

Thirty Active Engagement Activities in 30 Minutes



Signals:

- **Class/Yes**
This is a choral response to get the class' attention. Teacher says, "class." Students respond in the same tone and manner with "yes."
- **Teach/OK**
This is another choral response which signals students to *Turn and Talk* to their elbow buddy or partner(s) in order to summarize, review, or restate the learning.
- **Hands and Eyes (Used to make a BIG teaching point)**
Clenching your fists and then folding your hands together, while simultaneously saying "hands and eyes." The action and words signal students to get in their learning positions (folding their hands on their laps or desk and focusing both eyes on the speaker) and repeating chorally, "hands and eyes." Now attention is focused.
- **Freeze/Melt**
During a *Turn and Talk*, *Conversation Circle*, or other discussion group, the teacher calls out "freeze" and students momentarily suspend all talking. At this point the teacher may clarify a teaching point, summarize information, reinforce the teaching point, or give further instructions/feedback. When the teacher is ready for students to resume their conversations the teacher calls out "melt."
- **Switch**
This technique allows the chronic yackers and the chronic listeners to all have reasonable amounts of time to share. Assign a number/letter to each of the turn and talk partners – assign one student as "1/A" and the other as student "2/B." Start with 1/As being the teacher and 2/Bs use listening techniques. After a reasonable amount of time, shout "switch." Teach students to then suspend their speaking/listening and repeat "switch." Then give signal to resume (i.e. *Teach/O.K.*) at this point partners switch their roles.

Response to Learning - Before, During, After Learning:

- **Turn and Talk**
Two students (elbow buddies), sit knee to knee/eye to eye and discuss a specific topic for approx. 1-3 minutes while the teacher listens in on various groups.
- **Micro lecture**
Teacher delivers instruction in small chunks of information (approx. 30 seconds) followed by student restatement or summarization of the learning.
- **Gestures**
Create "sign language" or body movements to represent a concept, skill, or signal.
- **Thumb it**
Using thumb up, thumb to the side, or thumb down as an instant assessment/response from students. It also serves as a quick check for understanding and full student participation.

- **Fist of Five**

Students use their fingers and thumb as a Likert scale, indicating their level of understanding. The scale can be posted on an anchor chart in the classroom.

5 = I know it so well I can explain it to anyone

4 = I can do it alone

3 = I need some help

2 = I could use more practice

1 = I'm only beginning

- **Oral Cloze**

The teacher gives a statement without completion or drops a word. Students chorally complete the thought or fill in the missing word.

- **Pinch paper**

- **Face the Fact (Happy, Straight, Sad)**

- **Yes/No**

- **Multiple choice**

Students fold a sheet of paper in a hot dog (long and skinny) then continue to fold into the appropriate number of boxes for the above choices. Students will draw or write necessary symbol, letter, or word in each box. In response to the teacher's question, students will hold up their column of paper and pinch the selected response.

- **Conversation Circle (A, B, C)**

A group of three students is formed and seated in a circle. The circles are used to improve communication. The teacher assigns a specific topic or idea for discussion.

1. Students assume A, B, or C names

2. "A" starts talking and continues until given signal (i.e. *switch*)

3. "B" continues with the topic until signal

4. Then "C" picks up the topic until signal

5. Continue rotating the "talker" until no more facts or ideas can be added to the topic or the time allotted is over.

- **Thermometer**

Students extend an arm straight up. Using the opposite hand, they indicate their level of understanding, as if their arm is a thermometer. As their hand moves up the extended arm, so does their level of understanding.

- **Speedometer Reading**

Students extend both arms to one side. Keeping the bottom arm stationary and stretched out parallel to the floor, the top arm moves like a speedometer reading 0 mph to 100 mph indicating their level of understanding.

- **Quick Write on a White Board**

All students have a dry erase board, small chalkboard, or white paper on a clipboard and simultaneously respond or answer questions posed. Allow a reasonable amount of time for students to jot their response. Then signal students to display their response/answer collectively with a quick check by the teacher. The teacher reveals and discusses the correct response/answer.

- **Spoons**
Each student is given a plastic disposable spoon. Response choices are written on each side of the spoon. Students use the appropriate side to reveal their response.
- **Comprehension Check**
As the teacher meanders around the room, he/she listens in on groups of students to check their level of understanding.
- **Clipboard Feedback (OHT/Paper)**
While monitoring for comprehension, the teacher notates observations for specific feedback and/or further instruction.
- **Look, Lean, & Whisper (variation of Turn and Talk)**
Turn to your elbow buddy, look them square in the eye, lean forward, and whisper the requested response.
- **Donut**
On a piece of paper or a dry erase board, draw a donut shape. On the outside shape write, *I am learning*. On the inside shape write, *I Know*

Groupings:

- **Deck of Cards**
Utilizing a standard deck of card, distribute in some way to students for grouping purposes: Group by color, suit, face cards, numbers, odd/even, etc.
- **Animal Sounds**
Using an assortment of animal picture cards, distribute them to the group. Students determine their animal card and mill around the room making the sound that animal typically makes, finding the others making the same sound. Confirm with the picture on the card. Group is formed!
- **Four Corners**
Teacher presents a topic, statement, or open-ended question with four responses. Each corner of the room is allocated for one of the possible responses. Students move to their chosen response and discuss.
- **Two Sides**
Teacher presents a topic, statement, or open-ended question with two responses. Each corner of the room is allocated for one of the possible responses. Students move to their chosen response and discuss.
- **Three Musketeers**
Teacher presents a topic for discussion or review. Students hold up their arm with the palm of their hand facing out. Students move around the room until two other palms are touching theirs, forming groups of three: “three musketeers.” The *group of three* engages in conversation around the topic until signaled.

Motivators:

- **Scoreboard – (Keep the DeeJay Happy)**
Draw a T Chart on the board or chart paper. Put on the top on one side a smiley face or music note with a smiley face and on the other side a frowny face or music note with a frown on the inside of the note. When students respond in the appropriate manner, tally a

point under the smiley side. Simultaneously, students react with a *Mighty Oh Yeah!* When the response is not quite the expectation, mark under the frown side. Students respond with a *Mighty Groan!* When the “scoreboard” time period has ended, there can be a one-second party, students can earn a one-minute listening to an appropriate radio station or song of their choosing, extra recess time, pack up a minute earlier or loose recess time, loose time on the dance party, receive extra homework.

- **Mighty Oh Yeah!/Mighty Groan**

Teacher requests a *Mighty Oh Yeah* when students deserve/earn a positive affirmation. Students respond by clapping their hands and throwing their arms over their head shouting, “Oh Yeah!” When students are not quite meeting the expectation, the teacher requests a *Mighty Groan*. Students respond by using their fists to model rubbing their eyes and whine “Awwww.”

- **Celebrations**

When the class needs to acknowledge affirmation or success use one of the following whole group responses:

- *10 Finger Wooo* – Throw up hands with all fingers spread like a fan and shout “WOOOOOO!”
- *Looking Good* –As you are drawing the outline of a square with your index fingers...say “You’re . . .” (make a clicking noise as you make a pretend mirror around your face and fluff your hair), “. . . lookin’ good!”
- *Silent Cheer* – Use arms to make cheering motions and cheer without making sound
- *Fire Craker* – a strong clap followed by open fingers shooting out while making a “sh”ing sound
- *Hip – Hip - Hooray* – The leader starts the cheer by slapping each hip as she says, “hip, hip” and the group says “hooray!”
- *Superstar* – Stand up and go down on one knee extending arms out to the side shouting “SUPERSTAR!”

Resources:

Additional Celebration Cheers:

<http://www.realclassroomideas.com/resources/Classroom+Management-Dr.+Jeans+Cheers.pdf>

Power Teaching (Chris Biffel):

www.youtube.com

<http://www.powerteachers.net/>

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