

Think- & Wait- Time

The concept of “wait-time” as an important teaching technique was invented by Mary Budd Rowe (1972) and was identified as the periods of silence that followed teacher questions and students completed responses. Early studies showed that teachers periods of silence rarely lasted more than 1.5 seconds in typical classrooms, however further study demonstrated that when these periods of silence lasted at least 3 seconds many positive changes to students’ and teachers’ behaviours and attitudes were noted.



Stahl (1985) redefined this concept to “think-time” so that both students and the teacher can complete appropriate information processing tasks, feelings, oral responses and actions.

Student Benefits...

When students are given 3 or more seconds of undisturbed “wait-time” the positive benefits include:

- The length and correctness of their responses increases
- The number of ‘I don’t know’ and no answer responses decreases
- The number of volunteered, appropriate answers by larger numbers of students greatly increases
- The scores of students on academic achievement tests tend to increase (Stahl, 2006)

Teacher Benefits...

When teachers wait patiently in silence for 3 or more seconds at appropriate places, the positive benefits for the teacher include:

- Questioning strategies tend to be more varied and flexible
- A decrease in quantity and increase in quality and variety of questions
- Additional questions that require more complex information processing and higher-level thinking on the part of the student also begin to emerge (Stahl, 2006)

Eight Categories of Periods of Silence... (Stahl, 2006)

- 1. Post Teacher Question Wait Time**
 - the uninterrupted silence following a teacher’s question.
- 2. Within-Student’s Response Pause Time**
 - the student’s pause or hesitation during a previously started response or explanation
- 3. Post-Student’s Response Wait Time**
 - pause after a student response for others to consider volunteering reactions, comments, answers
- 4. Student Pause-Time**
 - the student’s pause or hesitation during a self-initiated question, comment or statement
- 5. Teacher Pause-Time**
 - teacher’s pause to consider what took place, what the situation is or what will follow next
- 6. Within Teacher Presentation Pause-Time**
 - teacher deliberately stops the flow of information for new information to be processed by students
- 7. Student Task-Completion Work-Time**
 - the uninterrupted silence is provided for the students to remain on-task
- 8. Impact Pause-Time**
 - uninterrupted silence is initiated to focus attention at a given time

Remember: teachers should ensure that all students also preserve the uninterrupted silence

Adapted from

- Stahl, R (2006) Using “Think Time” and “Wait Time” Skillfully in the Classroom. Retrieved 30th August 2009 from <http://atozteacherstuff.com/pages/1884.shtml>

