



Relationship Skills

ABOUT ENGAGING SCHOOLS

Engaging Schools collaborates with educators in middle and high schools helping them to create a schoolwide community of learning that integrates academic, social, and emotional development, and prepares each and every student to succeed. We offer professional development and resources with practical strategies that are grounded in the values of equity, community, and democracy. The result: educators who can better engage their students, and students who are prepared to make positive contributions in school, work, and life.

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Engaging Schools Activators Chapter 6

By: Engaging Schools

CHAPTER 6

It is only when we understand what our students are thinking, feeling, and attending to that we can use that knowledge to further engage and support them in the process of understanding. Thus making students' thinking visible becomes an ongoing component of effective teaching.

—RON RITCHHART, MARK CHURCH AND KARIN MORRISON

Post It Up

Students create a data “visual” that serves as a springboard for a learning-focused dialogue.

We live in a data-obsessed age, and Post It Up is an Activator that provides both the students and the teacher with a data visual to examine, discuss, and learn from. The key component of a Post It Up Activator is that students vote or visibly display a snapshot of their thinking or responses on a whiteboard, wall, piece of poster paper, or table by using sticky notes (Post-it brand or similar), sticker dots/stars, or initials. The power of this Activator comes with the rich dialogue that follows the Post It Up. The data picture that is generated serves to foster curiosity, connections, and deep thinking.

What are the ways the Post It Up Activator supports the conditions for engagement?

- Gathers **good will** by welcoming multiple perspectives
- Supports **participation** by creating a platform for everyone’s voice while also allowing for anonymity
- Captures **attention** by providing a concrete visual and incorporating movement

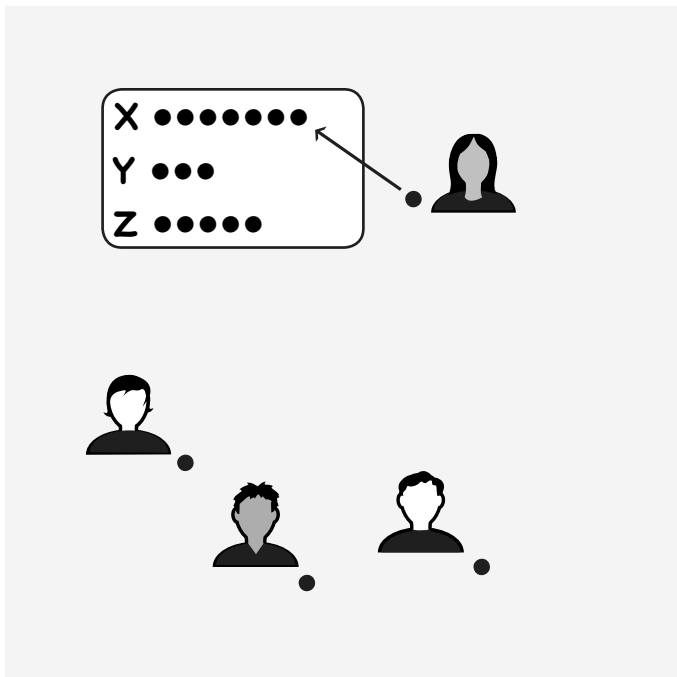
- Increases **interest** by creating an opportunity for students to consider how their thinking is similar or different from their peers
- Supports **effort** by emphasizing that everyone’s “vote” counts and is an important part of the big picture
- Fosters **investment** by providing a way to gather data around Classroom Expectations and Classroom Agreements

TIME: 5-15 MINUTES

TEACHER PREP LIST

- ❑ Sticker dots, star stickers, sticky notes, or pens/markers and chart paper/whiteboard
- ❑ If using sticker dots, star stickers, or sticky notes, prepare them for easy distribution. For example, if you have table groups of four, you might put a strip of four pre-cut sticker dots on each table
- ❑ Identify a space for students to place their “votes”: whiteboard, wall area, chart paper, or table top
- ❑ Design an engaging prompt aligned with a learning outcome
- ❑ Display prompt and student directions
- ❑ Design debrief questions to support a thoughtful examination and reflection of the data

ACTIVATOR SNAPSHOT



STUDENT DIRECTIONS

1. Consider the Post It Up question and review the optional responses.
2. At the signal, vote for your option(s) by placing a star, dot, etc. in the designated space on the poster.
3. Return to your seat, begin examining the data, and prepare to debrief with the class.

SET UP THE ACTIVATOR

1. Explain the purpose of the Activator. You might say, “*We’re going to do an Activator that will quickly create a snapshot of everyone’s thinking about _____, and keep your brains alert by putting you on your feet. We will then step back to discuss what we see in order to deepen our learning.*”
2. Review student directions.
3. Display and read the prompt.

MODEL AND TEACH

1. Model how to place a sticker/sticky note or mark a “vote” with a pen or marker. If using stickers/sticky notes, demonstrate how to place these without covering up the words that are displayed. If using pens or markers, model the size students should make their mark.
2. If students need support in deciding “how” to vote, model by using a different prompt and doing a Think Aloud.

PRACTICE AND ASSESS

1. Tell students how much time they have to place their stickers/sticky notes or make their marks and ask them to begin.
2. Remind students when time is halfway up.
3. When the time is up, use a signal to get the group’s attention, and debrief the Activator by asking the class some of the following generic questions here or generate your own more specific ones:

Content Questions

- What do you see or notice?
- So what do you think it means or why does it matter?
- Now what should we be asking, doing, or trying to understand?

Process Questions

- How does seeing a visual like this impact your thinking?
- What influenced your decision for how you voted?

Thank students for their active participation, affirm understandings, and address any misconceptions that surfaced.

TROUBLESHOOTING TIPS

- Sticky notes and sticker dots create a nice visual and students react positively to the tactile task, but these items do cost money so consider having students draw a star or a make a tally mark on chart paper or the whiteboard when supply costs are an issue.
- To maximize participation in the debrief, use a strategy like Quick Jot[™], Quick Draw[™], Table Talk[™], Cold Calls[™], Numbered Heads[™], or Turn and Talk (Chapter 3).

- If you have space constraints in your room, you may need to stagger the time for the Post It Up process, or have two different posters and designate one half of the room for each, and then bring both posters to the front for the debrief.

VARIATIONS AND EXTENSIONS

- Have students work in table groups to generate a smaller set of data that they can then manipulate by organizing the sticky notes into categories. Afterwards, table groups can do a gallery walk to see and reflect on the way other groups organized their sticky notes. (See the biology example on page 61.)
- Give students two or more different colored dots to indicate different “votes” on the same poster. (See the ELA Speaking/Listening example on page 63).

Using Post It Up to Create a High-Performing Community of Learners

In our visits to classrooms around the country we frequently see Post It Up used at the beginning of a year, semester, or trimester as a forum for individual student goal setting, and often those goals remain posted in the room. Teachers and students refer to the goals frequently to support Habits of Learning, like practicing the critical skill of -monitoring their own learning and progress in each of their subject areas. A Post It Up Activator that requires students to reflect on their own competency with the identified unit standards or objectives is one way to keep the class focused on the prioritized outcomes. And by its very nature, this Activator fosters a sense of connectedness because of the way it collects and projects a snapshot of the group’s collective thoughts and opinions.

Research shows that collaborative learning is a powerful tool for student achievement (Johnson & Johnson, 1988), yet most students need support to be able to collaborate effectively with their peers. Having a small group do a Post It Up Activator where they identify essential group behaviors and discuss what they need from each other will support them to function effectively and efficiently on their group task. This type of data helps students to harness their empathy and understanding for others and helps them see their peers as individuals with similar or different needs when working independently and within the group. Using Post It Up provides students with real-time data to inform what steps they need to take to strengthen their relationships for the important work they need to do with each other.

Post It Up Examples for Creating a High-Performing Community of Learners

- Mark your initials by the unit standard that is most challenging for you.
- Put a star sticker by the college and career readiness standards you feel will be most important for your personal college and career aspirations.

- (In project groups) Review the list of essential collaboration norms and select the one you feel is most important for your group to pay attention to over the course of the project. Each group member should write down their own norm on a sticky note and place it in the center of your group's table. Then each group should examine all the sticky notes and follow the generic debrief protocol: **What?** "What did group members pick?" **So What?** "Why are these important?" And **Now What?** "What can we do as individuals and a group to make sure we are paying attention to and upholding these norms?"
- On a sticky note, set a specific goal for improving in one of the four Habits of Learning categories and sign your name to it. Post your note on the Goal Setting for Next Unit poster in the back of the room, placing it in the quadrant that coincides with the Habit of Learning you selected (see example below).

Prompt and In Class

Organized and Prepared

On-task and Engaged

High-Quality Work

Using Post It Up to Support Learning in the Content Areas

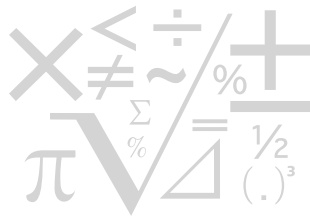
Generate Connections to Prior Knowledge: Using Post It Up to solicit and record predictions or assumptions about a topic is a natural fit for this Activator. For example, in a world language class that is structured thematically, Post It Up can be used to help students anticipate the vocabulary they will need to learn in the next unit on holidays and celebrations. When the new unit vocabulary is presented, students can examine how accurate they were at predicting the vocabulary. This simple Post It Up can easily lead to a deeper discussion on how culture influences language; students might not have thought of a high-frequency word because it is not part of or as important in their own culture.

Provide Opportunities to Practice Skills and Deepen Understanding: Post It Up Activators are particularly impactful because they create a visual that serves as a permanent anchor for student understanding. When economics students use the Post It Up Activator to generate a real-life example of how supply and demand influences prices, they create a visual that makes this essential economic concept come to life. And when students hear about a political candidate being on the “far left” or the “far right” they can access a mental image of the political spectrum where they were asked to plot their own political beliefs and also know that political stances are much more complex than simply “left” or “right.”

Support Formative Assessment: Post It Up can be used to measure student understanding and clarify where there might be confusion. When a teacher has students place a sticker dot next to the unit concepts they find most confusing and draw a star next to the unit concept they are feeling confident about, that teacher gains immediate insight about where to focus re-teaching efforts. It can also be a way to create or identify small groups with similar academic needs to allow the teacher to differentiate instruction.

Inject Relevance Into the Curriculum: Post It Up Activators can also be used to tie your content to world issues or student interests. For example, you could list career areas that are related to your subject and have students do a Post It Up to indicate which they are most interested in. By connecting your content to students’ career interest you open the door for making your class relevant to their futures and personal interests.

Math



Algebra

Place a dot on the method you would use to solve for this system of equations.

$$y = -3x - 7$$

$$-5x + y = 1$$

1. Graph them and find the point of intersection
2. Make tables for both and look for the point of intersection
3. Solve it algebraically using substitution
4. Solve it algebraically using elimination

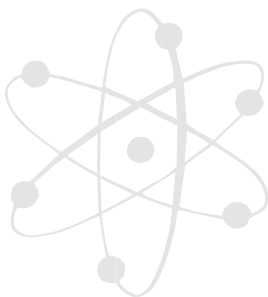
Write out your solution on a sticky note and post it next to the letter that corresponds with your response. Be prepared to explain why your method is best.

Geometry

Review the standards that were included in this unit. Place a star sticker next to the standards that you would like to focus on during the review day.

1. Understand similarity in terms of similarity transformations
2. Prove theorems involving similarity
3. Define trigonometric ratios and solve problems involving right triangles
4. Apply geometric concepts in modeling situations
5. Apply trigonometry to general triangles

Science



Earth Science

Examine the different career options related to earth science. Put your initials by the one you would be most interested in. Be prepared to facilitate a discussion around the way the careers might relate to earth science.

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| ■ Lawyer | ■ Chemist |
| ■ Graphic Designer | ■ Forest Ranger |
| ■ Engineer | ■ Politician |
| ■ Writer | ■ Meteorologist |
| ■ Computer Programmer | ■ Oceanographer |
| | ■ Fire Fighter |
| | ■ Teacher |

Biology

In table groups, on sticky notes, jot down five to seven individual food items you've eaten today. Afterwards, move the sticky notes around on your table to sort them into organic compound categories:

- Carbohydrates
- Proteins
- Nucleic acids
- Lipids

Chemistry

Place your dot sticker (or draw an X) on the continuum that represents your response to the following question:

"We will be doing labs once a week in this course. How do you feel about doing lab activities and handling chemicals?"

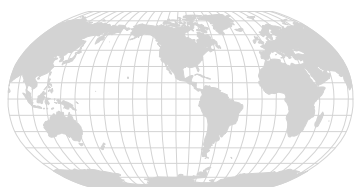
Very confident and comfortable _____ Not at all confident and comfortable

Physics

Put a green dot sticker next to a concept you feel confident explaining to a neighbor and a red dot next to a concept you need further support in understanding.

- Circular motion
- Rotational inertia
- Torque
- Centripetal force
- Centrifugal force

Social Studies



Economics

Supply and Demand graph – Place your dot sticker on the graph to show how much you would be willing to pay for one slice of chocolate cake right now. Next let students know that there are only 10 slices of cake and ask them to determine what each cake slice would probably cost, given their data.

U.S. History

Place your dot sticker on the continuum to indicate how skillfully you feel President Kennedy handled the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Very Skillful _____ Not Very Skillful

English Language Arts



World History

Place a star sticker on the continuum to represent your response to the following statement:

The consequences of China's industrialization and economic growth are:

Mostly Positive _____ Mostly Negative

Government

Initial Post It Up:

Place a star sticker on the political compass chart to indicate where you think you might fall.

Follow-up Post It Up

After students take a political spectrum quiz and you have explained the political compass chart: place your dot sticker on the chart based on your political spectrum quiz result.

(Search the internet to find a printable political compass charts and political spectrum quizzes.)

Writing

Write your initials next to an aspect of your persuasive speech you are feeling good about and an exclamation point "!" next to an aspect of your persuasive speech you are feeling challenged by:

- Introducing precise claims
- Establishing the significance of claims
- Distinguishing claims from counterclaims
- Supplying evidence for claims and counterclaims
- Pointing out strengths and limitations of claims and counterclaims

Reading – Literature

Put a sticky note next to the sign that represents your response to the following statement:

The conflict in the novel *47* is unresolved at the end.

True / True with Modifications / Not True / Unable to determine

Reading – Informational Texts

Put a star or dot sticker next to the component that would be most helpful to you in reading a chapter in your textbook:

- Headings and subheadings
- Italicized words
- Summary at the end of the chapter
- Review questions at the end of the chapter
- Charts and graphs
- Pictures and captions

Speaking and Listening

Put a green dot sticker by one thing you did really well during today's conversation and put a blue dot by one thing you want to be more intentional in practicing next time:

- Using textual evidence to support ideas
- Posing questions that connect our discussion to larger ideas
- Actively engaging others in the conversation
- Clarifying each other's ideas and conclusions
- Verifying each other's ideas
- Challenging each other's ideas respectfully

Language

Draw an X along the strongly agree-strongly disagree continuum in a position that represents your response to the following statement:

"I can distinguish between when I need to use a semi-colon (;) and when I need to use a colon (:) in a sentence."

World Languages



On the 3x5 size sticky notes, using a black marker, write down two to three vocabulary words (in English) that you think will be important to learn and know during our next unit on _____. Be sure you write them large and clear enough for students at the back of the room to read when we post these on the whiteboard.

Put your initials by the aspect of learning a language that you find most challenging:

- Vocabulary
- Grammar
- Speaking and pronunciation
- Reading
- Listening

Put a dot sticker next to the career area in (the target language) you are most interested in.

Suggestions for Writing Your Own Post It Up Activators:

Consider integrating at least two quick and low-prep Post It Up Activators into your unit. You might include one at the beginning of the unit to allow students to voice their opinion on a concept, and a second one at the end of the unit to solicit feedback on which concepts, skills, and knowledge students are struggling with.

YOUR TURN

Design Your Own Post It Up Activators

A large, empty rounded rectangular box intended for students to design their own Post It Up Activators.

A Checklist for Designing Effective Activators:

- Does the prompt support a specific learning outcome?*
- Is the prompt engaging?* Can students respond without feeling anxious or uncomfortable? Do students have enough prior knowledge to feel competent in their responses? Will the prompt ignite curiosity, make content relevant, and challenge students to think at a high level?
- Is the prompt crafted with invitational language that promotes exploration and reduces the need for certainty?* Invitational prompts might begin with “What might...?” “What are some of the...?” or “What is your hunch for why...?”