

SPONGE ACTIVITIES

Problem-Solving Box

Direct your students to collaboratively create and decorate a box with a slot in the top, labeled "The Problem-Solving Box." Have members of the class anonymously compose and insert a problem they might be having that they can't solve. Withdraw two problems to discuss right away, and then two more every week thereafter.

Progressive Writing

A group of three or more students answer a prompt, as described by Fisher and Frey. At the end of two minutes, each writer passes his or her paper to the student on the left. Continue until every student has written on every paper.

Four Corners

The four corners of the classroom can be labeled as Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree, according to the West Virginia Department of Education. After prompting students with a controversial statement about a recent concept, students stand in the corner that best represents their judgment. From their corners, the students debate.

Tweet POV

In 140 characters per line of dialogue, create a conversation between two characters in your book.

Email

Have students take a stand on a controversial topic and send an email defending their position to their legislator. Direct learners to blind copy you.

Expert Panel

Select five students to be experts on a critical concept. Let them prepare to discuss the assigned content, while the rest of the class prepares questions to ask the panelists. After 10-15 minutes of study time, seat the five students at the front of the room.

Blackboard Purge

Have groups of students write everything they know about a topic on the board. Ask students to orally elaborate on statements they have written.

Texts

Have copies of an engaging content-related text (or audio) to read (or listen to) and discuss.

Debate Formats

The International Debate Education Association describes five different formats: debate the masses, point and refutation, skills inventory, spar debates, and student parliament.

Hold a Failure Debate

The New York Times Learning Network recommends that students discuss the following questions: *What is "failure"? What is "success"? Who defines each? How is failure defined and dealt with in your family, your school, the activities you do outside of school, among your friends, and in your community? Which of those definitions and responses to failure seem fairest or best to you? Why?*