

Chalk Talk

Chalk Talk is a silent way to reflect, generate ideas, check on learning, develop projects, or solve problems. It can be used productively with any group—students, faculty, workshop participants, committees. Because it is done completely in silence, it gives groups a change of pace and encourages thoughtful contemplation. It can be an unforgettable experience.

Format

Time: Varies according to need, can be from 5 minutes to an hour.

Materials: Chalk board and chalk or paper roll on the wall and markers.

Process:

- 1 The facilitator explains VERY BRIEFLY that Chalk Talk is a silent activity. (No one may talk at all. Anyone may add to the chalk talk as they please.) You can comment on other people's ideas simply by drawing a connecting line to the comment. It can also be very effective to say nothing at all except to put finger to lips in a gesture of silence and simply begin with #2.
- 2 The facilitator writes a relevant question in a circle on the board. Sample questions:
 - What did you learn today?
 - So what? Or now what?
 - What do you think about social responsibility and schooling?
 - How can we involve the community in the school, and the school in community?
 - How can we keep the noise level down in this room?
 - What do you want to tell the scheduling committee?
 - What do you know about Croatia?
 - How are decimals used in the world?
- 3 The facilitator either hands a piece of chalk to everyone or places many pieces of chalk at the board and hands several pieces to people at random.
- 4 People write as they feel moved. There are likely to be long silences—that is natural, so allow plenty of wait time before deciding it is over.
- 5 How the facilitator chooses to interact with the Chalk Talk influences its outcome. The facilitator can stand back and let it unfold or expand thinking by:
 - circling other interesting ideas, thereby inviting comments to broaden
 - writing questions about a participant comment adding his/her own reflections or ideas

Source: Coalition of Essential Schools. Reprinted with permission.
