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## **Back to School: Simple Teaching Strategies from K-12 Classroom**

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## 2018 Celebration of Innovation in Teaching & Learning

**Nick Abel**  
**College of Education**

### Attention Signals

Active classrooms call for quick ways to get student attention. Try these!

- *Simple timers (try Google or classroomscreen.com)*
  - *Flashing lights*
  - *Music that stops or starts*
  - *Rhythmic clapping*
  - *Call & response (“If you can hear me, clap once.”)*
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### Cold Calling

Try calling on students instead of relying solely on volunteers. There’s debate on this, but some research indicates that mixing in involuntary participation (“cold calling”) increases participation and engagement. Consider using a mix of strategies to elicit participation from a range of students.

- *Hand raising*
- *Open discussion (“popcorn”)*
- *Random selection (popsicle sticks, index cards, random.org, classroomscreen.com, etc.)*
- *Prearranged order unknown to students (class list, student ID, etc.)*
- *Structured “go-around”*

### Grouping Strategies

Small group discussions and activities are a hallmark of active learning, but do you always let students choose their own groups? Consider using strategies to mix them up from time to time!

- *Random selection strategies (popsicle sticks, colored marks on back of handout, playing cards drawn randomly, color swatches, etc.)*
  - *Prearranged order unknown to students (ability/proficiency, differing viewpoints, age, etc.)*
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### Discussion Protocol

Sometimes free discussion (both small and large group) doesn’t get us very far due to dominators or a lack of focus/goals. Consider asking students to use some structured approaches to discussion.

- *Think/Pair/Share (important to give students a minute to record their own thoughts before asking for volunteers)*
- *Whip Around (structured go-around that places tight time limits on each speaker, at least for the first round)*
- *Pass It On (students choose who speaks next until everyone has contributed)*
- *My Two Cents (students get two pennies/tokens to use for speaking:*

### Facilitate Discussion

The strategies we use to facilitate large group discussion are so critical to learning. Try mixing up the way you respond to student contributions to see if it takes you further and deeper.

- *Repeat/summarize student answers for the class (especially the strongest parts)*
  - *Challenge students to expand on their answer*
  - *Stop discussion and ask students to do a 1-min free write*
  - *Call on another student to respond (summarize key points, build upon, or make a connection)*
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### Random Tips

We’re all content experts – let’s challenge ourselves to be delivery or pedagogy experts!

- *High-interest warmups or attention grabbers to start class*
- *Frequent free writes that lead to Think/Pair/Share chats*
- *Assign students to teach certain concepts, either preparing in advance or on the spot*
- *Vigorous/active first day of class to set a tone for engagement and participation. Some fun activities include: write our final exam, syllabus quiz, scavenger hunt (in the book or around campus), frequent icebreakers, impromptu group presentations, etc.*

## Resources /References:

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For pdf copies of a variety of teaching-related articles and reports, go to:

<https://goo.gl/oAJ8wR>

And feel free to add your own resources!