TOTAL PARTICIPATION TECHNIQUES TO ENGAGE STUDENTS

BY PÉRSIDA HIMMELE AND WILLIAM HIMMELE

ASCD

5 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

4 BENEFITS TO USING TPTs

15 CLASSROOM-READY TPTs

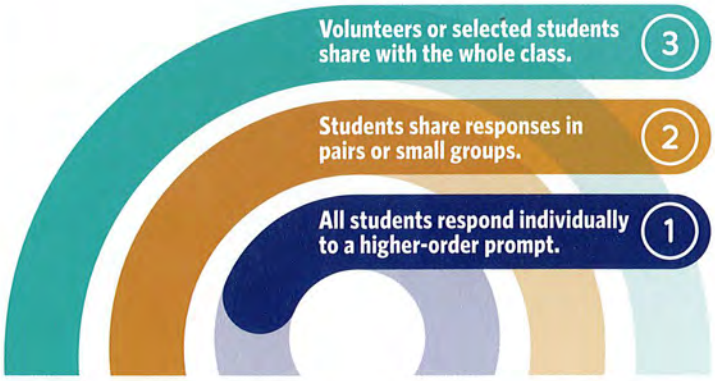
WHAT ARE TOTAL PARTICIPATION TECHNIQUES?

Total Participation Techniques (TPTs) are teaching techniques that allow for all students to demonstrate, at the same time, active participation and cognitive engagement in the topic being studied.

Typically, during a traditional Q & A session, a question is posed to the class and individuals raise their hands to respond. The problem with this method is that except for a small number of eager students who choose to respond, the teacher has little evidence that students are learning and doing so using deep levels of understanding. The responses of a small number of students are typically taken as representative of the understandings for all students in the class. Unless your students are highly motivated by the topic being studied, the traditional Q & A format is very ineffective. In contrast, TPTs allow students to demonstrate that they are active participants and cognitively engaged in the topic being studied.

THE RIPPLE

The Ripple is a cornerstone to understanding how to create and implement Total Participation Techniques.



The Ripple **IS** a way of posing questions to maximize actual learning time.	The Ripple **IS NOT** a traditional Q & A session.
The Ripple **IS** a way to engage each and every student.	The Ripple **IS NOT** calling on an individual student for the answer.
The Ripple **IS** all students responding to a prompt using Quick-Writes or other TPT structures.	The Ripple **IS NOT** simply group work.
The Ripple **IS** beneficial for all students, especially English language learners, socially tentative students, and students with special needs.	The Ripple **IS NOT** intimidating and does not put students "on the spot."

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF TPTs

- ★ Every student should be given opportunities to become deeply and cognitively engaged with the content.
- ★ Calling on someone should be the last thing you do (in terms of sequence). Instead, Ripple prompts for big questions so *all* students are required to deeply process the content.
- ★ Every student can have something worthwhile to share with the right Quadrant 4 (p. 3) structures (characterized by high student participation as well as cognitive engagement).
- ★ We're better together. The differences in our backgrounds and collective experiences add to the knowledge that we can share with one another.
- ★ What might have been considered a boring topic can become deeply engaging using the right Quadrant 4 structures.

BENEFITS OF USING TPTs

Ongoing Formative Assessments

- Provide you with evidence of learning from all students *during* the lesson.
- Allow you to gauge the effectiveness of instruction as it occurs and make changes to increase student learning.
- Alert you to which of your students need additional help and which are excelling.

Increased Student Participation

- Help students stay alert and focused on the content.
- Learning is an active process. There is little opportunity to passively absorb content.

Deeper Learning and Cognitive Engagement

- All students have opportunities to develop higher-order thinking.
- Students are more likely to remember content.

Increased Social Connectedness

- Build better student relationships and develop a more cohesive community of learners.
- Allow students to be heard without requiring students to share with the whole group.
- Appreciate what each student is bringing to the table. You're able to know your students better, know what motivates them, and know more of their backgrounds.

PLANNING FOR TOTAL PARTICIPATION

- **Identify your content.** This will help you avoid allowing your teaching technique to overshadow the content you're teaching.
- **Articulate your big "aha" moments.** What deep understandings do you want your students to walk away with?
- **Choose or create a technique** or structure that will allow all students to respond to the prompt and allow you to Ripple your prompts.
  - Circulate and join in on conversations.
  - Make sure the technique allows you to know or measure whether your students captured those deep understandings you were aiming for.
- **Develop your prompts** so that students are more likely to arrive at these deep and meaningful understandings.
- **Review your lesson**, evaluating the prompts and learning activities you are using.
  - What are you asking students to do?
  - When it comes to those questions or activities that require deeper thinking, are all students required to respond and participate?
  - If not, what might you do to require that all students process the deeper prompts?

Try to catch yourself before you say something like this:

- "Who can tell me...?"
- "Can anyone tell me...?"
- "Does anyone know...?"

Approach your questions and prompts in a way that requires everyone to produce a response.

For example:

- "Take two minutes to jot down your thoughts, and be ready to share these with partners."
- "Draw an image that captures the essence of what we've just talked about."

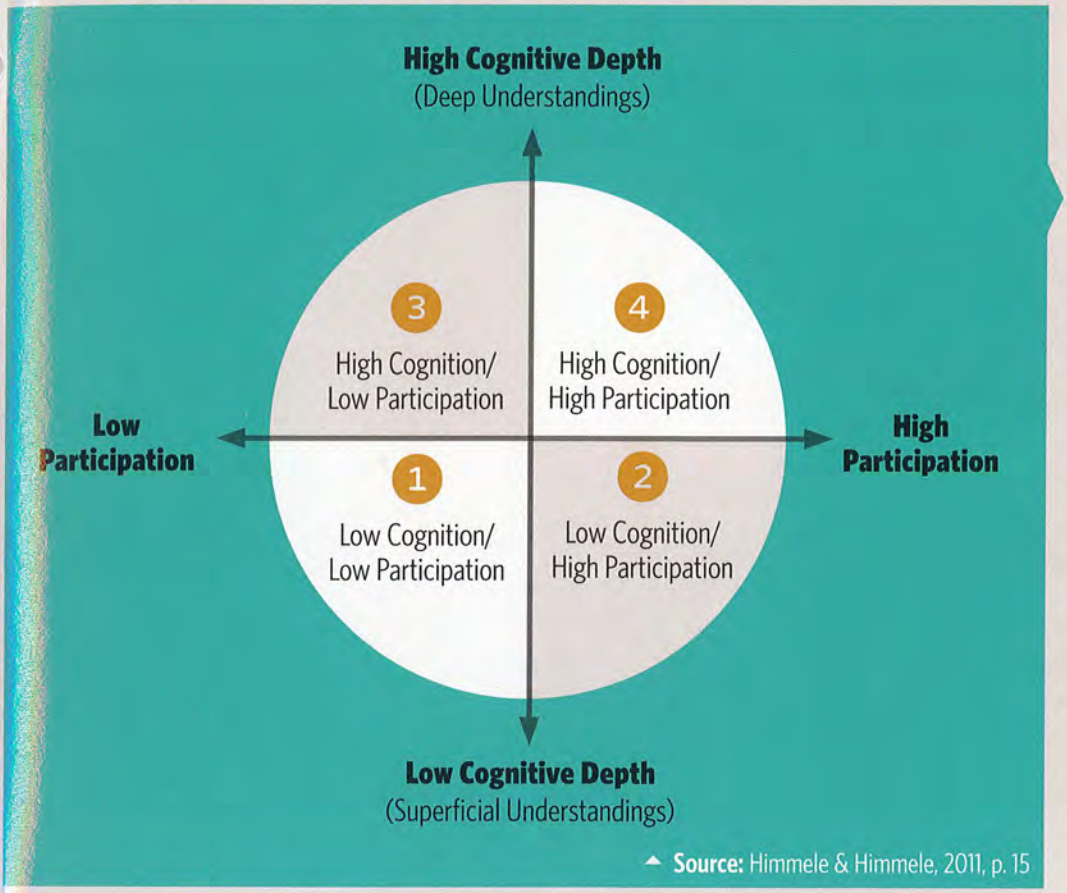
3 COMMON TPT PITFALLS

Pitfall #1: Dismissal, or "We're already doing that."
We've met educators who are quick to dismiss TPTs as something they don't need because "we're already doing that."
The Problem: There is often very little student engagement in the content presentations in these classrooms.
How to Avoid: Conduct a quadrant analysis. This will show whether or not you are using TPTs in the classroom. These can be done through video analysis or peer coaching and will help provide a more objective view of where students were engaged and where concepts could have been more deeply processed.

Pitfall #2: The question wasn't worth the time invested.
Remember that the whole point of a Ripple is that students have time to process a question that requires higher-order thinking.
The Problem: Not every question or concept is worth using the Ripple. TPTs are meant to help students learn deeply and become meaningfully engaged in learning the content, not glean a basic understanding of the content.
How to Avoid: Reserve your Rippled TPT structures for responses that require higher-order thinking. If questions are weak or factual, you don't need to Ripple them. You may want to use a Think-Pair-Share instead.

Pitfall #3: The activity becomes the lesson. Many TPTs are fun and interactive, which might lead some teachers to select the TPT first and then shape a lesson around it.
The Problem: Students learn the various steps involved in conducting the TPT instead of the actual content. Although the students might interact and enjoy themselves, very little of the learning target will be met.
How to Avoid: Select your content goals first. Once you've decided what specific content you'd like to teach, select a TPT that is best suited to meet that content goal at deep levels of understanding. Be sure to take some time to create meaningful questions or prompts that will allow your students to explore the content at a deeper level.

THE TPT COGNITIVE ENGAGEMENT MODEL



▲ **Source:** Himmele & Himmele, 2011, p. 15

The TPT Cognitive Engagement Model helps you visualize two crucially important components of your lessons: **the *level of participation*** and **the *level of cognitive depth*** that students are investing in the learning activities. The model can help you map out your lesson prior to teaching it or evaluate a lesson after teaching it. It can enhance video reflection of taught lessons and help you analyze your peers' lessons in a collaborative structure.

In any given lesson, every quadrant could be important. For example, there are places in your lesson where you may need to spend time in Quadrants 1, 2, or 3. However, the goal is to make sure that in every lesson, students are immersed in a Quadrant 4 learning opportunity.

QUADRANT 1
LOW COGNITION/ LOW PARTICIPATION

What: The use of prompts and questions that rely only on superficial understandings of the material being studied, with participation by only a few students.

Problem: There is very little evidence that students are progressing with the learning targets, and the learning targets are shallow and superficial.

Use: As an introduction to the lesson topic.

Examples: General information questions, defining words, and beginning a lecture.

QUADRANT 2
LOW COGNITION/ HIGH PARTICIPATION

What: The learning involves all or most of the students in active participation, unlike in Quadrant 1.

Problem: The learning is temporary and less meaningful because it only addresses superficial understandings. There are missed opportunities for examining the content and making the learning more meaningful.

Use: As an introductory activity at the beginning of a lesson or unit. Students enjoy themselves, and Quadrant 2 activities can get them excited for the learning ahead.

Examples: Thumb Up/Down votes, whole-class polls, and pair-shares for basic concepts like definitions.

QUADRANT 3
HIGH COGNITION/ LOW PARTICIPATION

What: Cognitively intense concepts are presented in a way that requires minimal evidence of participation by just a select few students. This quadrant is characterized by opportunity gaps, where only a few are expected or required to think deeply about the content.

Problem: Learning is meaningful for a few, but for the others, learning is superficial or nonexistent. Because there is no evidence that all students are engaging with deep content, you usually have no way of knowing until it is too late that some students are not processing the concepts or even following along.

Use: As a starting point for class discussions or to model for the class how deeper engagement works. Useful as a transition quadrant.

Examples: Group projects with one student presenting and types of class discussions like Socratic seminars.

QUADRANT 4
HIGH COGNITION/ HIGH PARTICIPATION

What: This is the point where TPTs are embedded in lessons. All students provide evidence that they are participating at deep levels of cognitive engagement.

Advantage: Students are engaged in learning opportunities that require active participation in activities that develop deep and meaningful content knowledge. Quadrant 4 is characterized by activities that ensure the content will stick, because it requires that students use the knowledge in ways that allow them to deeply explore it. Not only is it more intellectually meaningful for students, it's also more fun.

Use: To give all students a chance to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information.

Examples: TPTs listed on page 5, such as Think-Pair-Shares, Quick-Writes, and Networking Sessions, that make use of higher-order prompts.

TIP

Whenever you're tempted to start a question with the phrase, "Who can tell me...?", stop and ask yourself if there is a better way. Although it may be an important question, you want to help all students respond and reach deeper levels of learning, rather than just a few.

HOW TO CONDUCT A QUADRANT ANALYSIS

A quadrant analysis is when you analyze a lesson for the degree to which two components are present: *active participation by all students* and *cognitive depth* (using higher-order thinking or deep content knowledge). It requires that you observe and divide up the lessons into various teaching and learning activities and then analyze the student behaviors by asking the following two questions:

1. Were all students actively involved, or just a few?
2. Did the teaching or learning activity require superficial content knowledge (lower-order thinking) or deep content knowledge (higher-order thinking)?

Responses to these questions will point to a specific quadrant, which can be written in the left column of the quadrant analysis template. Brief descriptions of the activities can be written beside the quadrant numbers.

HOW QUADRANT ANALYSES HELP LESSON PLANNING

Quadrant analyses can help you judge the value of learning activities, and even of the quality of your curricula and digital learning tools, by helping you answer this question: **Are all students able to show deep and meaningful content learning at the same time?**

Conducting a quadrant analysis on a planned lesson (using behaviors you expect to see) or conducting analyses of lessons you've observed or videotaped can help you focus on ways to get students more actively and cognitively engaged in the content you're teaching.

Exploring student engagement with a trusted colleague—using collaborative structures such as peer coaching—can be an excellent way to grow your and your colleague's crafts.

SAMPLE TPT QUADRANT ANALYSIS

▼ **Source:** Adapted from Himmele & Himmele, 2011, pp. 15-16

To help you get a feel for how this type of teaching might look in a real-life classroom, this is an analysis of a lesson taught by a 5th grade teacher. We analyze her teaching in terms of quadrants to show how shifting provides more cognitively engaging learning experiences for students.

Quadrant	Sequence of Activities in Lesson on Judgments
1	2:00–2:08 The teacher read a chapter from *When You Reach Me*, by Rebecca Stead, which was the class read-aloud book for the week. The actual language arts lesson began at the conclusion of the read-aloud.
4	2:08–2:23 The teacher gave each student an individual graphic organizer with designated spots, so that students could record their judgments regarding six characters from *When You Reach Me*. In a Chart-Paper Splash, students were then asked to transfer and record judgments onto each character's assigned piece of chart paper.
4	2:23–2:27 Students circulated, analyzing peers' writings. They recorded similarities, differences, and surprises.
2/3	2:27–2:29 Thumb Up/Down Vote: "Did everyone write the same thing?" Volunteers shared similarities, differences, and surprises.
3	2:29–2:35 Content presentation on the concept of judgments: "You made a judgment. A judgment is an opinion based on facts and personal values and experiences. It's an informed opinion." The teacher introduced a flow chart, with three boxes and two different scenarios of personal experiences/values (facts + personal experiences = judgments). She explained that for each, the facts remained the same, but the personal experiences had affected the final judgments.
4/3	2:35–2:38 Students pair-shared (What's the difference between a judgment and a fact?). Individuals shared with the whole group. The teacher gave each student six emotion cards (cards with pictures of faces, each with distinct emotional expressions).
3	2:38–2:40 The teacher read a moral dilemma (a story with a moral conflict).
4	2:40–2:45 The teacher asked students to respond to the first moral dilemma by grabbing the card that best matched their emotions. "How do you feel about how the problem was solved? Be ready to explain why you feel this way."
4	2:45–2:47 The teacher stopped the students and asked the pairs to go one step further by sharing with each other why they believed what they believed. "What personal values or experiences are affecting your judgment of this scenario?"
3	2:47–2:50 All students were seated again. The teacher read a second moral dilemma.
4	2:50–2:53 The teacher asked students to choose an emotion card and repeat the 2:40–2:45 process, with different questions. "This time discuss how you feel, why you feel that way, and your personal values or experiences that cause you to feel this way." She referred to the flow chart and the directions on the board as she spoke.
3	2:53–2:55 The teacher read a third moral dilemma involving a celebrity (the students demonstrated strong opinions about this topic).
4	2:55–2:57 Students were asked to select an emotion card and share in pairs at their tables (due to time constraints).
4	2:57–2:59 In a Quick-Write, students were asked to "define the word judgment and explain why your judgments were not the same as your classmates."
4	2:59–3:01 Students were asked to pair-share their Quick-Writes at their tables.
3	3:01–3:03 Volunteers were selected to share with class.
3	3:03–3:04 The teacher summarized a final definition for judgments as she referred to the flowchart. Quick-Writes collected.

This lesson provided a nice blend of content presentation and student responsibility. The teacher continuously asked students to demonstrate, through the use of Total Participation Techniques, that they were actively processing the concepts using higher-order thinking. She circulated and commented on key words as students interacted. (Lesson taught by Courtney Cislo.)

TIP

The final Quick-Writes would make a great source of student-authored material that can be used for revisiting the themes in the lesson.

15 CLASSROOM-READY TPTs

Work on developing prompts that require higher-order thinking so that students are more likely to arrive at deep and meaningful understandings.

5 On-the-Spot TPTs

On-the-Spot TPTs allow you to quickly gauge student understanding of concepts being taught. They are activities that require little or no advance preparation.

① Think-Pair-Share

Ask students a question or prompt, then have them turn to a neighbor or assigned partner and discuss.

② Quick-Writes

Select a prompt for students to discuss and give them a specified amount of time to write an answer (three minutes).

★ **TIP** Follow up with a Pair-Share for student collaboration and discussion.

③ Quick-Draws

Select a major concept in your lesson, then ask students to reflect on the meaning of the concept and create a visual image to represent it.

④ Mouth It

When teaching foundational skills, ask all students to mouth the response, "air write" it, or whisper it to a neighbor.

⑤ Ranking

Select items, concepts, and events that can be analyzed. Ask students to rank the items based on specified criteria and provide justification for their choices.

2 Hold-Up TPTs

Hold-Up TPTs are interaction-based activities that use response cards. These activities improve interaction and participation, but they do require some planning time.

⑥ Number Cards

Create number cards (how many you need will vary based on answer choices). Ask students a question such as "Show me a number greater than ____." or "Show me a prime number." Students use the number cards to show a correct answer.

⑦ True/Not True

Create four cards for each student: True, Not True, True with Modifications, and Unable to Determine. Ask students a question that they answer by holding up the appropriate card.

4 Movement TPTs

Movement TPTs enhance learning while providing evidence of active participation and cognitive engagement. These TPTs require advance planning.

⑧ Line-Ups

Select a question for the class. Give students time to reflect. Ask students to stand in two parallel lines of the same length and discuss the question with the person across from them.

★ **TIP** After a few minutes, have students in one line move two steps to the left so they face someone new, then start a new discussion.

⑨ Networking Sessions

Prepare one to four prompts for discussion, and give students time to think about each. Ask students to find someone to whom they have not yet spoken and discuss responses to one prompt. After a few minutes, have students switch to a new partner and discuss another prompt.

⑩ Bounce Cards

Model good and bad discussions with a student for the class to observe. Show students how to discuss, summarize, and ask about ideas. Have students create cards with sentence starters to help them in classroom discussions. Allow students to practice using the cards.

⑪ Categorizing and Sorting

For categorizing, prepare a specific number of items. Ask students to sort them into like piles around the room and create category titles based on the features. For sorting, you determine the names and features of the groups, then ask students to sort items within these piles. For both, ask students to justify their thinking.

4 Concept Analysis TPTs

Concept Analysis TPTs help you support students as they summarize and analyze important concepts. They also require advance planning because they need to be integrated with key ideas.

⑫ Anticipatory Guides

Create True/False statements. Have students read the statements and predict responses based on what they know of the subject and then pair-share their responses and rationales. Then use a True/Not True hold-up to see class responses.

★ **TIP** This TPT works especially well at the beginning of a unit.

⑬ Picture Notes

Select important pause points in your lesson. Have students draw a picture that illustrates this concept and share the picture with a partner. At the lesson's end, ask students to create a "Big Picture" to summarize.

⑭ Three-Sentence Wrap-Up

At the end of a lesson, ask students to summarize it in three sentences or less. Have students get in groups to discuss and refine summaries.

★ **TIP** Take it one step further and have every group create a three-sentence summary.

⑮ A to Z Sentence Summaries

At a lesson's end, assign each student a letter of the alphabet. Ask students to provide a one-sentence summary of the lesson that starts with their assigned letter. Call out the letters in order as a cue for students to read their sentences out loud.

8 KEYS TO CREATING A TPT-CONDUCIVE CLASSROOM

Building a TPT-conducive classroom requires intentionality. For TPTs to run smoothly, teachers must establish a classroom culture conducive to student interaction and to students taking on active roles in the classroom learning community.

1 Appreciate Student Differences

Give students multiple opportunities to participate in class, show strengths, and demonstrate cognitive abilities. How would your classroom be different if you showed students their differences, perspectives, and diverse experiences added to small-group and classroom learning experiences?

2 Foster Student Collaboration

Use a variety of student groupings for projects and discussions, based on the activity and your knowledge of your students. Do you believe that although students are different, they all have valuable gifts and perspectives to share within their groups?

3 Promote Peer Acceptance

Integrate nonparticipatory students in lessons and create an accepting learning environment where all students feel safe participating. How can you create a classroom where all students feel free to participate without fear of ridicule?

4 Ripple Questions and Prompts

Ask higher-order thinking questions and give students time to process, both individually and in groups. Do you allow all students the opportunity to answer the questions and feel respected when doing so?

5 Grow Confidence

Give feedback to individual students. Do you provide all students with positive feedback and let them know their efforts are worthwhile?

6 Build Trust

Reinforce your own positive thoughts and beliefs about your students. Do you believe that your students are capable of learning? How do you show students that you trust them?

7 Follow Through

Walk around, ask questions, and redirect students' attention. How do you follow through and show your students you are invested in their learning?

8 Move Away from Right/Wrong

Use evaluation questions in which students have to justify their responses based on learned content, and say "Tell me more," when listening to student answers. How can your teaching style evolve to include more open-ended questions?

REFERENCE

Himmele, P., & Himmele, W. (2011). *Total participation techniques: Making every student an active learner.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS PÉRSIDA AND WILLIAM HIMMELE are the authors of several ASCD books, including *Total Participation Techniques: Making Every Student an Active Learner*, which contains examples of dozens of teacher-tested TPTs. Their website, www.totalparticipationtechniques.com, also contains tools and resources that you may find useful in planning for total participation. The Himmeles welcome your correspondence and can be reached at languagerich@gmail.com.

ISBN 978-1-4166-2351-9

ASCD PRODUCT #:
QRG117029 (single); QRG117029P (25-pack)