

Hot Potato Strategy

What is it?

Hot Potato is a fast-paced cooperative learning structure that promotes the contribution of a range of different ideas.

What is its purpose?

It pushes the students to keep digging deeper or more divergently to create ideas. The change of pace can be energising for students and keep kinaesthetic learners involved. Students can see everyone's involvement when their original sheets come back to them and they spontaneously read to see what has been added.

How do I do it?

Each group is given a sheet of paper with a topic or question to brainstorm. On a given signal the papers are passed around to the next group to read what has already been written and add extra ideas to the sheet. The process is repeated until the sheets arrive back at their starting point. Groups then have a chance to read all contributions.

How can I adapt it?

A Graffiti Wall is a variation on the Hot Potato Strategy. Several topics or questions are written on large sheets of paper and several students work on each piece of paper at the same time. The difference is the sheets are posted on the walls or floor around the room and the students move freely or in groups from one sheet to the next. Since all students have different needs and interests, the activity is more suited to individual needs when the children can move freely from sheet to sheet.

Classroom rules need to be clearly in place before this activity can be run successfully. Most students like to move around and make choices and don't take advantage of the situation. You'll observe that some students like to visit all sheets quite quickly and then linger and work on a particular sheet. Other students will target a topic of particular interest for a long time before visiting the other sheets.