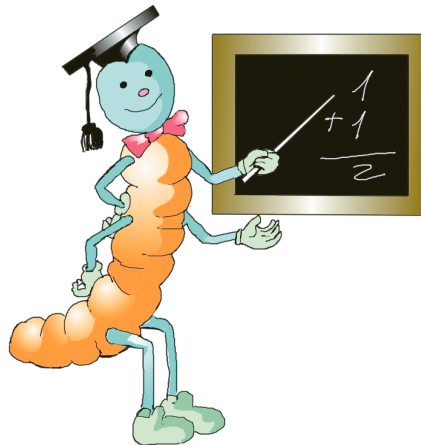


Student Engagement and Checking for Understanding Techniques

- 1) Positive Reinforcement of Behavior
- 2) Mode of Response
- 3) Arm and Hand Signals
- 4) Space
- 5) Involvement of Visitors
- 6) Do You Hear an Echo?
- 7) Specific Questions
- 8) Deliberate Mistakes
- 9) Circulation/Rapid with Hints



¹ adapted from Math Matters

Positive Reinforcement of Behavior

The key to any long-range successful program is *consistency*. This is very important in successful teaching. If students know what to expect, they will not have to waste time and energy “guessing” as to what kind of mood the teacher is in and adjust to the mood. You can establish a set of rules through positive reinforcement of the behavior that you want, as long as you are consistent. If you say “I’d like a quiet hand to give me the answer,” then you should expect and wait for a quiet hand. Gradually the “call-outs” will realize that they are not going to get recognized and get attention until they follow the rules.

Phrases that positively reinforce behavior:

“John has his pencil and paper on his desk. I like that.”

“Melissa is sitting in her seat quietly. I like that.”

“Mary is ready, Hector is ready....”

“Connie has a quiet hand, Laura has a quiet hand, Thank you.”

Besides behavior, **the content of the subject is another area in which positive reinforcement is important.** When one asks a specific question, generally three possibilities occur:

1. The child knows the answer and gives it.
2. The child does not know the answer, so he/she changes the premises of the question and answers the question that he/she knows the answer to.
3. He/she guesses wildly for attention.

It is the teacher’s role to decide which of the three occurred, and even if they did not give the answer the teacher wanted, to positively reinforce any logical reasoning and redirect their thinking from that point.

Mode of Response

Teachers should always give students a mode of response with built in wait time. By the time most students can think of what the answer is, someone has already called it out. With a mode of response students know that they are accountable, that the teacher will wait and they will be engaged!

Examples:

- raise a quiet hand -write on your whiteboard
- show on your fingers -tell a neighbor -go to the board
- talk it over with your group

Arm and Hand Signals

Arm and hand signals are used to allow students a consistent way of responding. Whether it be raising your hand or waving hands across each other to show disagreement, these silent modes allow everyone to participate without distracting from the lesson.

Examples:

- agreement: hands or thumbs up
- disagreement: hands waved across each other
- important question not related to subject: raise a “pinkie finger”
- I don’t know: hand moving back and forth over head
- display answers (show me on your fingers)
 - digit answers
 - operational symbols
 - letters from the alphabet
 - fractions/negative numbers

Space

The use of space in the classroom is important for a variety of reasons. A teacher must use full space of the classroom in the facilitating of the active involvement of as many children as possible. As one proceeds through a lesson, one moves to various parts of the room.

Benefits:

- Students have more, close contact with teacher.
- Less likely for students to hide in the back of the room than when teacher stays at overhead or desk.
- Less likely for two students to carry on an unnecessary conversation.
- Difficult for non-involved students to stay uninvolved given the proximity of the teacher.

Involvement of Visitors

Many teachers have daily interruptions in their class: special announcements, messages, visitors, phone calls, etc. Whenever a person comes into your room, it is automatic for the students to be distracted no matter what you are doing. It is important that the children relate visitors in conjunction with the teacher and then the transition from teacher to visitor is smooth. This technique allows you to include all visitors in the lesson by asking them to ask questions of your students.

Examples:

- “Ms. _____, would you check the first two rows and see if you see any answers that you like?”
- “Mr. _____, would you call on a quiet hand to answer my question?” It may be that the visitor does not know any names, and you could easily assist them by saying: “Tomas has a quiet hand, Regina has a quiet hand, etc., Who would you like to call on?”

Extension: To include students who may not be involved in the lesson, ask the question, “Peter, would you check your row and

see if there are any answers that you like?” While Peter may not be paying attention, by looking at the papers, he could possibly be thinking of how different people got the answer and gradually start participating again.

Do You Hear an Echo?

When you the teacher, ask a question of your class and a student answers, what is your response? Do you ever repeat the response? Do you always repeat the response? Why do you respond as you do? Does your response enhance the lesson or does it tend to allow the other students not to pay attention to their classmates and just wait for you to repeat the answer that you determine acceptable?

If one always repeats the students' responses or repeats it using one's own preferred response, then students will never have to listen to each other. They have learned that if it is important, the teacher will repeat it. Thus having the children try and work in cooperative groups will be more difficult as they are not use to having to listen to each other.

Examples:

“Would you please repeat your answer, but first let me go over to the opposite side of the room.”

“Raise your hand if you heard Peter.”

“Who can repeat what Sara said?”

“If you heard it, whisper it to a neighbor who didn't hear it.”

“How many students understood Martha's answer?”

“Who can give another explanation in their own words?”

Specific Questions

In class, students should never have to guess at what the teacher is asking, yet oftentimes teachers ask questions that are vague, but in the teacher's mind require a specific answer. If the question posed is not specific, but a specific answer is wanted, an unrealistic expectation has been set. Teachers should try to phrase questions that led to deeper understanding of the concept or helps the teacher know how much of the teaching objective, the student is developing.

Deliberate Mistakes

The techniques of deliberate "mistakes" sets the tone that allows the children to see that it is not bad to make a mistake. When introducing the technique, one should be very obvious, and work to get every student to show their silent disagreement.

Examples:

Mistakes can be made in •spelling •answers •operations
•symbols and •facts.

Procedures:

Never use when introducing an objective, but afterwards to focus and reinforce the concept. When a child corrects a mistake, the teacher may listen to the child's instruction and follow them literally. When a child makes a mistake and others are quietly disagreeing, it becomes very easy for that student to call on one of his/her classmates and find out what he/she disagrees with.

Circulation/ Rapid with Hints

When the mode of response given is “on your paper,” then the teacher will invariably check to see what the children are writing. This technique can be accomplished with the students showing the teacher through a mode of response or by quickly walking around the room.

Procedures:

Rapid check of all or sample of papers.

Verbal hints given to the entire class:

- helps students with the incorrect answer to refocus.
- keeps students with the correct answer listening and involved.