ENSURE STUDENTS FEEL HEARD

Use this toolkit to build caring relationships with students by practicing active listening, soliciting student input, and prolonging wait time.

In partnership, PERTS (Project for Education Research that Scales) and Sevenzo have created a series of toolkits to support educators who are taking action in their classrooms.

sevenzo   **PERTS**

ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

Hello! You've found this resource because you care about your students and are committed to creating a more caring and engaging learning environment. This toolkit can help you do just that. Inside you'll find strategies, inspiration, and tools for **ensuring students feel heard.**

WHAT YOU'LL FIND IN THIS TOOLKIT

Supporting research and essential definitions to help you practice strategies for listening to students

Activities to practice active listening, solicit student input, and prolong wait time in the classroom

A reference guide, educators' stories, and more

Ways to share feedback to make this toolkit even better

For teachers participating in the Engagement Project, this toolkit can help you respond to the **Teacher Caring** survey items.

Learn more about The Engagement Project at **perts.net/engagement**
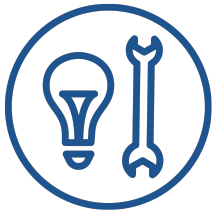
THE POWER OF BEING HEARD

Estimated time to complete: 15 minutes

Reflect on Student Perspectives

Listening is an important tool that can help you build a caring relationship with students.

Watch this inspiring TED talk with educator Azul Terronez, who asked thousands of students "What makes a good teacher great?" and take note of what resonates with you.
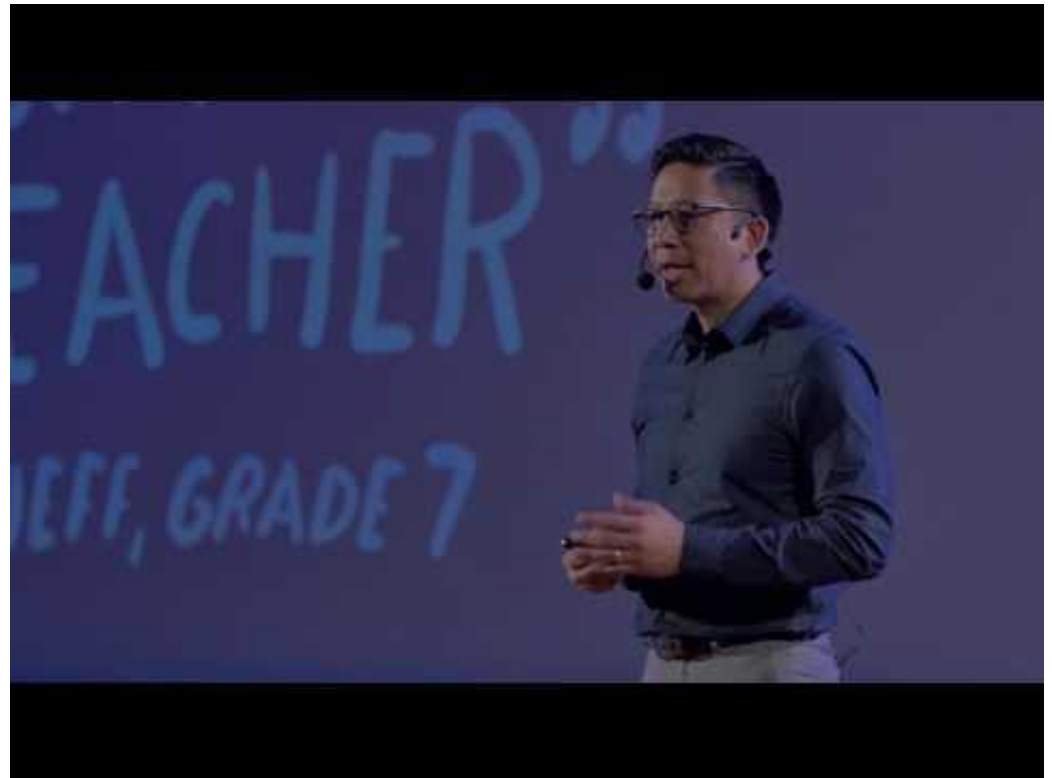
SOLICIT STUDENT FEEDBACK

One way to make students feel heard is to seek their input whenever appropriate. Remember, when asking students for feedback it's important to create conditions in your classroom that make students feel safe sharing their thoughts and to set clear expectations on how students should provide feedback.

Give student surveys following a lesson or unit to have students reflect on what they've learned. Check out this short guide from Cult of Pedagogy with suggested questions and tips for creating the best conditions for honest feedback.

Conduct student focus groups at the end of a lesson, project, or school year. Review the sample questions below, and watch this Teaching Channel video, highlighting authentic feedback strategies that develop a strong class culture.

> ### Sample Questions
> - *What did we learn that you loved? What were the things we learned that you liked the least?*
> - *Is there anything you wish we'd had more time to do?*
> - *How about [insert specific initiative]? What can I do to improve that?*
> - *What ideas do you have to make this [lesson/project/class] better?*

FIND TIME FOR DAILY CHECK-INS

To check in each day, I made a small whiteboard for each student that they get to write on as they enter my room. They get to write about anything that's going on and anything they want to talk about that day. I modeled this practice for students initially, and also wrote something myself 2-3 times a week, like "I made chili over the weekend and it was really yummy." They tend to mimic the same topic that I do. We learn a lot about one another and find ways to connect.

We also did a survey at the start of the year. We all took it, including me, and learned what we had in common. It was really neat to hear the things we had in common with one another.

— Kevin Cox, 8th grade Special Education teacher

Reflect | How does this strategy ensure students feel heard?

ACTIVE LISTENING

Active listening means **fully concentrating and demonstrating understanding of what another person is saying**. The listener takes a moment to devote their full attention to the speaker, takes in what the speaker says, and then summarizes the information back to the speaker to show that it was received accurately (and clarify if it wasn't). It's important to note that listening to understand doesn't necessarily mean you agree with the speaker.

By using active listening strategies in the classroom, you can demonstrate care to your students.
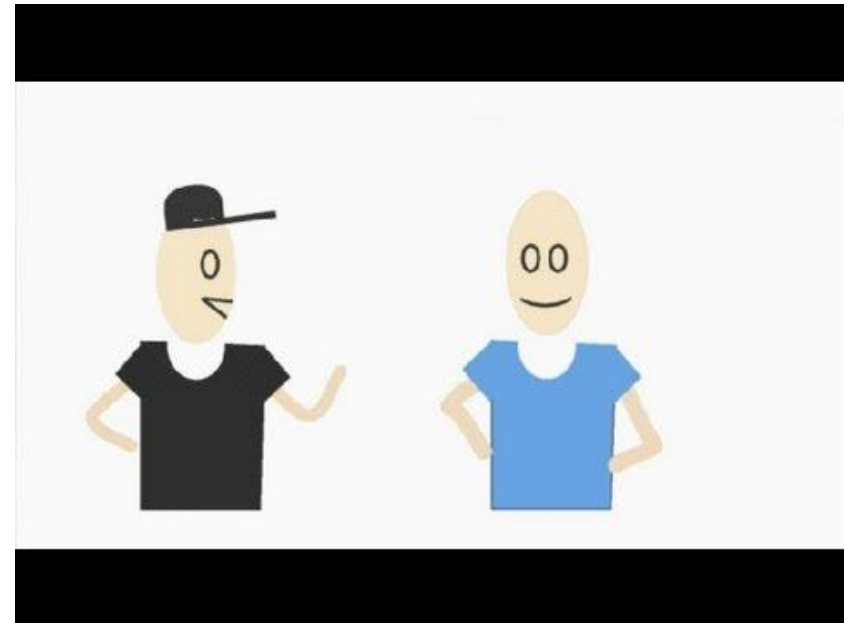
Inspired? Check out this a short video highlighting icebreakers you can try with your students.

ACTIVE LISTENING REFRESHER

Many teachers use active listening strategies in their classrooms daily, but sometimes remembering the process is a challenge. The steps below might serve as a helpful guide in challenging classroom situations.

Active Listening Steps
Adapted from Thought Co.

1. Look at the speaker and pause other activities to demonstrate sincere interest in what the other person is saying.
2. Listen to their words and pay attention to their feelings and tone of speech.
3. Restate what the person said to show you heard them.
4. Ask clarification questions to check for understanding.
5. Be aware of your own feelings and strong opinions.
6. Do not interrupt the speaker and state your views only after you have listened.

*Adapted from **Thought Co.***

Looking for more support? Check out ***How Active Listening Helps You Communicate Better With Students***.

PAUSE FOR STUDENT THINKING

Increasing wait time helps students see their contributions are valued.

Most instructors wait less than one second before calling on a student who immediately has a response or provide the answer themselves (*Rowe, 1986*). Instead, waiting just *three seconds* following a reflection question has benefits for student thinking (*Stahl, 1994*). This idea, known as **wait time**, can **demonstrate to students that their thinking is valued** and ensure students feel heard.

SCAFFOLDS TO SUPPORT STUDENTS

Wait time was something I struggled with as a new teacher. I needed to be able to do cold-calls and have students feel comfortable. I used a clock to make sure I gave students a set amount of time to respond. I could always move on to somebody else and come back to them, and that provided a scaffold of hearing other students talk first.

Another scaffold comes at the beginning of the year when we share in circles. Students have time to process and learn that it's comfortable to share, and this carries over to other academic situations. They know you value them.

— Kimberly Skukalek, K-12 Equity Coach
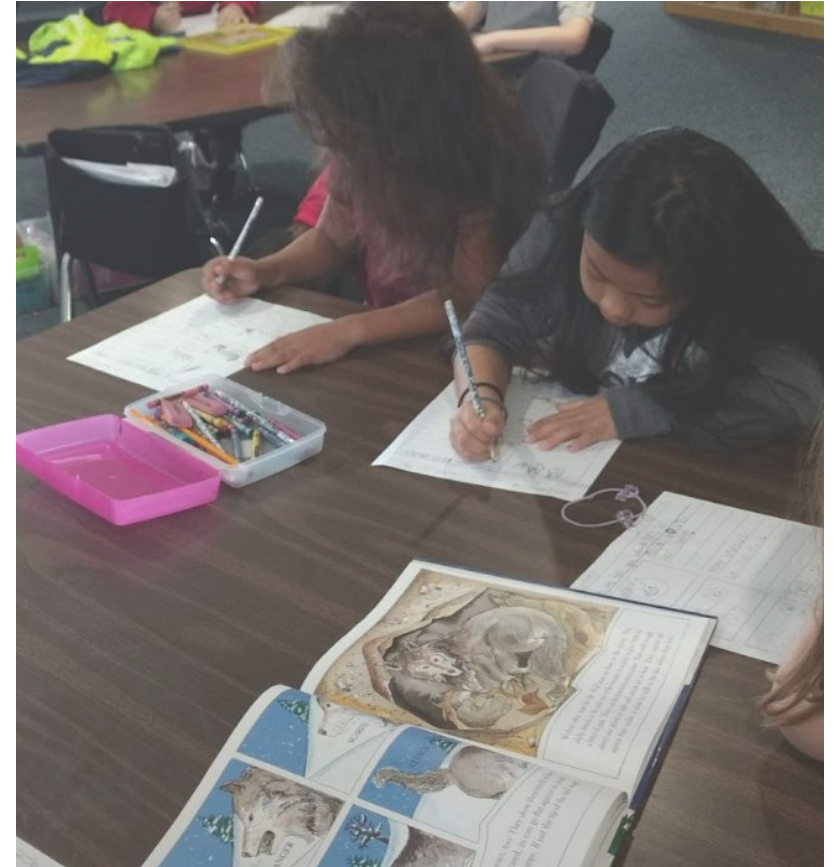
Reflect | How does this strategy ensure students feel heard? What might you do to scaffold wait time for your students so they feel comfortable sharing in your classroom?

PROLONGED WAIT TIME

Objective

Strengthen habits that encourage wait time and allow students the space they need to think and reflect

Time

We estimate that this activity will take 20 minutes, embedded in a single lesson.

Materials

- ❏ A list of key questions for a single lesson
- ❏ A visible note to help you remember to stick to 3 seconds of wait time

Gather Ideas

Before you begin, check out these great resources on wait time, and consider the types of questions that are best for this strategy.

Teaching Through Silence | A short video that offers a HS example of teaching through silence

Awesome Wait Time Phrases |

A curated list of phrases, pulled together by *Teach Like a Champion*, to print out and keep handy for reference

Open-Ended Questions + Wait Time
A short video from *Center for the Collaborative Classroom* of a 5th grade teacher using open-ended questions and wait time to increase participation in class discussion

The "3 Second" Rule

During an upcoming lesson that will involve questioning, challenge yourself to implement 3 seconds of wait time after each question. This sounds simple, but 3 seconds can feel *long*. If you catch yourself moving too quickly, try a physical activity that helps track time, like taking three steps at each pause.

Try this with one lesson. Note how students react and reflect:
- How did students respond?
- Did any students who don't typically answer chime in?
- What can you do to help yourself remember the "3 second" rule in the future?

WAIT TIME BEST PRACTICES

Check out these strategies in action for inspiration on how to incorporate wait time into your classroom.

1. **Implement Wait Time After a Question**
   After posing a question, a wait time of 3-5 seconds can encourage students to pause and reflect before sharing their answers. This short video explains this concept and cites great examples of how to put this practice into action.

2. **Ask Open-Ended Questions to the Full Class**
   Directing a question to a single student can make that student feel intimidated. Meanwhile, other students may disengage when they know they will not be called on to give a response. Questioning the whole class can encourage everyone to think about the question and formulate their own responses. Questions that ask "why" or "how" often provoke more thoughtful, interesting discussions, and allow students to demonstrate their thinking in more detail.

3. **"Get Back to Me" Wait Time**
   This strategy can be used if a student is not ready to give an answer. Educators can say "would you like me to come back to you?" to give the student time to think. By going back to the student later to ask for their thoughts, instructors allow learners who are not as good at thinking on their feet as their peers to participate in the discussion. Be sure you do get back to students to ensure this doesn't become an easy way to get out of answering questions.

INSPIRED? PASS IT ON!

Reflect and Share What Works

REFLECT | What did you learn when you asked students for their input? How did students respond to changes in wait time?

DISCUSS WITH PEERS | Talk to your peers about how you implemented this practice and share ideas.

SHARE YOUR STORY AND INSPIRE OTHERS | Come back to **sevenzo.org** to tell our community how you brought this practice to life. How did you adapt it for your class?

GIVE FEEDBACK ON THIS PRACTICE | Send us a message at **hi@sevenzo.org** with your feedback so we can make the toolkit even better!