

Activate, Investigate, Communicate – Teaching Strategy

Quick Overview

Students discuss prior knowledge and ideas before reading, then read or analyze with a purpose, and discuss with a partner to deepen understanding before writing to synthesize their learning. It integrates speaking, reading, and writing to strengthen comprehension and critical thinking.

Skill Objective

Students will...

- Activate and articulate prior knowledge through structured discussion.
- Read closely to identify key ideas and evidence from a text.
- Engage in academic discussion to clarify understanding and build meaning.
- Synthesize information in discussion and writing, using ideas from reading and discussion to support their thinking.

Content Objective

Students will...

- Critically engage with the ideas in a primary or secondary source.

Civics Skills Connection

Disciplinary Literacy

- **Sourcing** is emphasized during the Activate and Investigate phases, as students consider who wrote the text, their purpose, audience, and credibility before and while reading, mirroring how experts approach texts in disciplines like history, science, and ELA.
- **Close reading** is central to the investigate and communicate phases, where students analyze discipline-specific language, structures, data, or arguments and support claims with precise textual evidence.
- **Context building** occurs across both Activate and Communicate phases, as students use discussion to activate background knowledge, connect the text to historical, scientific, or cultural contexts, and refine understanding through peer meaning making.

Prep ahead

- Select an appropriate text that is rich enough to support discussion, analysis, and writing, and aligns with lesson objectives.
- Define clear purposes and prompts for each phase (discussion questions, reading focus, post-reading talk tasks, and writing prompts).
- Plan discussion structures (think-pair-share, roles, sentence stems, norms) to ensure all students can participate meaningfully.
- Identify disciplinary skills to emphasize, such as sourcing questions, close-reading targets, or context connections.
- Prepare scaffolds as needed (graphic organizers, annotation guides, vocabulary support, rubrics).

Strategy Steps

1. Divide students into groups of 2-4.
2. Activate (before reading): Students discuss the topic, activate prior knowledge, make connections, and pose questions to prepare for reading.
3. Investigate: Students read a text with a clear purpose, focusing on key ideas, details, or evidence.
4. Communicate: Students discuss what they read to clarify understanding, analyze ideas, deepen thinking, and build meaning together.
5. Write: Students synthesize and apply their learning in writing, often responding to a prompt or supporting a claim with evidence.

Customizations

- **Option 1: Assess it**

1. Assessing Activate and Communicate (Before & After Reading)

- Observation and anecdotal notes: Listen for use of prior knowledge, questioning, reasoning, and academic language.
- Discussion rubrics or checklists: Track skills such as participation, use of evidence, building on others' ideas, and clarity of thinking.
- Student Self- or Peer-assessment: Quick reflections on how well they contributed or listened.

2. Assessing Investigate

- Annotations or reading notes: Check for evidence of close reading (questions, key ideas, vocabulary, text evidence).

- Targeted reading tasks: Short checkpoints (e.g., identify a claim, source the text, explain a paragraph) aligned to disciplinary literacy skills.
- Exit slips or quick writes: Gauge comprehension and interpretation right after reading.

3. Assessing Written Communicate

- Writing rubrics: Evaluate students' ability to synthesize ideas, make claims, and support them with evidence from the text and discussion.
 - Success criteria or single point rubrics: Focus on a few priority skills rather than everything at once.
- **Option 2: Extend it- Add Collaboration Structures**
 - Give students roles during Activate and Investigate, such as summarizer, skeptic, or evidence-finder, to focus discussion and ensure participation.
 - **Rotate discussion formats, such as Socratic seminar, jigsaw, or fishbowl, to help students engage with ideas from different perspectives.**
 - Ask students to reach a shared understanding or consensus before moving to the written Communicate stage.