



Save Time Accomplish More

A Professional Development
Steering Committee Project

ONTARIO ENGLISH
**Catholic
Teachers**
ASSOCIATION

Save Time – Accomplish More

Strategies for increasing student engagement and collaborative learning in your classroom

Why was this document created?

This work has been created to make it easier for teachers to implement a variety of engagement and collaborative learning strategies to improve student learning.

Who is the document written for?

The document is written for new and veteran teachers wishing to further develop collaborative learning within their classrooms.

What is a facilitation strategy?

A facilitation strategy is a process that assists the teacher to help students learn and get work done in a collegial and purposeful way. An effective facilitation strategy can make learning easier. Using sequential steps that require explicit instruction and a check for understanding, students are more likely to be engaged in discussions, activities and collaborative learning in the classroom.

Why was this sample of facilitation strategies selected?

One document could not possibly detail the abundant number of effective strategies available. Therefore, for introductory purposes, twelve strategies have been highlighted. For example, within the document there are six student engagement strategies, four information processing strategies, one strategy for decision making and one strategy for inclusion. The engagement strategies are used to help students focus their attention. Information processing strategies are used to help the student deepen their understanding of processes and concepts. The decision making strategy helps the students to make group choices. Finally, the inclusion strategy helps students to feel they belong and get prepared emotionally for learning.

How does a teacher use this resource?

The facilitation strategies are not in any particular order. It is suggested that they are selected and used in a way that the teacher thinks is best.

In July 2007, OECTA held a two-day Summer Institute lead by Robert Garmston, author of *The Adaptive School, A Sourcebook for Developing Collaborative Groups*. During this Institute, we were provided with a set of practical adult group facilitation skills and strategies for developing collective understanding, making decisions, saving time, planning for accomplishment and developing high performance groups.

The success of this Institute led to OECTA's continued relationship with Robert Garmston over the next few years. We were involved in the making of a set of instructional videos designed to help teachers learn and develop the skills of dialogue and discussion. The instructional videos also provide a number of facilitation strategies that can be used in facilitating groups and delivering workshops.

We have been using these facilitation strategies in adult workshops and meetings and felt that they could be adapted for use in the classroom with students. In January 2011, we participated in an action research project and used these strategies in a variety of classroom settings. We have chosen 12 facilitation strategies for this booklet and have described how they can be used in the classroom by teachers to enhance student learning and engagement.

We hope that you will find these strategies helpful for use in the classroom and will adapt them to suit your grade level and students' needs.

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2012

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FACILITATOR MOVES

Airplane Stacking

Description:

Airplane Stacking is a strategy that allows students to share ideas and information in a time friendly manner. This strategy encourages students to take turns and listen to their peers when they are speaking. Using the metaphor of a busy airport, the air traffic controller (teacher) selects airplanes (students) to land (share information). Students are less likely to become anxious or restless as they know when or if they will be called upon to share or speak. This enables them to hear many responses in a short amount of time.

Steps/Process:

- The air traffic controller (teacher) explains the airport metaphor
- During discussion, planes (students) with raised hands wishing to speak, are numbered
- The air traffic controller calls upon planes to land (share) in order of their numbering
- The teacher avoids commenting on the planes' responses
- The air traffic controller records questions as they are posed for later discussion
- If time permits, the air traffic controller calls upon more planes to land

Variations:

- Students may assume the role of air traffic controller
- An alternate metaphor can be created which is appropriate for your location (eg. buses at a terminal, cars in a parking lot etc.)

Closing the Window

Description:

The Closing the Window strategy provides a visual cue to students indicating that the teacher is ready to end a discussion. This technique supports visual learners and helps to end a discussion in a calm manner providing a cue to students that the discussion or activity is coming to an end. Students learn to use the time remaining in the discussion effectively.

Steps/Process:

- The teacher holds up their hands shoulder distance apart indicating how much time is left (“We have this much time left for the discussion.”)
- The teacher then moves their hands together showing that time is decreasing
- The teacher scans the group, checking for students who want to speak
- The teacher freezes their hands while students respond
- When the teacher's hands meet, students know that the time for the discussion is over

Variations:

- The teacher may move their hands slowly or quickly depending on the time required
- This strategy can be used to end any task

Minute Finger

Description:

Minute Finger is a time management strategy used by the teacher to estimate the time required by groups to complete an activity. Students mutually agree upon the amount of time still needed to complete their activity. It is used when some groups are finishing their activity before others. It can also be used when a teacher has overestimated or underestimated the amount of time required for an activity. This strategy reinforces the notion that each small group is responsible to the whole group.

Steps/Process:

- When students are near task or activity completion, have the whole group pause
- The group members need to decide, using a range of 0 to 5 minutes, how much time they still need to complete their task
- Have a spokesperson from each group show the number of minutes still needed by using their fingers as the counter (e.g., a closed fist means 0 minutes, 1 finger means one minute, two fingers means two minutes etc.)
- The teacher announces the number of minutes that each group has chosen.
- The teacher calculates an average to determine the most appropriate time still needed, taking into consideration individual or group needs.
- The teacher informs the students of the time remaining for the class to complete the task and enforces the time limit

Variations:

- The teacher may adjust the range of minutes. For example, students could choose between a range of five and ten minutes.
- The teacher may ask students how much time they need to complete their assignment without providing a range.

Process As Given/Process As Understood

Description:

This strategy is used to provide detailed instructions on the processes to be used by students before starting an activity. This strategy allows the teacher to check for understanding of the instructions to be followed in a respectful manner. The teacher takes responsibility for any misunderstandings that the students may have. This process uses the mediums of space, voice and language.

Steps/Process:

- With a credible voice, the teacher gives directions or describes the processes that the students will be using (e.g. Brainstorming)
- The teacher pauses, and breaks eye contact then moves to a new space (e.g. one step to the left)
- Using an approachable voice, ask the students if you (the teacher) have given them clear instructions. Say, “Just to be sure that I have explained clearly, what are you about to do?”

Variations:

- The teacher can ask specific questions to elicit student understanding of the directions (eg. Ask what is to be done first, next, etc.)
- The students can check in with each other or with their group members to clarify understanding

Show Don't Say

Description:

Show Don't Say is a time management strategy used by the teacher to assist students in monitoring their time as they complete a task. The teacher provides a visual and verbal cue showing the students how many minutes are left for an activity. It can be used in all learning environments, especially for transitions.

Steps/Process:

- When the time for an activity is coming to an end, the teacher prompts the students by holding up the appropriate number of fingers and saying, "You have this many minutes left to complete this activity."
- The students turn their attention to the teacher when they hear the prompt
- The teacher holds the pose until all students have seen the number of fingers raised showing how much time is remaining for the activity and they have returned to the task at hand
- The teacher enforces the time limit given

Variations:

- When using a chart or other visual focus, the teacher stands to create a triangle between themselves, the chart and the students. Swinging their arm, the teacher points to the chart and is silent, focusing attention to the information that is displayed

Visual Paragraph

Description:

Visual Paragraphing is a focusing strategy which uses movement to reinforce the delivery of instructions by the teacher. By physically moving with each piece of information delivered, the teacher provides visual /spatial learners with a “space” to store and access information. Each time a new step or instruction is provided the teacher physically moves to a new space. This strategy helps students to understand the instructions and required content more easily.

Steps/Process:

- The teacher stands in one spot giving one step or instruction to the students
- The teacher moves one step to the left when it is time to give the next step or instruction
- The teacher pauses before moving to the next step
- The teacher continues the process until all steps or instructions have been given

Variations:

- If a question is asked about a step or instruction given, the teacher moves back to the spot where it was first introduced
- This strategy can be used to summarize or highlight key learning in a lesson

INFORMATION PROCESSING

3, 2, 1

Description:

This strategy is designed to help students in their recall of previous knowledge and information. This scaffolding of information precedes additional learning on a current topic. This enables students to consolidate their previous learning from a series of lessons on a specific topic.

Steps/Process:

- Students are asked to work individually to record the following:
 - three (3) key ideas from their past learning
 - two (2) questions they still have or areas they want to explore
 - one (1) idea or point they are still considering or pondering
- Students share this recorded information in a small group and prepare to report to the full group

Variations:

- Sharing can be with a partner, small group or the whole class
- The teacher can reduce the number of items per category to accommodate individual and group needs
- This strategy can be used as a quick assessment strategy to check for student understanding of a topic or concept. On a slip of paper, students are asked to record three (3) things they have learned or have a better understanding of, two (2) connections they are making to prior learning or knowledge and one (1) question or clarification that they still have. The teacher can use this information to inform their planning

AB Each Teach

Description:

AB Each Teach is a shared reading strategy which allows students to access new information or consolidate learning. This strategy encourages collaboration between students as they teach each other. In addition, this strategy reduces the amount of time needed to cover material and allows for the use of a variety of levelled texts.

Steps/Process:

- Have students identify which student will be partner A and partner B
- The teacher assigns a passage for each partner to read
- The partners read their assigned passage and highlight important information and ideas to be shared with their partner
- Partner A shares their passage with partner B
- Partner B seeks clarification on the information presented by Partner B
- Partners reverse roles and repeat the steps above
- Finally, partners summarize their key learning of the passages read

Variations:

- Partner selection can be done by the teacher or students
- This allows for use of levelled text selections for mixed ability groupings
- partners can join with another pair for larger group summaries
- summaries can be verbal or written (charted, ranked lists, poster etc.)

First Word/Last Word

Description:

First Word/Last Word is a strategy used to engage a group in deep dialogue after reading an article, book or other written passage. Everyone in the group is given an opportunity to share their thoughts and to explore ideas, assumptions and points of view. This strategy encourages students to equally participate in the conversation and helps to retain a focus on the person speaking. It is important that there is no cross talk to keep the group on topic and respect the person speaking.

Steps/Process:

- The teacher forms groups (four to eight students is ideal)
- The teacher assigns a portion of text to be read by all students in the group
- While reading the text, have students highlight three or four important points to share with the group
- To begin, one student has the “first word” by sharing one of their important points with the group, without commenting on it
- In a round robin fashion, each student in the group comments on the point provided, without any cross talk between group members
- Once everyone has had a turn comment, the initial student who provided their important point, shares their thinking and has the “last word”
- Repeat this process for each student in the group

Variations:

- Students can be assigned their reading prior to the group session. Prior to the sharing session, provide a few minutes for students to review their important points

Four Corners

Description:

Four Corners is a strategy which allows students to share their points of view and to identify commonalities and differences in their perspectives with other students. Students are asked to engage in conversation with each other in their chosen corner and to justify their opinions. This strategy engages the kinesthetic learner as they move around the classroom.

Steps/Process:

- The teacher posts a perspective is posted for all students to view
- The teacher checks for student understanding of the posted perspective
- The teacher places signs showing the different positions in the corners of the room
- The students move to the corner that best represents their opinion
- The students share ideas, opinions and experiences with others who have chosen the same corner and give reasons to justify their position
- A selected spokesperson reports back to the whole group.

Variations:

- The report can be verbal or written
- The teacher can vary the number of corners
- The questions and statements can be posted in corners for further discussion

DECISION MAKING

Forced Choice Stickers

Description:

Forced Choice Stickers is a strategy that allows every student to contribute to making a group decision. Students are given the opportunity to offer options to be voted upon by the group. This democratic strategy eliminates peer pressure. It teaches students that each vote can make a difference.

Steps/Process:

- The teacher posts a question requiring a decision on chart paper for all students to view
- The teacher checks to make sure that students understand the question
- The teacher charts all student options
- The teacher allows the students to review the options and ask for clarification on any they don't understand
- The clarification is given by the student who provided the option
- The teacher needs to refrain from conversation that would influence students' choices
- The students are given three stickers
- The students place their stickers beside their top 3 choices
- The stickers are counted and a decision is made

Variations:

- This strategy can be used with a variety of group sizes
- The students can be provided with a varied number of stickers
- This strategy can be used to create a prioritized list based on numerical data. The process can be repeated with fresh stickers
- Try not to have a conversation before the vote. It can persuade an outcome

INCLUSION

Grounding

Description:

Grounding is an inclusion activity that helps set group norms for listening respectfully. It helps focus students in the present and allows for every voice to be heard while allowing students to make connections with each other. Topic ideas can range from, "My name is ..., What I know about this topic is ..., What I hope to learn..., How I feel about being here..., My plan is ...," etc.

Steps/Process:

- The teacher creates groups of 4-8 students
- The teacher provides a conversation starter topic(s) on chart paper or on the black board
- One student in the group is chosen to be the summarizer
- In round robin fashion, allow each student in the group to speak to the topic until everyone has had a turn
- While each student is speaking, the other students listen with full attention and no cross talk
- The summarizer sums up the group's ideas/comments

Variations:

- The teacher can vary the group size depending on topic and students
- This strategy can be used for hard to discuss topics. With no cross talk, students need to listen to each other
- A variety of methods can be used to choose the summarizer (closest birthday, youngest in the class)
- Provide paper for the summarizer to take notes
- Allow the summarizer to choose a helper

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