Structured Student Talk

Adapted from Edutopia

Gallery walks

Gallery walks get students up and out of their chairs and actively engaging with the content and each other. In **gallery walks,** students display artworks or written works on their tables or tablets, for others to view. Although they can be more structured, alternating groups to peruse the art, basically, classmates peruse each other's work, perhaps providing feedback, asking questions, and/or praising each other. **Gallery walks** can also be curated by students or teacher, a smaller selection of:

- Artworks, posters, comics, illustrations
- Stories, poems
- Digital Images
- Sculptures, books
- Artists' statements

Whether the gallery consists of material made by students or by others, students can contemplate these artifacts silently while circulating, respond in conversation with a gallery walk partner, or jot down comments on sticky notes and paste them next to the displays.

During this time, the teacher's primary role is a facilitator or participant.
Here are five specific suggestions for gallery walks in your classroom:

1. QUESTION-ANSWER BRAINSTORM
Students individually make their way around the room and compose answers to questions displayed (directly on the poster or with sticky notes). Invite students to also reflect on answers written by other students—a sticky note can be a response to another sticky note.

2. CHALK TALK
If your class is studying a concept word—for example, *justice*—you can place posters around the room that say, "Justice Is . . ." and "Justice Is Not. . . ." Provide markers and have students write examples and definitions of what the concept is and what it is not. They can also draw symbols or stick figures. Invite students to comment next to what others have written (they might agree, disagree, or ask a question). Chalk talks are most powerful if done in silence. Children reticent to share verbally in large and small groups often shine with such an activity as this.

3. STATION-TO-STATION
A group of three or four students make their way to a chart (station) where a question is posed. Each group discusses the question and writes comments. One student will write as the others talk. After several minutes, each group rotates to the next station. They can add new comments or comment on the comments of the previous group. Before your students return to their seats, make sure that they get a chance to see what other groups have written. The posters can then be tools for individual writing or for whole-class discussion.

4. COMPUTER TOUR
Assignments on laptops or tablets can be engrossing for students, yes, but they can also be isolating. Stopping the individual work, pausing, and asking students to take a quick cruise around the room to see what others are doing (on their Prezi research report, for example) can assist with the learning. Half of the students remain with their devices so they can give a quick click through of their work while the other half visit and ask questions—then switch. Fifteen minutes of this can inspire and motivate in ways you might not imagine.

5. PROJECT SHARE

If your students are working in groups—and there is a lot to glean from the groups—pause the projects or tasks and ask your students to leave their materials (research articles, images, websites, notes) on their desks and walk around to see the process and progress of others. Afterward, ask the groups to reconvene and debrief on what they saw others doing. Follow this with a whole-class discussion so your students can share what questions they might have for other groups and how they were inspired.

Gallery walks make learning social, student-centered, and engaging. As Lev Vygotsky and other cognitive psychologists note, social interaction is essential to learning.