

6

Critical Teaching Skills for Promoting Active Participation

INTASC Standard #8: Instructional Strategies

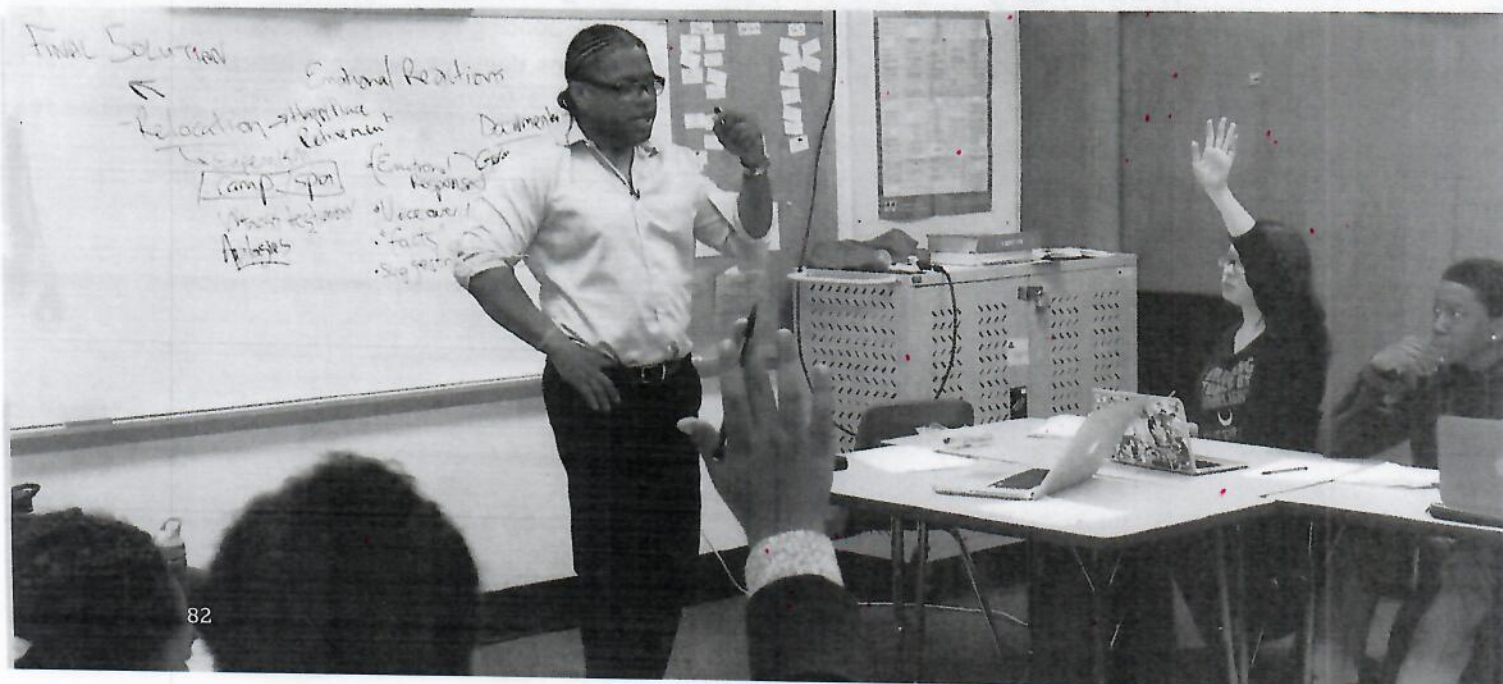
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- 6-1 Define and describe the characteristics of active participation.
- 6-2 Explain the importance of using active participation strategies.
- 6-3 Describe the various types of active participation strategies.
- 6-4 Give examples of involvement strategies, rehearsal strategies, and processing strategies.
- 6-5 Outline ways to respond to skill, cultural, and linguistic diversity when planning for active participation.
- 6-6 Explain how to decide on the number of active participation strategies to include in a lesson or activity.
- 6-7 Describe how and why to teach active participation response strategies.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

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| 6-1 ACTIVE PARTICIPATION DEFINED | 6-5 RESPONDING TO DIVERSITY WHEN PLANNING FOR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION |
| 6-2 IMPORTANCE OF ACTIVE PARTICIPATION | 6-5a Responding to Skill Diversity |
| 6-3 TYPES OF ACTIVE PARTICIPATION STRATEGIES | 6-5b Responding to Cultural Diversity |
| 6-4 EXAMPLES OF ACTIVE PARTICIPATION STRATEGIES | 6-5c Responding to English Language Learners |
| 6-4a Involvement Strategies | 6-6 NUMBER OF STRATEGIES TO INCLUDE |
| 6-4b Rehearsal Strategies | 6-7 TEACHING ACTIVE PARTICIPATION RESPONSE STRATEGIES |
| 6-4c Processing Strategies | |



Introduction

Finding ways to actively involve students during presentations is a critical teaching skill. Most lessons and activities eventually involve all students in active practice or processing of some sort. However, it is very important that teachers provide students with opportunities to actively respond right from the start. Involving students through the use of active participation strategies is an essential aspect of quality instruction and an

important primary prevention (tier 1) intervention within the response to intervention (RTI) framework. In fact, it is an important component of interventions used at every RTI level. This chapter contains many strategy ideas that teachers can use when planning diversity responsive methods to keep students engaged. They also provide an important opportunity for differentiation.

6-1 Active Participation Defined

Active participation is also called *active student responding* (Salend 2011) or *active student engagement* (Cohen and Spenciner 2009). **Active participation strategies**, planned by the teacher, are directly related to the content of the lesson or activity, ask for overt responses made by all students at once, and are requested frequently during presentations. As you will see, we define *active participation* very specifically. Each characteristic is displayed in Figure 6.1 and defined as follows:

- **Active participation responses** are *overt* student responses such as speaking, writing, and signaling. Students are asked to respond actively, rather than only responding passively or covertly (i.e., listening, watching, or thinking about the content).
- Active participation responses occur *during* teacher presentations rather than after or instead of presentations. Students can make active responses during teacher explanations, demonstrations, directions, reviews, openings, closings, readings, videos, and so on. These are different from the practice tasks that may *follow* a presentation—for example, the teacher presents information on how to make change from a dollar, and then the students complete practice problems. Active participation responses are also different from the hands-on activities that *follow* or *replace* presentations. Having students paint a picture of a story's main character, create a video play of Lewis and Clark's expedition, or make boats from cardboard and duct tape that will carry students across the lake are examples of hands-on activities. Because these activities *follow* or *replace* presentations, they are not considered active participation as defined here.
- Active participation responses are made by *all of the students at once*. For example, *everyone* says the definition in unison; *everyone* writes an example; *everyone* explains to a partner. Calling on individuals to answer a question or selecting one or a few students to demonstrate something or to do a problem on the board are *not* examples of active participation.
- Active participation responses are *frequent*. They allow students many brief opportunities to practice and process information as it is being presented and to build understanding. They keep

Figure 6.1 Active Participation Responses



students steadily engaged rather than waiting until the end of a presentation to give them something to do. Some active participation strategies are very quick. Example 6.1 shows a teacher using active participation as she introduces a new term to her students. Notice the back-and-forth, call-and-response quality of the interaction.

EXAMPLE 6.1: QUICK, FREQUENT ACTIVE PARTICIPATION RESPONSES

Teacher:	Says new term
Students:	Repeat it in unison
Teacher:	Defines term
Students:	Paraphrase definition to partner
Teacher:	Shows an example
Students:	Write another example
Teacher:	Shows several examples and nonexamples
Students:	Identify correct examples by signaling thumbs up

6-2 Importance of Active Participation

Strategies for active participation are valuable for several reasons. First, using these strategies keeps students engaged, making them more likely to learn, retain, and process the information presented. Additionally, various active participation strategies allow the teacher to check for understanding early and often during instruction so the teacher knows if students are learning. When students are involved in lessons or activities made interactive through the use of active participation strategies, they are also more likely to be attentive, less likely to be off-task, and more likely to feel good about their competence (Lewis and Doorlag 2011). Finally, the use of these strategies is likely to make lessons and activities more enjoyable and interesting for students and teachers.

Read about Mr. Reyna and the lesson he is planning for his class in Teachers in Action 6.1. Then, as you read this chapter, think about how Mr. Reyna could use active participation to help his students learn, retain, and use the lesson information. You may imagine that Mr. Reyna is teaching any grade level.

TEACHERS IN ACTION 6.1: A LOOK AT MR. REYNA'S PLANNING

Mr. Reyna is preparing to teach a series of lessons and activities about stereotyping; this is part of a school-wide antibullying and antibias curriculum. During this series, students will learn skills such as how to debunk stereotypes, how to avoid perpetuating stereotypes, and so forth. His objective for the current lesson is that his students will locate instances of stereotypes in segments of popular videos and books. The lesson will begin with Mr. Reyna providing a context for this lesson. He'd like for students to clearly understand his expectations for their learning and also wants to determine what they already know about this topic. After this introduction, Mr. Reyna will briefly present background information about stereotyping: a definition, explanations of types of stereotypes, and how stereotypes develop. He will then spend the majority of his time showing how to recognize stereotypes in films and books. He'll show a variety of examples and nonexamples and point out the signal words and images that help us recognize stereotyping. Following the presentation, the students will be given practice opportunities for finding stereotypes in other book excerpts and video clips.

6-3 Types of Active Participation Strategies

Many kinds of active participation strategies can be incorporated into lessons or activities. Recognizing the variation of strategies in terms of their response type and purpose can help teachers select which strategies to use at various points throughout lessons and activities.

One way to think about active participation strategies is by the type of response they require:

- Written responses
- Oral responses
- Signaled responses

Written responses involve having students write answers on a personal-size chalk- or whiteboard, a "paper think pad," or tablet, for example (see Photo 6.1). Calling out answers or discussing ideas with partners are examples of *oral responses*. Finally, *signaled*

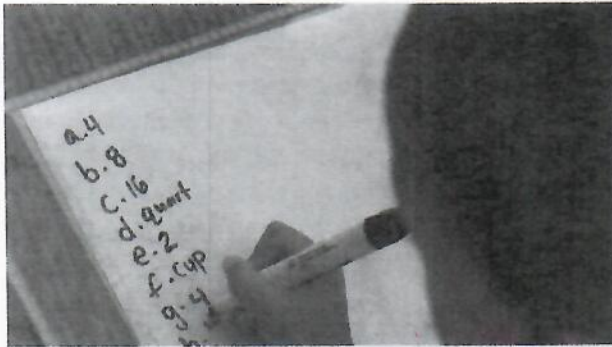


Photo 6.1 Each student can actively participate by responding in writing on a dry-erase board.

responses include actions such as pointing, holding up cards, or responding electronically.

Another way to think about active participation strategies is by their purpose. Most strategies can be loosely organized into three main categories:

- Involvement strategies
- Rehearsal strategies
- Processing strategies

Involvement strategies are designed to keep students alert and attentive. *Rehearsal strategies* are used to provide students with opportunities to practice or rehearse the information presented. A third category, *processing strategies*, helps increase comprehension by giving students time to think about, mull over, or discuss content to develop a deeper understanding of the material.

Many strategies serve several purposes. As you read through the specific strategies described in the rest of this chapter, notice how various strategies easily fit into more than one category. For example, choral response (i.e., unison oral response) can be both an involvement strategy and a rehearsal strategy. Notice also that some active participation strategies allow the teacher to check each student's understanding. (You will learn more about checking for understanding in Chapter 7.) The organization of strategies by response type and purpose provides a general guideline to consider when selecting strategies. It is far more important to select an appropriate variety of strategies that fit your purposes than it is to spend time trying to correctly label a particular strategy.

Note that teachers can use numerous strategies designed to elicit responses to their questions. Considering that teachers ask many questions each day, it is very important to decide carefully how students

will participate during question-asking situations. Be sure to select response strategies that will involve as many students as possible during these sessions. An important point must be made here: The act of asking a question is not an active participation strategy, whereas the strategy used for getting a response from students can be.

Teacher Checklist 6.1 provides an overview of key elements to think about when planning the use of active participation strategies. You can use it as a guide when you are writing lesson and activity plans.

TEACHER CHECKLIST 6.1: PLANNING ACTIVE PARTICIPATION STRATEGIES

- ✓ Am I planning *frequent* opportunities for all students to actively respond while I present (i.e., explain, demonstrate, review, give directions)?
- ✓ Am I planning strategies for *various purposes*, such as helping students process information, rehearse information, and stay involved?
- ✓ Am I planning strategies that require *different types of responses*, such as written, oral, and signaled?
- ✓ Am I planning strategies to be used in every *part of my lesson or activity*, such as the opening, body/middle, and closing?
- ✓ Am I planning strategies to *meet the diverse needs* of my students, such as oral responses to include students who have difficulty writing?

Professional Resource Download



6-4 Examples of Active Participation Strategies

Consult the following lists of involvement, rehearsal, and processing strategies for specific ways to elicit active participation responses from your students. Notice that written, oral, and signaled responses are included.

6-4a Involvement Strategies

An important purpose of this type of active participation strategy is to keep students alert and attentive during instruction. The following are some examples of how to achieve this goal.

1. Ask for *choral responses* from the whole class or from rows or table groups. Say, "The name of this river is...Everyone?" Make sure that everyone is, in fact, responding.
2. Ask students to use *response cards*. Say, "When you hear one of the new words in the story, hold up that card."
3. Ask students to *write a response*. Say, "On your list, check off the steps for resolving conflicts as I model them."

Strategies 1, 2, and 3 work well as response strategies when questions or requests require brief responses.

4. Have students *stand to share answers* (Kagan 1992). When students have an answer, have them stand up. Call on one student to share the answer. Have everyone with the same or similar answer sit down. Students continue to answer until everyone is sitting down.
5. Put a line on the floor or wall and label it to create a Likert scale (such as from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree"). Ask students to *stand at the spot* that reflects their response to your statement.
6. Use the *Quick Talk* strategy by placing students in pairs and giving them 30 seconds to share all they know about a topic (Student Engagement n.d.).
7. Have students do *choral reading* of content text as an alternative to "round-robin" reading. Students can read sentences or paragraphs as a group. As a teacher reads aloud, she can stop at various places and have the class fill in words or phrases.
8. Have students *take notes* during teacher presentations, speeches, films, or readings. Skilled note-takers can write their own notes; provide others with partially completed notes.
9. Use a *think-to-write preview* to get students thinking about today's topic. Give students 3 minutes to write down everything they know about the topic.
10. *Reaction response* is an involvement strategy where the teacher, after presenting a controversial topic, asks students to write (or orally respond) to a question, such as "What information do you question?" Students can work alone or in small groups (Wandberg and Rohwer 2010).
11. Active participation responses are meant to be overt, but covert strategies such as a *think-about* or *visual imagery* can also increase student involvement. For example, say to the students, "Imagine for a minute what it would feel like to be teased about the color of your skin," or "Think about a time when you helped a friend." Use visual imagery by asking students to "picture" something in their minds (e.g., "Try to imagine how the ferocious lion looked.>").
12. *Brainstorming*, followed by the teacher calling on individuals randomly, gives all students an opportunity to participate. This isn't technically an active participation strategy because not every student is expected to respond at once, but it certainly can help get more students involved.
13. When presenting detailed or complex information, use the *three-minute pause* strategy to give students time to "catch up" during the presentation. After a certain period of time (e.g. 10 minutes), give students 3 minutes to discuss a key idea about the presentation with a partner (Wandberg and Rohwer 2010).



TECH NOTE

Students can actively participate during a presentation by taking notes using a notebook or tablet computer; today's students may prefer this to traditional pencil-and-paper note taking. Note-taking software allows students to type or handwrite notes and to edit, organize, highlight, and share them.

6-4b Rehearsal Strategies

One goal of active participation strategies is to give students a chance to practice or rehearse new information. The following are some examples of how to achieve this goal.

14. Ask a question, and then ask students to *say the answer to a neighbor*.
15. Ask partners to *take turns* summarizing, defining terms, or giving examples.

Strategies 14 and 15 work well when you ask questions that require somewhat longer answers. They are also effective when many students are eager to speak, but there is not enough time to call on each student individually.

16. Ask everyone to *write down an answer* on paper, on a small blackboard, or on a dry-erase board. Then have them hold it up so you can see it. For example, tell everyone to write an adjective that describes your chair.
17. Ask students to respond using student *response cards* or other objects (see Photo 6.2). Say, "Hold up the green card if the word is a noun," or "Hold up the isosceles triangle" (Heward et al. 1996; Lambert, Cartledge, Heward, and Lo 2006; Munro and Stephenson 2009).
18. Ask for *finger signals* from everyone. Guillaume suggests, for instance, that "students hold up numbers of fingers to respond to mastery questions (e.g., 'How many sides on a triangle?'). Other gestures can also be used. For instance, 'I will watch while you draw a triangle in the air'" (2004, p. 87). Or you could say, "As I point to each number, put thumbs up if you would round upward."
19. Ask students to respond electronically. Say, "I'll show you a picture. Click on 'a' if it's a plant cell or 'b' if it's an animal cell. Be prepared to explain your decision."

Strategies 16 through 19 work well when questions require brief answers. Notice that in addition to promoting active participation, they allow you to check the understanding of all students.

20. Use the *pausing technique* (Guerin and Male 1988; Salend 1998). Stop for 2 minutes after every 5 to 7 minutes of lecturing. Have students discuss and review their notes and the content presented (e.g., they can rehearse important

points or discuss how the information relates to their own experiences).

21. Use the *practice test question*. Give students sample exam questions for practice, and then ask several students at random to report their answers to the class. This strategy allows the teacher to check for understanding (Wandberg and Rohwer 2010).
22. Use *drill partners* to work on facts students need to know until they are certain both partners know and remember them all (Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec 1991).
23. Have *board workers* work together to answer questions. Have each student play a role: One student is the answer suggester, one acts as checker to see if everyone agrees, and one is the writer (Johnson et al. 1991).

6-4c Processing Strategies

Another goal of active participation strategies is to allow students the opportunity to process new information. The following are some examples of how to achieve this goal.

24. Ask students to think about the answer to a question. Have them then discuss the answer with their neighbor. Call on pairs to share their answers, such as in think-pair-share (Lyman 1992).
25. Ask partners to formulate a divergent or high-level question that goes with the content just presented and to give it to another pair. That pair discusses possible answers or ways to find answers. Call on pairs to share.
26. Two students become worksheet checkers and complete a worksheet together. One student is the reader (reads the question and suggests an answer) and the other is the writer (agrees with the answer or comes up with a new one). When both students agree, the answer is written on the worksheet (Johnson et al. 1991).
27. Ask a question, and then ask students to share and discuss their answers in small groups such as in buzz groups (Arends 2012).
28. Provide students with randomly ordered key words and phrases from the lesson/activity as part of the *Jumbled Summary* strategy. Then, set a timer and have students put the terms



Photo 6.2 All students can actively participate using signaled responses.

6-6 Number of Strategies to Include

When planning lessons and activities, strive to use active participation strategies frequently. While there isn't a rule about how frequently they should be used, the following are guidelines. Cegelka and Berdine (1995) suggest that teachers plan for students to respond in some way several times during each minute of a lesson. The three-statement rule—the teacher will make no more than three statements without having students make a response—is another guideline that points out the importance given to frequent student participation during presentations (Christenson, Ysseldyke, and Thurlow 1989).

It may be impossible, impractical, or unnecessary to try to specify an exact number of response opportunities to include in any lesson or activity. Instead, consider (1) using strategies during all parts of the lesson or activity (the opening, closing, and all parts in between), (2) using numerous strategies that focus on the key ideas you are trying to emphasize (e.g., have students say the main points to a partner), and (3) adjusting the number of strategies based on student learning and behavior (e.g., if you notice that many students are confused, increase their opportunities to rehearse or process information). Remember that having students actively rehearse information will help ensure the transfer of that information into long-term memory.

6-7 Teaching Active Participation Response Strategies

It is important that students know exactly how to perform the active participation responses to be used, for several reasons. It's important because if the students are confused (e.g., as to whether signaling thumbs up means *yes* or *no*), the teacher won't get accurate information about student understanding. It is also important when using partner and small-group active participation strategies. If students don't know how to correctly use strategies such as think-pair-share or buzz groups, it may result in some students not having the opportunity to be involved. It's also important for students to know how to use active participation materials, such as signal cards and whiteboards, correctly in order to prevent distractions and behavior problems. Taking the time to teach students active participation responses is time well spent.

Some active participation strategies are relatively easy to implement. Others require more detailed directions and opportunities for practice with feedback. It is important to recognize that active participation strategies need to be taught to students, and a direct approach is generally the most effective technique to use for teaching them. For example, when using a strategy such as choral response, students need to have the signal explained ("When I say *everyone*, answer out loud"), be shown how they are expected to respond, and have the chance to practice ("Let's try again to say it all at once"). When having students write answers on a whiteboard, it is important to develop and teach a procedure that will make it less likely that students will copy a neighbor's board and that will make it easier for the teacher to read all boards. Note that once a strategy has been taught, it is reasonable to expect all students to participate by using the strategy. If you notice that not everyone is participating, it is important to stop and repeat the signal until all students are engaged. This will ensure that the purpose of the strategy is fulfilled. Look at Mini-Lesson 6.1 for an example of how a response strategy can be taught to students. Lessons for teaching such strategies do not need to be long or elaborate. Often, it will take just a few minutes to teach students what is expected of them. Practice time will vary, of course, depending on the students and the response strategy being taught.

Notice in the mini-lesson that the teacher is presenting information orally, in writing, and through modeling. She is also using repetition of key information and asking for quick and frequent responses from the students. Notice also that she uses a simple math problem during the rehearsal so that the focus is on practicing the procedure for using whiteboards rather than practicing math skills.

You may need to provide a review of an active response strategy that has been taught if a lot of time goes by between uses. Generally, however, it would not be necessary to spend a great deal of time reteaching. If the initial teaching was solid and successful, an occasional review may be all that is needed until the strategy becomes a well-engrained habit.

After teaching a lesson, Reflecting on Your Teaching 6.1 may be used as a checklist to see how well you incorporated active participation response strategies.