

## Is the use of response cards an effective strategy?

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### Statement of the problem

The frequency of active student engagement and responding can be linked to academic achievement and level of disruptive behaviour. There is also a need for specific feedback to students on their performance. Low levels of student engagement and responding have been observed during group instruction in classrooms.

### Proposed solution/intervention

Response cards can be used to increase learning and reduce disruptive classroom behaviour. A key feature of the strategy is the use of pre-printed cards or dry-erase boards to enable all students to give short (e.g., one- or two-word) answers to questions posed by the teacher. Pre-printed responses such as “yes”, “no”, “true”, “false” or a word with a picture prompt could be placed on sheets of paper which the student will hold up or could be attached to display boards with Velcro. Alternatively, blank laminated sheets or small whiteboards could be given to students to write their answers (e.g., a letter) and subsequently hold up. While there can be some variation, the procedure usually adheres to the following basic steps: (1) teacher poses a question, (2) a few seconds are given to allow students to prepare and hold up their answers, and (3) the teacher briefly scans the responses and provides appropriate corrective feedback. Brief training in the use of the strategy is needed prior to use.

### The theoretical rationale

It is claimed that actively preparing answers may be incompatible with some forms of disruptive behaviour (e.g., hitting). More time spent on-task can increase learning and decrease off-task behaviour. In addition, the teacher can use response cards as a quick indicator for measuring whether learning has taken place and if needed, appropriate feedback can be provided or teaching can be instantly adjusted.

### What does the research say? What is the evidence for its efficacy?

Researchers report that using response cards is superior to other methods of active responding (hand-raising and choral responding) for enhancing academic performance and reducing disruptive behaviour. The strategy has been implemented across various classroom settings (regular and support classes), age groups, abilities, content areas (e.g., learning vocabulary, mathematics) and positions within a lesson (e.g., at the beginning, at the end). There is also limited evidence demonstrating a maintenance effect (i.e., remembering content over time).

### Conclusion

The use of response cards is an effective, cost-effective strategy to increase opportunities for active student responding. Research supports its positive effect on academic achievement.

### Key references

- Horn, C (2010). Response cards: An effective intervention for students with disabilities, *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities*, 45, 116-123.
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