

# Intentional Instructional Moves

Strategic Steps to  
Accelerate Student  
Learning

## Companion Guide

Chapter 4: Cognitive Engagement  
Intentional Step Three



## Chapter 4

### Intentional Step Three: Encourage Students to Learn from Each Other

The teacher can help redirect interactions from primarily teacher-to-student-to-teacher to student-to-student by using carefully designed group work and scaffolded approaches to sharing ideas. We want to promote the notion that students can learn a great deal from each other and that effective interactions with their peers can help them achieve their academic goals. To help design the most effective peer-to-peer learning, teachers should ensure that group work is seen as meaningful and productive.

Some students might resist working with their peers due to preexisting fears or a desire to work alone. Here is where teachers can remind them about the importance of learning to work together as a team (CELT, n.d.). Even if they want to work independently, their future career will most likely require that they work alongside others. Teachers can help students develop this skill by thinking more purposefully about why they want students to work in groups. What do they want students to learn and accomplish? The goal isn't simply to make the task more interesting, but to practice valuable SEL and career skills. Clearly articulate these objectives to the class and offer guidelines for group behavior.

#### Strategy 1: Write-Pair-Share

The teacher asks a question and gives students a brief period of time (less than five minutes) to think about and write down their responses. At the end of the writing period, students share their responses with a neighbor. They are only allowed to share exactly what they've written and shouldn't add anything to their answer. Including this parameter will encourage them

to write out their thoughts more clearly. After both partners have shared, the pair selects the best answer to share with the class.

This activity provides a defined time when students think about what to write, write down their ideas, and turn to their partners to read their answers and discuss. Write–Pair–Share helps students organize and plan their thoughts before they share them. It allows students to hear each other's ideas and consider different points of view through small group learning (.47). Because everyone must share their written responses, it ensures that every student is heard, which hopefully helps them become braver about sharing ideas. While facilitating the activity, teachers can also assess students' thinking and writing skills.

### Strategy 2: Trade a Thought

This strategy can be adapted for both younger and older students. Using a graphic organizer, students write their responses to a prompt given by the teacher. For grades K-2, students will draw a picture and then write a sentence beneath the picture. They then trade papers with a partner and take turns sharing and listening to each other's ideas. Afterward, the teacher leads a class discussion where students explain what their partner shared. Older students will write out their thoughts on the graphic organizer. Then, students form groups of three and share their ideas while the other group members record them. The teacher might follow these group discussions with a whole-class conversation where students share the thoughts they collected from their classmates and come up with an answer. See the “Trade a Thought” handout for an example of this graphic organizer.

This strategy aims to create a situation where Student A has to fully explain an idea to Student B, and then Student B must share that idea with the class, which promotes active

listening, learning, and thinking. Both examples require higher-rigor questions that help students reflect on their thoughts, share those thoughts with others, actively listen to classmates, and then share what they've learned. This can encourage positive peer influence (.53) as well as ideation, analysis, and critical thinking.