

Chapter 7

The Engaged Learner: Interactive Methods in the Classroom

- Achieving Important Goals through Interaction
- Preparing to Create an Interactive Lesson Plan
- The Setting
- Components of the Interactive Lesson Plan
- Table 3. Warm-up Questions for Specific Learning Goals
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Interactive Lesson Plan: Themes in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*
- Interactive Lesson Plan: Introducing Percentages
- Creating Springboard or Work Exercises
 - Scenario 12: A Lesson Plan for Dealing with Test Anxiety
- Template for Planning an Interactive Lesson

The Interactive Meeting Format is easily adaptable for the classroom. Most of what you read in this book can be understood in classroom terms if you think “lesson plan” whenever you read “agenda” and “class” whenever you read “meeting.” The purpose of this chapter is to specifically translate the language of meetings into the classroom, and to provide you with some examples of lesson plans designed according to the format that Teen Empowerment staff have used successfully.

Achieving Important Goals through Interaction

Interactive methods in the classroom help teachers to create a healthy, lively, and respectful environment for learning and to achieve the following objectives, expressed as teachers have told them to us:

- I want all my students to become engaged in the learning process and passionate about the subject matter.
- I want my classes to be fun and meaningful at the same time.
- I want my students to learn to work together.
- I want to form positive and respectful relationships with my students that will allow them to learn more effectively from me and also allow me to learn from them.

Engagement. Teachers often feel that some of the students in their classrooms are “somewhere else.” These are the students who sit in the back of the room and do not participate in class activities. Some of these students may be preoccupied with personal issues, while others may feel so disconnected from the subject matter that they find it difficult to concentrate. The *Moving Beyond Icebreakers* approach makes clear to all students that their participation and their authentic voices are valued. It helps to break down the barriers that may be holding students back from participation, and it helps teachers to gain insight into why students may be disengaged. When these barriers begin to break down, students are freer to engage with the class’s academic content.

Also, use of interactive exercises allows teachers to tap into the range of “multiple intelligences” described by psychologist and educator Howard Gardner.¹ Most of the exercises work with bodily/kinesthetic and interpersonal intelligences, and many work with intrapersonal, musical, and spatial. Students whose strengths are in areas other than the types of intelligence most relied on for classroom work (linguistic and logical-mathematical) are more likely to become engaged as their own strengths are called upon.

¹Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1983).

Fun. Experienced educators recognize that powerful learning experiences are often playful. The Interactive Lesson Plan includes both play (the Springboard Section) and work (the Work Section). These are not distractions from real learning, but instead allow students to explore their learning through play and apply their learning through work.

Study of mental life has made evident the fundamental worth of native tendencies to explore, to manipulate tools and materials, to construct, to give expression to joyous emotion, etc. When exercises which are prompted by these instincts are part of the regular school program, the whole pupil is engaged.

John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 1916

Working together. Cooperation fuels human development. The ability to communicate effectively and the ability to work in collaboration with others are essential skills for success in almost any sphere of life. The Interactive Lesson Plan allows the teacher to facilitate relationship-building and surface group dynamics so that collaboration becomes a classroom norm.

Positive student-teacher relationships. In the view of renowned educator Deborah Meier, “Greater, not less, intimacy between generations is at the heart of all the best school reform efforts around today and is the surest path to restoring public trust in public education.”² Research reveals that the quality of student-teacher relationships is associated with students’ academic motivation and attitudes toward school³ and that youth who have positive relationships with teachers are more likely to achieve personal and professional success.⁴ Carl Rogers’ description of the teacher as “a real person... entering into a relationship with the learner without presenting a front or a façade”⁵ reflects the teacher’s role in the interactive setting. Through Warm-up Questions and Springboard Exercises, the Interactive Lesson Plan provides opportunities for teacher and students to build respect for each other’s strengths and life challenges while learning together.

Preparing to Create an Interactive Lesson Plan

There are three areas to consider when thinking about the needs of the students and the purposes to be served by the lesson plan: content objectives, skill objectives, and group objectives. Note that the objectives below are broad ones that may encompass several lessons; objectives for individual lessons would involve taking steps toward achieving the broader objectives.

²Deborah Meier, *In Schools We Trust* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2002), p. 13.

³Jacquelynne S. Eccles et al., “Development During Adolescence: The Impact of Stage-Environment Fit on Young Adolescents’ Experiences in Schools and in Families,” *American Psychologist*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (February 1993), p. 95.

⁴Emily Werner, “Protective Factors and Individual Resilience” in *Handbook of Early Childhood Intervention* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 110.

⁵Carl Rogers, *Freedom to Learn for the 80’s* (Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1983), p. 121.

Content Objectives: What do students need to know?

Setting content objectives is a familiar task for most teachers. Examples might be:

- for students to understand the concept of filial piety in *Romeo and Juliet*.
- for students to become familiar with the Pythagorean Theorem.
- for students to learn scientific method.
- for students to explore diverse perspectives related to a critical social issue.

Skill Objectives: What will students do?

After determining the content objectives, the next task is to think about what students will do to build their understanding. This step aims to ensure that students will apply their knowledge and it creates an observable result that aids in assessment. For example, working with the content objectives above, students might:

- script a play in which they compare a contemporary family's expectations to those in a play by Shakespeare.
- discover the Pythagorean Theorem from experimentation.
- use scientific method to research the health of a local pond.
- debate social issues in a public forum.

Group Objectives: How does the class need to develop more fully as a functional group?

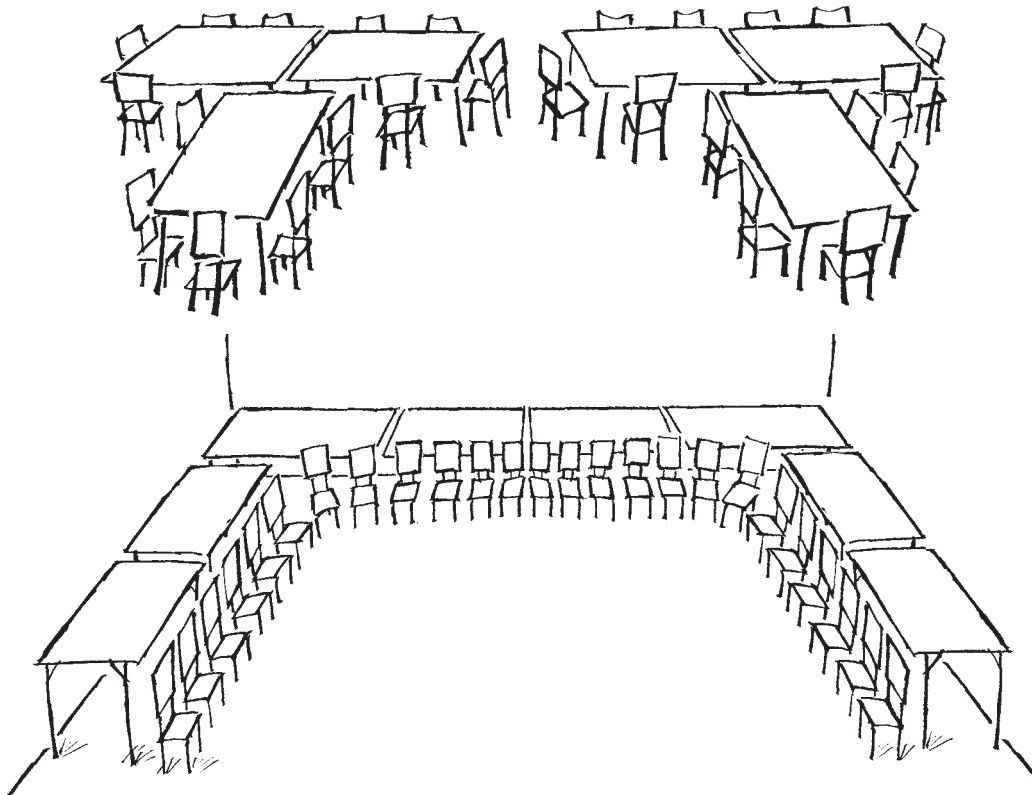
Ideally, your classroom will be an environment where students' interactions both enhance learning and develop appropriate socialization skills. This step aims to move the class toward that ideal situation. For example:

- If it is the beginning of the school year or if new students have recently joined the class, all students need to learn each other's names.
- If classroom conflicts are brewing or if some students are frequently disruptive, you may want to surface group dynamics.
- If students are about to enter into their first long-term group project, you may need to prepare them to work in groups or to manage their time effectively.
- If there is something strongly affecting the overall environment in the school (for example, an incident of violence), you may want to give students the opportunity to share thoughts and feelings about the situation.
- If it is the day before vacation, you may want to use the relaxed atmosphere of the day to work on group-building.

Each day before you design an interactive lesson plan, reflect on these three key questions. It is not necessary to accomplish all types of objectives in every lesson, but you should strive to create a balance of learning, fun, and physical movement that is thematically organized. Once you have identified your objectives, use them to develop each component of the lesson plan.

If you work with a co-teacher, peer coach, or student teacher, reflect on the key questions together. Multiple perspectives create increased insight and students learn about professional growth as they see their teachers engaged in discussions about subject matter or best practices.

After you have created the lesson plan, review and revise it based on your original objectives. Write up a large final lesson plan on the blackboard in your classroom.



The Setting

Large classrooms and seating in rows were first promoted in the early 1800s when emerging public schools adopted the pedagogical methods of Joseph Lancaster. The Lancastrian system was praised for its low cost and its capacity to teach “subordination.”⁶ However, in an era when we encourage students to develop leadership and initiative, the legacies of the Lancastrian system are no longer practical.

Through our work with teachers, we have developed alternatives to row seating that meet multiple needs:

- “Double T” formation. This works particularly well when students are seated at tables rather than desks or desk-chairs. With six tables, arrange them in two parallel T’s. The teacher can circulate easily to check on student work and reduce disruptive behavior. In a large classroom, you may be able to space the T’s far enough apart to leave room for interactive exercises. In a smaller room, you can create space by moving one T or both to the side.
- “U” formation. Arrange tables or desk in a U shape around the perimeter of the room with students’ chairs on the inside of the U. Students face their desks during individual or pair work, and during whole group activities they face the center of the room. This arrangement allows student to focus during individual/pair activities, makes it easier for teachers to circulate throughout the classroom during the Work Section, and provides a safe, open space for Springboard Exercises.

⁶Joel Spring, *The American School: 1642-1985* (New York: Longman, 1986), p. 55.

When planning for small group or pair activities, pre-arrange random or planned groups or pairs rather than asking students to choose their own groups or pairs. See “Pairing People Up” on p. 237 and “Structuring Small Groups” on p. 46 for reasons why this is important.

Components of the Interactive Lesson Plan

Chapter 4 explains the purpose of and procedure for each element of the Interactive Meeting Format. When using the format to create a lesson plan, consider the following:

Introduction

During the Introduction, the teacher shares information with the group for approximately five minutes:

- Welcome. Welcoming students to the classroom reaffirms that each individual is valued and needed for optimal learning to take place.
- Acknowledge who is present, who is missing, and where missing people are (if known). This communicates to students that their presence is so important that it is the first point of business. During this segment, also introduce any guest speakers or visitors to the classroom.
- Outline the goals of the class period (in terms of the objectives). Note, however, that if you plan to use the class period to work on group objectives, be subtle in your description of these goals. For example, it would be productive to say, “This class period will give you all a chance to think about the roles you take in class activities,” whereas it would not be helpful to announce that “Today’s class will be dedicated to learning why this class is so factionalized and how that hurts everybody.” Read more about subtlety on p. 59.
- Establish the class situation in time (timeline). Include the objectives and the accomplishments of the previous day, important project dates, due dates, etc. This is also a good time to integrate reminders and announcements (permission slip due dates, grade report dates, etc.).
- Briefly preview the class period and explain how the time will be used.

The Introduction gives students an understanding of the purpose of the class and how the purpose will be achieved. When students understand the organization and relevance of their learning experiences, they are more likely to learn.

Name Exercises

Knowing names is the first step to building community in the classroom. Unless every person in the room knows every other person’s name, include a Name Exercise or integrate names into the Warm-up Question. For an explanation of why this is important, see pages 41 through 43.

Warm-up Questions

With a class of 20 students or fewer, you can have everyone answer the Warm-up Question. If you have a larger class or limited time, you can pose the question but take only a few answers.

In addition to those purposes described on pp. 42-43 (such as assessing the general health of the group, energizing/focusing, and connecting students with upcoming work), Warm-up Questions in the classroom can be used for particular learning goals. See Table 3.

It is important to choose Warm-up Questions that allow students to share, but that do not require students to take risks that reveal sensitive and personal information in the group setting. For example, a

Function of the Warm-up Question	Example
Assess what students already know about a topic. Give students an opportunity to learn from each other.	What is one thing that you know or think may be true about the American Civil War?
Introduce a topic.	In a geometry class studying proofs: What is one thing about yourself that you can prove to be true?
Review concepts. Give students an opportunity to learn from each other.	If you were one of the elements in the periodic table, which element would you be and why?
Help students evaluate and reflect on learning.	If you were to go back in time and give yourself one piece of advice before starting this project, what would it be and why?

Table 3. Warm-up Questions for Specific Learning Goals

teacher introducing issues of filial piety in *Romeo and Juliet* might ask, “If you were a parent, what is one thing you would expect from your children?” While this question would not be threatening to most students, teen parents or students experiencing severe parental pressure might need to be in a well-formed group to answer this question comfortably.

Write the Warm-up Question on the blackboard with the lesson plan so students can prepare themselves for their first contribution of the day. Depending on the question, you might require students to offer original answers or allow them to use answers already offered.

Teachers should always participate in the Warm-up Question. This is a primary vehicle for helping you to build relationships with your students. Follow the guidelines on p. 40.

Springboard Exercises

The general purposes of the Springboard Exercises (see p. 44) are relevant to and important in the classroom setting in this slightly adapted form:

- Give students an experience (frequently a creative or a body-centered experience) of the tasks, objectives, or issues they will be addressing in the Work Section of the lesson plan, thus building a bridge to the work of the class.
- Provide the class with a chance to have fun, laugh together, and be energized to do the work of the day.
- Generate enthusiasm for being in the class and working together, or reflect the difficulties the class is experiencing and help people understand what needs to be changed to create an optimal learning environment for everyone.
- Provide students with insights into how they work together.

Many of the Springboard Exercises in chapters 11 through 16 can be used in the classroom either as given or with slight modifications to better meet your objectives. See below for examples of how some exercises can be used in the classroom, and see chapter 8 for in-depth information about choosing exercises to suit particular needs.

Numerous books and websites of teaching resources contain many other collaborative learning exercises. Two sources that we can recommend are materials from Teachers’ Curriculum Institute (TCI) found at

www.historyalive.com and *Get It Together: Math Problems for Groups Grades 4-12*⁷ by Tim Erickson. Exercises from these sources may be appropriate as Springboard Exercises and/or Work Exercises.

As you design Interactive Lesson Plans, remember that students spend most of the day seated and they generally respond with enthusiasm to exercises that involve movement.

From chapter 10: Five-Minute Springboard Exercises

WAIT A MINUTE, p. 177

Objective: For students to engage in a discussion about managing time and meeting deadlines.

Modification for the Classroom: No modification needed.

From chapter 11: Fifteen-Minutes-Plus Springboard Exercises

CONCENTRIC CIRCLES, p. 190

Objective: For students to explore and discuss issues faced by characters or players in a work of fiction or a historical event.

Modification for the Classroom: Create one question related to the particular struggle of each character or individual. Reduce the total time for the exercise to 5-10 minutes, if necessary.

FINDING THE PATH, p. 195

Objective: For students to have an experience of learning (or not learning) from mistakes as a lead-in to a lesson in scientific or mathematical discovery, history, or literature that deals with people learning or not learning from the past.

Modification for the Classroom: In processing, emphasize learning from past successes and failures.

TWO-TEAM PATHFINDING (Variation), p. 196

Objective: To provide students with a body-centered experience of competing strategic interests as a lead-in to a lesson in history or current events.

Modification for the Classroom: In processing, discuss how groups of people have dealt with the fact that they required the use of the same space in order to meet their goals.

PICTURE WALL, p. 205

Objective: For students to self-evaluate group projects.

Modification for the Classroom: No modification needed.

From chapter 12: In-Your-Chair Springboard Exercises

FINDING THE FS, p. 218

Objective: For students to pay attention to details when doing schoolwork.

Modification for the Classroom: Relate processing to the attention to detail needed for specific projects or assignments.

SELF POEMS, p. 240

Objective: For students who are learning a language, to practice using the language and to express themselves creatively.

Modification for the Classroom: Add an introduction to the poem, such as: "My name is __, I am from __, and I live with __."

⁷Berkeley, CA: University of California Berkeley, 1989.

SNICKERSNACK, ANIKANIPANISAN, p. 242

Objective: For students to engage in a discussion about multi-tasking and managing stress (useful during finals).

Modification for the Classroom: Ask processing questions that allow students to identify their own stress responses. Then Brainstorm ways of managing stress and multiple tasks.

PAIRING, p. 237

Objectives: To prepare students for discussion and to build the group.

Modification for the Classroom: No modification needed. Choose discussion questions that lead in to the topic of the class. Be sure to assign pairs, rather than having students find their own partners.

SWITCH SWATCH, p. 246

Objective: To illustrate how controversial issues become polarized in the public debate.

Modification for the Classroom: No modification needed.

From chapter 14: Springboard Exercises for Groups Both Large and Small

STAND UP/SIT DOWN, p. 296, or DO WHAT YOU GOTTA DO (Variation), p. 297

Objective: To review material, to gauge students' level of knowledge about new material, or to prompt discussion about issues.

Modification for the Classroom: Prepare questions in multiple-choice format and ask students to stand (or to perform a specified action) for the answer they think is correct. Then ask students to explain why they chose their answers.

From chapter 15: The Rest of the Springboard Exercises

ALL ABOARD, ALL AHEAD, p. 300

Objective: For students to attend class regularly or to work with motivation.

Modification for the Classroom: Ask processing questions that allow students to realize the importance of their presence to the overall success of the group.

BAG TOSS, p. 302

Objective: To provide material for understanding probability.

Modification for the Classroom: Set up controlled situations such as: varying the number of bags entered into play, subtracting players, not saying names before throwing bags, and using THINK AHEAD BAG TOSS (p. 304). Have students graph the probability of bags being dropped under varied circumstances.

HIDE AND SEEK, p. 329

Objective: For students to attend class regularly or to work with motivation.

Modification for the Classroom: Ask processing questions that allow students to realize the importance of their presence to the overall success of the group.

PAY ATTENTION, p. 353

Objective: For students to engage in a discussion about multi-tasking and managing stress (useful during finals).

Modification for the Classroom: Ask processing questions that allow students to identify their own stress responses. Then Brainstorm ways of managing stress and multiple tasks.

POEM PUZZLE, p. 354

Objective: For students to work with sentence and paragraph structure.

Modification for the Classroom: Write a paragraph and give each small group of students a sentence, in POEM PUZZLE fashion, to put in the correct order. When all the sentences are correct, have the class work on ordering them to create the best possible paragraph.

RELAY RACE, p. 359

Objective: For students to review material (vocabulary, historical names, parts of speech, science terminology, etc.).

Modification for the Classroom: Prepare question sheets and post them on the walls. Each member of a relay team must fill in the correct word, term, etc., on the team's sheet.

THE WIND BLOWS WITH WORDS (Variation), p. 378

Objective: For students to review material (vocabulary, historical names, parts of speech, science terminology, math fundamentals, etc.).

Modification for the Classroom: Require each student who does not find a seat to provide the answer for one of the elements that you have posted (define a word, explain a term, solve a problem, etc.). If the definition (or the explanation/solution, etc.) is incorrect or incomplete, leave that element on the board for someone else to speak about.

Work Section

In a well-designed Interactive Lesson Plan, when students begin the Work Section they have been prepared by the preceding elements to be more comfortable in the classroom and ready to settle down to work. Depending on the effectiveness of the lesson plan thus far, they may also be better prepared to understand the work that is required and why they are doing it.

Generally the Work Section is the time for students to apply, or prepare to apply, their understanding of the objectives individually, in pairs, or in small groups. This is the part of the class that students might think of as the “real” classwork, and indeed, depending on your content objectives, this time might include traditional textbook or written work. While these forms of classwork are essential at times, be aware as you plan your lessons of other approaches that can help your students achieve the learning objectives you have set. For example, many teachers routinely include real-world tasks in their lesson planning (such as students in a Spanish class writing to pen pals in Puerto Rico, or students who are learning about bar graphs polling other students about school issues and graphing the results). In addition, most of the Work Exercises in chapter 17 can be used or adapted for the classroom, as follows:

BRAINSTORMING (p. 385)

This is a most valuable exercise that can be used in many types of classes for many purposes.

BRAINSTORMING that is conducted according to the rules on p. 385 requires both students and teachers to suspend judgment of ideas as they are contributed. In a typical classroom, some students are reluctant to speak because they are afraid of how their contributions will be received and judged (both by teachers and by their peers). BRAINSTORMING reverses this negative classroom dynamic that keeps some students from sharing their thoughts. When students come to understand that the ideas they contribute to the Brainstorm will be received in a neutral manner, they are able to relax and to speak up.

In the discussion (processing) of the Brainstorm, both teacher and class do evaluate the ideas that

THE ENGAGED LEARNER: INTERACTIVE METHODS IN THE CLASSROOM

were contributed, but the Brainstorm format allows each idea to stand on its own merit, without regard to whose idea it was.

In addition to creating an environment where all students can speak, BRAINSTORMING provides the teacher with a wealth of material and an approach to exploring a subject from a variety of angles. Here are two examples of how BRAINSTORMING can be used in the classroom:

- To understand the importance of a historical event, students can brainstorm the possible repercussions if the event had not occurred or had turned out differently.
- To explore the complexity of a scientific problem, students can brainstorm the questions to be answered or the obstacles to finding the answers.

WORDSTORM (p. 413)

Like BRAINSTORMING, WORDSTORMING helps students to relax and to speak up, and it is useful in many classroom settings. A WORDSTORM can open up discussion and examination of concepts in any academic discipline. Also, WORDSTORMING can help teachers explore social dynamics in the school (a WORDSTORM on the name of the school can give rise to excellent discussions) or in the classroom. As always, it is important to be subtle in your choice of words; see p. 60.

GROUP POEM (p. 397)

Can be used to sum up reactions to a project or a unit of work and to review material from it. You can specify that each student must write at least five lines and must include some piece of information learned in the project or unit.

INFO FLOW (p. 398)

Gives students the opportunity to present class material in a creative way. You can use this as one option for a project.

INFO Pictionary (p. 399), QUIZ-A-RAMA (p. 403), and WIND BLOWS FOR PRACTICE (p. 411)

Can be used to review any information.

INSIDE ME DRAWINGS (p. 400)

Can be used to think about fictional or historical characters.

LIFE LINES (p. 401)

Can chart the lives of fictional or historical characters.

ROLE-PLAYS (p. 404)

Can be used to understand how a novel or a historical event might have turned out differently.

THE SPEECH GAME (p. 405)

Can help students to learn and use new vocabulary or terminology in a meaningful context. You can introduce the words before the exercise. Instead of emotions, list authentic settings in which students can use the words.

STAND AND DELIVER (p. 406)

Can draw students into debate about issues in any discipline.

TAKE A SEAT (p. 407)

Helps students to understand the distribution of resources. It can be tailored to show the situation in a particular country or in the world.

VISUALIZATION (p. 409)

Can be used in many ways, such as: to help students to visualize a place and time in the past, present, or future; to see the world through the eyes of another person in the study of psychology, history, or literature; to generate ideas for creative writing.

WORLD PARTY (p. 416)

Helps students to understand stereotypes.

If students have been working individually or in small groups during the Work Section, be sure to include time for report-backs (see p. 47) so that students can present their accomplishments, seek support for their challenges, share what they have learned, and receive feedback when appropriate.

Summation

Before moving into the Evaluation, spend a moment summing up what the class has accomplished and assigning homework or clarifying questions about the assignment.

Evaluation

Providing time at the end of the class for students and teachers to evaluate the experience they have just shared helps students to create ownership of their own learning. This is just one of many reasons that Evaluations are a good idea; see p. 49 for others. For the teacher, research on effective teacher evaluation states that: “Teachers who want to improve their teaching are eager to know how other teachers and their students view them. These are the people who interact with the teacher every day; their perspective should not be ignored during the evaluation process.”⁸ The Evaluation allows you to gather this information directly from your students. In addition, students often use their evaluation to assess their own performance and engagement, and to assert a positive influence on other students.

Chapter 18 describes several approaches to doing the Evaluation.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. There is an element of silliness in some exercise, such as BOPPITY BOP BOP BOP and ZIP ZAP ZUP. Is this method serious enough to be meaningful?

Playful routes are often the best avenues to serious objectives. If you know what you plan to accomplish with an interactive exercise, the exercise is serious no matter how much laughter it may provoke. In addition, students and teachers need to see each other as real people, and being “silly” within the limits of an exercise is a helpful way of touching our common humanity without losing control of the classroom.

2. My class periods are only 50 minutes long. When is there time to do all this?

The Interactive Meeting Format described in this book fits most comfortably into a time period of 80-

⁸ Ronald T.C. Boyd, *Improving Teacher Evaluations* (ERIC Digest No. 111 1989), <http://www.ericfacility.net/ericdigests/ed315431.html>

90 minutes or more. Adapting the format for a 50-minute period requires some compromises, particularly if there are more than 20 students in the class.

Warm-up Questions are too time-consuming for classes of more than 20, unless you take only a few answers. Even in smaller classes you may at times need to limit warm-up responses to a word or phrase, and Evaluations to a phrase or a number. For Evaluations in large classes, you can use a **GROUP SHOUT** (p. 423), **GROUP WHISPER** (p. 423), or **GROUP THOUGHT** (p. 424) Evaluation.

For many of the Springboard Exercises and Work Exercises, you can spend less time than cited in their descriptions. The sample Interactive Lesson Plans in this chapter allot less time for most of the exercises than the descriptions call for.

Once your students become accustomed to the routine, you will find that you can move through the lesson plan in a timely way. In general, when all students are engaged, distractions will decrease and productivity will increase in your classroom.

It's best to form the habit of starting the class on time and moving quickly to either the Warm-up Question or the Springboard Exercise. Most students will not want to miss this element of the class and will try to arrive on time.

You can also create time for the Interactive Lesson Plan by giving extra attention to class preparation. Completing the following tasks before class will save time during the period:

- Prepare and lay out all materials for the Work Section.
- Set up pairs and groups.
- Prepare handouts or datebook-sized stickers (such as mailing labels) with the day's assignments, rather than have students copy assignments from the board.
- Prepare templates and examples for students to follow.
- Prepare follow-up or enrichment activities for students who complete the Work Section early.

3. When can new information or ideas be presented in this format?

In general, you would introduce new information in the Work Section. However, you can also use other parts of the lesson plan for this purpose, as in the following examples:

In the instructions for an exercise:

- A biology teacher could introduce the parts of a cell and then ask the Warm-up Question, "Which part of the cell are you most like and why?"
- A math teacher could introduce the concept of prime numbers, then facilitate **GROUP COUNT** (p. 221) using a set of prime numbers.

In processing an exercise:

- A math teacher can ask the Warm-up Question, "What are your three favorite foods, in order of preference?" or use the Springboard Exercise **LINE-UPS** (p. 340). During processing, the teacher can introduce the concept of the order of operations.

4. I've tried to use interactive methods in my classroom, but my students seem unwilling to try something new. What should I do?

It's not surprising that students are resistant to trying new things. Notice how, in classes that have no

seating plan, students generally sit in the same seats every day (just as adults attending meetings have their preferred seats). Most students have developed routines for getting by in school in ways that make them comfortable. By introducing interactive methods to your class, you are requiring students to step outside of their routines. Though you are offering an approach that focuses on student activity, brings fun to the classroom, and engages students in their learning, many students will prefer at first to stay within their comfort zones.

Read about resistance in chapter 3 and about being consistent on p. 70. Consistent use of Interactive Lesson Plans while recognizing and working through your own resistance are fundamental to the success of this approach for your students.

Interactive Lesson Plan: Themes in George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*

Subject: English

Grade Level: 9-10

Content Objectives	To explore the following themes in the novel <i>Animal Farm</i> by George Orwell: the corruption of ideals by greed, the nature of leadership, and human weakness.
Skill Objectives	Students will take positions on issues related to these themes, then debate the issues and consider whether to change their positions.
Group Objectives	Students will engage in respectful discussion of issues related to the themes.

Notes:

- This lesson plan assumes that students have finished reading *Animal Farm*. However, a teacher could adapt the lesson to generate interest in reading the book and to serve as an introduction to the book’s themes by gearing discussion in the Work Section to the themes themselves without particular reference to the book.
- The lesson plan is not a comprehensive study of *Animal Farm*. It touches on only one dimension of the novel and does not delve into other important aspects.

Introduction (2 minutes)

Warm-up Question (5 minutes)

If you could be any animal in the world, which would it be and why?

Processing suggestions

- People identify with different animals for a lot of reasons; various animals may represent power, grace, beauty, intelligence, speed, etc. In *Animal Farm*, the main characters are animals and they have different degrees of status in their society because of their traits. Through telling a story about animals, the author is making points about people, how they act, what they want, and what they will do to get what they want.

Springboard Exercise (8 minutes)

THE LEADER GAME (p. 227)

Processing suggestions

- Sometimes it is difficult to figure out who is exerting influence on others’ behavior. At other times, it’s clear where the influence is coming from, but it’s not clear what the leader’s motives are. If someone is waving a flag and wants you to do the same, it takes sophistication to stop and think about why the person is doing what they are doing and whether you agree with their reasons enough to follow them. You also need to think about the consequences of following or not following a leader. In *Animal Farm*, of course, those who don’t follow are killed.
- Whenever we are in a new group, we observe what other people are doing. Each of us makes decisions about how this will help us to fit in (or not) and whether or not to change our usual behavior to conform to norms of the group. In this exercise, most people choose to go along with what everyone else is doing, just as most of the animals in *Animal Farm* chose to go along with Napoleon. In this school, what do most people choose to do in order to fit in? What happens to those who choose not to fit in? Is it difficult to identify the leaders here?

Work Section (25 minutes)

STAND AND DELIVER (p. 406)

Use the following statements:

- Leaders tend to be the smartest people in a group.
Discussion points: What makes people ideal leaders? How are leaders selected in our community/school/society? How did the pigs become the leaders in *Animal Farm*? What motivates people to follow leaders? Was it a failure of intelligence that caused the other animals to let the pigs seize power? What is the meaning of “intelligence”? Are there different ways of being intelligent?
- Power corrupts.
Discussion points: How did the pigs gain absolute power? Did they always intend to seize power? Which animals collaborated with them in that process? Could they have been stopped? How? What parallels do you see to institutions and governments that you know about?
- Money equals success.
Discussion points: What are the various ways we can measure success? What equals success in *Animal Farm*, and how does that change between the beginning of the novel and its end?

General discussion points: How did you make your decisions? Consider how many people changed their minds after listening to the arguments of others. Did some people change their minds internally but not switch groups? How much of what you decide is based on your own beliefs? on what you hear from others? on the beliefs of people you identify with?

Summation (2 minutes)

Evaluation (3 minutes)

Interactive Lesson Plan: Introducing Percentages

Subject: Math

Grade Level: 4-6

Content Objectives	To introduce and practice percentages.
Skill Objectives	Students will understand the concept of percentages and will practice turning raw data into percentages.
Group Objectives	Students will work cooperatively in groups.

Preparation:

- Prepare about 20 questions for STAND UP/SIT DOWN (p. 296), using low-risk questions that will not make anyone in the class uncomfortable. Prepare questions that will give you a range of results from 100 percent (everyone will stand up) to zero percent (no one will stand up). Also, to make the math more challenging you could include some questions that will be for students only, others for everyone in the room (students and teacher), and others for subsets (for example, for all the girls or all the boys). You could also include questions that relate to other areas of study (for example, to tie in with genetics, “This is a question for people with blond hair only. Raise your hand if you have blond hair. Now stand up if you have blue eyes.”)
- Prepare a chart to record the responses to the STAND UP/SIT DOWN questions. Include room for additional questions that you add at the last minute. Make copies of the chart to distribute to all members of the class.
- Make a large copy of the chart on flip chart paper or an overhead transparency.
- Depending on the length of the class, you could also prepare worksheets for practice with percents.
- If you wish, decide how you will divide students into small groups.

Introduction (2 minutes)

As you preview the agenda, include the following explanation: Today the class will be learning about ourselves as a group, what we like, don’t like, and so forth, and then learning how to express that in percentages.

Warm-up Question (5 minutes)

What is one thing you think is true of most of the people in this room?

Processing suggestion

- Tell the class that if something is true for every single person in the room, we can say it is true for 100 percent of the group. If it is true for most of the people, we can say generally that it’s true for 80 to 90 percent. Today you are going to learn about percents and how to calculate them.

Springboard Exercise (8 minutes)

STAND UP/SIT DOWN (p. 296)

- Appoint a student (or ask for a volunteer) to record the responses to the questions. The recorder should also participate in the exercise.
- Proceed as normally with the exercise, except that the recorder captures information about how people respond.
- If you wish, include additional questions that came up during the Warm-up Question, and remind the recorder to write these in.

Processing suggestion

- We got a lot of information about ourselves from this exercise. It would be interesting to know how to talk about this information in a clear way. We can always say, “14 out of 28 students like

math,” but it’s also good to know that 50 percent of the class likes math.

Work Section (25 minutes)

1. Explanation of Percentages

- Using a question that everyone stood up for, ask what percentage of the class responded. For example, “What percent of our class likes ice cream?”
- Then use a question to which no one responded. For example, “What percent of our class likes to spend all day Sunday doing homework?”
- Then, beginning with these simple examples, explain the mathematical process for figuring percentages, using more examples from STAND UP/SIT DOWN.
- Pass out the charts. Have the class fill in all of the percentages that have been figured thus far and the information from the recorder about the numbers who stood up for each question.

2. Individual Work

Have students work individually on their charts to figure the percentages for several more of the STAND UP/SIT DOWN questions.

3. Small Groups

Create small groups of 3-4 students each. In their groups, have students compare the results of their individual work and settle discrepancies in their answers.

4. Report-backs

Have each group report back on two or three percentages, recording their answers on the large chart.

Summation (2 minutes)

Summarize briefly what the class has learned, and assign homework. For extra credit, students could write up the results of this class as a report on the class’s likes and dislikes.

Evaluation (3 minutes)

Ask students to express their evaluation of the class as a percent. (For example, “I give this class a 90% because it was fun and I learned how to make percentages.”)

Creating Springboard or Work Exercises

Many teachers are adept at creating ways to make learning interactive and fun in their classrooms. See p. 61 for information that may help you to think creatively about how to construct interactive exercises to meet your goals for your students. In the meantime, here are two exercises that Teen Empowerment staff devised for use in English classes. (Both can be adapted for any language arts or foreign language class.)

There, Their, They're Tag (Homonym Tag)

Goal	To reinforce the correct use of the homonyms “there,” “their,” and “they’re.” (Can also be used with other homonyms.)
Time	5-10 minutes
Physical contact	Tagging
Physical challenges	Ability to walk fast
Number of participants	8-25
Space requirements	Open floor space
Materials needed	Signs
Preparation	Prepare a sign for each of the homonyms. Post each sign in a different part of the classroom. Write 15-20 sentences, each including one form of the homonym, and write each sentence on an index card. Order the cards so that no form of the homonym is used twice in a row.

Instructions

1. Explain or review the homonym forms. Point out the signs around the room.
2. Ask for two volunteers, one to be the tagger and one to be the reader. Give the reader the stack of index cards.
3. Tell everyone else to scatter around the room. Emphasize that there is to be no running.
4. When the reader reads a sentence, everyone walks as fast as they can toward the sign with the homonym form that they think is included in the sentence. A person is safe when their hand is touching the sign.
5. The tagger’s task is to tag two people before they are safe. The tagger must say “there, their, they’re” as they tag someone. The first person tagged becomes the new tagger and the second person becomes the reader. If no one is tagged, the tagger and reader stay in their roles for the next round.
6. Continue until all the cards have been read.

Processing suggestions

- Sometimes it seems hard to be “safe” when dealing with these confusing words. But with practice, knowing which is which can become as automatic as walking.
- This exercise is a lot harder than trying to figure out the correct word when you’re writing, because during the exercise you have to make snap judgments. When you’re writing, you can be more careful and deliberate; you can stop and think it over. If you practice, think about what you know, and approach your writing carefully, you’ll get it right.

Pop It into Place

Goal	To practice using words in proper context.
Time	5-10 minutes
Physical contact	None
Physical challenges	None
Number of participants	8-25
Space requirements	None
Materials needed	Slips of paper, balloons, tape
Preparation	For each team, write a paragraph on a subject of interest to the students. Then think about which words you will remove from the paragraph so that students can reinsert them in the correct places. Leaving space for the words you have removed, write each paragraph in a separate place on the board or on flip chart paper hung on the wall. Next, write each removed word on a slip of paper. Blow up a balloon for each word and insert the slip of paper into the balloon. Put the balloons for each team into a bag. (If popping balloons will be too noisy for the classroom setting, you can set up a different task, such as unwrapping words that you have wrapped in paper or tied up in rubber bands.)

Instructions

1. Divide the class into teams of up to six students. (Depending on the size of the class and the classroom, you may decide to have half of the teams watch while the other teams compete, then switch.)
2. Show each team the paragraph they will be working on.
3. Give each team the bag containing its balloons and the missing words.
4. Each team first has to pop the balloons using only their feet, then extract the words from the balloons.
5. Each team works together to tape their words to the correct places in their paragraph. When all the words are inserted, the team reads the paragraph to a teacher. If it is correct, the team reads it aloud to the whole class.
6. The first team to read its paragraph correctly is the winner.

Processing suggestion

- A word all by itself, out of any context, usually doesn't have that much meaning, and a bunch of separate words don't communicate very much, either. It's only when everything is in its place that we gain understanding.

Scenario 12: A Lesson Plan for Dealing with Test Anxiety

Sharon and Marcus, counselors at an urban high school, wanted to help students overcome the anxiety that was contributing to their poor performance on a high-stakes standardized test. They designed an Interactive Lesson Plan for this purpose, which they conducted in each of the school's test-preparation classes. (For a related scenario about this lesson plan, see p. 29.) The lesson plan's objectives were to address the students' frustration and stress and to increase motivation levels in the classroom.

They set up the classroom with chairs in a circle to facilitate discussion. Sharon introduced the agenda and gave the class the Warm-up Question "Say your name and a word that describes how you feel right now." Many of the words that came out had to do with being scared, frustrated, angry, upset, or tired. In her process, Sharon talked about the importance of feelings and how they can drive the decisions that people make. She stated that if you don't feel good about something, you may find it difficult to focus your attention on it and give it your best effort. She said that it was important to be aware of your feelings about the test, and not to let those feelings prevent you from trying your best.

Marcus then instructed the group in how to play BAG TOSS and told them that he would time the exercise so they played for one minute. The first time the group played, it was chaotic and frenzied. Marcus counted the number of bags that were dropped—a total of 15. Then he said they would play again for one minute, but he instructed the group to throw the bags more slowly, to focus and concentrate, and to set a goal of not dropping any bags. This time, with group members more focused on receiving and throwing, only six bags were dropped. In processing, Marcus brought out the awareness that the group had taken a task that seemed difficult and undoable and, with some structure, helpful strategies, and concentration, had come much closer to reaching their goal. He drew a parallel with the test, suggesting that just as in BAG TOSS, the task might seem undoable, but with structure, helpful strategies, and concentration, it could be done.

During this discussion, one student, Joe, said that he was sick of everyone making such a big deal about the test, that he was so worried about failing and not graduating that he couldn't even try to focus in class, and that he might as well drop out now. Sharon related people's answers from the Warm-up Question to Joe's concern, saying that when you feel afraid that you can't accomplish something, sometimes you don't even want to try. But if you work to overcome your fear, and realize that one test doesn't define who you are, your chances of succeeding are actually much greater.

The group then did CONCENTRIC CIRCLES, with discussion questions designed to help students reflect on their time in high school and on their own learning styles and to develop relationships in the class. Then they did a WORDSTORM on the word "Success," which brought out issues of hard work and sacrifice and the need to have confidence in yourself.

In the evaluations, the students rated the session very highly, and made comments such as, "No one ever asked me my feelings about the test before," "I think this session will change people's minds about giving up," and "I felt like I got to express myself and learned how I need to have confidence about this test." The sessions reduced anxiety about the test, and enabled the students to recognize the necessity of sustained effort in their test-preparation classes.

*Agenda Summary***Introduction****Warm-up Question**

Say your name and a word that describes how you feel right now.

Springboard Exercises

BAG TOSS, p. 302

THINK-AHEAD BAG TOSS, p. 304

CONCENTRIC CIRCLES, p. 190 (See questions below.)

Work Section

WORDSTORM on “Success,” p. 413

Summation**Evaluation****Questions for CONCENTRIC CIRCLES**

- What was your freshman year in high school like?
- How is it different now that you are an upperclassman?
- What is your strongest subject, and why?
- What is your weakest subject, and why?
- Talk about how you learn best, and why you think that is.
- How have you personally been feeling about this test?
- What do you want to do when you graduate from high school, and why?
- Where do you see yourself in five years, and how do you plan on getting there?

Interactive Lesson Plan

Date: _____ Class Period: _____ Subject: _____

Objectives:

Preparation and Materials:

Groupings or pairings:

Introduction

- Welcome
- Who's here and who's not here
- Outline the goals of this class period
- Timeline and announcements
- Review the lesson plan

Time:

Other:

Name Exercise: _____ Time:

Warm-up Question: _____ Time:

Processing ideas:

Springboard Section: _____ Time:

Processing ideas:

Work Section: _____ Time:

Summation: _____ Time:

- Review objectives
- Share observations
- Preview next class

Other:

Evaluation Technique: _____ Time:

Learning Assessment: