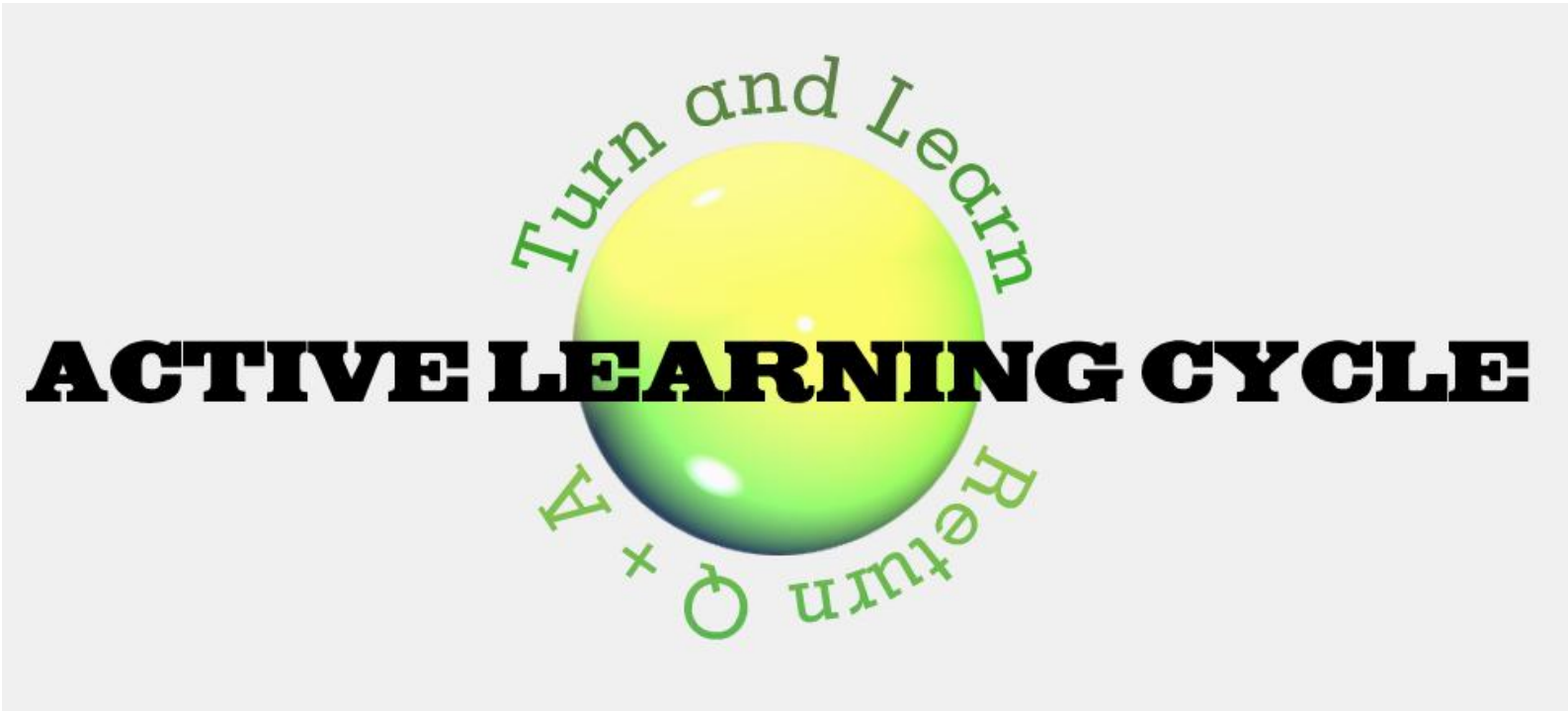
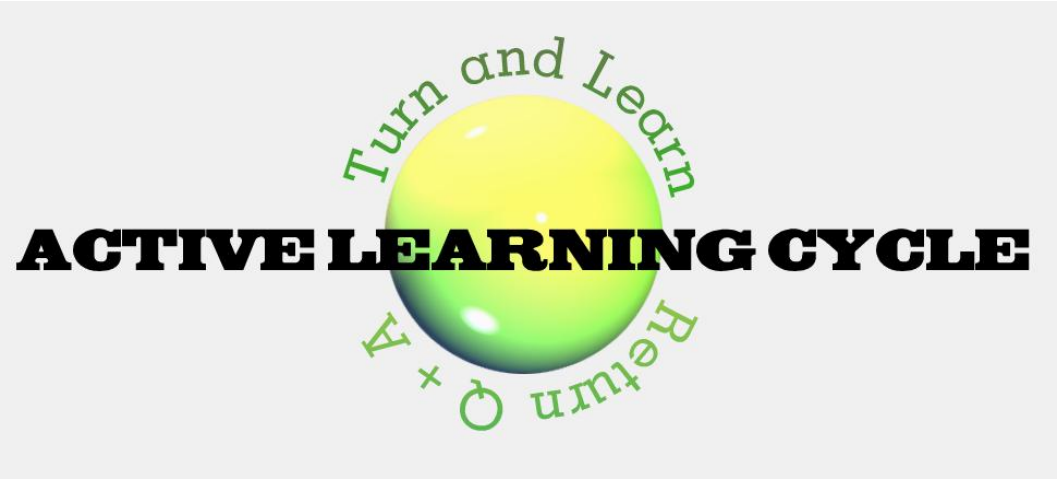


ACTIVE LEARNING CYCLE

The Positive Engagement Project

Making a difference...not a dollar.



Having students deliberately speak with one another and being an active participant during a lesson is not a new innovation. There are numerous versions of how to get students engaged in active learning. According to Silberman, M. 1996 (Active Learning: 101 Strategies to Teach Any Subject), "When learning is active, students do most of the work. They use their brains...studying ideas, solving problems, and applying what they learn. Active learning is fast-paced, fun, supportive, and personally engaging… To learn something well, it helps to hear it, see it, ask questions about it, and discuss it with others. Above all, students need to 'do it'--figure things out by themselves, come up with examples, try out skills, and do assignments that depend on the knowledge they already have or must acquire."

The Positive Engagement Project incorporates a simple cycle of cues to add to lessons that signal to the students when to learn with a partner (Turn and Learn) and when to give their attention back to the instructor (Return Q + A). When I look back on my college days, I remember walking out of a lecture with a friend or two and scheduling study sessions to "learn" what we just listened to for the past hour. I felt that if I couldn't explain it to someone, I really didn't understand it. It is with that thought in mind that we incorporate the *Active Learning Cycle* into all learning opportunities. Within lessons presented to students, it is important to pause frequently to give them an

opportunity to work with the information they're given. You may ask them to respond to a question, to summarize important concepts in writing, or compare notes with a partner.

We have several variations of both pieces of the **Active Learning Cycle – Turn** and **Learn and Return Q + A**. Though these are simple concepts, they are sometimes the easiest parts of a lesson to skip. The idea is to present your learners with a question that requires some thought and can be discussed with others. This allows the students to gain confidence answering whole group, because they do not feel singled out or required to have a ready answer, as they have had an opportunity for trying out their idea and refining it before presenting it to a larger group.

Learning Partners

It is important to set up "Learning Partners" in your class right away. Learning Partners are pairs of students that will work together whenever the "Turn and Learn" technique is used in the classroom. Be sure to assign Learning Partners rather than just saying "Turn and Learn". When you don't assign partners, students frequently turn to the more popular student and leave the other person out.

Give your Learning Partners a title that clearly differentiates them from each other. Here are some examples: 1's and 2's, peanut butter

and jelly, rights and lefts, or any other clever combination you decide to use. For our examples, we will use the terms 1's and 2's.

Turn and Learn (Class Conference Cue)

Turn and Learn is a strategy/cue to get students actively involved in classes of any size. This technique requires students to (1) think individually about a topic or answer to a question; and (2) share ideas with Learning Partners. There are multiple ways to use the Turn and Learn to promote student engagement and allowing them the opportunity to verbally express thoughts and information. The technique's name is exactly what we want kids to do: Turn (their bodies) and Learn (not talk, but truly learn the information).

For any of the options below, be sure to allow "reflection time" before the students actually work with each other. Students need the opportunity to process the information before engaging with another student. The "reflection time" increases the quality of student responses.

Option A: Reflect…..Turn and Learn: After asking a question or teaching a small portion of a lesson, have the students reflect silently about their answer or new information by saying, ***"Take a sec and reflect"***. Depending on the complexity of the question or information, the Reflection time can vary from ten seconds to upwards of a minute.

After the Reflection time, have the students work with a partner to compare or discuss their responses by saying, "**Turn and**". The students will respond by saying "**Learn**" and then begin conferencing with a partner. Again, depending on the complexity of the question or information, the Turn and Learn time can vary from 30 seconds to upwards of two minutes.

Option B: Write…..Turn and Learn: A different variation might be to have the students write their individual answers. The process remains the same; start by asking a question or teaching a small portion of a lesson, then have the students write their answer or new information by saying, "***Quiet, Try It, and Write It***". Depending on the complexity of the question or information, the Write time can vary from 45 seconds to upwards of two minutes.

After the Write time, have the students work with a partner to compare or discuss their written responses by saying, "**Turn and**". The students will respond by saying "**Learn**" and then begin conferencing with a partner. Again, depending on the complexity of the question or information, the Turn and Learn time can vary from 30 seconds to upwards of two minutes.

Option C: Reflect….. Compare, Turn, and Learn: A further variation includes the skill of comparing and contrasting information. The Compare step gets students to synthesize their ideas and come up with differences and similarities amongst their two separate concepts. The process has a couple of more steps then the

previous variations of Turn and Learn. The teacher asks two separate questions; one for the student assigned one and a second for student assigned two. Allow the students to reflect silently about their answer or new information by saying, "***Take a sec and reflect***". Depending on the complexity of the question or information, the Reflection time can vary from ten seconds to upwards of a minute.

After the Reflection time, have the students work with a partner to discuss their responses by saying, "**Compare, Turn, and**", the students will respond with "**Learn**". Again, depending on the complexity of the question or information, the Compare, Turn, and Learn time can vary from one minute to upwards of two or three minutes. The students discuss their answers to both questions and then try to find similarities and differences between the two concepts. ****To give this comparison and contrasting conversation a bit more structure, you can use Language Line Sentence frames specifically designed for this type of thinking at www.PEPnonprofit.org in the free downloads section.***

In the book Classroom Instruction That Works by Robert Marzano, the number one classroom instructional strategy most likely to improve student achievement across all content areas and grade levels is identifying similarities and differences.

Option D: Write….. Compare, Turn, and Learn: A

final variation includes the skill of comparing and contrasting information and writing. The Compare step gets students to synthesize

their ideas and come up with differences and similarities amongst their two separate concepts. The teacher asks two separate questions; one for the student assigned one and a second for student assigned two. The process remains the same; have the students write their answer or new information by saying, "***Quiet, Try It, and Write It***". Depending on the complexity of the question or information, the Write time can vary from 45 seconds to upwards of two minutes. Depending on the complexity of the question or information, the Write time can vary from ten seconds to upwards of a minute.

After the Write time, have the students work with a partner to discuss their responses by saying, "**Compare, Turn, and**", the students will respond with "**Learn**". Again, depending on the complexity of the question or information, the Compare, Turn, and Learn time can vary from one minute to upwards of two or three minutes. The students discuss their answers to both questions and then try to find similarities and differences between the two concepts. ****To give this comparison and contrasting conversation a bit more structure, you can use Language Line Sentence frames specifically designed for this type of thinking at www.PEPnonprofit.org in the free downloads section.***

Turn and Learn Summary

As you can see, there are many variations that can be used with the Turn and Learn. These variations allow students to become actively involved in their thinking about the concepts presented in the lesson. Research tells us that we need time to mentally "reflect" on new ideas

in order to store them in memory. Simply having kids repeat what you just said is not a good usage of kids communicating with one another. You will save more time in the end by allowing kids the time in the beginning to reflect or write about their thoughts before working with a learning partner.

When students talk over new ideas, they are forced to make sense of those new ideas in terms of their prior knowledge. Their misunderstandings about the topic are often revealed (and resolved) during this discussion stage. Also, and maybe most importantly, students are more willing to participate since they don't feel the peer pressure involved in responding in front of the whole class. The Turn and Learn also teaches students to share ideas with classmates and build oral communication skills.

To borrow an acronym, the Turn and Learn part of the Active Learning Cycle is as easy as PIE.

Positive interaction amongst learning partners happens when students are able to learn from each other.

Individual accountability is happening when students are accountable to each other for sharing ideas.

Equal participation exists in the sense that each student within the learning partner group has an equal opportunity to share.

Return Q + A (Class Quiet Cue)

The second half of the Active Learning Cycle is the Return Q + A. If the "Turn and Learn" is the cue to conference, then the "Return Q + A" is the cue for quiet and attention towards the instructor. Throughout the day you're going to want your students to "Turn and Learn" with each other numerous times, therefore, you must have a "Return" to get their attention back to you. Now there is nothing wrong with clapping signals or counting as oral cues to your students, but if you're going to do it in the double digits everyday, five days a week, for 180 days, we feel that it is a great opportunity to incorporate some basic facts or academic vocabulary into the classroom management section of teaching techniques.

Instead of clapping twice and having the kids clap twice or saying the school's name and the kids responding with the mascot of the school, try using some meaningful questions and answers that are needed by the students. For example, tell the kids that the "Return Q + A" for the day is going to be 8 times 7; whenever the teacher says, "8 times 7" the students respond "56" and give their entire attention to the teacher. It works the same way as counting from 5 to 1, but instead, it gives the students numerous opportunities to answer a tricky multiplication problem correctly.

There are a multitude of ways to use the Return Q + A with your students. You can add claps or volume to how you say your question with the expectation that the class responds with the same clap or volume when they answer the question. A fun way to get your kids

involved is let them decide what the question is going to be at the start of the day and stick to that question all day, but mixing up how you ask it. On the next couple of pages we are going to give you a few examples of what the Active Learning Cycle looks like.

Option A Example: Reflect…..Turn and Learn

Teacher: clap-clap "Two words with opposite meanings."
Class: clap-clap "Antonyms."

Return Q + A to get the students' attention.

Teacher: "We have been learning about different types of angles in math. We have the acute angle which is an angle with a degree under 90. There is also a right angle which is an angle that has a degree of exactly 90. What is another type of angle that we have learned? Take a sec and reflect…." *(Teacher gives students a few seconds to process the question).*

Teacher asks a question after reviewing a small portion of the lesson.

Teacher gives students reflection time.

Teacher: "Turn and."
Class: "Learn." *(Students get with their learning partners and discuss another type of angle as the teacher circulates around the room).*

Turn and Learn cue to work with learning partner.

Teacher: clap-clap "Two words with opposite meanings."
Class: clap-clap "Antonyms."

Return Q + A to get the students' attention.

From the example on the previous page you can see the entire Active Learning Cycle, starting from getting the kids attention with the **Return Q + A**. Next, the teacher presented the information and gave the students time to reflect on the question. Then, the class conference cue was given when the teacher gave the **Turn and Learn**. After circulating the classroom, the teacher completed the cycle with the **Return Q + A**.

In simpler terms: Return Q + A → Information → Reflect → Turn and Learn → Return Q + A

It would be ludicrous to think that this is all you have to do for students to truly understand information. The **Active Learning Cycle** is a key piece to have in all lessons, but it is important to note that it is only a **piece**. Regardless of what lesson structure you use, it is imperative to have your kids interact and verbalize with partners. The Positive Engagement Project believes students need as much time talking and working with the information than the teacher does in presenting it. This technique is meant to be applied to lessons, but not be the lesson itself.

We believe in clear objectives, kid friendly language (as well as academic language), constant checking for understanding, and making learning as fun as possible (as you can tell from our numerous academic games). All of these components make up a positive learning experience, but it's the **Active Learning Cycle** that is easiest to implement, and at the same time, easiest to neglect. *We cannot stress enough the importance of rehearsing the Active Learning Cycle with your students to assure your expectations are met every time.*

Option B Example: Write….Turn and Learn

Teacher: "Nine times nine."
Class: "81."

Return Q + A to get the students' attention.

Teacher: "In science there are three main types of rocks that make up the rock cycle. Using a Thinking Map, write down the three types of rocks and any characteristics you'd like to add for each rock. Feel free to use your books. Quiet. Try it. Write it." *(Teacher gives students a few minutes to write information about the assigned question).*
Teacher: "Turn and."
Class: "Learn." *(Students get with their learning partners and discuss and share their Thinking Maps on the rock cycle as the teacher circulates around the room).*

Teacher asks a question after reviewing a small portion of the lesson.

Teacher gives students time to write responses before sharing.

Turn and Learn cue to work with learning partner.

Teacher: "Nine times nine."
Class: "81."

Return Q + A to get the students' attention.

Notice in this example the **Return Q + A** is different from the previous example. We like to do the same **Return Q + A** for a chunk of time (let's say morning block before recess) and then do a different **Return Q + A** for the next session. You may wish to use the same **Return Q + A** all day, which is totally fine, but we suggest you don't use different Returns within the same lesson.

Option C Example: Reflect….Compare, Turn, and Learn

Teacher: "2nd US President."
Class: "John Adams."

Return Q + A to get the students' attention.

Teacher: "Ones, I want you to think about some examples of homographs. Twos, I want you to think about some examples of synonyms. Take a sec and reflect…." *(Teacher gives students a few seconds to process the question).*
Teacher: "Compare, Turn, and."
Class: "Learn." *(Students get with their learning partners and compare and contrast homographs and synonyms as the teacher circulates around the room).*

Teacher asks a question after reviewing a small portion of the lesson.

Teacher gives students reflection time.

Compare, Turn, and Learn cue to work with learning partner.

Teacher: "2nd US President."
Class: "John Adams."

Return Q + A to get the students' attention.

In this example, the teacher is reviewing some Language Arts terms and assigns each learning partner a different term to reflect on. The **Reflect…..Compare, Turn, and Learn** is a great way to review information and increase the rigor from simple remembering to more analyzing and evaluating.

Option D Example: Write….Compare, Turn, and Learn

Teacher: clap "Three states of matter."

Class: clap "Gas, liquid, and solid."

Return Q + A to get the students' attention.

Teacher: "John Brown is a key figure in American history. Ones, I want you to write down from the point of view of the Northern states your opinions of John Brown. Twos, I want you to write down from the point of view of the Southern states your opinions of John Brown. Quiet. Try it. Write it." *(Teacher gives students a few minutes to write information about point of view).*

Teacher: "Compare, Turn, and."

Class: "Learn." *(Students get with their learning partners and share what they have written and compare their points of view as the teacher circulates around the room).*

Teacher asks a question after reviewing a small portion of the lesson.

Teacher gives students time to write responses before sharing.

Compare, Turn, and Learn cue to work with learning partner.

Teacher: clap "Three states of matter."

Class: clap "Gas, liquid, and solid."

Return Q + A to get the students' attention

In this example, the teacher has the students take on different points of view. Since this is a more difficult cognitive skill, writing down their viewpoints is a good way to allow more time for processing. The **Reflect…..Compare, Turn, and Learn** is a great way to review information and increase the rigor from simple remembering to more analyzing and evaluating.