Response Cards

The response cards procedure is an intervention that increases students' active engagement and provides a means for a teacher to immediately assess students and to provide feedback to the whole class, a group of students within the class, or to individual students. The basic procedure for response cards is for all students to respond simultaneously to a teacher prompt using a card with pre-printed answers, a white board, interactive white board, or other technology. The teacher then assesses the responses and provides feedback to students.

The response cards procedure has been shown to increase student performance on both short-term and delayed assessments (Cavanaugh, Heward, & Donelson, 1996; Christie & Schuster, 2003; Maheady, Michielli-Pendl, Mallette, & Harper, 2002; Randolph, 2007). This procedure has also been shown to decrease off-task and disruptive student behavior (Armendariz & Umbreit, 1999; Gardner, Bullara, Heward, Cooper, & Sweeney, 1993; Randolph, 2007). The response cards procedure has been demonstrated to be more effective than hand raising (Narayan et al., 1990). Research has shown that the response cards procedure is effective at all educational levels from primary through college with a variety of subjects (Cavanaugh, Heward, & Donelson, 1996; Kellum, Carr, & Dozier, 2001; Randolph, 2007; Marmolejo, Wilder, & Bradley, 2004).

Procedure

Introducing the procedure to students

1. Inform students that they will be responding to teacher questions and prompts in a new way.
2. Show students a response card or white board (see below for examples of response cards).
3. Model how to use the response card correctly providing examples of the different responses a student will provide using the response card. For example, if using a Yes/No response card, the teacher will provide examples of using the response card when the response would be Yes and examples when the response would be No. Be sure the demonstration includes the use of your selected prompt for students to show their responses (e.g., "Cards up" or "Answer please"), the proper placement of cards or white boards (e.g., below chin), and for students to put down their cards or white boards (e.g., "Cards down" or "Boards down and clean").
4. Distribute the response cards or white boards to students. If using white boards, you will need to distribute an appropriate marker and something for erasing the board (e.g., tissue, paper towel, eraser) to each student.
5. Provide the students with an opportunity to practice using the response cards or white boards. A suggestion is to use material from a previous lesson or class session for this practice. Provide students with praise and corrective feedback. Students should be facing the teacher when using response cards or white boards.

6. Once all students consistently respond on cue with cards/boards in the proper position, then conclude the introduction of response cards.

Daily procedure in the classroom

1. Prior to the class period determine what material will be used with the response cards. Initially, it may be helpful to plan the questions or prompts that will be used with students when they use the response cards.

2. Prior to the class period prepare a student list or seating chart that will be used to keep a tally of student incorrect responses. This information will be used later to make decisions about differentiating instruction for groups or individual students.

3. Present a portion of material to students.

4. Distribute the response cards or white boards if students do not have them at their seats. If using white boards, you may also need to distribute an appropriate marker and something for erasing the board (e.g., tissue, paper towel, eraser) to each student.

5. Ask a question or provide a prompt to which students will respond to using the response cards or white board.

6. Give the students a few seconds to choose an answer or to write a response. Generally, 3-5 seconds should be sufficient for recall types of demands. More time will generally be required for a response requiring higher cognitive demand.

7. Prompt students to show their responses with a cue such as "Cards up" or "Answers please." Be sure that students hold or display the cards/boards in the manner they were trained.

8. Scan the class as a whole to assess the response. The goal is for 80% or more of the students to respond correctly.

9. Put a tally mark on the student list or seating chart prepared in step 2 above beside the name of each student who responded incorrectly. If more than one skill or concept is assessed during the session it will be helpful to denote which skill or concept. The notation can be made by using a single letter abbreviation for the skill or concept as the tally mark. For example, a mathematics teacher might be addressing communicative and distributive properties. The teacher might simply indicate an incorrect response addressing communicative property with a "c" as the tally mark.
10. Provide feedback to students.

   a. If 80% or more of the students respond correctly:

      1) Affirm the correct response by clearing stating it for the whole class (e.g., "36 is the correct response" or "Pronoun is the correct response") and providing a brief supporting explanation or rationale.

      2) Prompt students to put down their response cards or white boards with a cue such as "Cards down" or "Boards down and clean."

      3) Move on to the next question or prompt to which the students will respond.

   b. If less than 80% of students respond correctly:

      1) Prompt students to put their response cards or white boards down with a cue such as "Cards down" or "Board down." If using white boards, do not instruct students to clean their white board at this point so they can see their response.

      2) Ask students who responded correctly to explain how they solved the problem.

      3) Ask students who did not respond correctly to explain how they solved the problem; provide feedback to the students on where their thinking was incorrect.

      4) Affirm the correct response by clearing stating it for the whole class (e.g., "36 is the correct response" or "Pronoun is the correct response") and providing a brief supporting explanation or rationale if not already provided by the students who responded correctly.

      5) If using white boards, prompt students to clean their white boards with a cue "Clean boards."

      6) Re-teach or model the knowledge or skill if appropriate.

      7) Following steps 5-9 above ask a new question or provide a new prompt on the knowledge or skill until 80% or more of the students respond correctly.

11. Continue asking questions or providing prompts until the knowledge or skill has been adequately assessed.

12. At the end of the session using the response cards or white boards, prompt students for the procedure for putting the materials away or for collecting materials, whichever is appropriate for the class setting.
13. While students are putting away or collecting materials, review the student list or seating chart and take note of any student(s) who responded incorrectly during the session. Based on the patterns presented in the data, determine if students should receive individual or small group instruction at another time (e.g., when the rest of the class is engaged in independent practice). If these data cannot be reviewed immediately, they should be reviewed prior to the next time these students will be receiving instruction in this content area.

**Important Things to Note**

1. When using response cards or white boards, try to maintain a quick, energetic pace.
2. Periodically (at least once per session) praise students for appropriate and correct use of the response cards procedure.
3. The items on the response card should be legible from the front of the room so the teacher can quickly and accurately assess all student responses.
4. When using white boards, keep the responses to one to two words if possible. Be sure to train students to write the responses large enough to be seen by the teacher at the front of the room.
5. If there is more than one method for arriving at the correct response or more than one correct response is possible, the teacher should validate these other methods or correct responses. Affirming these alternatives will help students to generalize the knowledge or skill that is the focus of the learning.

**Examples of Response Cards**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes - No Card</th>
<th>True-False Card</th>
<th>True-False with Multiple Choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Front</td>
<td>Front</td>
<td>Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back</td>
<td>Back</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: For students with less experience with response cards and for younger students, the response card design should be simple. More complex designs such as the True-False with Multiple Choice example should be reserved for students with more response card experience and/or older students.
References


