

## Safe Engagement

(Excerpted from *Eight Great Ideas: Simple Ways to Transform Your Teaching*)

It took me about fifteen years of teaching before I began to realize that I was doing most of the talking during lessons and discussions. (Research indicates that the teacher's voice accounts for 80% of the words being spoken.)

Furthermore, when I pondered the fact that a lot of my words were nothing more than a repetition of what a student had just said—a traditional behavior known as *echoing*—I decided to try something new.

### The benefits of not echoing

- a significant reduction in how much talking you normally do
- no need to validate everything being said by the students
- increased levels of meta-cognition for students
- increased levels of formative assessment for teachers

### The challenge of not echoing

- it takes time to recondition yourself
- you'll need to ensure that students are listening to each other
- deal with the soft speakers [See suggestions below.]

### Formative Assessment Booster

#### Try Taking Multiple Responses

Present a question or offer a thought to students.

Pause briefly or allow time for a bit of collaboration

Call upon students randomly and respond with thank you. [Or thanks. A nod is also good.]

After taking multiple responses, verbally confirm the correct information. Here's one possibility:

*"If you said or thought, 'both sides contributed to Shay's Rebellion,' then you are correct."*

After five or six student responses, raise a hand and display a V using your first two fingers.

This gesture will indicate to your students that you are looking for volunteers. It's a nice change of pace that provides students with the freedom to respond. . . . .



*A simple gesture to my students that indicated I was looking for some voluntary responses.*

### What About the Soft Speakers?

#### Ask Students to Say *Echo*

Student A responds to being called upon by sharing a thought.

Student B, sitting across the room, didn't hear what was just said.

Student B says, "Echo" loud enough for Student A to hear.

Student A, upon hearing the word echo, repeats the thought.

Result? Better speaking skills. Better listening skills.

#### Prepare for Overuse

Let the novelty wear off.

Allow students time to become comfortable with the power of saying echo.

Counsel the abusers privately. [Core Principle #4: You can focus your attention.]

#### Make it Manageable [Core Principle #5]

Limit initial use of the strategy to a specific time or interaction. For example, allowing students to use the "Say Echo" strategy only during journal sharing might help to make the trial run a bit smoother and more successfully. As students gain experience, remove the restrictions. In a month or so, the whole thing will be automatic. And what a difference it will make.

*Say "Echo" whenever you didn't hear what someone had just said.*

*The person who had just spoken will then know to repeat what was said more clearly.*

