

Name _____

Using the Whip-Around Method

A Quick and Participative Assessment Tool

The whip-around, as described here, is based on a technique developed by Jack Conklin, PhD, and is designed to provide a quick assessment of what students have learned in a class period or segment of a class. The technique serves several functions: helping students to recall significant facts, allowing student comments to serve as review for the rest of the class, and, as an active learning event, waking students to awareness and getting their minds in gear. The idea is to call on every student, in random order, to answer a question (or short series of questions), making sure every student has a chance to respond.

The Process

At the end of a class or information session (or when changing the topic or activity in a lesson), each student is asked to quickly respond to one of these prompts:

1. State one thing that they have just learned.
2. Answer one of three questions written on the board. (The teacher chooses the question, but the students prepare on paper for all three.)
3. Name one question or concern they have about the material. One student answers, then the question is whipped to the next student (the teacher calls on another student at random), and then the next, until all the students have had the opportunity to respond. It's that simple.

The following hints may prove helpful as you begin:

- Have the students write down responses to the prompts in advance, so that the more introverted students will be able to read their answers.
- It is always good to allow students the option to "pass." This is a technique designed to keep all the students engaged.

The Rules

1. The answers must be short.
2. Everyone should respond as quickly as possible.
3. All answers are accepted.
4. Everyone participates.
5. No "editorial comments" about other people's statements (except when the teacher corrects blatant errors; otherwise, even the teacher should not comment).
6. Whip-around should happen before changing topics, before breaks, or at the end of class.

Response Guide

You might want to provide a chart with the following response initiators when you first use this method. After the first three or four times, this will likely not be needed anymore. Soon enough, students will be able to whip around the room in just a few minutes.

- I now know that . . .
- I learned . . .
- I was reminded of . . .
- I was surprised to learn that . . .
- I feel (an emotional response is given) because I now know . . .
- This makes me conclude . . .
- I discovered that . . .
- I remember that . . .
- "Pass" with a return for an answer or comment.
- "Piggyback" on someone else's comment (with an addition of my own).

