

Designing Effective Projects: Cooperative Learning Think-Pair-Share

The Think-Pair-Share Strategy

Think-Pair-Share is a cooperative discussion strategy where students talk about the content and discuss ideas before sharing with a whole group. It introduces the elements of “think time” and peer interaction, which are two important features of cooperative learning. Think-Pair-Share’s purpose is to help students process information, develop communication skills, and refine their thinking.

With this strategy the teacher:

1. Poses an open-ended question or problem
2. Gives students a minute or two to think about their answer, pairs students to discuss the answer and share ideas
3. Gives opportunities for students to share their response with a small group or the whole class

Because students have time to think about their answer, then share with a peer and get a different perspective, they may be more willing and less apprehensive about sharing with a larger group. It also gives them time to change their response if needed and relieves the fear of giving the “wrong” answer.

Example

Teacher: I have a question I would like you to think about before we begin our new math unit on fractions. Can you think of places where we use fractions in our every day lives? I would like you to use Think-Pair-Share to talk about your ideas. Take a few minutes to think about your responses and when I signal, turn to your partner and share your thoughts. You will be sharing your responses with the class. (Teacher waits two minutes while students think about their ideas.) Now turn to your partner and discuss what you’ve thought about.

Mark to Natalie: I was thinking that we use them when we share food. Like a pizza. If you have eight slices of pizza and you want everyone to have the same amount of pizza you have to count out the slices. What did you think of?

Natalie to Mark: I was thinking of food too, but then I thought about how money is kind of like a fraction. Like four quarters equal a dollar and five dimes equals fifty cents.

Teacher: Now that you and your partner have had a chance to share ideas, choose which one of you will share your ideas with the whole group.

Mark: Natalie and I talked about how food can be made into fractions, like pizza. We also talked about how money is like a fraction. There are smaller amounts that equal bigger amounts, and we think that is what a fraction is.

Teacher: Both of the ideas are good examples of using fractions in our every day lives. Thank you for sharing.