Checking for Understanding creates a picture of learning so that teachers can be sure of what students have learned and make any changes needed to increase their understanding.

**WHY SHOULD YOU CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING?**

- **Unless you check for understanding you may not know what students have learned.**
- **Checking for understanding helps to identify misconceptions that can interfere with learning.**
- **Checking for understanding provides students with a model of good learning skills.**

**EVERY CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING IS A FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT THAT CAN ALSO BE A PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT**

**THE CHECKLIST**

- How often are you checking?
- Do students have to produce language to demonstrate their understanding?
- Is students’ demonstration of their understanding aligned to the targeted proficiency level?
- What are you doing with the information gleaned from your checking?

**SAMPLE NON-VERBAL STRATEGIES**

- **Acting Out a Gesture**
  - Students act out a vocabulary item or concept.
  - **TIP:** Ask students to close their eyes so that the teacher can see when students don’t comprehend.

- **Drawing/Writing**
  - Students draw pictures or write words to signal comprehension.
  - **TIP:** Use whiteboards for quick every day checks.

- **Finger Holdups**
  - Students signal their level of comprehension by holding up a designated finger.
  - **TIP:** Use and reuse preprinted response cards instead of fingers.

- **Sequencing Pictures**
  - Students put a series of pictures in the correct order as they listen to a story or sequence of events.
  - **TIP:** Have students match written descriptions to pictures as a follow up.

**SAMPLE VERBAL STRATEGIES**

- **Line-Ups**
  - Two lines of students face each other, one line moves with same question or a new one.
  - **TIP:** Younger students may sit on the floor.

- **Exit/Entrance Slip**
  - Students can complete an exit or entrance slip orally or in writing on their way in or out the door.
  - **TIP:** Use post-it notes so students can leave response on desks.

- **Summarizing**
  - Students summarize what teacher said & a second student summarizes what the first student said.
  - **TIP:** Split up the class and have one half write what they hear.

- **Questioning**
  - Teachers (or students) ask questions to which students must respond. (yes/no, true/false, either/or, who, what, where, when, why)

**LEARN MORE:**

- Total Participation Techniques, Himmele & Himmele (2012)

When teachers regularly check for understanding, students become increasingly aware of how to monitor their own understanding.

Doug Fisher & Nancy Frey

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**www.TELLproject.org/STARTALK**

Funding for this product was provided by the United States government through STARTALK, a program of the National Foreign Language Center at the University of Maryland.