

PEACE POWER TOOLS

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Response Cards/ Slates

Summary:

Response Cards are reusable cards or signs that can be held up simultaneously by individuals in a group setting (i.e. classroom) in response to a question or problem. The response card strategy is a simple, low-cost, and enjoyable means of encouraging active participant engagement in teacher-led settings. This strategy was developed because the traditional hand-raising in academic settings affords a limited number of youth the opportunity to respond to questions or problems, and may limit recognition and learning for those who are more shy. In addition, response cards substantially increase rates of praise and recognition.

Resources Needed:

- Response cards for each participant (i.e. white laminated particle boards or chalk boards)
- Dry erase markers (or chalk) for each participant
- Overhead projector (if needed)

Implementation Steps:

- Following instruction or presentation of material, spend 10 minutes explaining the response card procedures.
- Ask participants a question in review of a presented fact or concept. *It is important to pose questions which are answerable with no more than one or two words (i.e. "true or false", "multiple choice" or "open response").*
- Then say "**Write**" to cue participants to begin writing their answer. Alert participants that answers are to be no more than one or two words.
- Depending on the reading and comprehension levels of participants, it is suggested that questions be read aloud twice and simultaneously projected on an overhead projector.
- After a few moments (silently count 5s), ask participants to raise their response cards above their heads so that everyone's answers can be seen by saying "**Hold up your cards**".
- Quickly scan all of the answers offering praise and feedback (i.e. "Good, everyone, the answer is..." or "I see many of you wrote..., which is the correct answer" or "I see no one has the right answer. The right answer is..."). Some individual recognition can also be worked into teacher response for those whose performance improves, but it is important that most recognition be to all who give the right answer.
- For about 20 minutes, repeat the same procedure for every question asked. However, if participants seem to get distracted (i.e. doodling on the response card) it may be necessary to introduce a contingency, such as 2 minutes of free time (i.e. drawing on the response card) at the end of the day if most children get the responses correct.

Variations:

- Choral responding is an effective low-cost strategy where individuals chant (or sign) answers to oral or visual prompts. Choral responding may be particularly appropriate for some cultural groups, including many African American populations.
- As with response cards, the instructor provides praise and feedback after each prompt and group response.

Rationale and Evidence Base:

There is considerable evidence that the use of response cards as an active engagement strategy among elementary students in classroom settings is superior to hand raising. When

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response cards were used, students had more opportunities to respond, were more apt to remain on task and were more likely to show academic improvement than when hand raising was used. In studies with youth residing in inner city neighborhoods, response card use was associated with substantial reductions in class disruptions and behavior problems. In addition to being low in cost, the youth in these studies reportedly enjoyed using response cards. Research shows that the traditional method of hand-raising yields a lower cumulative effect over an entire school year than the response card method with a class size of 20. Additional research shows that learning associated with response card use can be sustained over time. Research also suggests that response cards may be effective with larger groups. Instructor time is an important cost associated with the implementation of new strategies, yet response cards require very little preparation prior to a given lesson. Finally, the response card strategy can be used in the home.

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Julia Wesley & Mark A. Mattaini

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Response Cards originated in Native American cultures and is referred to in *Talking Circles*. In a Talking Circle, a topic or issue is written on a card. Then the card is passed around the Talking Circle with the following rules:

1. Only the person holding the card can speak
2. Participants in the talking circle must remain quiet while others speak (no planning what they'll say)
3. People can "pass" on their turn, but they are not to speak until it is their turn
4. Performance is not the purpose – instead they are to be brief so that others can have a turn.

Pairs of group members work together and each writes down one positive behavior that he or she has observed in his or her partner. These observations are shared with the group. Group members change partners. This exercise offers a way to observe and practice recognition skills. Response cards or slates involve modeling and skills training. In today's Western culture, an individual's recognition skills in one area may not transfer to other areas. Also, there are some whose recognition skills are actually poorly developed.