

Carousel Brainstorming

Carousel Brainstorming is a cooperative learning strategy in which students work together in small groups to brainstorm and assess their knowledge about various topics related to a class lesson. For this activity, the teacher will post different topics or prompts around the classroom on large posters, in various “stations.” Each small group of students will rotate around the classroom to each of the stations, spending a few minutes at each to discuss the prompt and then write their response on the poster. Students will build upon the ideas that previous groups have already listed on the poster. One study recommended that students be assigned roles of writer, timer and presenter, so each student actively participates in the brainstorming activity. The writer is tasked with writing the group’s ideas on the poster, the timer with determining when it is time to rotate to the next poster, and the presenter is given the task of presenting the group’s ideas to the class following the activity (Hunter et al., 2017). This activity can be used to help students review what they have learned, to introduce a new topic to assess students current knowledge or preconceptions about the topic, or to encourage critical thinking and teamwork. Carousel brainstorming has been shown to increase student engagement and participation, as well as reduce speaking anxiety (Hunter et al., 2017; Ahmadifar, Shangarfamm & Marashi, 2019).

Grade Level: Upper Elementary - 12th

Materials: Large poster paper, markers, timer or stopwatch

Duration: 30-60 minutes, as desired.

Implementation: 1. Write a topic or discussion prompt on the top of 4-5 pieces of poster paper and post them on the wall around the classroom
2. Divide students into groups of 2 or 3. If desired, assign roles (writer, timer and presenter) and describe the responsibilities of each role to encourage all students to actively participate.
3. Instruct students on how the rotation will work and how long they will spend at each station. Have students rotate to each of the posters around the room.
4. After students have rotated through all sessions, encourage students to share their group's ideas in a class discussion.

Does it work?

Eight 2nd and 3rd graders in a summer enrichment program in the Southern, U.S. were studied for the effectiveness of a carousel brainstorming activity on literacy and engagement (Hunter et al., 2017). Students were divided into small groups of 2 or 3 and given specific roles (writer, presenter, monitor) and rotated between 3 stations where they discussed story-related prompts. Each student spent about 3 minutes at each station. At the end of the activity, students had higher literacy scores, improved participation and reported higher engagement with the lesson (Hunter et al., 2017).

An additional study assessed the impact of a carousel brainstorming activity on the speaking ability and anxiety of 60 English language learners (Ahmadifar et al., 2019). The carousel brainstorming activity was compared to another cooperative learning activity, the fishbowl strategy (similar to the Socratic method of class conversation). The carousel brainstorming group outperformed the fishbowl strategy group on speaking ability following the activity. The carousel brainstorming activity also reported reduced speaking anxiety, possibly due to the fact that the carousel brainstorming encourages building relationships with peers (Ahmadifar et al., 2019).

References:

Ahmadifar, M., Shangarfamm, N. & Marashi, H. (2019). The comparative effect of using fishbowl and carousel brainstorming strategies on EFL learners' foreign language speaking ability and anxiety. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research*, 6(1), 276-294. <https://edtechbooks.org/-QNZz>

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Allen, A. & Jasper, A. (2017). Effects of carousel brainstorming on student engagement and academic performance in a summer enrichment program. *Journal of Evidence-Based Practices for Schools*, 17(2), 220-244.

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DAVID BOREN



Fawson, S., Bates, M., & Boren, D. M. (n.d.). *Addressing Wellbeing In Schools*. EdTech Books.
https://edtechbooks.org/addressing_wellbeing