

Numbered Heads

(Created by Spencer Kagan)

This strategy was first observed on a T.V. game show, in which it was used as a light-hearted way of ensuring that all contestants received a turn. Spencer Kagan has formalized it for the classroom, referring to it as Numbered Heads. The strategy is also known as Quiz Show.

To implement this activity:

- Divide the class into teams of four members.
- Assign the numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4 to the members of each team. If there are extra students, then create teams of five, and ask two students to share the '4' role.
- The teacher then directs a question to all of the teams, eg "What is the chemical formula for water?"
- Each team discusses the question, and attempts to reach consensus on the answer.
- The teacher then calls out a number between 1 and 4, such as 3, and all 3's then raise their hand to provide their team's answer.
- After receiving the correct answer, the teacher moves on to other questions. The four numbers are chosen at random during usage of this strategy.

The self-esteem of students who sometimes struggle with their work is boosted immeasurably by Numbered Heads. Instead of being constantly embarrassed by their lack of knowledge, these students will frequently be able to give the correct answer.

As well, the dilemma of under-achieving high ability students can be partly resolved with this strategy. Just as the brilliant try scorer in a sports team is lauded by the team members, so too the student who manages to provide many of the answers for their 'academic' team.

Talking Chips

(Created by Spencer Kagan)

Description: Teammates place a "talking chip" in the center of the team table each time they talk. When they're out of chips, they may not talk until all teammates have used their chips.

- Each student receives one "talking chip." The chips can be any kind of game token, or a pen, pencil, eraser, slip of paper, or any other tangible item. It is preferable if each student has a unique color for his/her chips.
- The students are given an open-ended discussion topic such as, "Where in the world would you most want to live and why?" To speak, a teammate must place his or her chip in the center of the team table. It is his or her turn to speak. Teammates cannot interrupt and must practice respectful listening.
- When he or she is finished, another student places his or her chip in the center of the team table and is free to add to the discussion. When a student uses his or her "talking chip", he or she cannot speak until all teammates have added to the discussion and placed their chip in the center of the table.
- When everyone has had a chance to speak, each student collects her or his chips and continues with the discussion, using "talking chips" or start again with a new topic.

Talking Chips regulates discussion, ensuring that everyone participates and everyone contributes. Shy students, low achievers, and less-fluent students are encouraged by the social norms of the structure to fully participate and develop their language skills, too.