INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES



Silent Discussion

Instead of hasty and loud responses, this strategy allows all learners time to think before they quietly share their thoughts with their writing utensil. The conversation develops visually in a common space as students read others' responses, react to them, and expand on ideas without speaking.

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SILENT DISCUSSION

Summary

Silent Discussion is a collaboration framework in which students communicate their thoughts in writing instead of speaking aloud. This lets students engage in real time while still having time to think before responding, promoting complex thinking, deeper reflection, and more thoughtful consideration of others' ideas. It also creates more opportunities for students who may hesitate to join traditional spoken discussions.

Procedure

1. Decide whether you want a whole-class or small-group discussion, and then create a discussion space for each prompt. The prompt can be teacher-created or student-created. See the attached **Examples** document for more ideas of how to use this strategy in your classroom.
2. Explain to students that during a Silent Discussion nobody speaks; instead, they are to communicate by writing words or drawing sketches in the discussion space. They should use their writing/drawing to respond to each other's ideas by adding details, asking for clarification, agreeing/disagreeing, etc.
3. Clearly communicate discussion expectations with your students. Consider having students share writing utensils to ensure that students' ideas are going back and forth, as they would in a real conversation. Share how much time students have and encourage them to think before they respond, rather than rush.
4. After the Silent Discussion, facilitate a whole-class debrief (out loud) where students/volunteers share their takeaways from the discussion.

Spencer, J. (2026, February 24). The power of silent discussions for deeper collaboration. Spencer Education. https://spencereducation.com/silent-discussions/