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## How Blues Clues and Opportunities to Respond Can Make You A Better Teacher

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their students.

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September 2, 2022 by [hbohano@gmail.com](mailto:hbohano@gmail.com) — 2 Comments

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Before *Blues Clues*, *Sesame Street* was one of the most engaging shows for youth. The writers for *Sesame Street* encouraged engagement by frequently changing the scenes and content throughout the program to engage children. *Blues Clues*, however, was the first show to attempt to capture viewers' attention on **one** theme for an entire 30 minutes episode. One of the critical ingredients for the increased engagement of the viewers was providing them with opportunities to respond to the show host.

According to [Malcolm Gladwell](#), the researchers and writers behind *Blues Clues* believed that the more intellectually and physically children were when watching something, the more memorable and meaningful the content became. Throughout a *Blue's Clues* episode, the hosts asks students questions to help them solve a problem (e.g., *What's Blue's favorite food?*). As the viewers participate with the host, they are intellectually and behaviorally engaged. Not only did providing opportunities to respond increase viewer ratings, but it also led to improved [cognitive development for viewers](#). While there were undoubtedly other factors related (e.g., repetition of content) to improved viewer engagement and development, providing opportunities for the viewers to respond was a crucial part of the show's success.

So what are "opportunities to respond?"

## **Opportunities to Respond**

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[Eric Common and colleagues](#) stated that opportunities to respond can include:

- Presenting materials
- Asking questions at a high rate
- Using rapid prompting strategies (e.g., text-based, gestures, verbal)
- Providing immediate feedback to students
- Teacher-related prompts (e.g., choral responses)
- Peer-related prompts (e.g., peer tutoring, pair-share)



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instruction.

This suggestion means you ask your students to respond to a prompt just under four times per minute. It may seem like a lot, but it should become easier once you have some practice. Additional examples of providing opportunities to respond may be helpful as well.

According to the researchers Brandi Simonsen and Diane Meyers, in their book [Classwide positive behavior interventions and supports: A guide to proactive classroom management](#), providing opportunities to respond helps teachers to:

- Identify students who need more support with the class content
- Acknowledge correct responses
- Correct misunderstandings

Here are some great ways to learn more about providing opportunities to respond for your students.

## Resources for Opportunities to Respond

I like [this article](#) that includes examples for providing opportunities to respond in secondary class settings. While the authors focus on math, I think the models could apply to other content areas.

[Classroom Check-Up](#) also includes examples and videos for increasing opportunities to respond, such as individual and choral responding, using whiteboards, yes knocks, and short answers on your chest. Each of these strategies can help increase opportunities to respond to your students.

## Opportunities to Respond in High School Settings

I am a huge fan of [Dr. Terry Scott's](#) work! And if you look at [this website](#), you will see why. On this site, Terry and his colleagues provide short video examples for using opportunities to respond in the secondary and elementary levels classroom. This site also includes specific examples of using OTRs in math, reading, group instruction, and students with disabilities.

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chart comparing each tool's advantages and disadvantages. As the authors point out, it is important to consider students' access to technology and the purpose of the response you are seeking. For example, perhaps you are seeking to support drill and practice with closed-ended responses, or maybe you want to gain insights into students' knowledge through open-ended questions. Your instructional purpose can guide your selection of online instructional tools.

In terms of online delivery formats, you also might try to use interactive lessons and videos, quizzing and polling responses, or discussion and feedback platforms. [This is a link](#) to a list of technology-based tools developed by [Common Sense Education](#) that you can use to encourage opportunities to respond for your students. These tools are designed to support formative assessment but could be used for incorporating opportunities to respond during instruction.

## **An Example From My Classroom**

Here is an example from my classroom (undergraduate teacher preparation students). Before each lesson, I ask the students to read content of some kind, complete an online module, or watch a video about an education-related concept. During class, we conduct a [Kahoot](#) quiz together. Providing the in-class Kahoot provides opportunities for students to respond, allows me to assess their knowledge, and gives them immediate feedback. I can also use this Kahoot as a diagnostic assessment to know what I need to re-teach to address deficits or misconceptions. This process saves me time from having to cover material the students already know and helps me to go deeper into areas where the students need additional support.

## **Where to Find More Training on Opportunities to Respond**

There is one additional resource I want to share to help with your professional development around using opportunities to respond. The [National Center on Intensive Intervention](#) has a great module called, "[Using Effective Methods to Elicit Frequent Responses.](#)" Within this module, they describe additional strategies for using opportunities to respond as part of an effective instructional approach. I love their content and frequently use their modules for the classes I teach and my professional development.