What to do… Show Call

What is Show Call?

Essentially, Show Call is the written equivalent of Cold Call. Show Call involves taking students’ written work and displaying it to the class by using a visualiser. This is not done randomly but rather with a clear outcome of global improvement in mind. There are multiple ways of doing this, all of which will be outlined in this What to Do.

What is the purpose of Show Call?

Show Call enables you, as teacher, to assess the content and quality of student work as carefully and rigorously as you do for their verbal work and has multiple benefits

* It maximises accountability and rigour: Publicly reviewing written work on a regular basis incentivizes students to do their best whenever they put pen to paper. If a student knows that their work may be displayed to the class, they are more likely to put their best effort forward.
* It normalises “better”: By consistently guiding students to redraft and improve the quality of their written work, the teacher is sending the message that it is normal to be self-critical and reflective.
* It reduces anxiety: Often in a classroom of high expectations, student anxiety - the fear of not being able to ‘measure up’ – can be a significant barrier to excellence. The more frequently students see other work being publicly appraised and used to support everyone’s improvement with zero judgment, the more likely they are to put their best foot forward in the first place.
* It demonstrates the ‘possible’: When you showcase outstanding written work to show students what’s correct, possible, and how they can replicate success, students will see that exceptional work is not just within the abilities of the teacher, but of their peers.

How do I get the culture right?

Show Call is a clear example of how culture eats strategy for breakfast. If students do not view Show Call positively, the underlying pedagogy will not be effective. It is therefore imperative that Show Call is delivered in a way which demonstrates the highest of expectations in a supportive culture of redrafting. Here are some tips on how to achieve this:

* Explain the purpose: If students understand, in explicit terms, that a Show Call is not a punitive exercise but rather a way of improving everyone’s work as a team, they are less likely to view it negatively.
* Be positive: Show Call can seem intimidating to teachers and students. When done right, however, Show Call is incredibly positive and can become a sought-after reward for quality work. As with Cold Call, a Show Call should not be a “gotcha” or an opportunity to shame a student who is ‘off task’ into paying closer attention. Rather, a teacher should communicate to students (through words, tone, and body language) that Show Call is a tool that’s designed to help them succeed.
* Be systematic: Every student should feel like they are eligible for a Show Call. When it comes, students should not feel like they’re being singled out or punished. It should feel like a genuine invitation to a discussion about their written work. Over time, students should come to view it as “the way we do things here.”
* Be predictable: In the same way that you alert students to a Cold Call by saying ‘Cold Call coming in 10…’, let students know when a Show Call is coming. This increases rigour and accountability, participation and think ratio and reduces anxiety. In the same way that Cold Call should not come as a surprise, neither should Show Call.
* Maintain positive body language: Social science research indicates that 55% of what you communicate daily is conveyed through body language. Often, however, we’re unaware of how or when our nonverbals undermine what we’re trying to say. It is important, therefore, to be intentional about how you manage your body language to keep the Show Call positive.
* Alternate feedback: Feedback doesn’t have to come in the form of praise to feel positive. Giving constructive feedback that helps students get better can be just as empowering as praise. Students want to be successful, and they’ll appreciate a Show Call even more when it shows them how.

Which work should I choose?

* Model of excellence: In this type of Show Call, a teacher spotlights work that is complete, accurate, and in some cases, exemplary. This is a great example of how to ‘show’ rather than ‘tell’. It’s a useful way to establish a positive culture around Show Call.
* A common error: This type is great for re-teaching, facilitating deep error excavation, and strengthening critical thinking.
* ‘Good to Great’ work: Good to Great Work Show Calls are a positive, motivating way to normalise better, support lower and middle prior attainers, and ‘stretch’ students whose written work is already good. During this type of a Show Call, the teacher strives to strike for a greater balance between positive and constructive feedback. What should students be doing during Show Call?