rehearse" their answers by sharing their thoughts with a partner before a single student is selected to respond with the sticks. Additional information such as English language level, special needs, etc. can be added to the sticks so that as a teacher you can readjust the question to match their needs after you see who is chosen.

## Class - Yes

This attention getter was coined by Christ Biffle at [www.wholebrainteaching.com](http://www.wholebrainteaching.com). Simply train your students that when they hear you say, “Class,” they are to respond in unison with “Yes.” The fun starts when you vary the tone and volume of the “Class” and ask them to mimic that when they respond with “Yes.” There are countless videos on youtube showing his various strategies, here’s one to start with <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JJw9mzCtWbk>

## Whip Around No Repeats

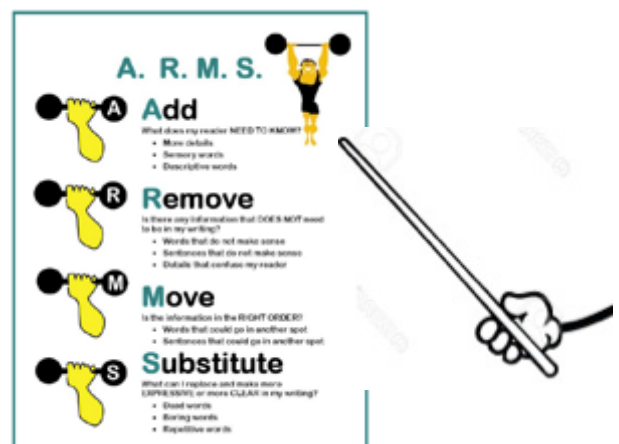
A quick way to get many responses from small groups is to have groups discuss a topic, brainstorm background knowledge, or review a concept first in a group, then signal that they will be sharing out with “**whip around no repeats**”. Point to a group and anyone can respond. Point to the next group and anyone can respond, but can’t repeat something from the previous group. Move from group to group randomly around the room. Do not allow students from a group that has already responded answer again.

## Teach, OK!

Another fun and engaging strategy from Chris Biffle at [www.wholebrainteaching.com](http://www.wholebrainteaching.com). After teaching a short section of a lesson or procedure, have the students paraphrase what you just taught, with a partner, at your signal. You say “Teach?” and the class says “OK!” - and each pair points to the student they will teach the lesson to.

## Chant the Charts

As a review and warm up before any lesson, have the students re-read the charts from the previous lessons. You may assign the child of the day to lead this with a pointer. If you've developed a chart or word list that you want students to reference during independent work or writing time, simply have them read all of those words and phrases again before they are excused for independent work time. As the students are chanting the charts, turn your attention on the students to see who is participating and following the reading with their eyes. You may pause and reteach a word or phrase if students are not reading it, for example.



# Nonverbal Engagement

## Gestures

Whenever possible, add gestures and body movement to your teaching. Ham it up! This not only increases students' likelihood of comprehending your words, but adds to the fun of the day. You can make up a gesture to signal a vocabulary word or math move on the spot. Not feeling creative? Just ask the kids. "How shall we move to remember that idea?" They will be full of ideas and can mimic each other. Teaching with lots of gesturing all day long burns extra calories too!

## Thumbs:

Students can gesture with their thumbs to give you feedback on a concept or procedure quite easily when you teach them the rubric:



Thumbs up = I understand it!



Thumbs sideways = I kind of get it, not sure of everything,



Thumbs down = I don't understand and need help.

Checking for understanding this way takes literally seconds and will let you know how to proceed whether it's re-teaching the whole group, or meeting with a few students.

## TPR: Total Physical Response

This was a method developed by Dr. James Asher, a professor of psychology at San Jose State University, California, to aid learning foreign languages. In Total Physical Response (TPR) students act out and show new words (verbs, adjectives, nouns etc.). This will increase their understanding of new vocabulary and help them remember it. Connecting gestures and oral movements to new learning is one way to move new words and concepts into long term memory.



After an introduction to key vocabulary, students watch a demonstration of the command and then follow the command.

For example, “paper” (teacher shows a stack of paper) “a piece of paper” (teacher holds up one piece), “take out” (teacher does this action with different objects) “take out a piece of paper.” New vocabulary is introduced and previous vocabulary reviewed in a series of related commands. New commands are added until students can respond to variations of several.

- Students watch a demonstration of key words and then a command using them.
- Students listen again and watch as the teacher performs the action.
- The teacher gives the command and models the action again, this time having students perform the actions simultaneously.
- The teacher gives the command to the group without modeling the action.
- The teacher gives the command to an individual without modeling the action.
- The teacher models variations and combinations for the groups.
- Students perform variations and combinations.

*Jeanette Gordon, Elementary Example of Total Physical Response: A Strategy for Beginning ELL's, Illinois Resource Center*

### **TPR-P Total Physical Response with Pictures**

The actual physical response with pictures is fairly basic – pointing at something, or lining up, or standing next too, but the opportunity for vocabulary acquisition is as varied as the type of pictures you can use.

- Point to the illustrator or an illustration
- Point to the character who looks \_\_\_\_\_
- Point to the word in bold print...title...caption

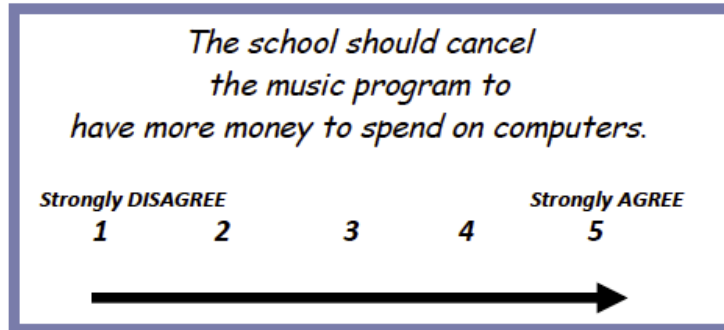
or

- Show how you think this character feels.
- Line up to demonstrate sequence, events, setting changes

*Available through [www.languageimpact.com/articles/other/tprext.htm](http://www.languageimpact.com/articles/other/tprext.htm)*

## Take a Stand

1. Clear space in the classroom so that students may stand anywhere from one side to the other. Label one side of the classroom “strongly agree,” label the other side, “strongly disagree.”



2. Post a sentence strip or card with a statement such as the ones listed below:
  - Children should not be able to eat sugary breakfast cereals.
  - Dogs should be kept on leashes
  - The school should offer more lunch choices
  - If you misbehave in school, your parent should have to attend class with you.
  - Children should get paid for doing chores at home.
  - People who own cats should keep them indoors.
3. After you read the statement, have students SILENTLY move their positions along a line in the classroom to show where they stand on the issue. Students may strongly agree/disagree and be at either side of the room, or may have more neutral or contradictory feelings about the statement. You may also have them list on a white board what number their position represents and bring that with them. They can jot their reasons why they hold that opinion on their white board before they move to their spot.

From our website:

[https://www.knoxeducation.com/sites/main/files/file-attachments/1-5\\_how\\_to\\_take\\_a\\_stand\\_lesson\\_0.pdf](https://www.knoxeducation.com/sites/main/files/file-attachments/1-5_how_to_take_a_stand_lesson_0.pdf)



## Be the Teacher

Following an interactive or shared writing lesson, students can take turns “being the teacher”. This simply means they lead the class in a review reading of the chart guiding the group with a pointer. You can explicitly teach the students how to stand to the side of the chart or screen so that everyone can see the words. The class reads at the same pace as the “teacher” points to the words. This really encourages students to reference the charts as they work independently because they’ve been in charge of teaching the class to “read” them. If a student does not have one-to-one correspondence yet for emergent reading, simply stand with that student and help them guide the pointer over the words.



## Hands-on Experiences for Prewriting or Theme Launch

Nothing is more engaging than getting to touch, feel, smell, and sometimes even eat something as a learning experience. Wherever possible add a hands-on experience to learning units. Oral language spontaneously erupts when students get to hold objects. You can let it flow, try to capture some of it on a chart. Writing will be greatly improved with this activity as a prewrite. Interest in a topic or theme will explode if you simply take in the time to bring in some real life artifacts to launch a unit. For example, if the students are going to be reading a story involving camping, simply bring in some gear and let them see it or even set it up. If you’re starting a history unit with specific artifacts, try to bring in something similar for them to explore.



## Role Play: Procedures

When teaching a new classroom procedure such as how to select a book from the classroom library, or how to put away the chrome books, have students role play the act several times and rate themselves. To make it fun, go first as the teacher and demonstrate everything you don't want the students to do. They will laugh and give you a low rating. Next ask for a student or small group to repeat the procedure "better" than you. This is a "no shame" way to be proactive about potential problems and make your expectations crystal clear as demonstrated by fellow students.

## Response Cards

Students can respond simultaneously to a teacher question or lesson problem with cards. You can have students label cards with A, B, C, D for multiple choice, for example. You can also have them label cards with a discreet skill such as a letter sound and lift that card corresponding with the letter for the sound.

## Written Engagement

### White boards

#### Basics:

1. **Explain** the task.
2. Provide a **student-friendly definition** of the skill on the large white board or a piece of chart paper. Connect this to prior learning—bridge the known to the new.
3. Provide some **examples**.
4. Ask students to respond to the teacher prompt by showing you their thinking on individual white boards. Give **think/work time**.
5. Have students **display** their **answers** all at once on the white board close to their chests.
6. Give **feedback** to every student every time and have students whose answers are wrong fix them.

Link to our website:

[https://www.knoxeducation.com/sites/main/files/file-attachments/k-5\\_ck-white\\_boards\\_strategies\\_mini\\_lesson\\_1.pdf](https://www.knoxeducation.com/sites/main/files/file-attachments/k-5_ck-white_boards_strategies_mini_lesson_1.pdf)



## Exit Tickets

Exit tickets are a formative assessment tool teachers can use to quickly gauge how well students understood material at the end of a lesson. Simply display or write a question linked to the objective in the last couple of minutes of class and have the students write or draw their answer on an Exit Ticket. As they exit the room glance at the card and if possible give feedback, and sort the cards out for the students who demonstrate they didn't understand. A good exit card is linked to the objective and can be answered in a few minutes. These can include multiple choice, true/false, short answer, or even written responses of a few sentences. Students may also draw a figure or diagram if the concept lends itself to that sort of response. A single index card can quickly be divided into 4 response spaces for Monday through Thursday tickets by making a line down the middle of each side of the card. Check out Pinterest for photos of many kinds of exit tickets to inspire you: <https://www.pinterest.com/explore/exit-tickets/?lp=true>

## Video Viewing with Note Taking

When analyzing results on the SBAC exams we've noted that most frequently "listening" is the lowest bar for a school. Students are now expected to be able to listen to audio and/or video and not only learn new information but also select appropriate evidence to use in written responses. Students need practice listening to audio/video presentations while also taking notes on what they hear. Initially, you'll have to pause the video frequently and give time for students to jot down what they heard. Supplying a focusing question, or reading the prompt question first will also help them discriminate what's important and jot it down. After each section you can increase engagement even more by having pairs or groups compare notes and add new material to their own that they may have missed.

## Digital Engagement

There are literally dozens of ways students can share their learning with computers, smart phones, or tablets in the classroom. Here are some favorites, however, you'll want to continually ask your teaching buddies to share what they are using because new apps and software are constantly appearing in our field:

Thank you to Joanna Conrado, TOSA/Instructional Coach, Ballico Cressey Schools for assembling this list!

**Socrative** — Create quizzes and assess students in real time

<https://socrative.com/>

**Quizlet** — Create study cards with terms and definitions/images that can be shared with students

<https://quizlet.com/en-gb>

**Kahoot** — Game based classroom response system

<https://kahoot.com/>

**Plickers** — Use QR codes and a device to collect student responses in real time

<https://plickers.com/>

**Quizslides** — Create tests and quizzes and host them online for students to take, view results, online and download on spreadsheets

<https://quizlet.com/en-gb>

**Geddit** — Instant student feedback and checks for understanding

<https://www.geddit.com/gradecam>

**GradeCam** — Use your smartphone, web camera, or document camera to grade student work

<https://gradecam.com/>

**Answer Garden** — instant student feedback that creates a wordle

<https://answergarden.ch/>

**GoFormative** — Create assessment, homework, or classroom, receive live results

<https://goformative.com/>

**Jeopardy Labs** — Templates to create online games for assessment/feedback

<https://jeopardylabs.com/>

**EduLastic** — Common core formative assessment, create or reimagine tests aligned to specific standards

<https://edulastic.com/>

**The Answer Pad** — Create formative and summative assessments with instant student feedback

<https://app.theanswerpad.com/homepage.html>

**Edpuzzle** — Create questions inside videos and track responses

<https://edpuzzle.com/>