

Chalk Talk

A silent routine focusing on reactions, connections and questions

Purpose/Selecting Appropriate Content

This routine asks learners to consider ideas, questions or problems by silently responding in writing both to the prompt and the thoughts of others. It's open-ended and exploratory in nature and because students do not have to sign their names to their responses, it encourages them to take risks.

The prompt(s) can be single words or phrases related to a topic of study, but questions often generate a richer level of discussion and activity. In creating the questions, think about those that might encourage multiple perspectives and reactions.

CT can also be used for reflection (e.g. What have you been most surprised by in this unit of study? What is hard for you to master in this topic? Where would you most like to see improvement in yourself? etc.)

Uses and/or Variations

- Access with prior knowledge and reflection
- Use with word study

Steps

Looking at the topic or question written on the chart paper:

- What ideas come to mind when you consider this idea, question, or problem?
- What connections can you make to others' responses?
- What questions arise as you think about the ideas and consider the responses and comments of others?

Tips

Write each prompt on a large sheet of paper and place on tables around the room. Decide whether you want to assign students to groups for the purposes of the Chalk Talk or if you want them to move freely. To track lines of thinking you can distribute markers so that each student uses the same color throughout the process.

Learners should think about their reactions to the prompt, record their ideas and questions, and then read and add to each other's responses with comments and questions.

Time is important in a Chalk Talk. You should monitor it and think about how long your students will need to reflect, read, and respond. Then have groups rotate to another group's paper, silently reading what has been written and then adding their reactions and questions.

Chalk Talk sheets can be placed where learners have access to them over the next weeks to revisit the ideas and add to them