TIES Center

TURN & TALK

Turn and Talk (Think Pair Share, Shoulder Partners, Numbered Heads Together, etc.) is a great high-leverage collaborative learning practice that is widely used across grades and subject areas to engage all learners in general education classes. This practice involves two students discussing a topic, coming to a consensus, and then sharing with the class. This TIPS in Action focuses on using principles of UDL to plan, implement, and evaluate the Turn and Talk strategy in a way that removes barriers and empowers students with significant cognitive disabilities to engage in this strategy.

Benefits for students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities:

- Increased engagement with peers
- Deepened understanding of content
- More opportunities to practice communication in a supportive environment

Planning:

1. Determine the outcomes you want from the strategy. Turn and Talk creates an aligned prompt for all pairs to respond to.

2. Identify barriers and brainstorm solutions to plan for all students. Anticipate where students may be stuck or not able to participate or engage in the Turn and Talk. Ensure that any adaptations do not take away from the original outcomes of the Turn and Talk and promote student independence as much as possible.

3. Determine what supports are needed to reduce barriers. Ensure that any adaptations do not take away from the original outcomes purpose of the Turn and Talk and promote student independence as much as possible.

In Action:

4. Conduct Turn and Talk using solutions planned ahead of time.

5. Collect data on student performance.

6. Be responsive to student performance for necessary adaptations during instruction (e.g., reframe questions or adjust response options to support the communication).

Evaluation:

7. Determine whether the support(s) provided met the needs of the student by considering the following:

- How were all students able to actively participate in the Turn and Talk activity?
- Were students able to understand what to do?
- In what ways did the students have options to communicate with each other and to the class?
- Were students supported to deepen their understanding of the prompt?

Figure 1. Turn and Talk Self-monitoring Checklist/Peer Communication Support

TURN AND TALK: TROUBLESHOOTING

*The ideas presented are examples of ways to apply principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL; https://udlguidelines.cast.org/) and are not intended to be comprehensive.

If there is a barrier to student engagement in the Turn and Talk activity, you can:

Allow choice, such as choosing a partner or choosing a question to focus on.

Offer flexibility in how students "talk,"such as verbal options, drawing a picture, or using other communication supports.

Provide wait time prior to the turn and talk so students have the chance to do some independent thinking first.

If there is a barrier to student understanding during the Turn and Talk, you can:

Offer multiple ways for students to understand the task and lesson, such as modeling a Turn and Talk or by using a student's AAC device of giving examples/non examples.

Support vocabulary use by providing some pre-teaching on using the relevant vocabulary. You could collaborate with the special education team on this.

If there is a barrier to student(s) expressing their ideas during Turn and Talk, you can:

Encourage flexible forms of communication (e.g., access to software sentence systems, AAC, choice boards, word prediction software)

Reduce demands on working memory by providing models or checklists demonstrating Turn and Talk steps.

Figure 2. Another image
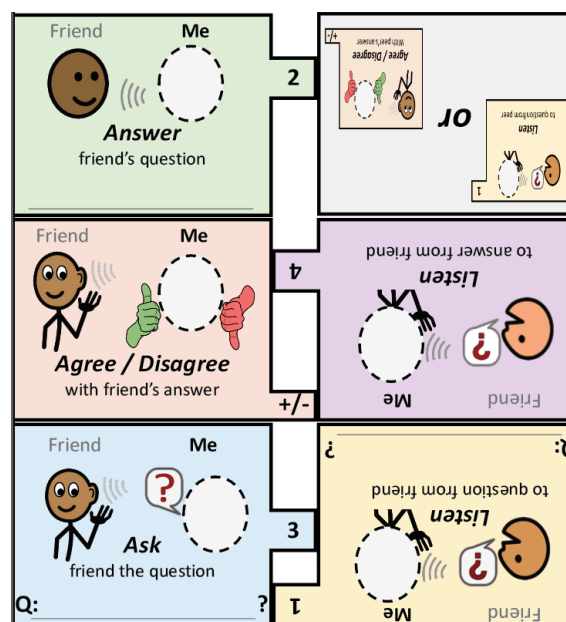
For a planning worksheet, please refer to the TIPS in Action Planning Worksheet.

For additional information on using the Turn and Talk strategy in general education classes, please see the full Turn and Talk TIPS.