

How Pop-Up Debate Works

Students use assigned text(s), logic, and/or course content to respond to a debatable prompt and their peers' arguments, using the rules below.

- Every student speaks 1+ times, depending on time constraints. These limits are set by the teacher.
- To speak, students simply “pop up” at their desks and talk. First person to speak has the floor. When multiple students pop up, teach them to politely yield the floor. Argument is a collaborative endeavor, and collaboration isn't a pointed finger and, “Sit down, I was up first.”

Why Use Pop-Up Debate?

Pop-up debates are a novice-friendly, replicable teaching strategy. They allow me to

- **get all students talking** about course content;
- **explicitly teach students how to speak** within an authentic context;
- **teach students to argue**, which Jerry Graff explains is critical for the democratization of postsecondary attainment (and this is why argument is one of the five things I recommend working on all year long); and
- **build character**, although I'm still studying exactly how through a national Teacher Innovation Grant.

Management Considerations for Pop-Up Debate

- No cross talk. The person standing has the floor until they sit.
 - Courteous, civil behavior is the norm; don't let them stand up obnoxiously long.
- Teacher = coach. Model, instruct, correct as needed.
 - Step in as needed; not too much, not too little.
- Every kid needs to speak. Be proactive with shy kids.
 - Think Pair Share for a couple weeks before the first debate.
 - Don't mention an option for not speaking. “Mr. Stuart, what if I don't want to speak?” “Guys, we're all going to speak, and I'm going to show you exactly how it's done. You can literally read off your claim from a piece of paper for the first pop-up debate; you got this.”
 - Read this blog article: “Beyond a Fear of Public Speaking: Making the First Pop-Up Debate a Success for All Students.”¹
- “Great debaters can debate all sides.”
 - Pick their sides if they get too comfy, too one-sided, etc.
- “We all win with a great debate.”
 - I don't do the “pick a winner” thing. That probably makes me lame.
- Teach and assess 1-2 skills at a time.
 - Explicitly show them how to do these skills. Provide sentence templates as needed.
- Remember to coach not just on argumentative skill, but also **content** and **performance** (Erik's PVLEGS).

¹ www.davestuartjr.com/fear-of-public-speaking-pop-up-debate/

Pop-Up Debates from a Sample Semester

	TOPIC	TARGET SKILL	OBSERVATIONS	LESSONS LEARNED
PUD1 9/25	If you had to choose one of the groups below to time warp into and live in for the rest of your life, which would you choose and why?	State your answer.	Even students with self-identified phobias re: speaking stood up. See davestuartjr.com/fear-of-public-speaking	This question did not create claims. Most students feel nervous.
PUD2 10/2	<i>How did the early Islamic empire expand as rapidly as it did?</i>	State hypothesis + Support with evidence or reasoning	Two classes, two different results: one class constantly referred to others, another didn't at all.	One student started the great speaking trend in the one class.
PUD3 10/8, 10/12	<i>Was 400-1400 CE a period of cultural decline in Europe -- a true "Dark Age"?</i>	Cite evidence + productively agree or disagree with another's argument	Stanford "Reading Like a Historian" lessons ideal for argument-building.	Ergh -- save enough time in class to finish. 10 minutes = not enough for classes of 30. 15 = minimum.
PUD4 10/16, 10/19	<i>Was 400-1400 CE a period of cultural decline in Europe -- a true "Dark Age"?</i>	Work on a self-identified portion of PVLEGS	PVLEGS is powerful.	Same topic for 2 PUDs can be useful when introducing a complex skillset.
PUD5 10/30	<i>How barbaric were the "barbarian" Mongols?</i>	Paraphrase Plus (davestuartjr.com/paraphrase-plus)	This is a debate I had been previewing for weeks as "one of my favorite of the year."	Students feed on the hype; lots of great speeches and eagerness.
PUD6 11/6	<i>Has "pinkification" gone too far? Should the strategy change? (Based on an article of the week.)</i>	Speaking with sensitivity, grace, and care when debating touchy topics	Students handled the sensitive nature of this debate very well.	Best to save sensitive topics for a bit into the school year when norms are set.
PUD7 11/13	<i>Which foodstuff, animal, or pathogen from the Columbian Exchange has had the most significant impact on world history?</i>	Self-identified element of PVLEGS	Periodically, it's useful to revisit key skills that I want students to remember to work on for years to come.	Even the blandest of topics can become interesting when properly framed.

Questions? Dave periodically gives free webinars on Pop-Up Debate. Subscribe to his newsletter to be the first to know of the next one: davestuartjr.com/newsletter

Three Keys of Effective Speaking Instruction

Content

- Which academic vocabulary words do you want students to practice using?
- Which transitional words do you want students to practice using?

Organization / Argumentation

- What sentence templates can you create to help students organize their thinking?
- How can you show students to hit beginning, middle, and end?

Delivery = PVLEGS (from Erik Palmer's *Well Spoken*)

Poise

- Appear calm and confident
- Avoid distracting behaviors

Voice

- Speak every word clearly; no mumbling!
- Use a volume level just right for the space
- Avoid trailing off

Life

- Express passion and emotion right for the space

Eye Contact

- Connect visually with the audience
- Look at each audience member

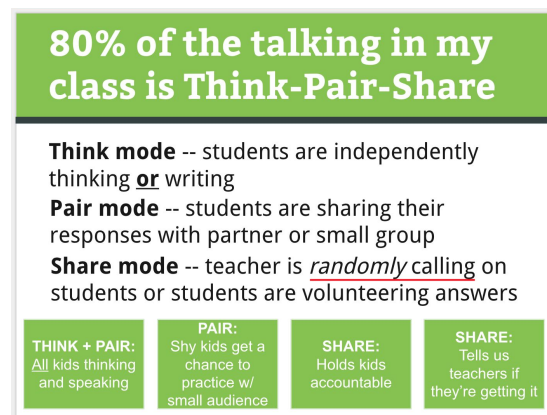
Gestures

- Hands
- Body
- Face

Speed

- Use pauses for effect and emphasis

Speaking needs to be efficient; create student engagement through the *content* of speaking, not 100 cute strategies



80% of the talking in my class is Think-Pair-Share

Think mode -- students are independently thinking **or** writing

Pair mode -- students are sharing their responses with partner or small group

Share mode -- teacher is randomly calling on students or students are volunteering answers

THINK + PAIR: All kids thinking and speaking	PAIR: Shy kids get a chance to practice w/ small audience	SHARE: Holds kids accountable	SHARE: Tells us teachers if they're getting it
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(T-P-S is Frank Lyman's creation; it, like me, is a child of the '80s.)