



Big Paper Talk

About

Big Paper Talk is a collaborative thinking routine where students analyze, discuss, and build on ideas by adding them to large, shared papers posted around the room. Unlike individual work or worksheets, this approach emphasizes visible thinking, peer dialogue, and iterative idea development. Students engage with the content, respond to others' contributions, and refine their understanding in a communal space.

This routine requires minimal preparation using large paper, markers, and open-ended questions, prompts, or sources. When used consistently, Big Paper Talk builds student agency, strengthens reasoning skills, and fosters habits of disciplinary thinking by making thinking visible and collaborative.

Repeatable Routine

Approximate Time: 15–25 minutes

Students work in groups to explore questions or sources posted on large papers. They contribute ideas, respond to others' contributions, and rotate to new papers, building understanding collaboratively.

Best Used When:

- Introducing a new topic or concept
- Examining multiple perspectives or sources
- Encouraging collaborative reasoning and discussion

Set Up: Create stations around the room, each with one chart paper and one question, prompt, or source. Place stations on the walls or tables and provide sticky notes or markers color coded by group.

Teacher establishes norms:

- “Add ideas thoughtfully and respectfully.”
- “Build on what others have written without writing over their work.”
- “When time is up, stop writing and move to the next station.”

Activity: Divide students into groups and assign each group to a station. Use a timer to maintain pacing.

Students work at their stations for 5–7 minutes, reading the assigned question, prompt, or source and working together to record observations, questions, and ideas on the chart paper. When time is up, have groups rotate clockwise to the next station.

During each new rotation, students:

- Examine the question, prompt, or source
- Read the existing contributions
- Add new ideas, questions, or connections and respond to others' contributions

Continue rotating every 5–7 minutes until all groups have visited each station.

After the rotations are complete, conduct a whole class review of the ideas recorded on each chart paper. Guide students in identifying key themes, diverse viewpoints, and questions that emerged across stations.

Tips for Implementation

- **Establish norms for respectful writing.** Emphasize that students should build on peers' ideas thoughtfully and avoid erasing or disregarding prior contributions.
- **Model thoughtful writing and responding.** Demonstrate how to add ideas and engage with previous contributions to set expectations.
- **Use visible timers.** Timers keep the activity focused and ensure all groups can visit each station.
- **Assign group roles.** Roles like writer, facilitator, or evidence finder ensure equitable participation.
- **Display completed papers.** Display completed papers so students can revisit them to identify connections as they encounter new content.

