

JANET RANKIN: The think-pair-share strategy is one of the classic active learning strategies that one can use in one's classes. And it has, as you might guess, three parts-- the think, the pair, and the share. Often there's a collapsing of the pair and the share.

But in general, you first give students time to think about a question or a situation or some other scenario that you want them to think about. And you give them time to think actively but alone about that. And often you can ask them to write down their thoughts. But then at the end of that short period of time, whether it's three minutes or five minutes, you have them pair up. And if it's a really big class or the numbers of students in your class warrant it, you can have them triple up, it doesn't have to be a pair.

And they discuss whatever it is they came up with. It's just an opportunity for them to just say here, this is what I thought of. What did you think about it? What did you think about what I said? So it's just an interactive opportunity for the students to hear from their peers.

And then the key part when they're talking to each other is that the instructor should walk around the room and kind of eavesdrop on what the students are saying. So you want to understand the kinds of things they're talking about, maybe not the specific details, but the kinds of things they're talking about. And pretty quickly you can learn if students are on the right track or if there's a big misconception that maybe they might be reinforcing each other's misconceptions. So you want to know that as the instructor. So that's why if possible, to walk around the room and just overhear what people are saying, that can be a really important part of that pair step.

And then for the share, you have them report out. So this does two things. One, it lets you bring to light any specific comments that you overheard during the pair section.

You can bring it up with the whole class, because there can be some really important, wonderful observations the students make within the pair. And if you don't share that, or if you don't create a situation where that can be shared with the bigger class, then everybody misses out except for those three people. So it gives you an opportunity to do that. It also gives you an opportunity to globally clear up any misconceptions that you've heard that have bubbled up from this pair exercise.

The other thing it does is if there's a group of two or three or even four, but I think three is

probably optimal, the group reports as a group. It doesn't report as an individual. So if a student is a little insecure or may not really want to share what he or she thinks at a personal level or at an individual level, being able to share out as a group is a bit safer, is a bit more comfortable for many students. So that's what the share part does. And then it just gets the whole group together, and it lets you kind of sum up the smaller conversations with the larger group.