

Show Call

Overview:

A Show Call is a visual Cold Call. Show Call is a routine built into classroom culture by teachers in order to display a student's work in real time, either to analyze and error together or to draw attention to a solution that others can compare or analyze to strengthen their own work. Frequently, the quickest and most productive way to respond to an error made by a student as part of a pattern of errors within a lesson in order to meaningfully impact learning is to study the error itself (Lemov, 2021). In Show Call, a student's work is chosen and shared visually with the class, fostering analysis of the work in a durable, sustained way.

Purpose:

The purpose of Show Call is to create a culture within a classroom that allows for the identification of errors or improvement on work in progress in order to teach students a skill they can apply in both school and their lives. They can learn the importance of identifying mistakes or areas for improvement, studying the mistake without defensiveness and learn to recognize and honor this as an opportunity to learn.

Application: When and where can I use it?

Show Call can be used in K-12 classrooms across content areas and disciplines when the routine is built with intention, respect, and understanding. This routine progresses from selecting student work to visually analyze for strengths into a more rigorous routine that also allows analysis of errors and areas for improvement. For Show Call to work effectively and in a culture of psychological safety, it is best partnered with the creation of a culture of error (refer to this Instructional Move template separately for full description).

Show Call functions best when built into the fabric of a supportive classroom community from the beginning. Incorporating language and expectations around the practice into classroom norms or agreement, and scaffolding the experience are important for students to feel safe.

It is important that if new students join a classroom community or course in progress, they are introduced to the routine ahead of time, and perhaps given an opportunity to observe the culture of trust around it through experience before their work is chosen directly.

Getting Started: What are some tips for starting and using this routine?

This strategy involves a shared culture and routine that must be intentionally built. Once introduced and built into the classroom environment as an expectation, you might consider starting with a few instances of selecting a student's work to make Show-Called students feel honored and comfortable with the process. Then, over time, build in a regular practice to select a student's work to study errors or room for improvement. This is a helpful practice that reinforces accountability for written work and can be used to help students strengthen their own work by studying others'.

Make it a 'we' issue. Use language like "As I walk around, I'm seeing on a few papers that we are making a mistake we can learn from." Then, select one to study, while focusing on the error as a class challenge rather than an individual challenge.

Build in positive practices such as “snaps and shine.” When studying a single student’s work visually, first ask students to snap when they see something strong in the work and share it out. Then encourage messages of “shine” for areas of improvement.

If a student appears anxious, begin with a compliment (“The goal is to show our work, so I’m going to show off this student’s work!”). The student will likely move to a feeling of pride. Then build on that and ask for “one little thing” to make better. Perhaps the student themselves will see an opportunity to improve, and further expand the feeling of pride. Language such as “almost there work” also offers an opportunity to reduce a focus on the ending answer and instead on the process.

Show Call works because decisions almost always start with visual observations. We can build students’ perception ability with this routine. Students (and adults) learn well from comparative judgment. It brings abstract feedback to concrete. For example, the difference between very good and great writing. Or showing two similar mathematical approaches to a problem that achieves a common goal may allow students to connect to a method they understand best. If comparing two students’ work, consider when it might be best to display the work with anonymity balanced with credit. This might be a time to ask permission to share before taking a students’ work, depending on your knowledge of the students and the culture previously created within the classroom community.

Finally, Show Call can be built into discussion work to foster self-evaluation and improvement of work. The teacher might say “We are going to Show Call some students’ work, have them explain their thinking, then give you time to add to your own.”

See this Instructional Move in action:

[Teach Like a Champion Blog- Show Calling Exemplars to Build Writing Culture](#)

[Show Call, Collectively Work Examples and the Transient Information Effect](#)

Read more about this Instructional Move:

Book: [Teach Like a Champion 3.0: 63 Techniques That Put Students On the Path to College](#) (Doug Lemov, 2021)

[Using Show Call in the Classroom](#)