

The Compassionate Classroom Playbook



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The Compassionate Classroom Playbook

"The Compassionate Classroom Playbook" is a guide to be utilized as an instructional approach that emphasizes empathy, understanding, and emotional intelligence as foundational elements of the learning environment. In such a classroom, teachers prioritize creating a safe and nurturing atmosphere where students feel valued and respected. This involves actively listening to students' concerns, fostering open communication, and encouraging collaboration among their peers.

By integrating social-emotional learning into the curriculum, educators help students develop essential life skills such as empathy, conflict resolution, and self-awareness. This holistic approach not only enhances academic achievement but also prepares students to become compassionate and responsible global citizens. Ultimately, "The Compassionate Classroom Playbook" cultivates an inclusive and supportive learning environment, where every student can thrive through building a collaborative community of learners.

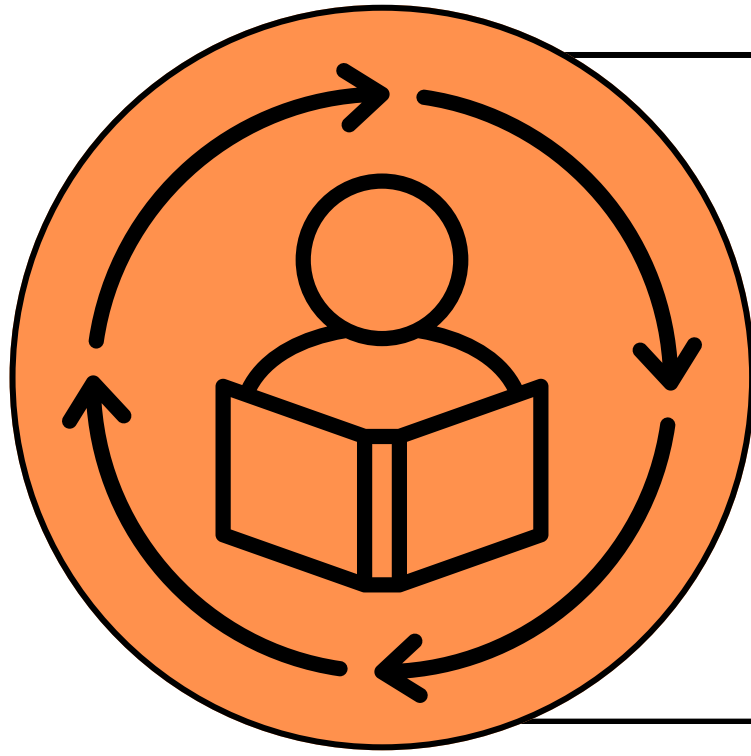
About the author: [Naomi Louise](#) is an experienced educator, instructional coach, global EdTech presenter, and women in leadership strategist with a proven record of designing and leading engaging, educator and student-centered learning experiences. Her work centers on building compassionate, inclusive learning communities that elevate "Total Participation Techniques (TPTs)," EduProtocols, AI-powered reflections, and movement-based strategies to increase belonging and agency for both students and adult learners.



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3- 2- 1 STRATEGY

Goal: Sharing information and gaining multiple perspectives on a topic through partner interaction



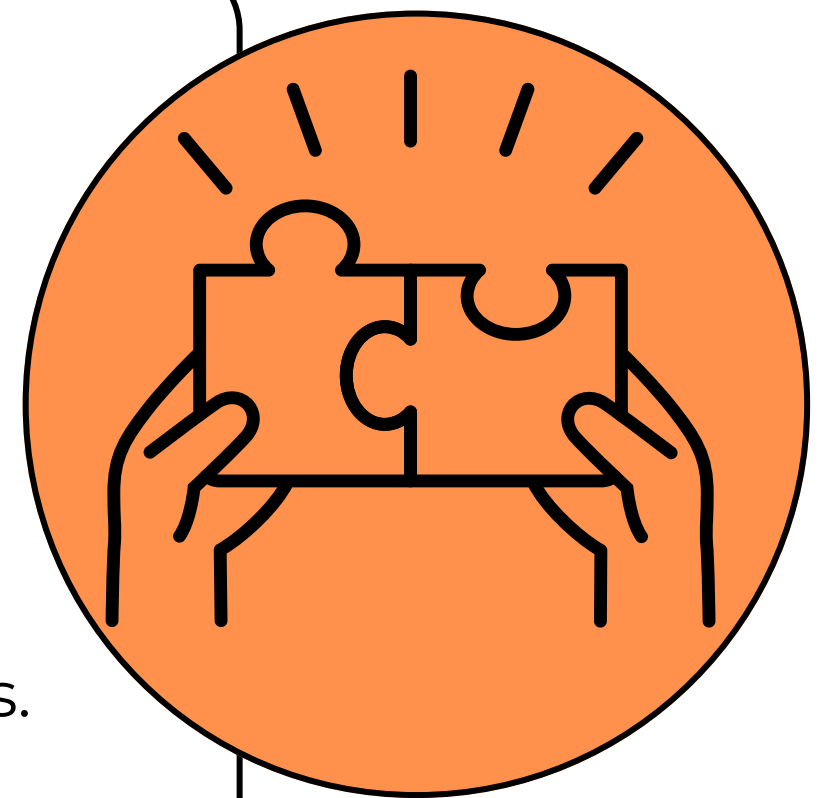
01. PROCEDURE

Students respond to a text, film, or lesson by listing three key takeaways, two questions they have, and one thing they enjoyed.

02. MODEL THE PROCESS

Students must visually and verbally see what a strong 3-2-1 looks like. Model:

- 3 things learned (concepts, skills, insights)
- 2 connections (to real life, culture, previous lessons)
- 1 question or wonder
- Think aloud. Share an example. Normalize mistakes.
- Modeling increases cognitive access and equity.



03. PERSONALIZATION - UDL IN ACTION

Allow students to choose how to complete their 3-2-1:

- Writing
- Drawing/doodling
- Voice recording
- Video reflection
- Sticky notes
- Digital tools (Jamboard, Padlet, Flip, etc.)



04. CLOSE THE LOOP WITH FEEDBACK & ACTION

This is the part that makes the strategy actually work:

- Review patterns in student responses
- Address misconceptions in the next lesson
- Highlight student questions
- Celebrate insightful thinking

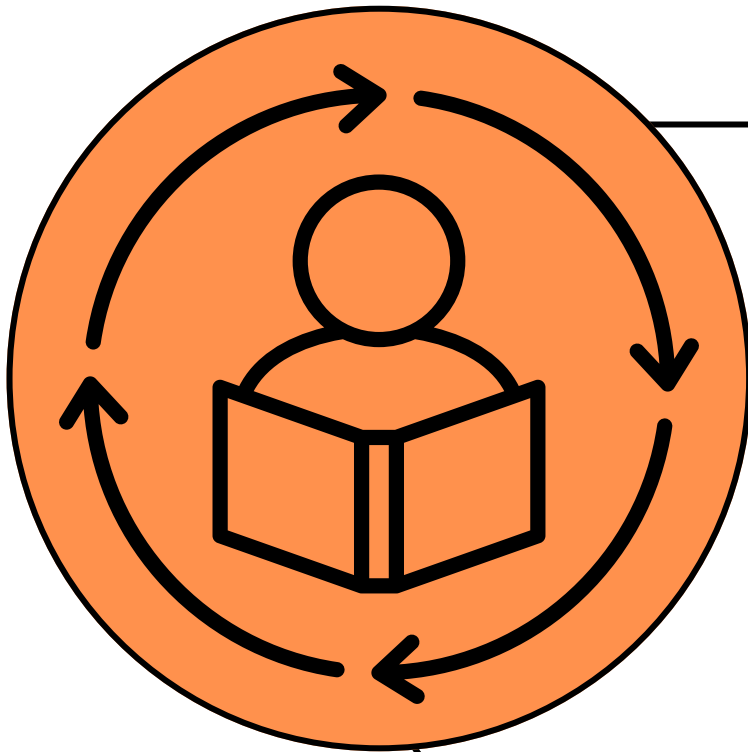
When students see their reflections shape future learning, participation skyrockets.



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APPOINTMENT AGENDAS

Goal: Steps for ensuring higher-order thinking will depend on the activity that you choose to do once partners meet.

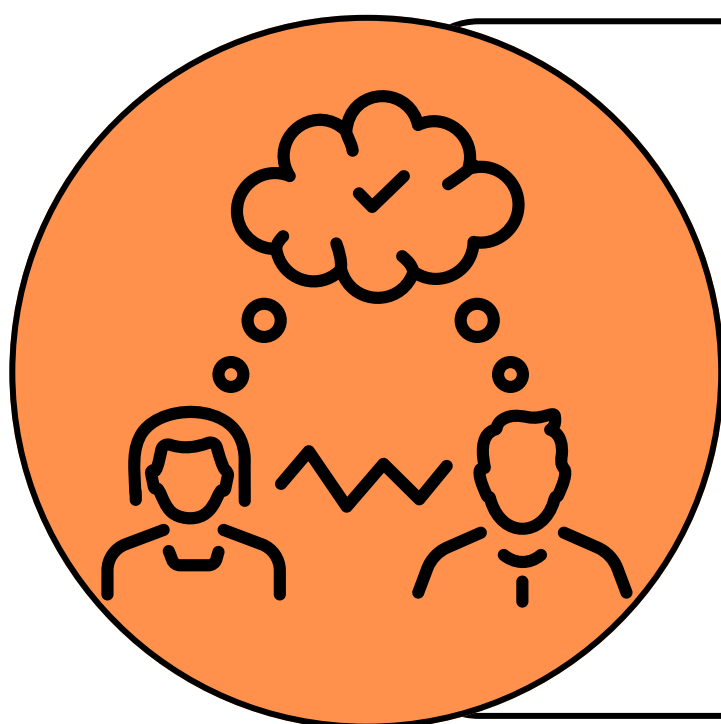
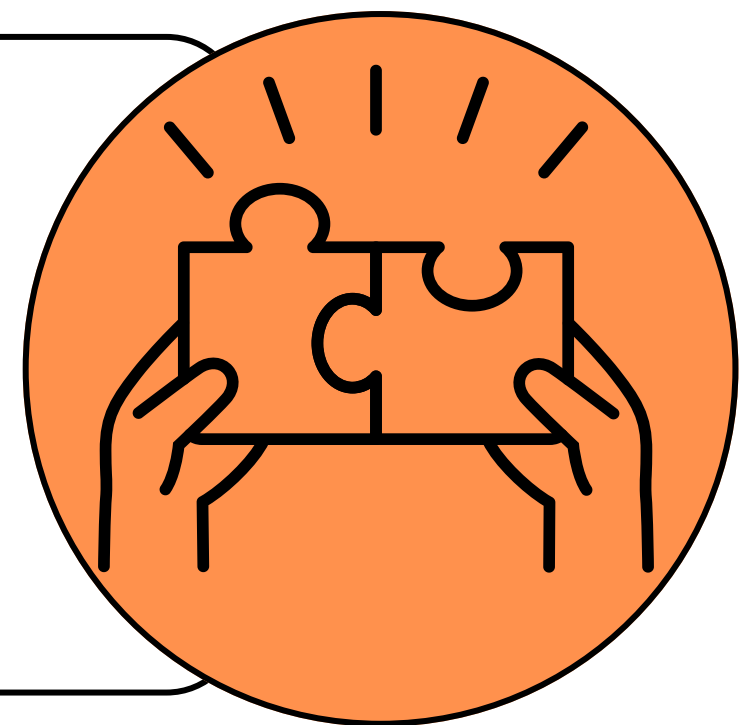


01. MAKE APPOINTMENTS

Provide students with a copy of an Appointment Agenda with various time-slot options. – Ask them to walk around the room and make “appointments” with various partners. (You have 3 minutes to complete this task).

02. SELECT A TIME SLOT

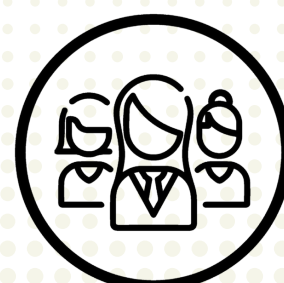
Both partners should select a time that is open and write each other’s name in the time slot. – If someone remains without a partner, have that person triple up with an existing pair.



03. PAIRING TOOL FOR DYNAMIC DUO PARTNERS

Once the agendas are filled in, you can use this as a pairing tool. – Partners should appear only once on an appointment agenda.

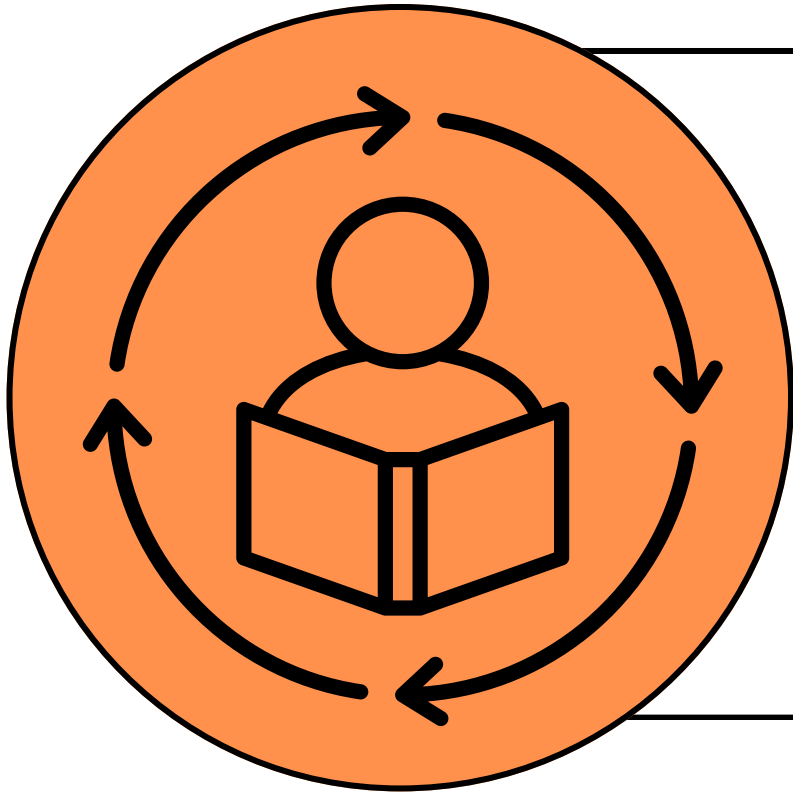
Here is a link to an appoint clock as a printable.



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BACK-TO-BACK AND FACE-TO-FACE

Goal: Sharing information and gaining multiple perspectives on a topic through partner interaction



01. PARTNER UP BACK-TO-BACK

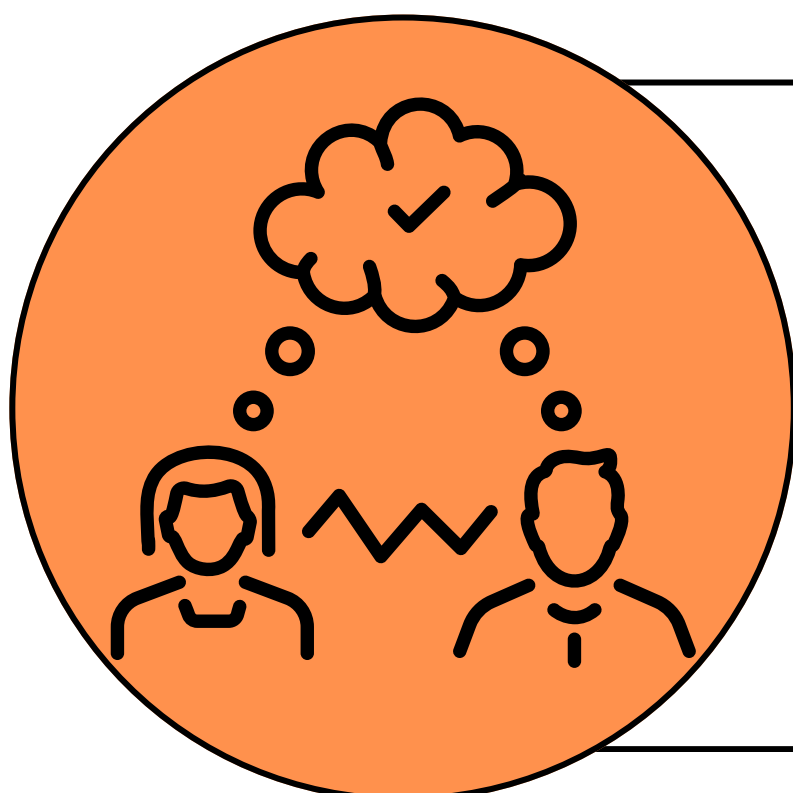
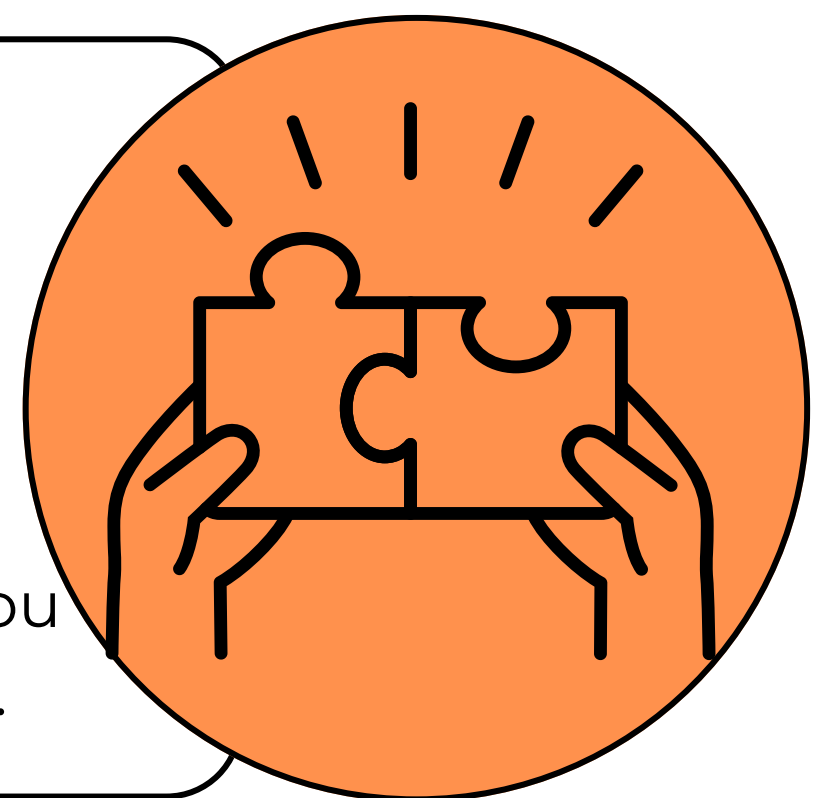
Have students find a partner and stand back-to-back with him or her, being respectful of space.

Have students wait for the question, opinion, etc., that they will be asked to share with their partner.

02. THINK AND SHARE FACE-TO-FACE

Have students think about what they want to share and how they might best express themselves.

When you say, “face-to-face,” have students turn, face their partners, and decide who will share first if you have not indicated that a certain person should go first.



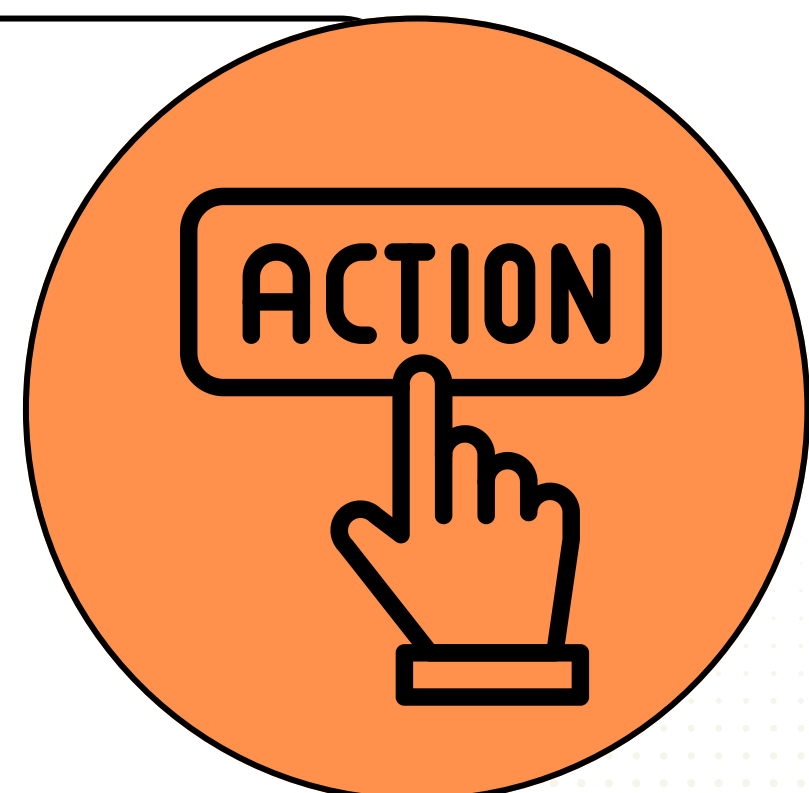
03. LISTEN TO UNDERSTAND

Have students listen carefully when their partner is speaking, and be sure to make eye contact with him or her.

04. SIGNAL AND ROTATE

When given the signal, students should find a new partner, stand back-to-back, and wait for the new question, opinion, etc.

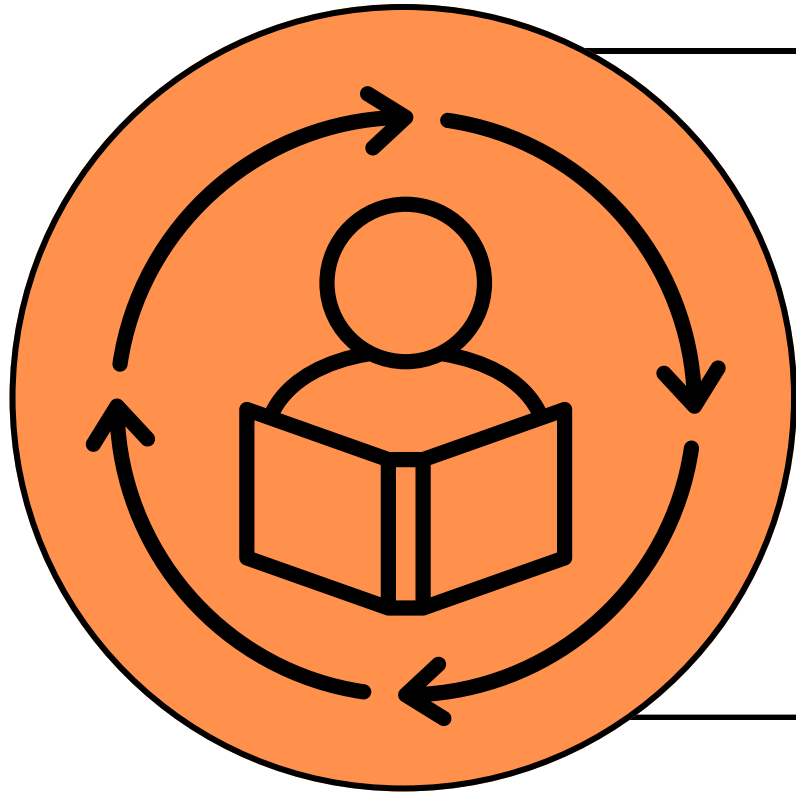
This may be repeated for as many rounds as needed/appropriate.



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CHALKBOARD OR WHITEBOARD SPLASH

Goal: Students write their responses on a shared surface like a chalkboard or whiteboard, which can then be categorized or discussed as a whole group.



01. PROVIDE A CLEAR PROMPT

Students need a simple, direct prompt that guides their thinking.

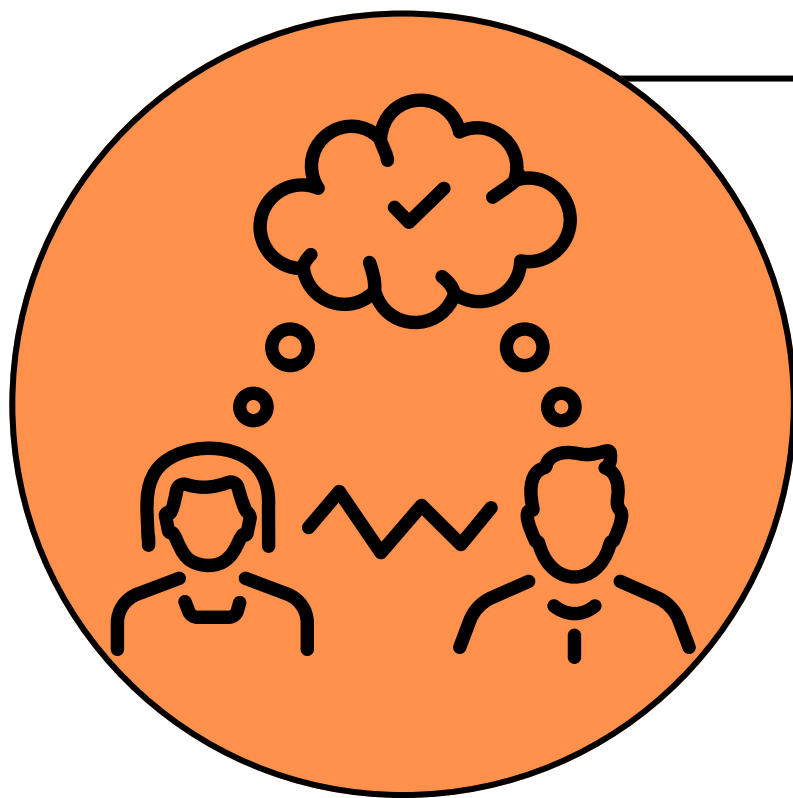
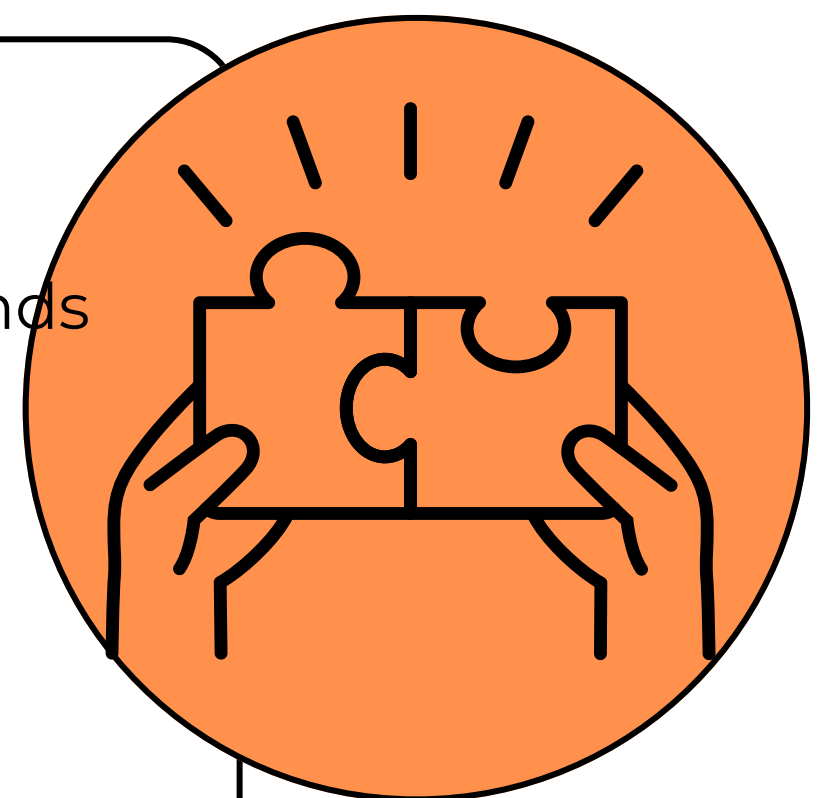
- ✓ Keep it short
- ✓ Use language all learners can access
- ✓ Ensure it targets one idea, skill, or reflection

02. INDIVIDUAL THINK TIME

Before students write on the board, give 30–90 seconds of quiet processing time.

This supports:

- Introverted learners
- Neurodiverse students
- English learners
- Students who need processing time to contribute confidently



03. STUDENTS POST RESPONSES AT THE SAME TIME

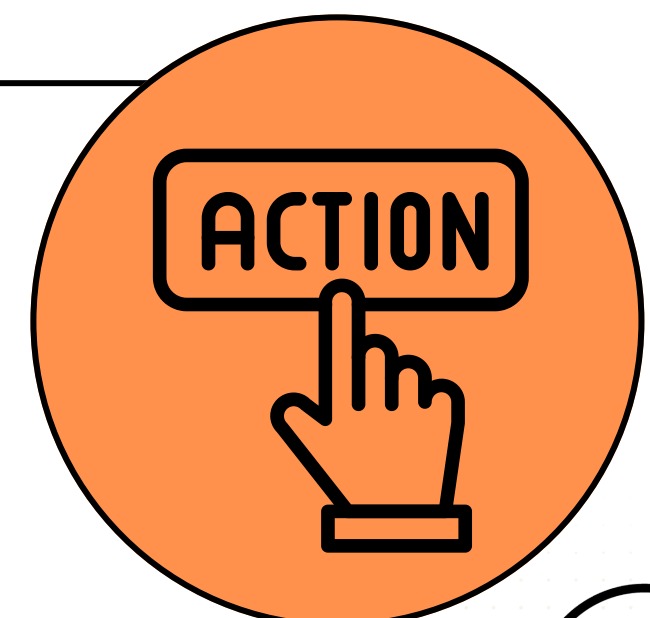
This prevents social influence and creates a powerful visual “splash.”

- ✓ Students walk up together OR take turns quickly in waves
- ✓ Every student contributes a response
- ✓ Encourage a variety of formats (words, phrases, drawings, symbols)

04. FACILITATE GROUP SYNTHESIS OR DISCUSSION

After the splash, guide students to make sense of the collective thinking:

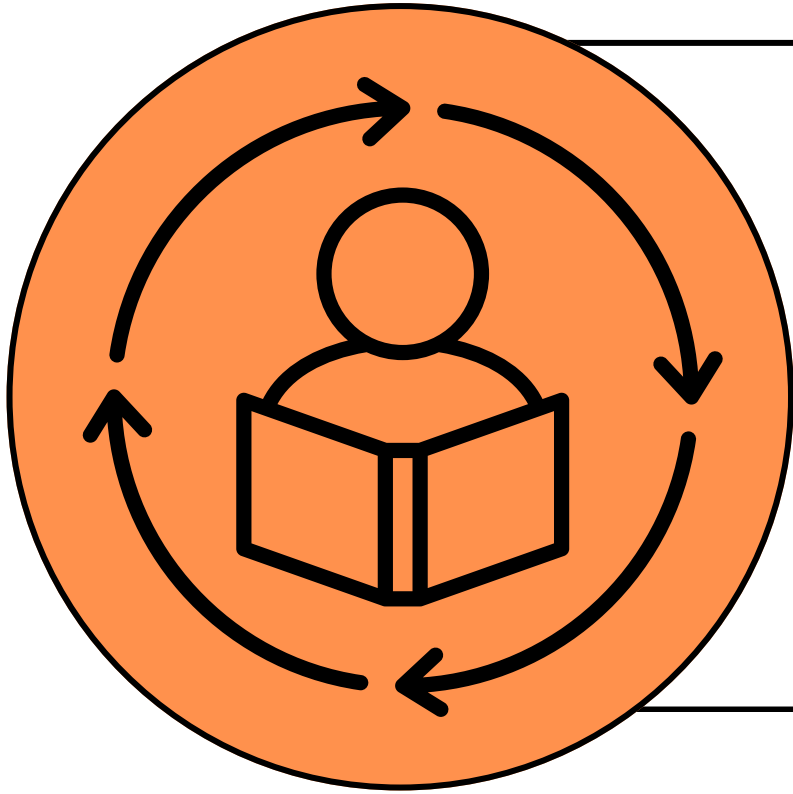
- Categorize patterns or themes
- Highlight unique ideas
- Ask students to explain, compare, or build on responses
- Connect to the learning target or SEL focus



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CLASSROOM COMPLIMENT CHAIN

Goal: Build trust and celebrate classmates' strengths.

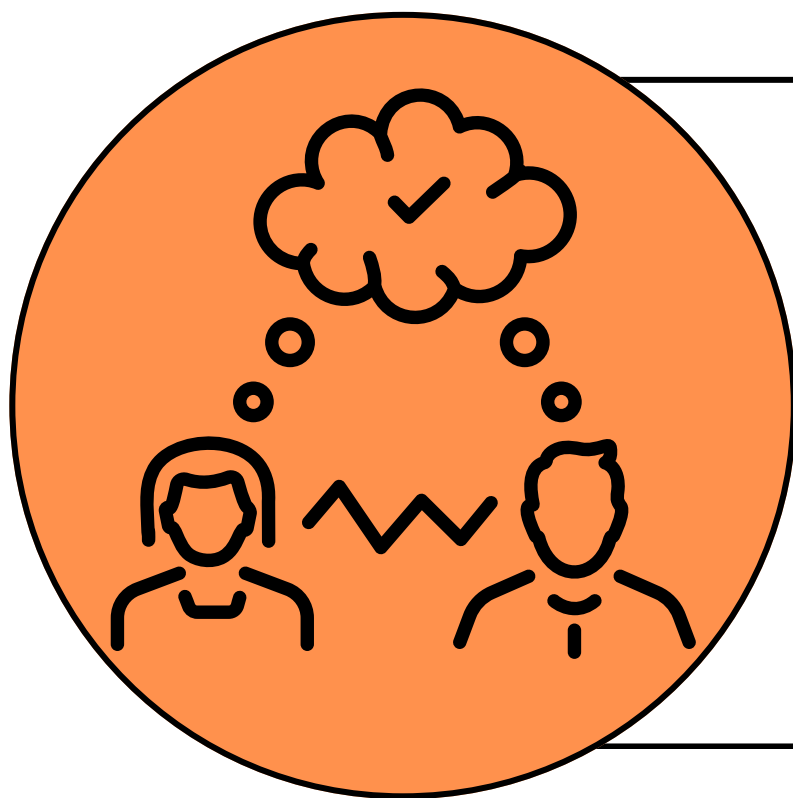
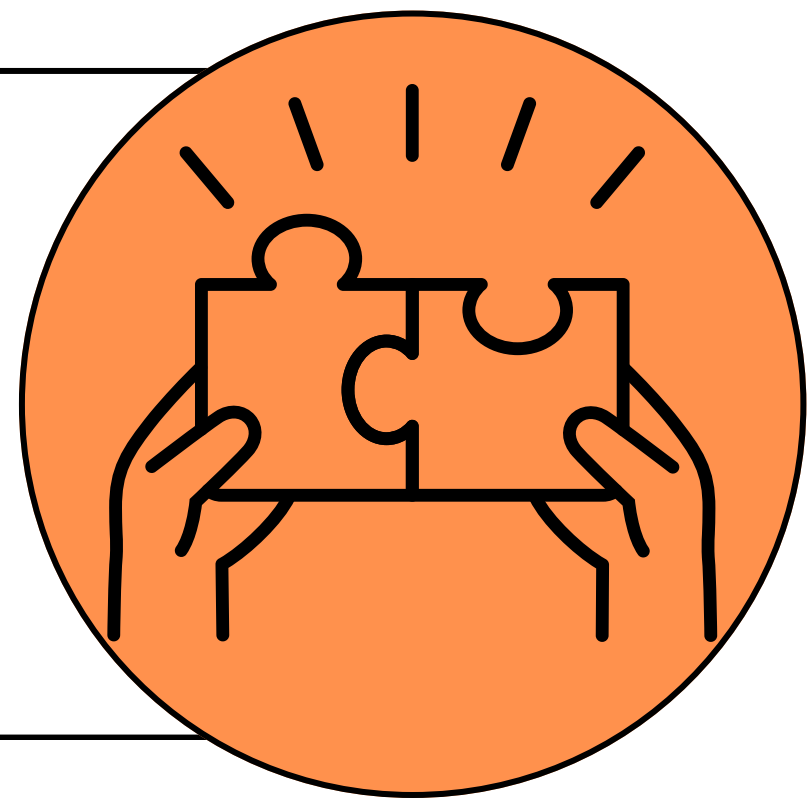


01. STARTING THE COMPLIMENT CHAIN

Share with students they're going to participate in a compliment chain. One student starts by giving a classmate a compliment (e.g., "I like that you always share your crayons").

02. PASSING THE KINDNESS FORWARD

Next, the student who received a compliment gives one to another classmate.



03. MAKING SURE EVERYONE IS INCLUDED

The compliments keep flowing in this way until everyone in the class gets one.

04. USING HELPFUL SENTENCE STARTERS

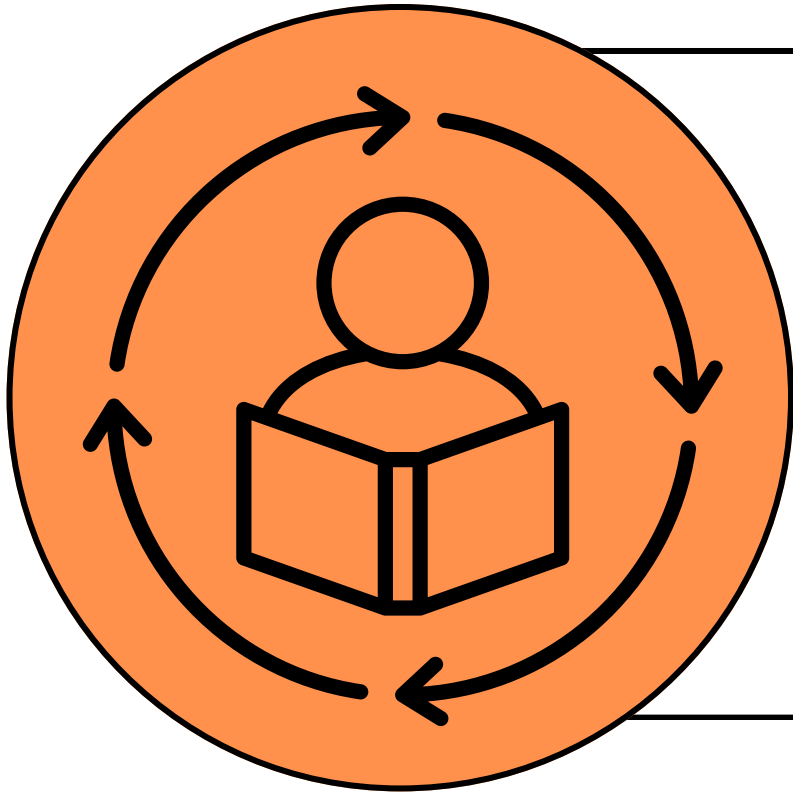
- "One thing I admire about you is _____."
- "You make our class better because _____."
- "I noticed you're really good at _____."
- "I appreciate how you _____."
- "You inspire me when you _____."
- "Our class is lucky to have you because _____."
- "You made me smile when you _____."
- "I respect the way you _____."
- "You bring creativity to our class by _____."
- "Thanks for showing kindness when you _____."



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FOUR CORNERS

Goal: Learn to stand by your opinion while respecting others.

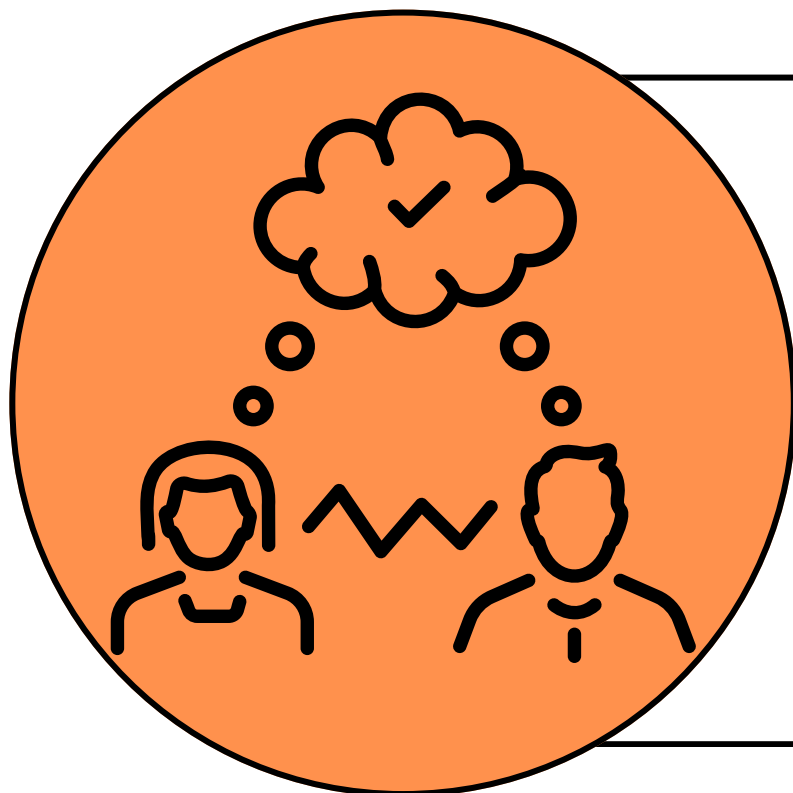
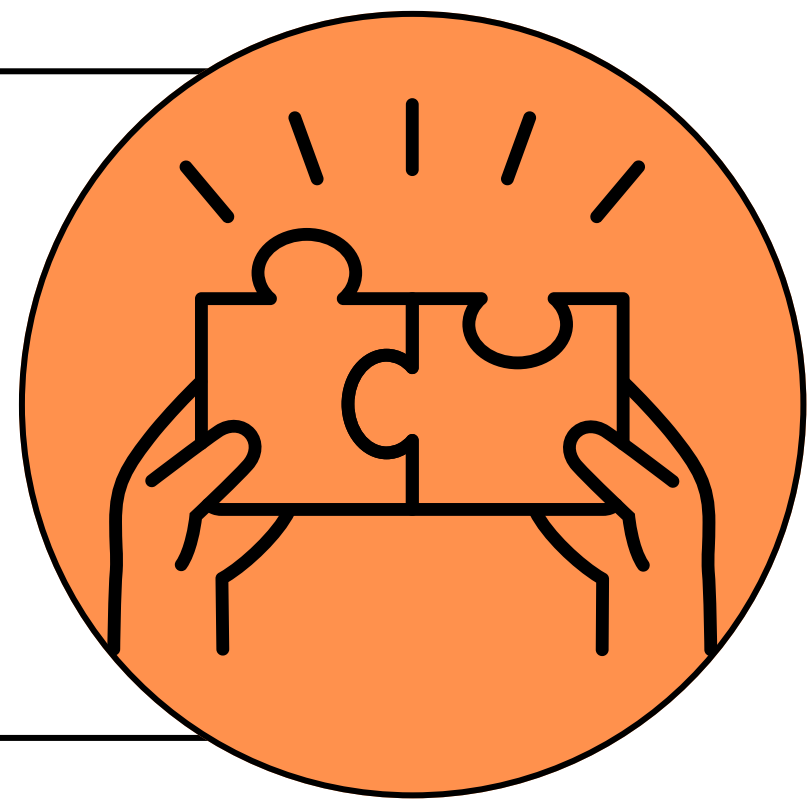


01. PROMPT

The teacher will read a statement (e.g., “Teamwork is better than working alone”).

02. TAKE ACTION

Go to the corner of the room that matches your opinion: (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree).



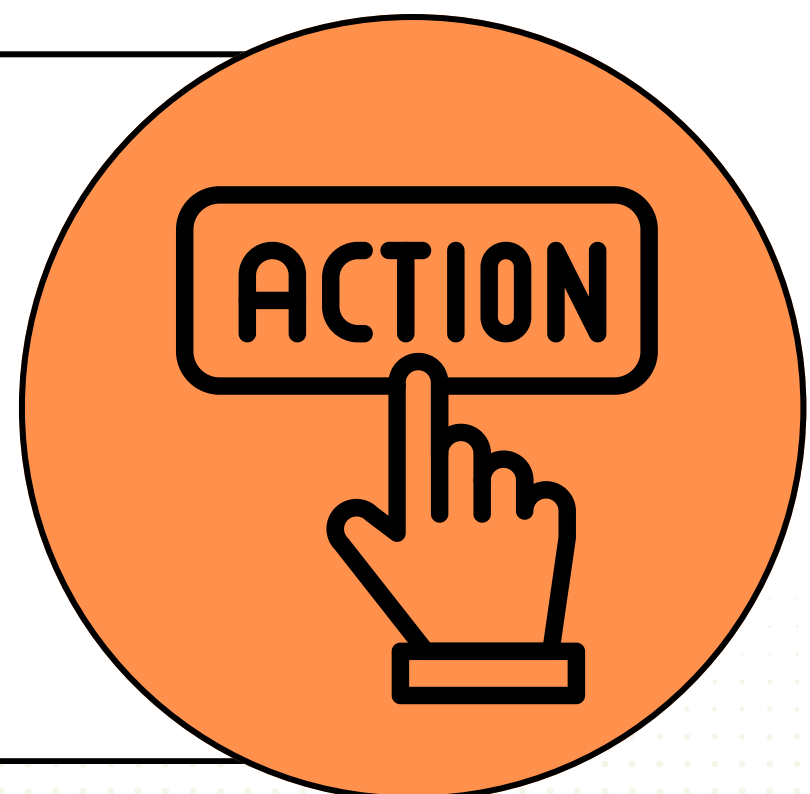
03. SHARE YOUR WHY

Discuss why you chose that corner with your group. Address and answer any clarifying questions they may ask.

04. LISTEN TO UNDERSTAND

A student team lead will now share your group’s ideas with the class.

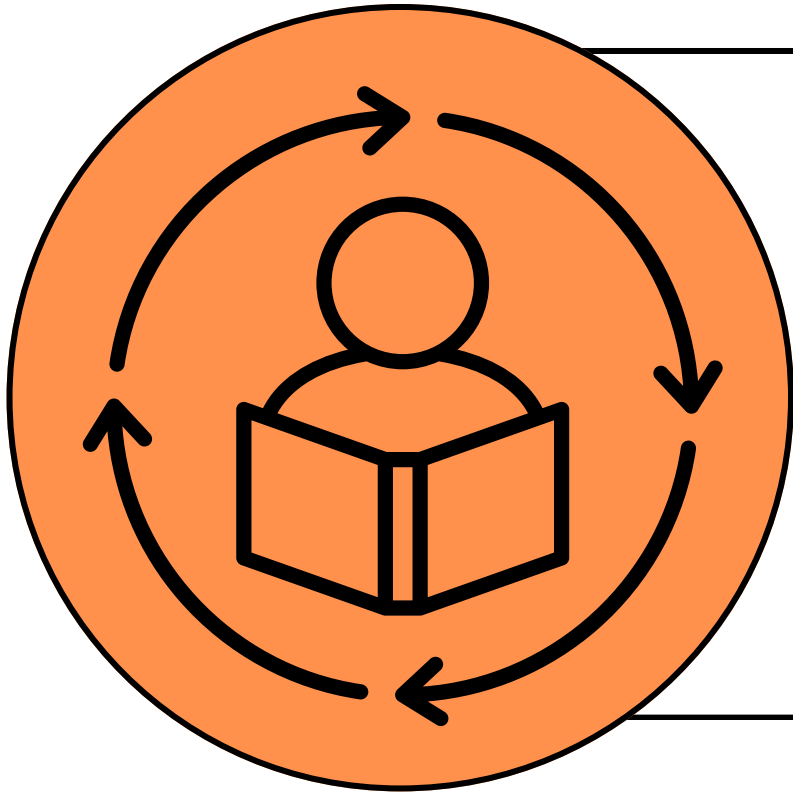
Listen respectfully to understand— it’s okay if people think differently!



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EQUITY STICKS

Goal: Ensure academic equity by allowing teachers to physically track who they have called on/interacted with during the course of the class. inion while respecting others.



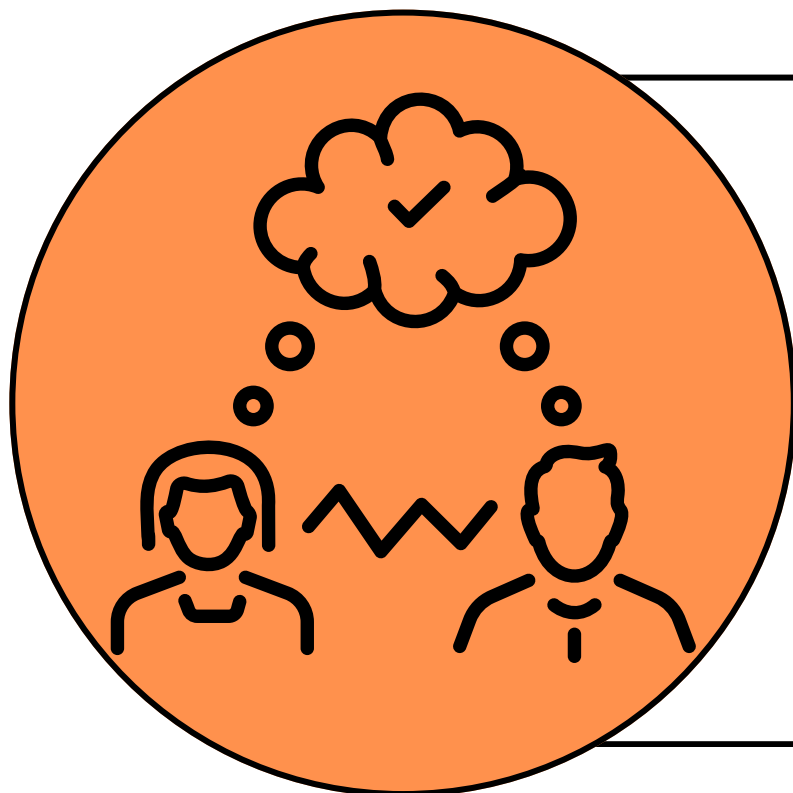
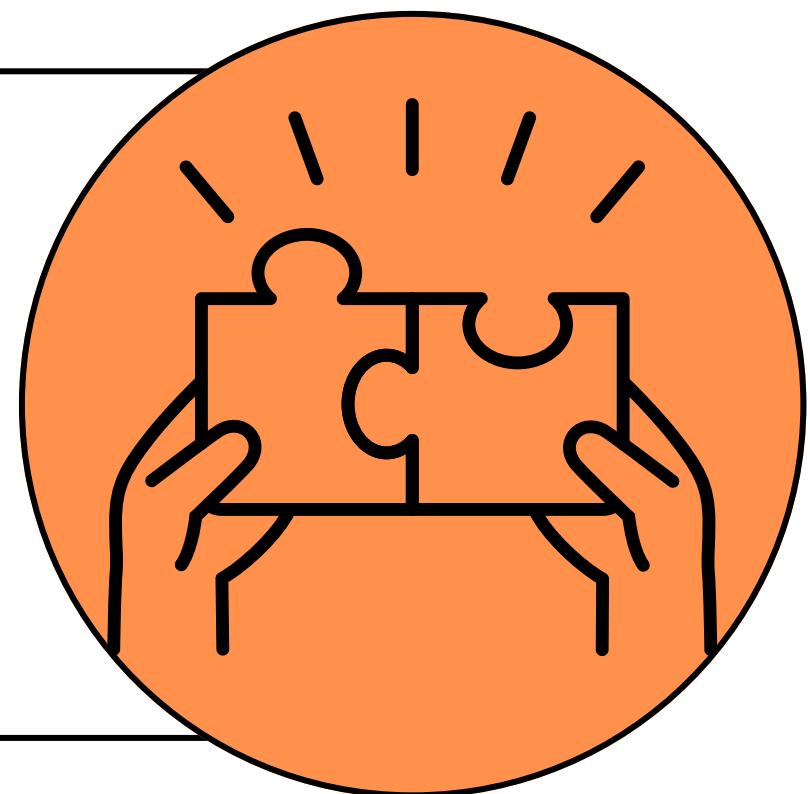
01. PREPARING YOUR MATERIALS

Wooden sticks (e.g. tongue depressors or popsicle sticks) or cards with a student's name of each

02. POSE A QUESTION

Pose a question to the class.

After giving students some think time, call on a student for an answer.

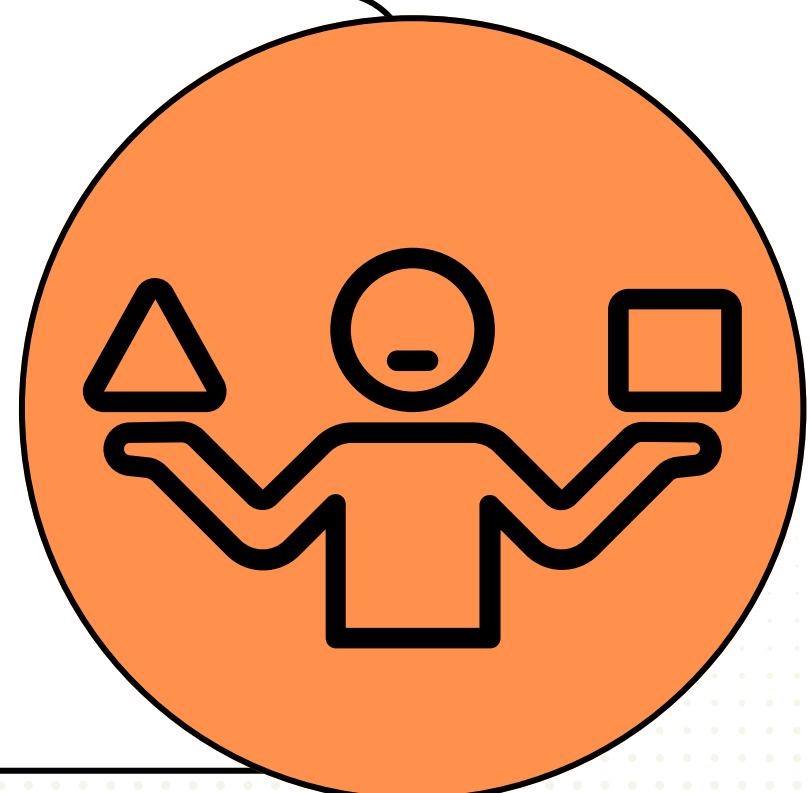


03. TAKE ACTION

Move the equity stick from one location to another, indicating that the student has participated in class that day.

04. VARIATION

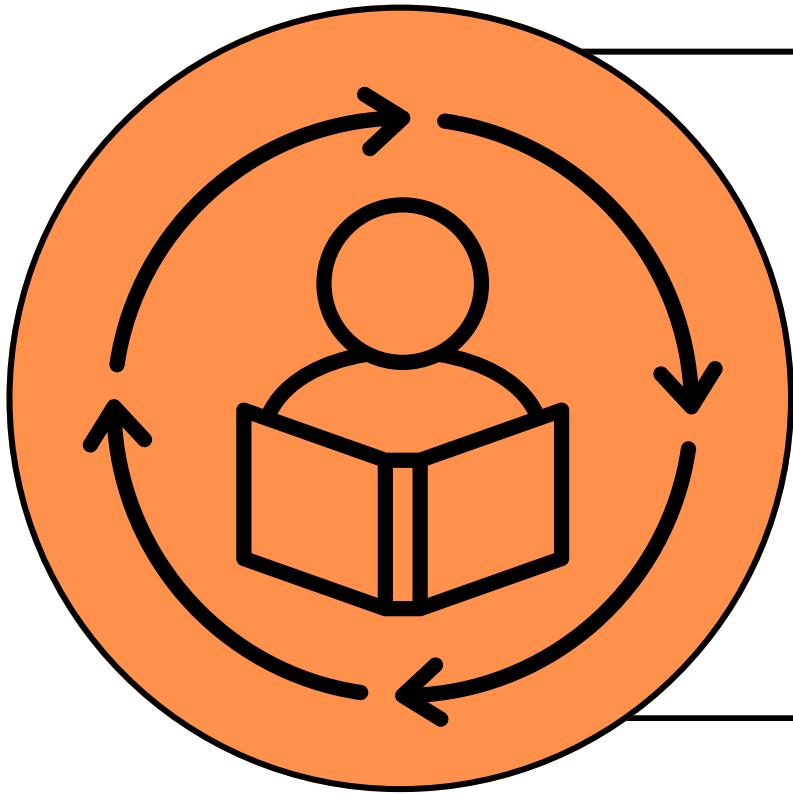
Color in one end of the equity stick. Instead of moving the whole stick, flip the stick upside down in its container to indicate via color that the student has been called on. Use equity sticks to call on one student to summarize the ideas shared in a small group discussion.



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HANDS HIGH

Goal: A quick and quiet Likert scale protocol to show degree of agreement, readiness for tasks, level of confidence (or need for support) with a task, or comfort with a learning target/concept.



01. HAND PROCEDURE

Students quickly show their thinking by holding up one hand and showing the following numbers with their fingers:

02. SHOW THEIR THINKING

0 (closed hand) = Disagree, "I need support," or "I really don't understand"

1 to 4 = Graduated levels of agreement, support/confidence or clarity of task

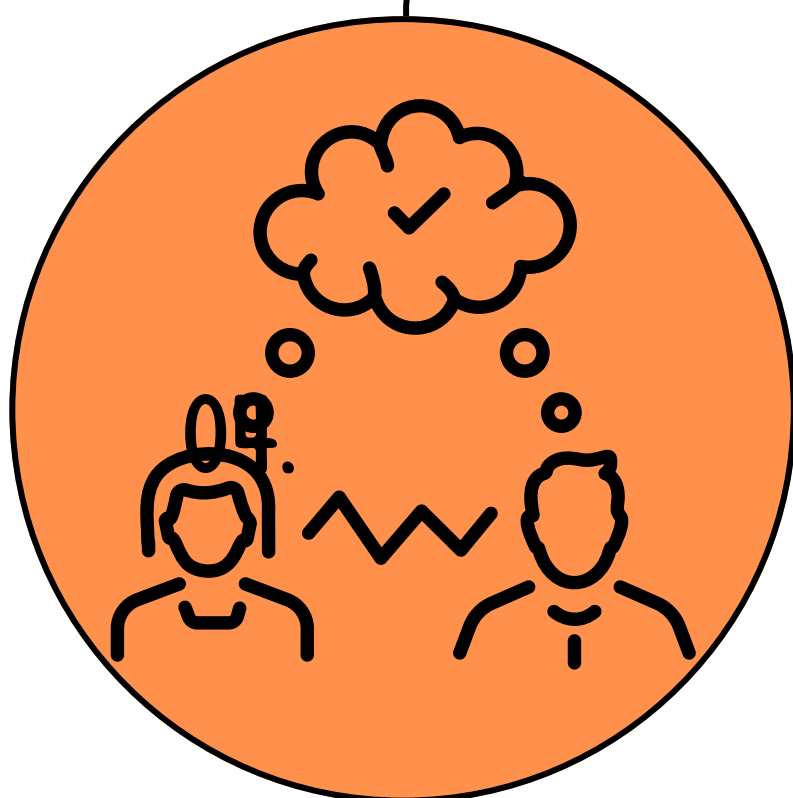
5 (open hand) = Total agreement, confidence or total clarity of task



03. ADJUST AND SUPPORT

Teachers adjust directions instruction, or supports based on student feedback. Repeat as needed.

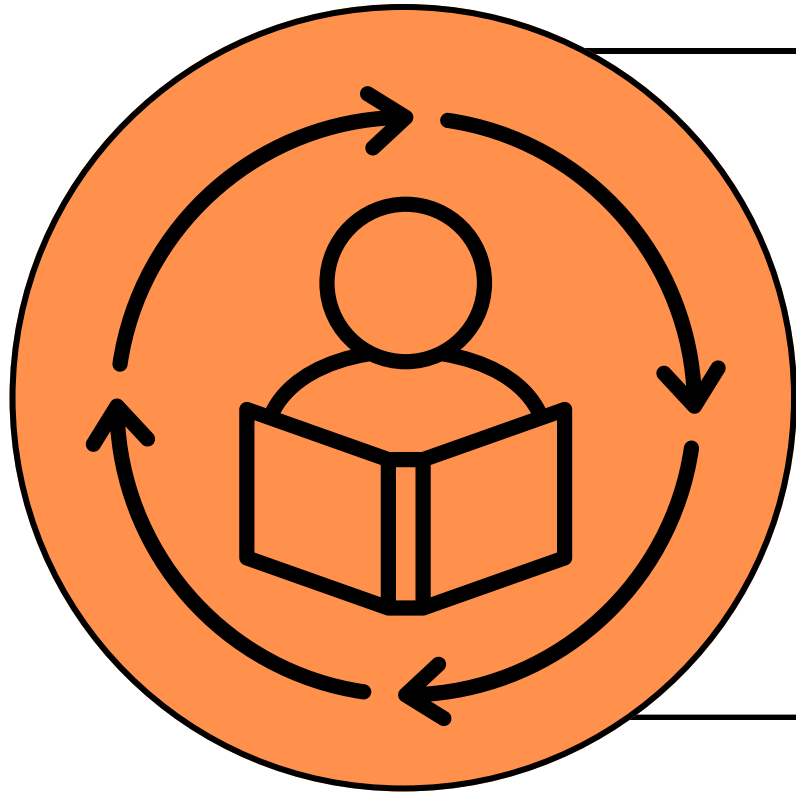
If students are uncomfortable sharing their comfort level in front of their peers, invite them all to close their eyes so that only the teacher sees their responses.



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HEADS TOGETHER

Goal: Students support one another by collaborating to respond to a question.

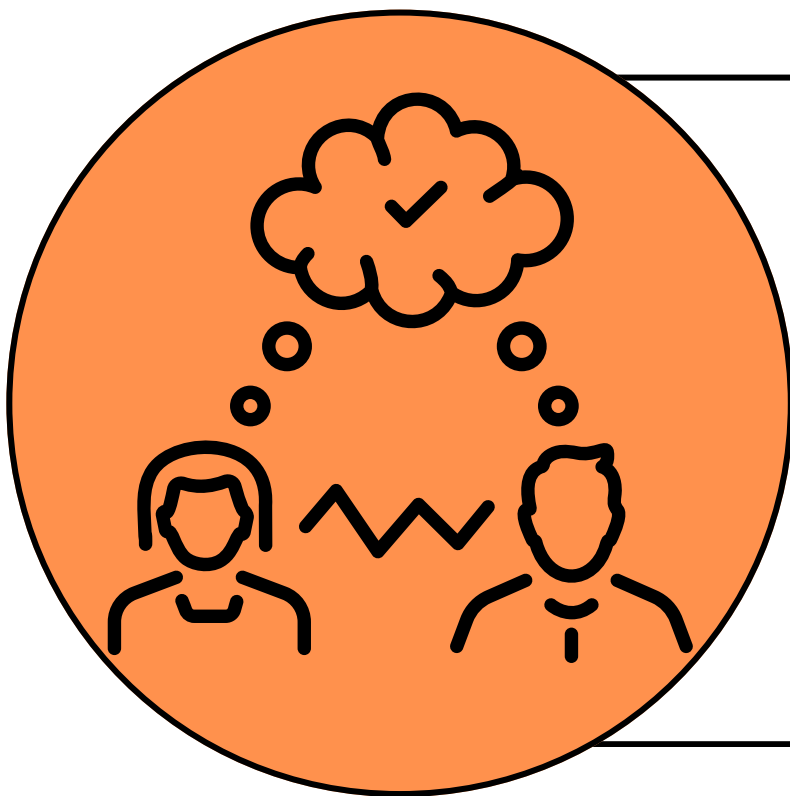
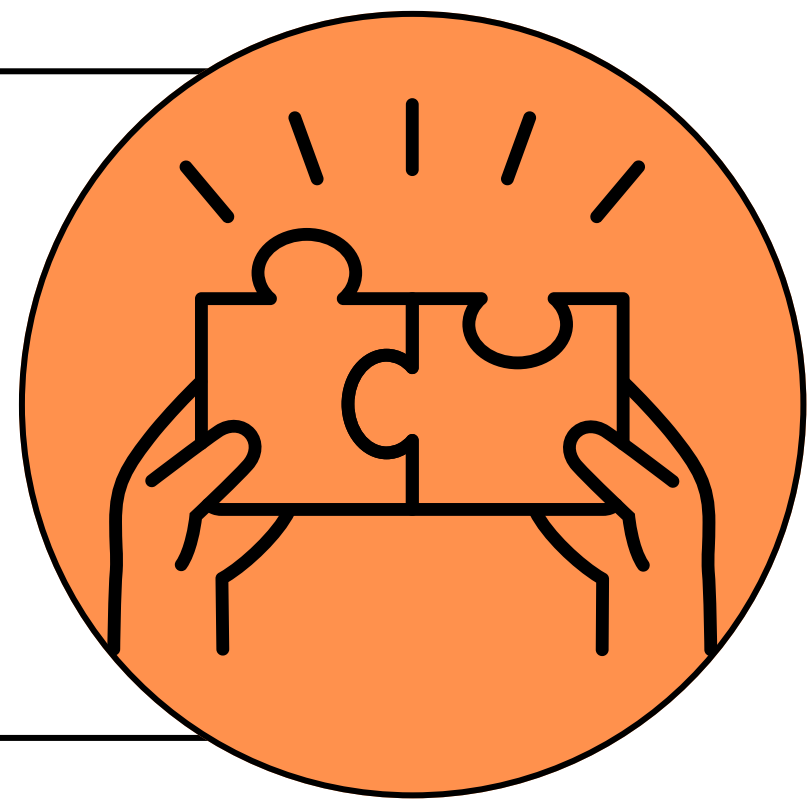


01. TRANSFORMATIVE TRIO GROUPING

Have students form groups of three as a transformative trio. Within each group, have students count off from 1 to 3.

02. POSE A QUESTION & DISCUSS

Ask the Crew a question. Invite students to discuss a response in their groups.

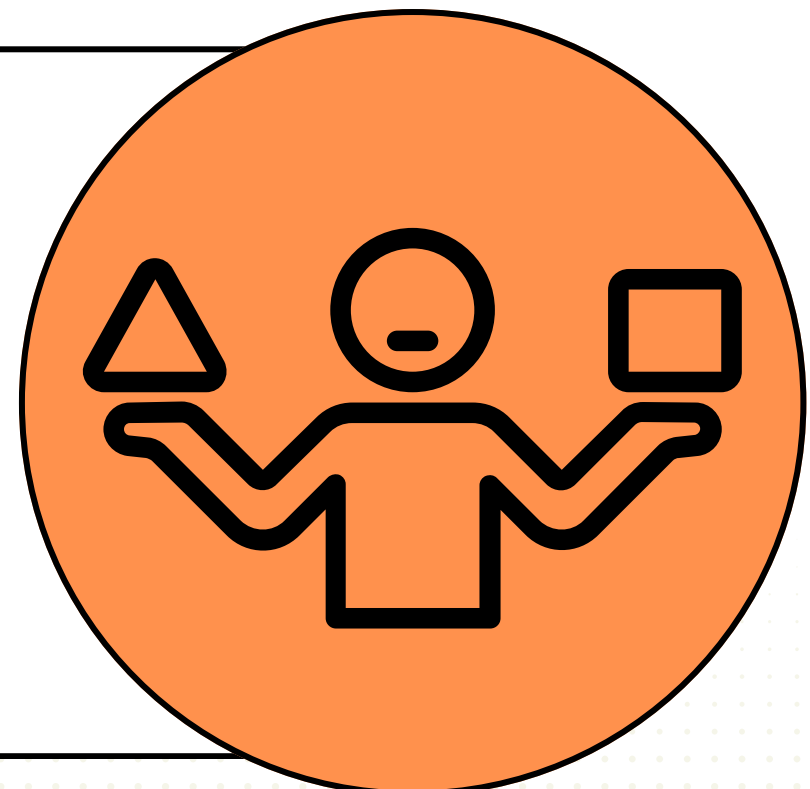


03. SPOKESPERSON SHARE OUT

Call out one number (1, 2, or 3), and invite that person in each group to share their group's answer.

04. VARIATION

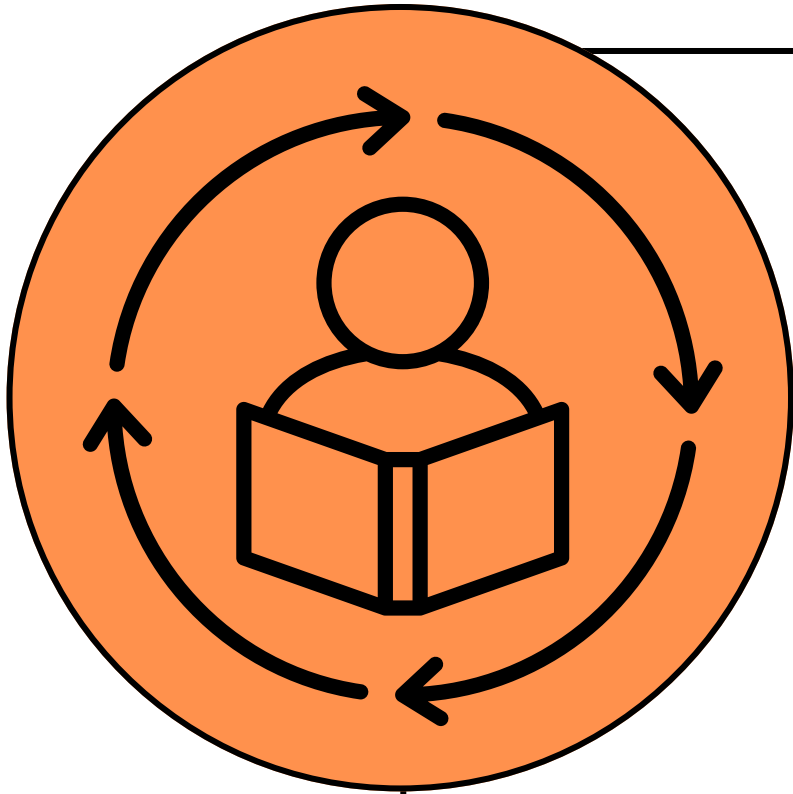
Assign each group a letter. When inviting responses, call out one letter and one number (e.g., "A3") to identify a specific group and person.



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MUSICAL MINGLE

Goal: To share information and gain multiple perspectives on a topic through small group conversation.



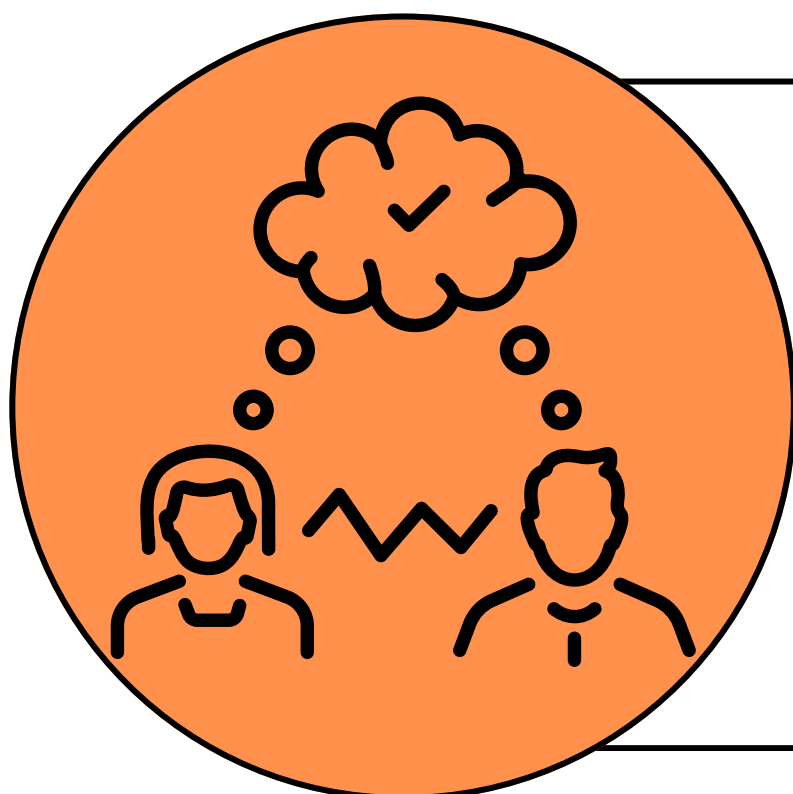
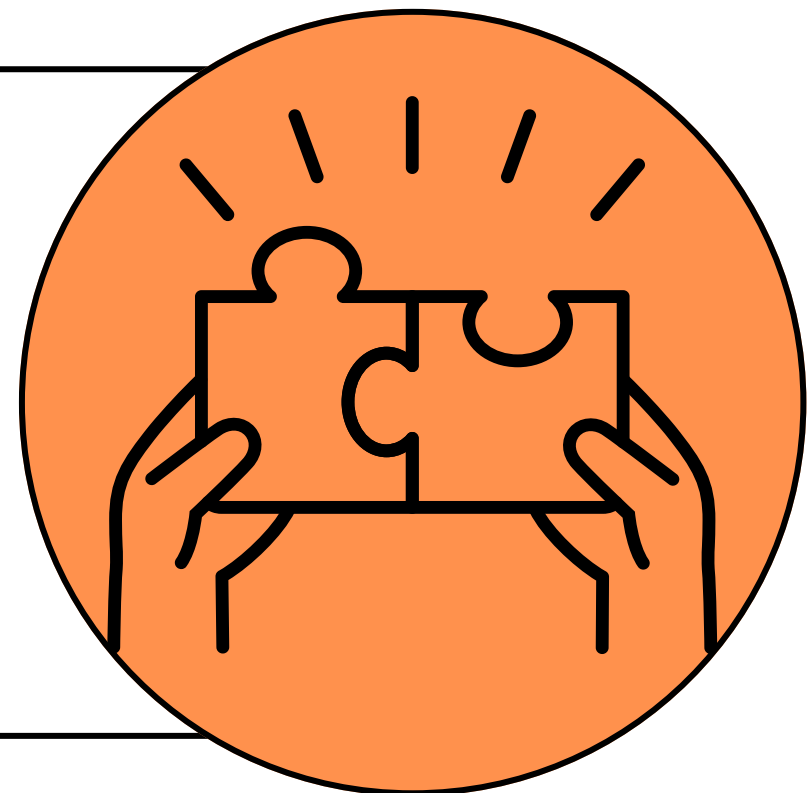
01. FEEL THE MUSIC

The teacher begins playing music and invites students to listen to it. When they hear the music, students move or gently dance around the room and find three others to hold hands with to form a circle of four.

(Tip: Use Suno an AI music tool to create a customized themed music for your students.

02. MUSIC WALK & STOP

Students continue walking in a circle while holding hands until the music stops. Once the music stops, students stop moving and drop their hands.

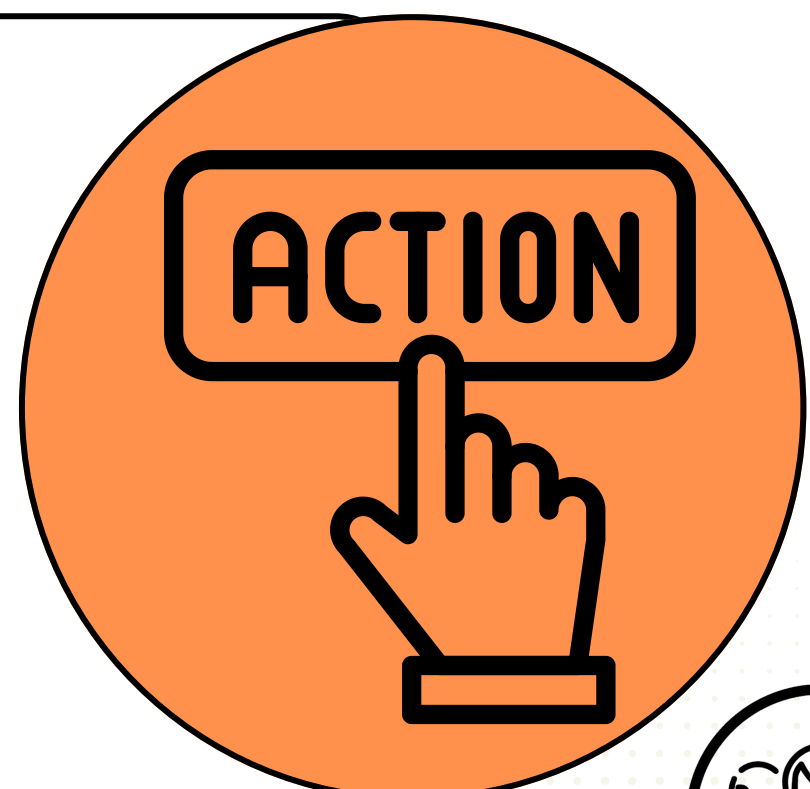


03. READ AND THINK

The teacher reads aloud a prompt, then students think silently for 30 seconds about what they want to share and how they might best express themselves.

04. SHARING AND ACTIVE LISTENING

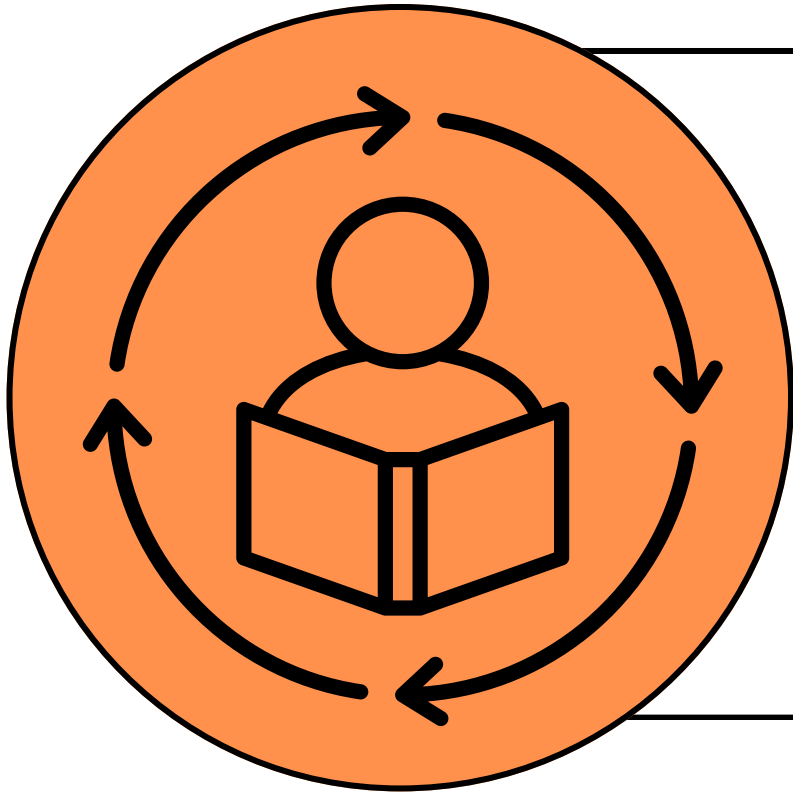
After 30 seconds, the teacher gives the signal and students label themselves A, B, C, or D. Group member A shares with his or her group first. While sharing, students should listen carefully, speak clearly, and make eye contact. Repeat step 8 with group members B, C, and D.



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ROUND ROBIN RESPONSES

Goal: Share ideas as a whole group while promoting equity of voice.

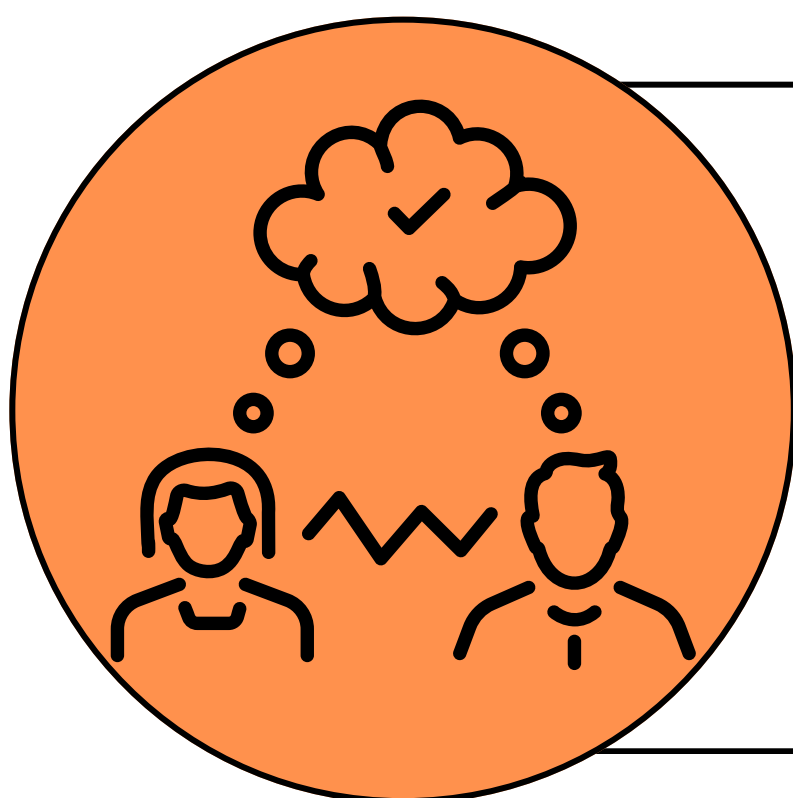
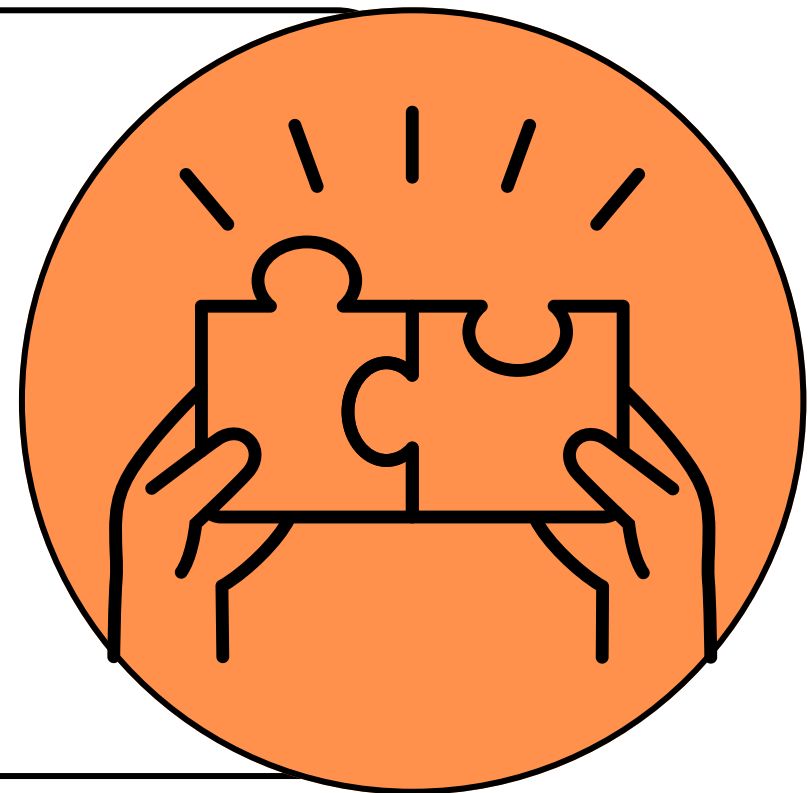


01. SHARE THE PROMPT

Share the prompt for response, providing a reasonable amount of thinking, sketching and processing time.

02. ROUND ROBIN RESPONSE TIME

Identify one participant to respond first. When this first participant has finished sharing, they pass to the person next to them, and continue around the circle from there (either clockwise or counterclockwise).

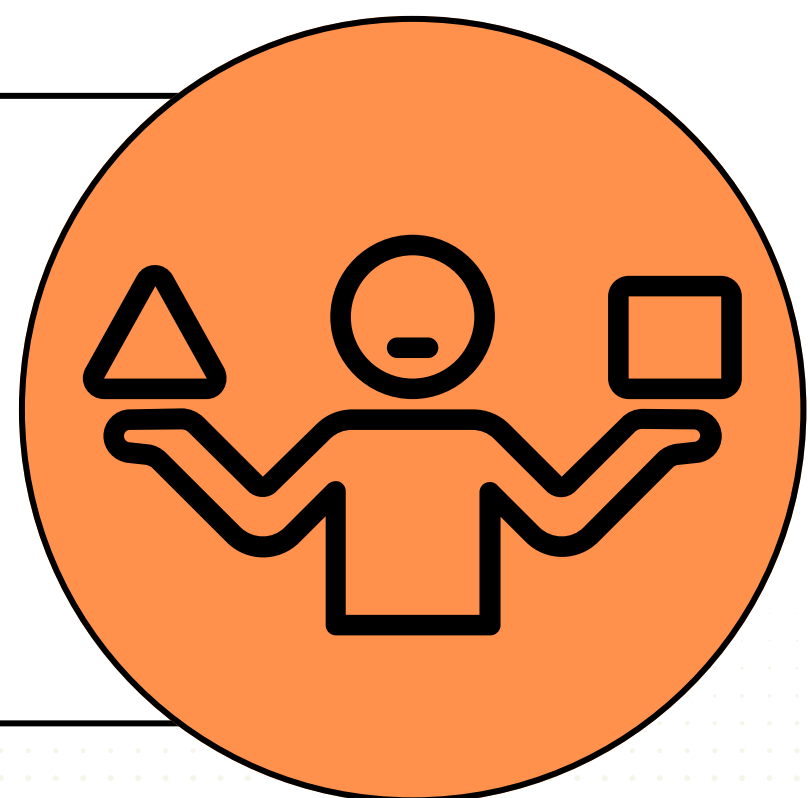


03. STUDENT SHARE OUTS

Continue until all students have had the opportunity to share.

04. VARIATION

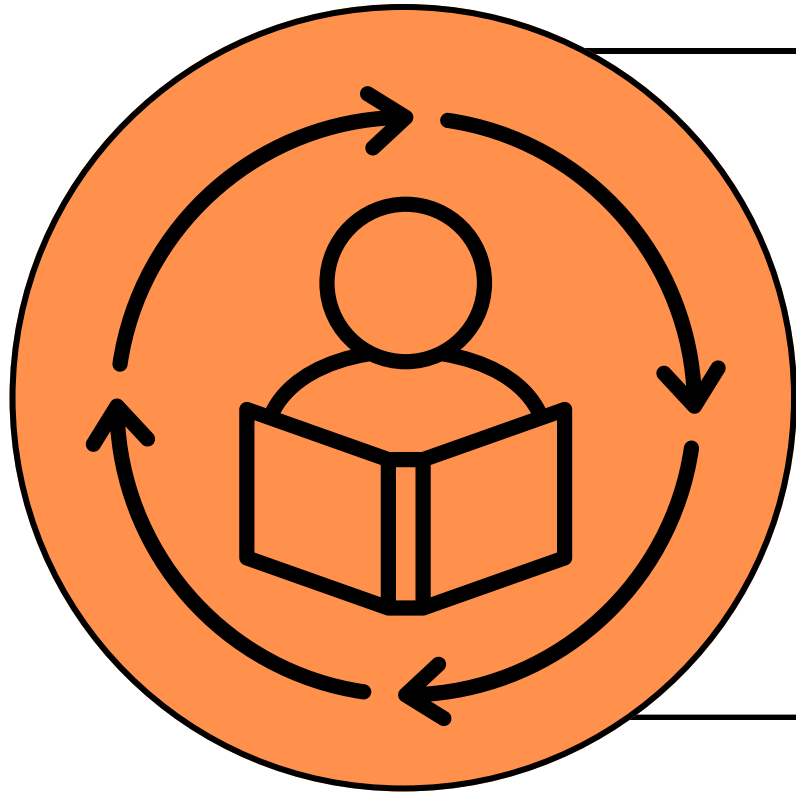
Order of sharing can be determined by other variables such as alphabetical order, reverse alphabetical order, height, birthdate, etc.



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PINKY SHARE

Goal: A method for finding a partner with whom to share information.



01. STAND & FIND A PINKY PARTNER

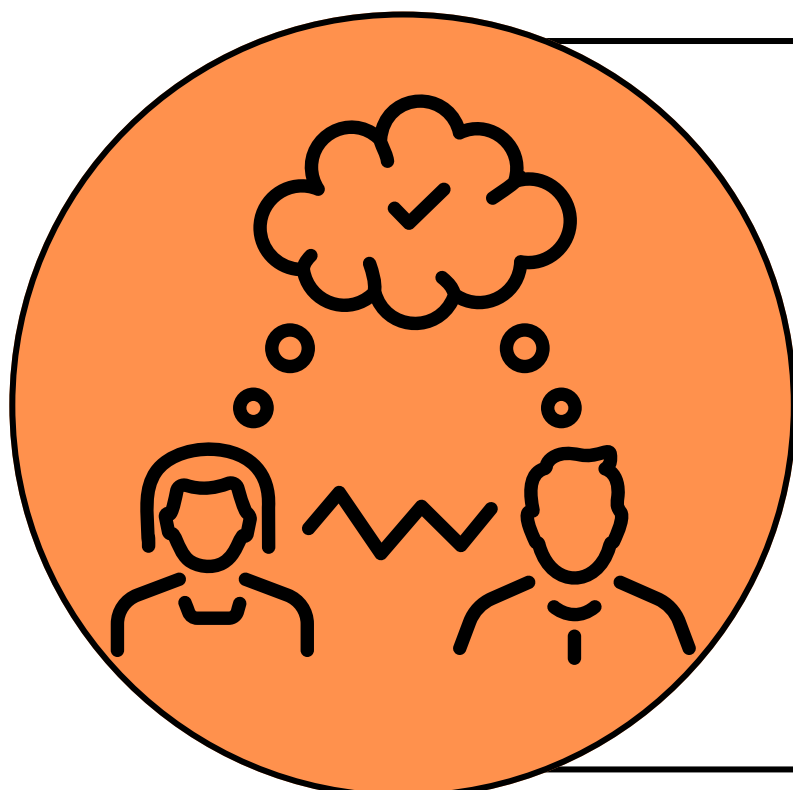
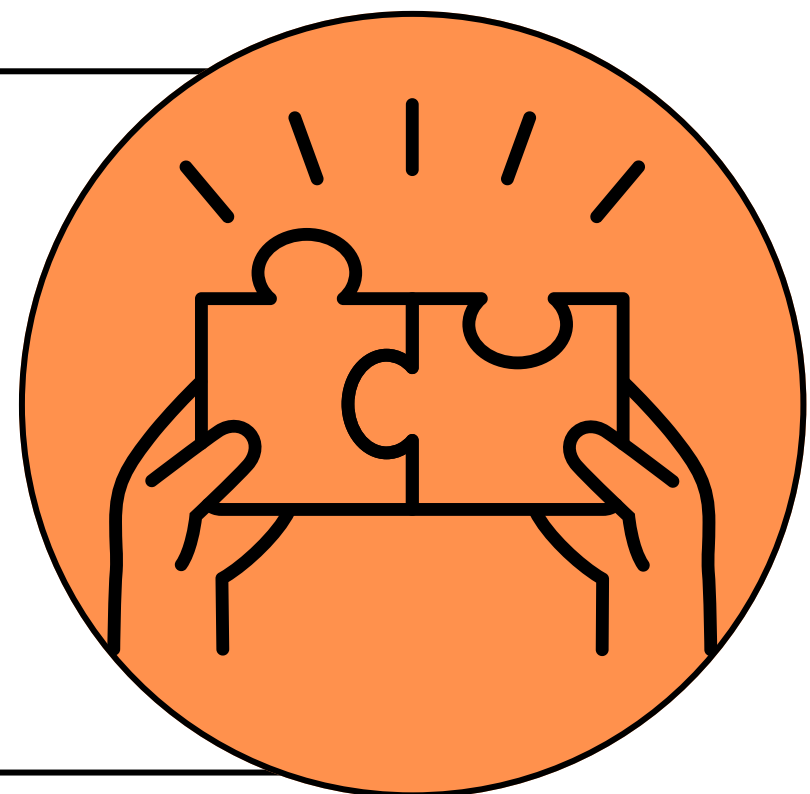
Students stand up with their work or ideas and place one pinky in the air. Signal students to move calmly and quietly to link pinkies with a partner.

02. PAIR & SHARE

Partners label themselves A and B.

Partner A shares his or her work or ideas while partner B listens.

Partner B shares his or her work or ideas while partner A listens.



03. TENT COMPLETION GESTURE

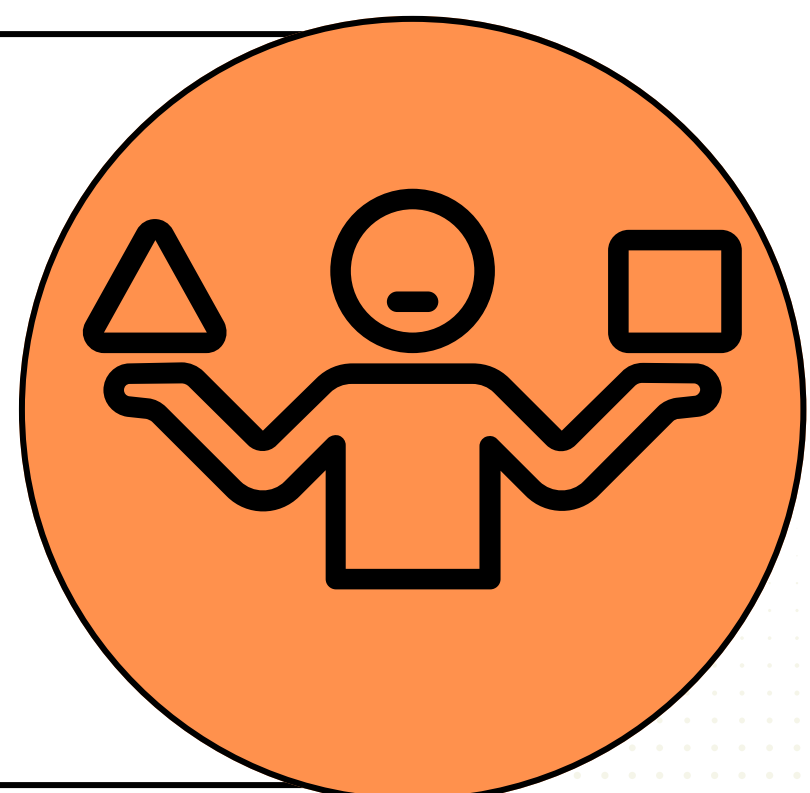
Once both partners have shared, encourage them to safely make a tent with their arms to show they are done.

Students repeat steps 2-6 with new partners as necessary.

04. VARIATIONS

Give students a sentence starter or sentence frame to use during discussion.

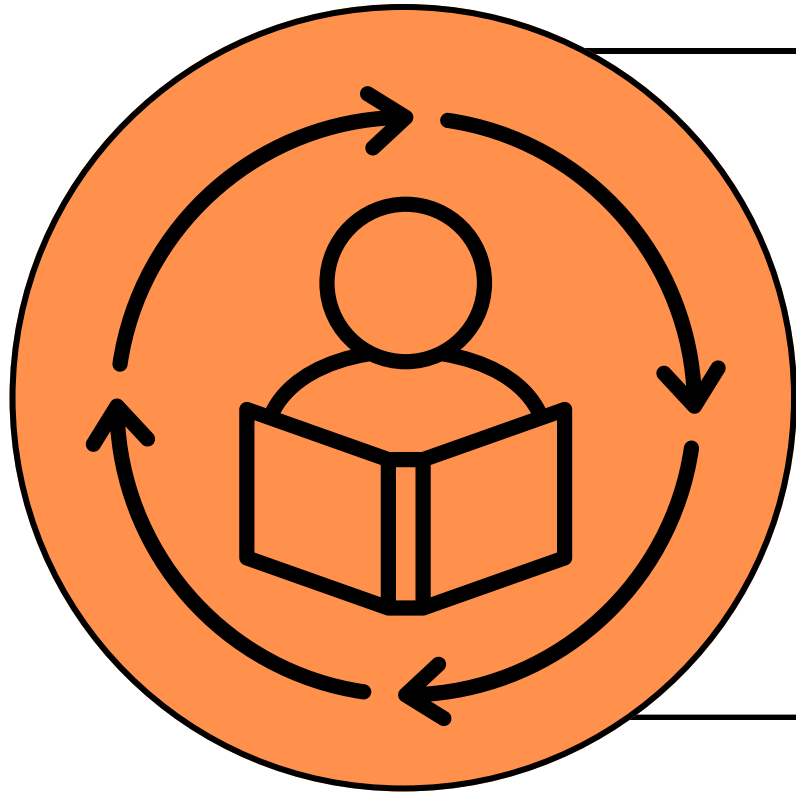
Have students share with multiple partners to hear a variety of perspectives or to reinforce learning.



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SPECTRUM OF SELF

Goal: A quick, visual, and engaging method of determining where students are in relation to a preference or mastery of a learning target.

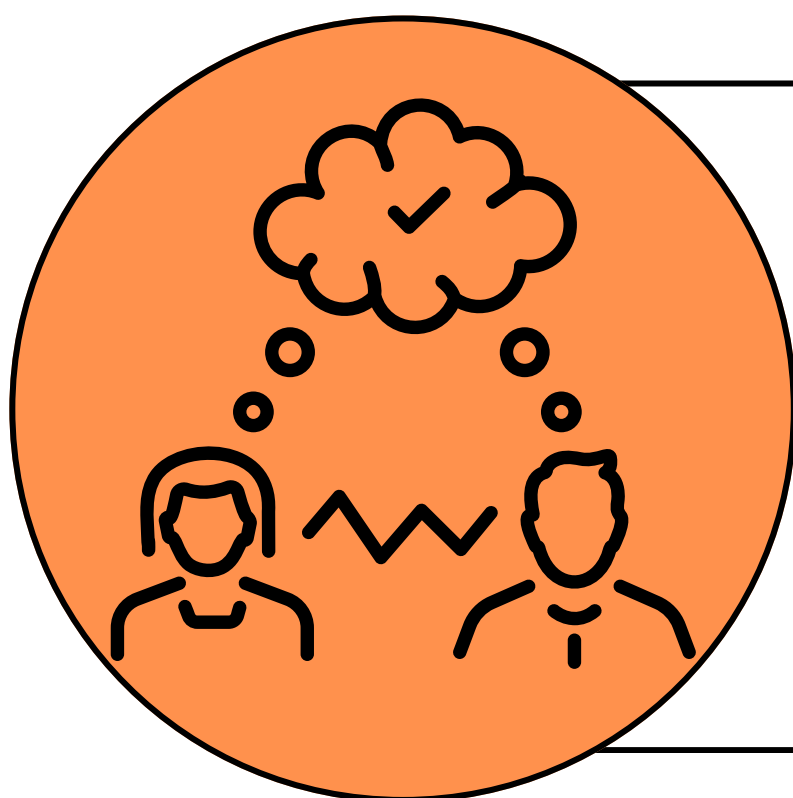
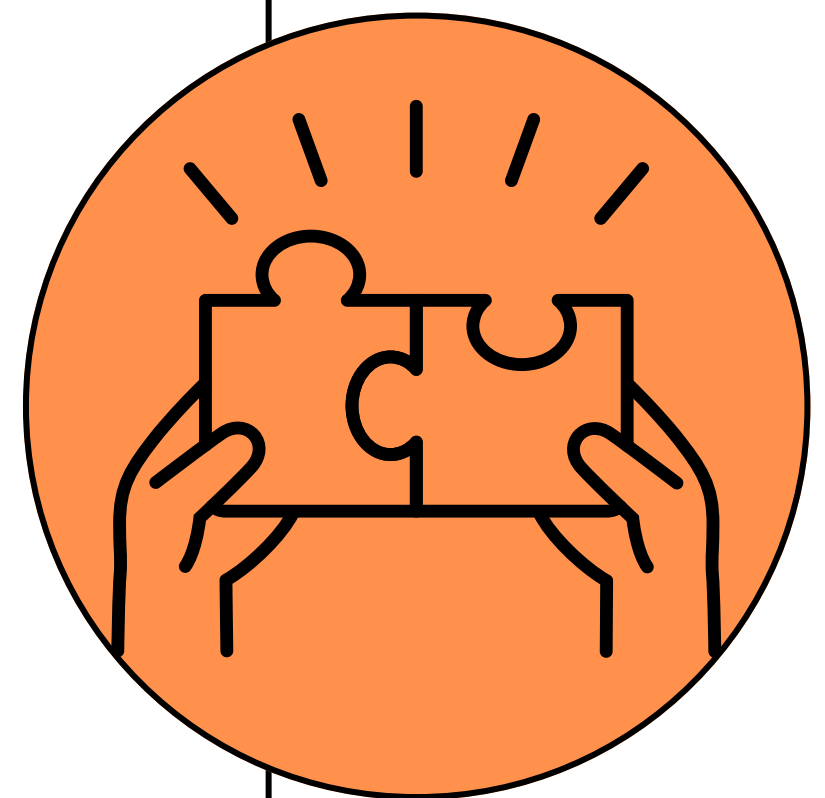


01. IDENTIFY TWO ENDS OF THE SPECTRUM

Identify two ends of the spectrum, (e.g., That is SO me! or Who Me? Couldn't Be) or levels of understanding or mastery (e.g., Very confused or I've got this!) as labels for two opposite ends of the classroom or hallway.

02. TAKE A STAND

Have students then stand along the spectrum in a place that best represents their preference or current level of understanding. For example, if a student feels neutral about the prompt, they may stay right in the middle of the two labeled ends. Or if the prompt is "I am the tallest/oldest in our Crew," then students should end up in height or age order along the spectrum.

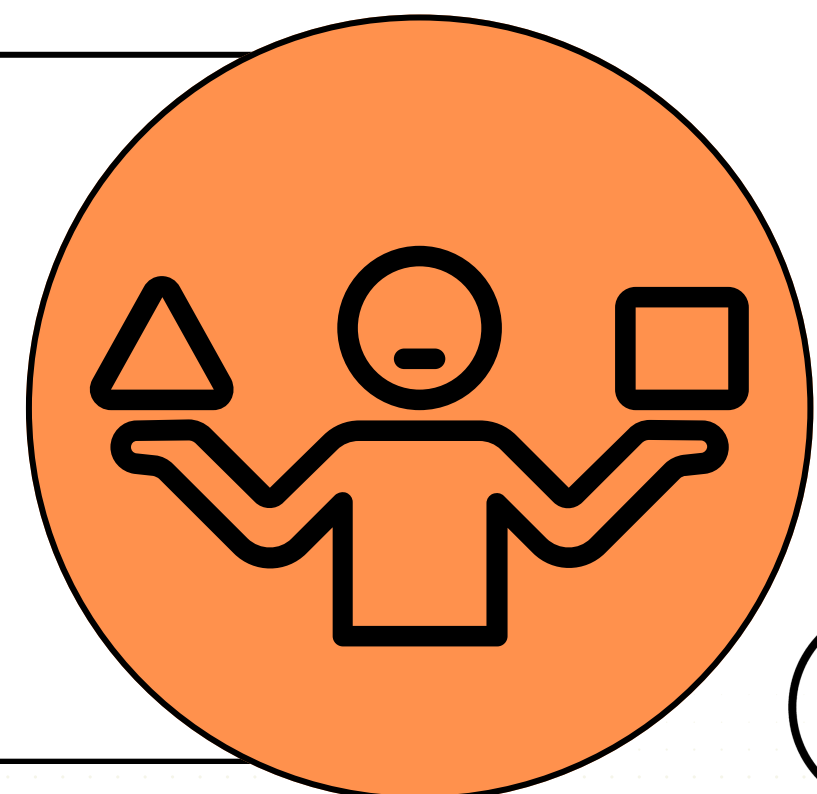


03. REFLECT ON YOUR LEARNING

Periodically pause between prompts to invite students to reflect aloud about their choices, either with a nearby partner or with the whole group.

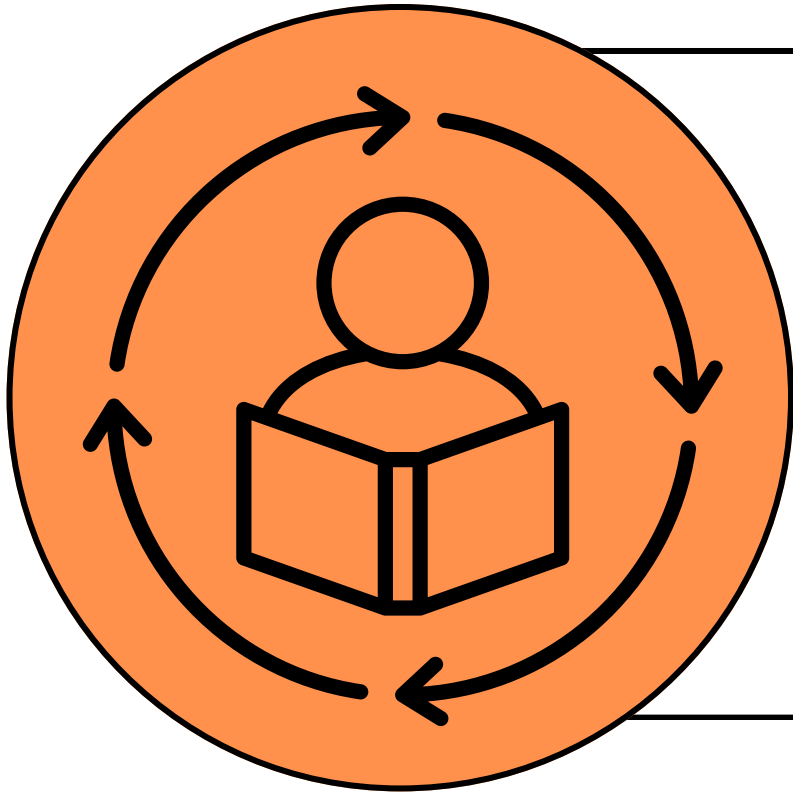
04. VARIATION

Scaffold this activity by labeling a scale of 1–10 on the floor or along a perpendicular wall to help participants identify more closely where on the spectrum they'd like to stand.



THINK - PAIR - SHARE

Goal: Practice sharing your voice and listening to others.

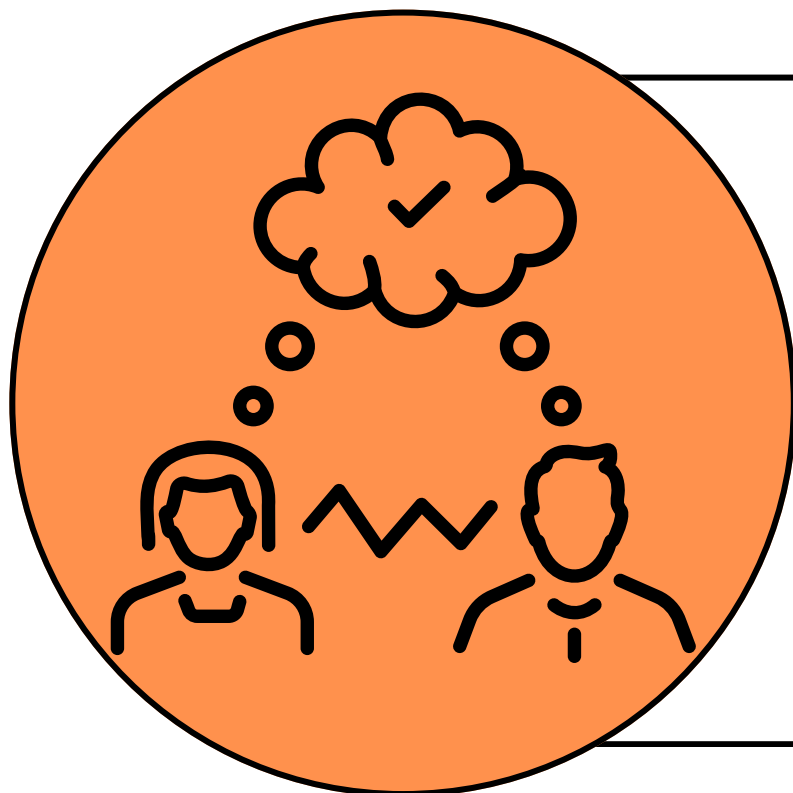
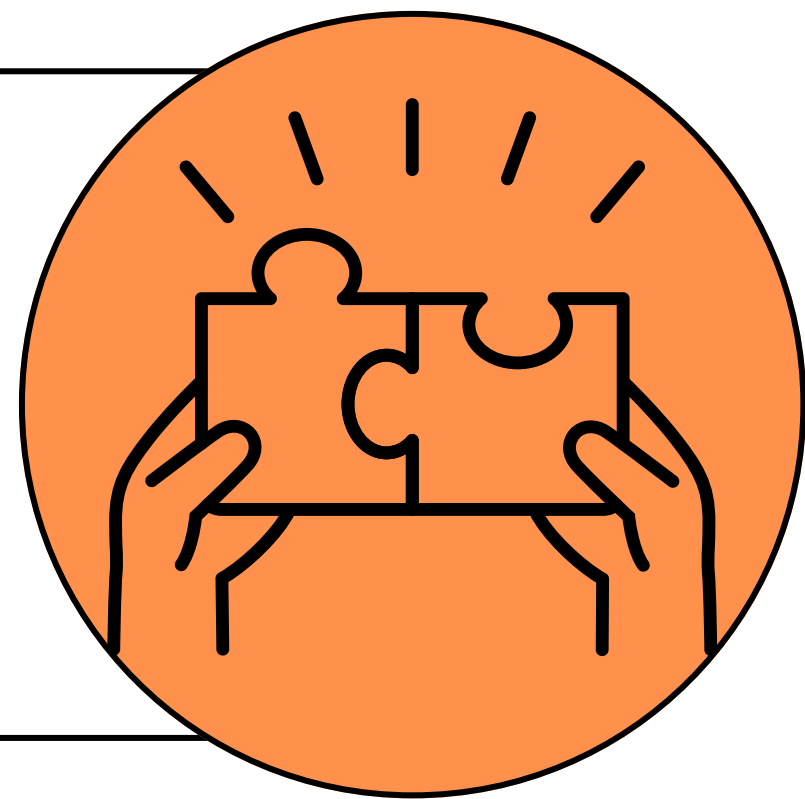


01. THINK

Take a moment to reflect quietly as you gather your thoughts on the topic presented or question posed.

02. PAIR

Turn to a partner and share your idea. Then actively listen to the idea or learning connections your partner has to share.

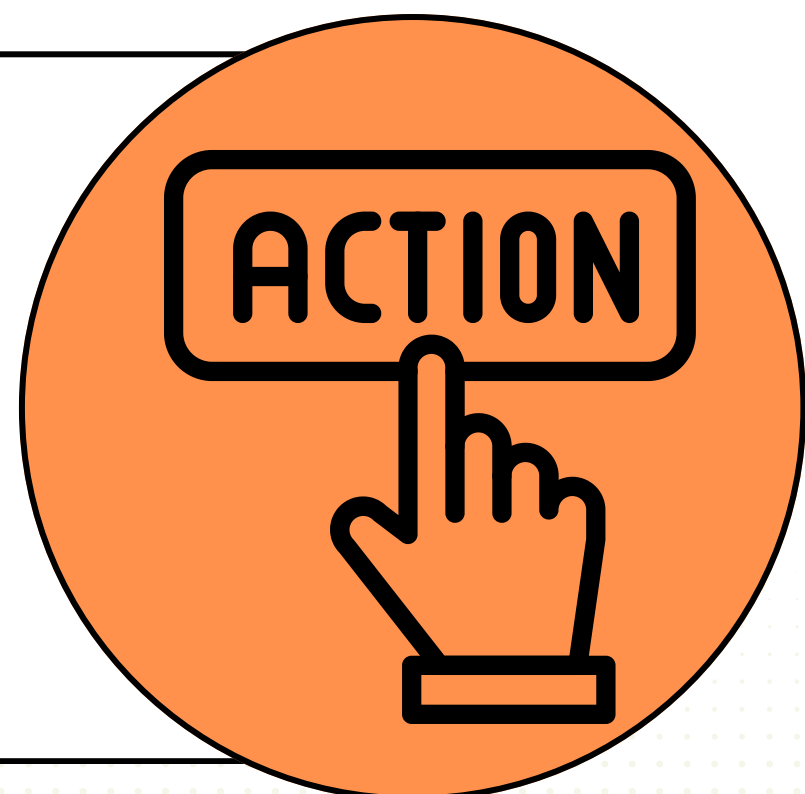


03. SHARE

Be prepared to present a concise summary of the new ideas or critical insights you've gained from your partner's comments to the entire class.

04. REMEMBER AND REFLECT

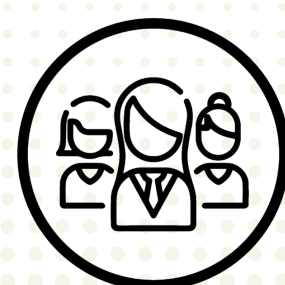
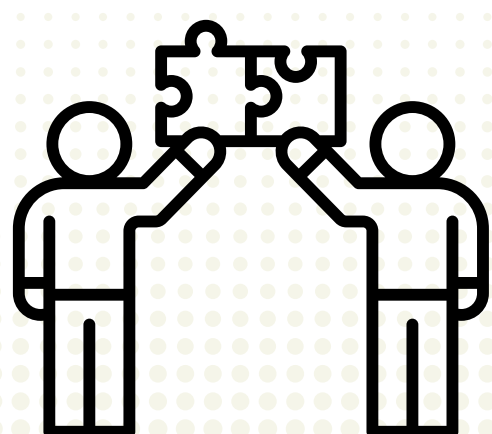
Good listeners help ideas grow! Reflect on your new learning and pose any questions you still may have.



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CREATIVE AND UNIQUE STUDENT GROUPING STRATEGIES

- **Clock Partners** or **Phone a Friend**: Are great ways to pose a question to students, give them time to think about it, and then have them pair up with their “clock partners” or “Phone A Friend” to share their responses.
- **Dot Stickers on Handouts**: Place multi-colored dot stickers on handouts before class. Students form pairs/groups with others who have the same color dot on their handouts. Likewise, you can have students form mixed groups composed of students who have each color dot.
- Naomi’s **Dynamic Duo’s or Transformative Trio’s**: Have students choose a picture card from picture card deck that is premade of forming famous duo’s or trio’s. (Ex. may include Batman and Robin, PB and Jelly etc).
- **"Find someone who..."**: Ask students to find a partner who has a specific trait, such as a birthday month or hair color.
- **Line-up Sorting**: Have students line up according to a specific rule like their birth order, the number of letters in their name, or the last two digits of their phone number, then divide the line into groups.
- **Paint Swatches**: Give each student a paint swatch and have them find others with the same color.
- **Playing Cards or Colored Index Cards**: Assign groups based on the suit or color (clubs, diamonds, hearts, spades) or number/face value of cards. *(Thanks to Teach & Curate for the FREE premade cards from TPT)*
- **Popsicle Stick Matching**: Write matching stickers or words on several Popsicle sticks and have students find their partner(s).
- **Postcard Puzzles**: Cut postcards with images or text into a specific number of pieces for each group and have students find their teammates and solving the puzzle at the same time.



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The Compassionate Classroom



THE COMPASSIONATE CLASSROOM GLOBAL CARD PROJECT



The Global Compassionate Classroom Card Project

How It Works – Holiday 2025 Timeline Global Card Exchange

Let's spread kindness across classrooms and across the globe! Here's the simple step-by-step plan for this year's global card exchange.

Step 1: Sign up between November 1 - 15, 2025

Complete the registration form to join the project. Indicate your grade level band and preference (U.S. or international partner).

Step 2: Get Matched - By November 18, 2025

You'll receive an email with details about your partner classroom. Start planning your exchange and introduce the project to your students!

Step 3: Create Cards of Kindness - Nov. 18 - Dec. 5, 2025

Students design holiday cards filled with kind messages. Choose handmade, digital, or both! *Optional:* Work on a "Compassionate Creation" project, making crafts, blankets, or gifts for local nursing homes, shelters, or families in need.

Step 4: Mail or Share - Send by December 5, 2025

Ship or digitally share your classroom's cards with your partner. Consider adding photos of your classroom working on the project (with permission).

Step 5: Celebrate & Reflect - By December 15, 2025

Share received cards with your students and discuss what compassion looks like in different communities. Complete a short reflection to celebrate your impact and inspire others.

Bonus for Educators

All participating educators will receive Naomi Louise's ["The Compassionate Classroom Companion" Guide](#) - a guide for building empathetic, inclusive, and globally connected classrooms, as well as Naomi's <https://bit.ly/2025GlobalProjects> Webinar Series



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