

(Q) Question, (S) Signal, (S) Stem, (S) Share, (A) Asses

(Q) Question:

First, the teacher asks the class a question related to a concept. Asking open-ended questions- usually beginning with How or Why- helps ensure that student conversation is rich and significant.

Examples:

- How is a presidential system different from a parliamentary system?
- How can you determine if a chemical equation is balanced?
- Why is it important to use the order of operations?
- In this article, how does the author's word choice impact his message?

(S) Signal:

Instead of calling on students who raise their hands or shout out, the teacher asks all students to give a signal when they are ready to answer the question. Asking for students to give a signal accomplishes two goals. First, it builds in "thinking time" for everyone. Second, it communicates a clear expectation for everyone to participate-by signaling- instead of just the few "high flyers" who normally contribute.

Examples:

- When you're ready give me a "thumbs up".
- Jot down your answer and then put your pen down.
- Think about the question. Show me a fist if you think you have an answer. Show an open palm if you are not sure of the answer.

(S) Share:

Now that students have thought about their responses and have a sentence stem to get them started, they are ready to talk. The teacher determines with whom they share their response. The most critical feature of sharing, however, is that ALL students participate. It is not realistic or effective to call on each student individually, so sharing takes the shape of students talking to each other. Everyone answers the question with his or her pre-assigned partner, triad, or group.

Examples:

- Turn and tell your shoulder partner your answer.
- Share your responses at your table, beginning with the tallest person.

- Explain your thinking to your two lab partners.

(A) Assess:

After all students share with their partners or groups, the teacher randomly selects the student(s) to answer the question aloud for the entire class. The goal of this step is twofold: formative assessment and student accountability. When the teacher hears the responses of randomly selected students, he/she can accurately assess the classes' understanding of the concepts. If the responses are not on target, the teacher can adjust the lesson immediately to move in the right direction. In addition to gaining an authentic check for understanding, randomly selecting students builds accountability. It ensures that students stay on task because they have to share with others. When students do not know when or if they will be called upon, they are inclined to actually do the thinking and talking as assigned. In other words, they will be prepared to respond during random selection.

Examples:

- Using an app that allows the teacher to enter all students' names at the beginning of the year, the app chooses Ashley Smith. The teacher says: Ashley, you can share your response...or one that you heard in your group. What was the impact of the 15th amendment?
- If your birthday is in the summer, please stand up. You will be the one to explain your group response.
- Okay, who has the number 12 on his/her desk?
- Frank, please draw a name from the cup to see who will answer the question.