SECTION 1

Verbal Engagement Strategies

Verbal engagement strategies all involve prompts that lead to students providing a verbal response to the teacher/class. These may be in the form of a single word, a concise description, or a longer discussion. There are four key ways in which verbal engagement strategies can be used.

1. Whip around
2. Quick poll
3. Choral responding
4. Individual questioning

Whip Around

STEP INTO THE
FACE-TO-FACE CLASSROOM

Mr. Blake is a middle school teacher looking for ways to make his lessons on the Civil War more engaging for all of his students. He has noticed that students are especially slow to get back into the content each day, and he feels like he spends too much class time just trying to reset from where they left off the day before. On a typical day, students come to his class right after lunch and seem sleepy at their desks. Mr. Blake attempts to prod the students to open their books and to get the lesson moving, but he feels that the process is too slow and too cumbersome, resulting in even longer durations of downtime for students and making the reengagement even more difficult as time goes by.

STEP INTO THE
VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

Ms. Slone is an elementary school teacher whose fifth-grade government lessons are taught live online. She has no idea what her students may have been doing right before joining her online, and many seem to have their minds elsewhere, perhaps still on whatever home activity they were engaged in right before logging on. As a result, she has noticed that student attention is hit-and-miss as the lesson begins, and she spends several minutes of her instructional time trying to get everyone's attention to focus on her virtual lesson. Ms. Slone would like to more quickly engage and refocus the students on the content so that she can use her window of time more efficiently.

Image source: unsplash.com/NeONBRAND

The whip around is a great way to involve all students quickly and is a great strategy for starting out a lesson by getting everyone's attention on the topic at hand. It can be used for activities such as priming background knowledge on a subject prior to a lesson or summarizing information learned at the end of a lesson, or as a brainstorming activity.

BIG IDEA

The teacher asks a question with many possible answers and then quickly prompts every student in the room to respond. For example, the teacher may ask students to name a U.S. state, then go up and down rows asking each student to either name a state that has not been named or pass. Similarly, the teacher can ask students to name their favorite book or to state one thing they learned from a previous lesson.

Step-by-Step Directions for Use

The whip around requires only an initial explanation so that students understand the routine. It is generally used in a planned manner but can also be unplanned.

1. Teach students the whip around routine.

   • Let them know that it is okay to say "pass" or to say, "Someone else took my answer."

   • Name the routine "whip around" or something similar so that they know when the activity is about to begin.

   • Make students aware that guessing—that is, making up an answer—is okay; this is not a test.

   • Practice with students a few times so that they understand the simple procedure.

2. Plan to use the whip around at the beginning of a lesson and for review.

   • Plan for responses that are very brief or even a single word.

   • Start at different points in the room—not always with the same student going first or last.

   • Remember that the purpose is to engage students and not to stump or shame them.

3. Provide reminders to students immediately before using the strategy: "We are getting ready to do a whip around."

4. After providing the prompt, quickly point to each student in succession, keeping the responses coming to quickly move through the entire classroom.

   • If a student does not respond, remind them that they can pass.

   • If a student does not respond with even a pass, move on quickly, and speak privately to the student afterward.

CONSIDERATIONS AND DIFFERENTIATION FOR FACE-TO-FACE ENVIRONMENTS

- Remember to keep the responses simple; long responses create a lengthy downtime for most students while awaiting their turn or the end.

- Teach students with cognitive challenges or content area deficits to listen to other students for clues before responding and that it is okay to say that someone else gave your answer (or to pass).

- Present from the front of the room so that all students can see when the teacher points to them to indicate their turn.

STEP INTO THE FACE-TO-FACE CLASSROOM

When planning an upcoming unit on the Civil War, Mr. Blake decided to use the whip around strategy to prime students' background knowledge on the subject. This would not only encourage all students to participate but also allow him to formatively assess what they knew about the subject. At the beginning of class, Mr. Blake displayed the question on the board: "What do you know about the Civil War?" He asked the students to jot down one thing they knew about the Civil War and be ready to give a response aloud. His only stipulation was that it needed to be short enough to fit on a bumper sticker. After giving the students adequate wait time, Mr. Blake explained,

> We are now going to go around the room, and when I point to you, you will give your bumper sticker answer. If you do not have an answer, don't worry. All you have to do is say "pass." Okay, we'll start from the back of the room and work across.

Mr. Blake was pleased to see that most of the students participated, with only a few who "passed" instead of giving an answer. He determined that he would use the strategy again at the end of the unit to summarize what they had learned.

CONSIDERATIONS AND DIFFERENTIATION FOR VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENTS

- Remember to keep the responses simple; long responses are especially difficult in terms of holding student attention when they are watching online.

- Teach students with cognitive challenges or content area deficits to listen to other students for clues before responding and that it is okay to say that someone else gave your answer (or to pass).

- Realize that each student may see the classroom arrangement differently on their own computer, so it may not be possible to have students respond by row or in natural order. The teacher should call out student names to prompt the next response and have it appear to be random.

- It is best if the teacher has the ability to control student microphones so that they can be on mute but unmuted as the student is called on. However, this is not always possible, and in such cases the teacher must provide reminders to students about unmuting and muting as they are called on.

STEP INTO THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

Ms. Slone sees her students in a grid formation that is unique to her computer. As the class meeting begins, she welcomes the students and briefly reminds them of the daily schedule and impending due dates. She then provides a very brief overview of what they have most recently covered in class, pivoting directly to the students and asking each to think of one fact learned about the U.S. Senate. She reminds all that she will call out names randomly and that everyone has the option of passing if they are unable to think of anything different from what has already been said. She prompts all the students about unmuting and then moves to the first student: "Remember to unmute when I call on you. Sam, you're up first; what have you got for us?" Sam is familiar with the routine and is able to quickly make a statement: "There are 100 senators." She thanks him for the response and works randomly, calling students from her class list, making a checkmark by each name as they respond. "Julie, what fact did you think of?" Julie hesitates and responds with a question: "Is the fact that the vice president breaks a tie something about the Senate?" "Yes, great," Ms. Bailey responds. Afterward, she noted that one student had passed and one had an answer that was slightly off base. She determined that she would follow up individually with these students later to see if additional help might be needed.

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

One big advantage of the whip around strategy is that it engages all students individually in a very quick manner. It is especially good for getting students oriented to a lesson at the start of class or for providing an engaging review at the end of a lesson. One disadvantage is that it can be somewhat time-consuming and not something easy to use repeatedly. In addition, the whip around does not require students to think about the content as much as some other strategies. They often can get by with a simple "pass" statement or can easily recall something to say even if they did not understand it. For these reasons the whip around is generally more appropriate for social studies, humanities, and other content where open-ended questions make sense.

Quick Poll

STEP INTO THE
FACE-TO-FACE CLASSROOM

Ms. Donita is an elementary teacher planning for an upcoming mathematics lesson on the properties of quadrilaterals. She has recently been struggling with getting her students to transition from small-group reading to mathematics. She feels as if she is losing a lot of valuable time trying to get them focused. She is looking for a quick activity that she can use at the beginning of the lesson to focus the students' attention on the subject in a fun and engaging manner.

STEP INTO THE
VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

Ms. Allen is a middle school teacher preparing for an upcoming science lesson on water conservation that will be delivered online. She has found a great video on the subject that she wants to use but is unsure how she could engage all of her students in a discussion afterward. During traditional instruction, she would facilitate a class discussion, but that has not been successful in the online environment. She feels that many students are not actively engaged in her online lessons.

Similar to the whip around strategy, the quick poll is a great way to actively engage all students individually in a quick and efficient manner. It can be used for activities such as priming background knowledge on a subject prior to a lesson or summarizing information learned at the end of a lesson, or as a brainstorming activity.

BIG IDEA

The teacher poses a question or prompt that has many possible answers and then "polls" the classroom by randomly calling on students, writing their answers on the board, and asking if others had the same answer. This process will continue until all student answers are given. Although not all students will verbally state an answer, they will need to be actively listening to the other students' responses. This strategy is useful across all grade levels and content areas.

Step-by-Step Directions for Use

Quick poll requires minimal teacher preparation. Although this strategy can be used in both a planned and an unplanned manner, preplanning the questions/prompts to be given to students is suggested. Questions/prompts can be delivered before, during, and after the lesson. Although no student materials are required, a writing instrument (e.g., pencil, pen, dry-erase marker) and writing surface (e.g., paper, response slate) may be used to write down responses.

1. Stop at a predetermined time in the lesson, and introduce the quick poll procedures.
   - Initially, explicitly teach and model the step-by-step process as well as expectations.
   - As students become familiar with the process, briefly review procedures and expectations.
2. Present students with a prompt/question.
3. After presenting the question/prompt, tell students how much time they will have to think of a response.
   - Although the length of wait time will depend on the question prompt given and the age of the student, three to four minutes is suggested.
   - Provide clear and consistent cues for how much time is available. This can include using a visual timer or verbally stating increments of time (e.g., "You have one more minute to finish your thought").
4. Monitor students as they write their responses, and provide assistance when needed.
5. Randomly call on three to four students, and write their answers on the board.
6. Read each answer, ask the students with the same answer to raise their hand, and record the number of students next to the answer.
7. Ask the students with responses that are not written on the board to raise their hand, and record these responses on the board.
8. Once all the responses are recorded, facilitate a whole-group discussion on the responses.
9. Provide specific feedback related to both the content of the responses and participation in the quick poll procedure.

CONSIDERATIONS AND DIFFERENTIATION FOR FACE-TO-FACE ENVIRONMENTS

- Remember to keep responses short and simple; longer responses will increase the downtime for most students while awaiting their turn or the end.

- Consider having students write their responses down or choose from a list of choices to increase the pace of the activity.

- Consider interspersing questions throughout to have students clarify their response, justify their thinking, or compare their response with those of others.

- Consider explicitly teaching students how to be effective listeners and speakers. This may include instruction on turn taking, speaking clearly, and appropriate feedback.

- Consider using visuals such as anchor charts to initially teach the strategy and later as a reminder for students.

- Provide assistance to students who have difficulties with processing information.

STEP INTO THE FACE-TO-FACE CLASSROOM

In an effort to immediately focus her students' attention on the mathematics lesson after small-group reading, Ms. Donita decided to use the quick poll strategy for students to identify quadrilaterals in the classroom. The first step in planning for the activity was to write down the prompt "Find a closed shape that has four straight sides" on chart paper, along with a few visual examples.

When the small-group reading time ended, Ms. Donita displayed the chart paper with the prompt and asked the students to look around the classroom as they transitioned back to their desks and find a closed shape that had four straight sides. She asked the students not to share what they found with the others. To provide additional support, she pointed to each example she had written on the chart paper and explicitly explained why it was an example.

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To start the lesson, Ms. Donita asked for all students to give her a thumbs up if they had found a closed shape that had four sides. Once she saw that all students had their thumbs up, she then randomly selected one student to share their response. When the student replied, "My book," Ms. Donita replied, "Yes, a book has four straight sides. Good job!" and wrote the word book on a blank sheet of chart paper. She then prompted four more students to give their responses and wrote each of the responses on the chart paper. The chart paper included the following responses: book, paper, calendar, tile, and door. She then asked if any students had a similar response for each. For example, she said, "Raise your hand if you also had 'book' as your answer." Four students raised their hands, and Ms. Donita put a 5 next to the word book. She continued this process for the remaining four words. Finally, she asked the students to raise their hand if they had responses that were not written on the board. Four students raised their hand, and she added their responses to the chart paper.

To wrap up the activity, Ms. Donita briefly reviewed the properties of the shapes again and explained that these shapes are called quadri-laterals. Looking around at the students, she could see that all the students were engaged in the lesson.

Image source: https://unsplash.com/@kellysikkema

CONSIDERATIONS AND DIFFERENTIATION FOR VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENTS

- Remember to keep the responses short and simple. Shorter responses will increase the pacing, which is important in the virtual environment.

- Consider interspersing questions throughout to have students clarify their response, justify their thinking, or compare their response with those of others.

- Consider combining this strategy with the colored choice response card strategy (see Section 2), where students will show a specific color if they have the same answer as the one given (e.g., a green card), a different color if their answer has already been written down (e.g., blue), and another color if their answer has not yet been given (e.g., red).

- Consider using a classroom response system that will allow you to poll students, or create a word cloud.

STEP INTO THE
VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

Ms. Allen decided to use the quick poll strategy to quickly and efficiently assess student comprehension of the video. In preparation for the lesson, she typed the following prompt on a word document: "In one to two words, name one way we use water."

During the lesson, Ms. Allen showed the three- to five-minute video to the students. After the video, she displayed the prompt on the computer screen and said,

> Now I am going to ask you to think of one way we can use water. Remember, your response should only be one to two words. When you have your answer, I want you to hold up your green response card.

When Ms. Allen noticed that all the students were displaying their green cards, she then randomly selected five students to share their response. She typed the following responses on the word document: to drink, to grow food, to cook, to clean, and to water grass. She then asked for any students having similar responses to raise their green response card. For example, she said, "Raise your green card if you also had 'to drink' as your answer." Ten students raised their green cards, and Ms. Donita typed a 10 next to "to drink." She continued this process for the remaining four words. Finally, she asked the students to raise their green card if they had responses that were not given. Two students raised their green cards, and she added their responses to the word document.

Ms. Allen wrapped up the activity by reviewing the ways in which people use water and transitioned into topics of water sustainability and the environmental issues introduced in the video. Overall, she was pleased to see how this activity helped students to be actively engaged while also allowing her to quickly assess student comprehension.

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

One big advantage of the quick poll is that it engages all students individually in a very quick and efficient manner. Although not all students will verbally state an answer, they will need to be actively listening to the other students' responses. One disadvantage is that it can be somewhat time-consuming and not something you would implement on a consistent basis. In addition, students whose answers are already listed might become disengaged while other students are giving their responses.

Choral Responding

**STEP INTO THE
FACE-TO-FACE CLASSROOM**

Ms. Naher is an upper-elementary resource teacher. In one of her co-taught classrooms, she works with a small group of students who are working to master basic math facts. While she knows that continued instruction on these facts is necessary, she is also under pressure to move through the standards-based content to fractions. She is looking to find a quick way to cover math facts while continuing to introduce new content on fractions.

**STEP INTO THE
VIRTUAL CLASSROOM**

Mr. Orr teaches a Drivers' Education class online to 14- and 15-year-old students who are preparing to apply for learners' permits. He enjoys the engaging conversations that he is able to generate with the students, but he is also aware that there are some very basic facts they will have to master if they are to pass their permit examinations. Mr. Orr wants to provide some repetitive practice for these facts but is afraid of losing student interest if the pace of the lesson is too slow.

Choral responding is simply verbal responses provided simultaneously as a group of students. While this strategy is often believed to be used only in very structured small-group direct-instruction lessons, the application is much broader.

Image source: unsplash.com/JeswinThomas

BIG IDEA

Choral responding involves a teacher query delivered to a group or full classroom, with the response by the group being in a simultaneous chorus, often signaled by a teacher prompt. For example, the teacher reminds the class that they need to check their answers in order to be finished with a mathematics problem, then asks, "So everyone, a mathematics problem is not done until you have what?" The teacher then points to the group, and they simultaneously respond, "Checked our answer." Similarly, the teacher can ask a small group of students, "What word do we use when we want to ask someone for something politely?" The students then respond in unison, "Please."

Step-by-Step Directions for Use

Choral responding requires an initial explanation and then frequent practice to keep the responses coming in unison. In addition, teacher prompts are likely necessary to facilitate tight choral responding.

1. Teach students the choral responding routine.
   - Specifically, teach both the signal and the desired response format.
   - Practice with students a few times so that they understand the simple procedure.

2. Plan to use choral responding to help students focus on important concepts that need to be fresh on their mind.
   - Use choral responding repetitively to help students commit concepts to memory.
   - Use choral responding in an unplanned manner to keep students focused on the lesson topic.

3. Provide reminders to students immediately preceding the use of this strategy: "We're getting ready to do a choral response."

4. After providing the question or request, demonstrate in some manner that you are about to provide a signal.
   - The signal can be verbal: "So it is called a what?"
   - The signal can be a hand gesture, a nod, or other physical prompt.

5. Observe the student responses, and make note of those who did not respond or responded incorrectly.

CONSIDERATIONS AND DIFFERENTIATION FOR FACE-TO-FACE ENVIRONMENTS

- Remember to keep the desired responses simple and succinct.

- Consider pairing students with cognitive deficits with a peer tutor who can help with appropriate responding in these instances.

- Present from the front of the room so that all students can see the teacher's prompt.

- When errors are heard, it may be appropriate to first repeat the correct answer aloud, explain why it is correct, and then immediately repeat the choral response activity.

STEP INTO THE FACE-TO-FACE CLASSROOM

Ms. Naher decides to incorporate choral response into her daily lessons. She explains to the students that she will pose a question and give them time to think. She tells them to wait for her signal "Everyone?" before responding in unison. Ms. Naher practices with the students by asking them questions like "What time does the bell ring to go home?" She praises them for waiting and responding in unison. She begins the lesson on fractions, embedding questions on math facts when appropriate. As she explains adding the numerators of the fractions, she provides her first choral response: "I need to add the numerators 4 and 6. What is 4 + 6? . . . Everyone?" The students respond "10" in unison. Ms. Naher quickly provides behavior-specific praise for waiting and feedback that their answer is correct. She then provides two more quick opportunities to respond. She is pleased that all of the students remain engaged and provide responses.

CONSIDERATIONS AND DIFFERENTIATION FOR VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENTS

- Remember to keep the desired responses simple and succinct.

- Consider providing fact sheets or other cues for students with cognitive deficits or other students who have difficulty with quick recall.

- Present from the front of the room so that all students can see the teacher's prompt.

- When errors are heard, it may be appropriate to first repeat the correct answer aloud, explain why it is correct, and then immediately repeat the choral response activity.

- It is best if the teacher has the ability to control student microphones so that they can be unmuted as a group prior to each choral response. However, this is not always possible, and in such cases the teacher must provide reminders to students about unmuting prior to each choral response.

STEP INTO THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

Mr. Orr decides to use choral responding with his online Drivers' Education class. As he continues leading students through the drivers' manual and covering new material, he finds multiple opportunities to remind them of key facts. For example, as the lesson content turns to adjustments for hazardous conditions, Mr. Orr uses a quick choral response regarding the position of hands on the steering wheel. "Let's do a quick choral response, unmute yourself; it is especially important to do this under hazardous conditions, but what position should your hands be on the wheel at all times?" Mr. Orr looks directly into his computer camera and points his finger as a signal, on which the entire class responds in unison, "2 and 10." Mr. Orr replies with a strong "Yes!" and continues into the lesson on hazardous road conditions. With each new content area, Mr. Orr finds it easy to sneak in opportunities for choral responding to key facts from previous chapters in the manual.

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

One big advantage of choral responding is that it is very quick and easy to use in an unplanned manner. Oftentimes a teacher may realize that some particular fact or concept is

difficult for students to remember. In these instances, providing multiple opportunities to chorally respond can help build the repetition necessary for maintaining this critical knowledge. The disadvantage is that the types of responses are limited to what can be provided verbally in a quick word or phrase. Choral responding is not appropriate for longer answers or deep open-ended questions. Some online classroom platforms may not allow more than one student at a time to respond. In these cases choral responding is not possible, and nonverbal responses may be an appropriate alternative for accessing quick group responses.

Individual Questioning Strategies For Student Response

STEP INTO THE
FACE-TO-FACE CLASSROOM

Mr. Martinez is an early-elementary school teacher wanting to keep students engaged during a small-group reading lesson in which they are reviewing the skills needed for identifying key ideas, settings, and characters from a story. He is concerned that his typical use of choral responding and whip around are not providing him with enough information about individual student progress and he has very little individual interaction. Mr. Martinez is looking for a way to engage students in a more individualized manner along with his group strategies.

STEP INTO THE
VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

Ms. Bailey is a high school music teacher who is teaching an online course on music theory. The content for this course is challenging, and she regularly provides opportunities for group responding to keep the students engaged. However, she thinks that some of her students may simply be moving their lips without actually responding and may be appearing to be engaged while actually not understanding. She would like to get more individual responses but does not want to put students on the spot or embarrass anyone. Ms. Bailey is looking for ways to have individual engagement with students to make sure they are following the lesson, but without raising the stress level in some of her more anxious students.

Individual questioning techniques are perhaps the most common engagement strategy used by teachers. Questions are common because they are easy to use—on a whim we can just blurt them out as we go. While everyone is familiar with questioning, consideration of some basic principles can make this strategy as effective as it is easy to use.

Image source: unsplash.com/@nci

BIG IDEA

Individual students respond to teacher queries verbally by providing a factual response to a very specific question or stating an opinion to a more open-ended question. These questions can be simple or complex and can be focused on academics, behavior, or any topic of choice. For example, the teacher may ask a student to answer a simple question: "Sandy, what's the capital of Oregon?" Or the teacher may make this more complex by asking, "Sandy, how did Oregon decide where to put their capital?" Similarly, the teacher may ask a student to state an opinion simply by asking, "Stan, do you agree that level zero is the right voice level in the hall?" Or in a more complex manner the teacher may ask, "Stan, why do you think it's important for us to use a level-zero voice in the hall?" Note that in each case the question is directed to a specific student and not to the group at large.

Step-by-Step Directions for Use

While questioning can be used in a planned or unplanned manner, to be most effective, questioning requires more planning and forethought than one might think. Importantly, questioning by itself is not recommended as the sole manner of engaging students. First, it's hard to get high rates of responding across the classroom when queries are targeted only to individual students. Second, questioning can be slow while the teacher waits for an individual student to respond and then

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potentially can take longer if the student's response requires correction. Unplanned individual questioning, on the other hand, can be implemented at any time just to keep the pace of instruction going. Regardless of the type of individual questioning strategy being used, it is important to remember that the purpose of this questioning is engagement more than evaluation. As such, the goal is to ask questions that can be correctly answered by students during 80% to 90% of trials.

1. Think ahead as to what questions will be most useful in driving instruction.

   - Create a mix of simple and complex questions.

   - Create a mix of closed- and open-ended questions.

   - Write down your questions so that you can refer to them at the right point during the lesson.

2. Start with questions for review.

   - Begin with questions delivered to the group, asking for volunteers and calling on someone who raises a hand.

   - Move toward questions that are directed at specific students.

   - Ask specific students to answer questions about what they already know.

   - As this strategy is used to kick off the lesson, keep the questions simple to keep it moving.

   - Find students who are sometimes reluctant to engage, and ask very basic questions that you believe can be answered correctly—this creates momentum.

3. As new content is introduced, use very simple and concrete individual questions to build momentum before moving to more complex questions.

   - Refer to lesson plans regarding when and what questions are appropriate during the lesson.

   - Ask no more than one individual question for every five OTRs provided to the group.

   - Avoid asking complex questions of students who you believe have anxiety with answering in front of the group.

4. Immediately correct the errors in responses.

   - As a rule of thumb, the teacher should be the one who delivers the corrections.

   - Avoid protracted correction of an individual student's errors in front of the class.

   - Deliver correction in a positive manner, prompting the student to get the correct answer.

CONSIDERATIONS AND DIFFERENTIATION FOR FACE-TO-FACE ENVIRONMENTS

- Use unplanned individual questions for the student who is engaged and attending but makes off-task comments.
  - Think of these students as being off task *within the lesson*, and take advantage of the fact that they are still attending.
  - Use off-task comments as an invitation to ask a relevant question—not as a punishment but one that can be easily answered to bring the student back to task.
- Questions to the group for volunteers and to specific individuals can be mixed, but questions to the group can be used to get an idea of what content might be more challenging (fewer hands raised).
- Teach students with cognitive challenges or content area deficits that it is okay to pass or to say, "I don't know."
  - Avoid singling out students with severe anxiety and those with more pronounced deficits, as questioning in this manner may be punitive.
- Move about the room while using individual questions so that interaction is more personal rather than always from the teacher at the front of the room.

STEP INTO THE FACE-TO-FACE CLASSROOM

Mr. Martinez explains to the students that he will read a small section of a story and then pause and ask some questions, so they should be ready. He has thought ahead of time about which students might be the best recipients for specific questions and which students might be best for answering the follow-up "Is that right?" questions. For example, he knows that Preston is a bright student but does not like to be put on the spot in front of

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the class. While reading the first section of the story, a girl named Sarah is identified as the main character in the story, and the story is set in the mountains of Colorado. After reading the first section, Mr. Martinez calls on an individual student, Thomas, who is widely considered to be among the brightest in the room. "Thomas, when I snap my fingers, I want you to tell me the name of the main character in the story." After waiting a few seconds, he snaps his fingers while making eye contact with Thomas. Thomas replies verbally saying, "Sarah." He immediately turns to Preston and asks, "Thomas says 'Sarah'; Preston, do you agree?" Preston replies, "Yes." Mr. Martinez provides both students with verbal praise for the correct response. Mr. Martinez then follows up by asking another student about the setting of the story, following the same procedure. In this manner Mr. Martinez is able to get Preston to be individually engaged and receive public praise for his engagement.

CONSIDERATIONS AND DIFFERENTIATION FOR VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENTS

- Use unplanned individual questions for the student who does not appear to be attending to his or her computer.

   - Use off-task student comments as an invitation to ask a relevant question—not as a punishment but one that can be easily answered to bring the student back to task.

- Questions to the group for volunteers and to specific individuals can be mixed, but questions to the group can be used to get an idea of what content might be more challenging (fewer responses).

- Teach students with cognitive challenges or content area deficits that it is okay to pass or to say, "I don't know."

   - Avoid singling out students with severe anxiety and those with more pronounced deficits, as questioning in this manner may be punitive.

   - Remember that the purpose of individual questions is more about engagement than assessment—although there is always some degree of assessment possible.

- Be thoughtful in terms of who is asked to answer individually, and make it random so that it does not appear that you are calling on favorites or picking on anyone.

- Remember that students very likely will have their microphones muted and when called on will begin answering without sound. It's a good idea to always provide a visual or auditory prompt about unmuting when asking questions.

STEP INTO THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

Ms. Bailey continues to use choral responding and some cued retell with her students as she reviews content on the 12 keys of music. She begins asking for volunteers to answer more specific questions: "Who can tell me what the black keys on a piano play? Raise your hand if you remember. I see a few hands. How about Robert? Please unmute yourself, and tell us what your answer is." Robert responds, "The flat and sharp notes." Ms. Bailey quickly provides praise and then goes to a student, Angie, in whom she has less confidence. However, Ms. Bailey knows that Angie has already heard part of the answer, so there is a much better chance that she will be correct. "Angie, if it's true that the black keys play the flat and sharp notes, which notes are played by the white keys on a piano? Remember to unmute." Angie unmutes and responds, "The natural notes." This is correct, and Ms. Bailey provides Angie with praise: "Very good, Angie, you are correct, and you were right on top of the question." Ms. Bailey now has had an individual interaction with Angie, has engaged Angie, and has had an opportunity to provide her with praise.

Image source: https://unsplash.com/@thomascpark

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

Of course, the big advantage of individual questioning is that the teacher can get a very strong engagement one-on-one with a student. There is also an opportunity for a personal interaction with the student, providing an opportunity for the teacher to initiate a positive relationship. While the purpose is engagement, there is also the possibility of getting an index of a student's knowledge or understanding of the lesson. Despite these advantages, the disadvantages related to individual questioning are perhaps greater than with any other engagement strategy. First, as has been noted, individual questioning is slow. In a class with larger numbers of students individual questioning as the sole strategy would likely mean that each student gets only one chance to respond during class. Thus, this strategy is best used sparingly and interspersed with other strategies allowing for higher rates of student response. Second, individual questioning puts students on the spot in front of their peers. While some students do not mind this, others may have extreme anxiety over such potential embarrassment. In such circumstances this strategy may actually cause students to be less engaged or even to defy the teacher's query out of fear. It is important to both use these individual questions in a measured manner and be thoughtful about how specific students may respond. Remember, the primary purpose of the individual question as an OTR is to engage students, not to evaluate them.