

Turn and Talk

Instead of asking students to raise their hands if they know an answer, have each student “turn and talk” with a neighbor.

- Each student takes a turn responding to the question with a partner.
- Students then share what their partners told them.

This is a simple but very powerful strategy for English language learners and is as effective for kindergarteners as it is for high school seniors. English learners need as many opportunities to practice using English as possible. When you call on one student at a time, often ELL students do not get the chance to reply. English learners often need extra time to translate your question into their language, formulate a response, and then put the response in English. By that time, you are three questions ahead.

When one student responds at a time, only one of twenty-five students is talking at any given time. In “turn and talk” you have half of your class responding and the other half actively engaged listening to their partners at any given time, maximizing students’ opportunity to practice English.

Having students “turn and talk” with a partner provides ELL students the time to formulate a response in the relatively safe environment of talking with one other student, not the whole class. If ELL students are paired with native English speaking students, this also provides ELLs with positive language models.