

Talking Points Activity

cultivating exploratory talk through a growth mindset activity

Exploratory talk is the ***greatest single predictor of whether group work is effective or not***, yet most symmetrical classroom talk (peer talk) is either cumulative (positive but uncritical) or disputational (merely trading uncritical disagreements back and forth).

This activity is based on Lyn Dawes' Talking Points activity but is adapted for use within a restorative practices framework. It's a great way to practice circle skills (i.e., respecting the talking piece) and get students to practice **NO COMMENT** (i.e., trying to score social points rather than focusing on the task at hand).

PURPOSE

- to *support students' exploratory talk skills* by pushing them out of cumulative and disputational modes and into a more exploratory talk mode (i.e., speaking, listening, justifying with **NO COMMENT**)
- to *reveal student thinking* about speaking, listening, justifying and about having a growth mindset
- to *cultivate a growth mindset community*

PROCEDURE

17 minutes

Get students into groups of three.

Talking Points is a timed activity. You will have exactly ten minutes to do as many rounds as you can do. The important thing for our whole-class debrief at the end is to keep track of who thought what and why.

Like classroom circles, Talking Points proceeds in rounds. Each "talking point" statement on the list receives three rounds of attention. One person reads the first statement aloud with **NO COMMENT**. There are then three rounds of speaking and listening. You want these to be "lightning rounds" rather than plodding or deliberate rounds. The Talking Point statements are provocative and designed to stimulate reactions that can be worked with.

TALKING POINTS ACTIVITY

10 minutes

ROUND 1 – Go around the group, with each person saying in turn whether they AGREE, DISAGREE, or are UNSURE about the statement AND WHY. Even if you are unsure, you must state a reason WHY you are unsure. **NO COMMENT**. You'll be free to change your mind during your turn in the next round.

ROUND 2 – Go around the group, with each person saying whether they AGREE, DISAGREE, or are UNSURE about their own original statement OR about someone else’s statement they just heard AND SAY WHY. **NO COMMENT**. You are free to change your mind during your turn in the next round.

ROUND 3 – Take a tally of AGREE / DISAGREE / UNSURE and make notes on your sheet. **NO COMMENT**

Groups should then move on to the next Talking Point.

At the end of ten minutes ring the bell and have groups finish that round. Don’t let the process go on — they need to stop and move on.

GROUP SELF-ASSESSMENT

2 minutes

At the end of the ten minutes, give students **exactly two minutes** to fill out the **Group Self-Assessment**. They will use this during the whole-class debrief and will hand this in for a group grade.

WHOLE-CLASS DEBRIEF

5 minutes

Ask each group to report out about specifics, such as:

- Who in your group asked a helpful question and what was it?
- Who in your group changed their mind about a Talking Point? How did that occur?
- Who in your group encouraged someone else? How did that benefit the conversation?
- Who in your group provided an interesting additional idea and what was it?
- Who did your group disagree about and why?

I generally choose two or three of these questions and then move on to the actual mathematical group work while the energy level is still high.