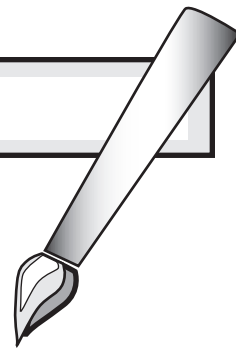


# CAROUSEL BRAINSTORM

*“When students are given the opportunity to brainstorm ideas without criticism, to discuss opinions, to debate controversial issues, and to answer questions... wonderful things can happen that naturally improve comprehension and higher order thinking.”*

Marcia Tate, 2004



## OVERVIEW

A Carousel Brainstorm is a variation of the Walkabout Review process. Chart paper containing several statements or issues for student consideration are posted at strategic locations around the classroom. Groups of students brainstorm at one station and then rotate to the next position where they add additional comments. As new thoughts and ideas emerge, the list grows. When the carousel “stops” the original team prepares a summary and then presents the large group’s findings.

The Carousel Brainstorm provides an opportunity to use the group’s collective prior knowledge to further individual student understanding. It is an active, student-centered method for generating and sharing large amounts of data. Because the process is somewhat anonymous, even the most reluctant learners are motivated to participate.

## IMPLEMENTING THIS ACTIVITY

1. Clearly state the problems, questions, or issue statements to be explored on large pieces of chart paper.
2. Give instructions for completing the Carousel Brainstorm.
3. Separate the class into equal groups based on the number of problems, questions, or issue statements (e.g., 5 problems, 5 groups).
4. Distribute sticky notes and markers to each group.
5. Groups brainstorm ideas on the sticky notes, coming up with as much information as possible.
6. Use one sticky note per thought or idea. Generally short phrases or sentences work best.
7. Place the sticky notes randomly on the chart paper under the problem, question, or issue statement.
8. To encourage creative and open thinking, groups consider all ideas without evaluating their accuracy or relative importance.
9. After a specified time, groups move to the next station in a clockwise pattern.
10. During each round of the Carousel Brainstorm new ideas are added to expand the information base.
11. When groups rotate back to their original positions, the data is collated on a new piece of chart paper.
12. Each group’s spokesperson summarizes the findings to the larger group.
13. If students maintain a notebook, have them write a summary reflection that captures the essence of what they discovered during the Carousel Brainstorm.

## **A** SSESSING THIS ACTIVITY

In brainstorming activities such as this, student performance is not typically assessed. Teachers may want to generally evaluate a student's level of participation or review the final reflections.

## **M** ANAGING THIS ACTIVITY

1. To support quality discussion and analysis, use a maximum of five - six problems, questions or issue statements.
2. Create problems questions or issue statements that stimulate discussion. Overly difficult questions will frustrate students and inhibit thoughtful generation of ideas.
3. Use different color sticky notes for different stations.

## **C** ONTENT AREA APPLICATIONS

**English:** In reviewing a book that the class has been reading, the teacher posts topics and has students enter information that they have gleaned about the book. Topics could include main characters, themes, symbolism, setting, critical events, etc.

**History:** In a unit that targets American leadership, names of several presidents are posted. Students brainstorm information that they already know about these individuals. Posters are displayed prominently through the remainder of the unit. Information is added or deleted from to the lists as the unit unfolds.

**Biology:** The teacher prepares poster lists of the principal cell structures. Students complete the Carousel by adding pictures, drawings, information, or questions about each item.

## **R** EFERENCE

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory. (1999). Blueprints CD-ROM.