"Use the Force." - Kagan Structures Enhance, Refine & Expand Oracy Skills

"Use the Force!" I'm talking about teaching, not Star Wars. In Star Wars, Luke Skywalker, the young hero at the climax of the battle between the forces of good and evil, hears the voice of his mentor Obi-Wan Kenobi, "Use the Force, Luke." Obi-Wan implores Luke to trust his instincts. Skywalker turns off the targeting computer of his X-Wing Fighter, closes his eyes, goes with the flow … and the forces of good prevail over the dark side. Fade to black. Raise the curtains. Flip the lights on. Standing ovation….. If only teaching were that easy.

What do we mean by, 'use the force?' Close your eyes and trust your instincts? No. We mean trust students' instincts. Or at least one of them. Students naturally crave social interaction. As you will already be aware, if you are a teacher, students will do anything to keep in touch with their friends — even in classes where it is prohibited. They'll pass notes. They'll text message each other. They'll whisper. They'll yell across the room. As a profession, we expend an extraordinary amount of energy going against students' natural instincts to interact.

For years, teachers have been trying to silence students. But social interaction is natural. We all crave it. It's part of our collective biology. Sadly, orphans that were given plenty of food literally withered and died without social interaction. If necessity is the mother of invention, then we as a species have a burning desire to interact. From cave drawings, to oral language, to letters, to telegraphs, to faxes — we have this tremendous need to communicate with others. And now recent technological advances such as Skype, FaceTime, TwitterChats, WhatsApp, SnapChat, text, e-mail, and video messaging enable us to surmount the obstacles of geographical distance and communication lag time to connect with our friends, family, social groups, and even business partners on the other side of the world — instantly.

If you look at the most frequently visited sites on the web, apart from search engines, guess what pops up? Yes. You guessed it. Sites that connect people: **Facebook** and **Instagram** for social networking, **YouTube** for sharing videos with each other. Social networking is a hallmark of the Web enabled world. Even the most independent act of logging onto the web, one person behind one computer is a very social act, just of a slightly different nature than face-to-face interaction. We are becoming increasingly high-tech, and, in many ways, just to become more high-touch.

Indeed, the need to interact is strong. Why in the world have we as an educational system chosen to thwart such a powerful force? Is talking that dangerous? No! In fact, I think we have had it dead wrong.

There's an inverse relationship between the amount of teacher talk and student learning. The more we talk, the less they learn. The more they talk about the curriculum, the more they'll learn. Interaction breeds the highest form of engagement and produces the most learning. That's part of the reason why cooperative learning consistently outperforms independent learning.

Teachers work so hard to keep students quiet and still. But that's not how all students best learn. Who does all the talking when students are quiet? The teacher! That's a lot of work, and we miss a golden opportunity to transform learning from a one-way transfusion of information from the teacher to the students to a shared creation of knowledge and meaning for all students. Use the force. Use some simple **Kagan Structures.** They are highly-interactive and harness the power of social interaction for student learning. Unfortunately, we

RoundRobin

Timed Pair Share

can't just close our eyes like Luke Skywalker and trust the force. Teaching is reality, not a blockbuster movie; we'd have sheer chaos. We can't just tell students to "talk it over." Predictably the social students, the high achievers, and the extroverts dominate the conversation, not letting others get a word in edgeways. We can't just say, "do this project as a team." The same will happen: the reserved, the quiet, and the low achieving students are back at square one: unengaged, disinterested, unmotivated.

To successfully use the power of social interaction for social skill development and academic learning, we need specific tools that allow us to channel all that energy into productive learning. That's exactly what Kagan Structures are. They're designed to skyrocket student engagement through social interaction, in a very controlled way. That's why we call them structures — because they structure students' interaction. By using structures we are confident that everyone stays engaged, everyone gets a chance, and everyone is learning.

We all have the need to interact, especially children and adolescents. Instead of bucking their natural proclivities to talk and interact, let's go with the flow, and let the forces work for us.

May the force be with you.

Let KaganUK show you how.

Interested in a KaganUK keynote speaker or professional development for your school? Contact Mathew on 01626573223

Sample Kagan Structures that develop key components of spoken communication: linguistic, physical, cognitive and social & emotional.

Timed Pair Share	One student talks for specified time and the other listens. Then they switch roles.
Team Interview	Each student on a team in turn is interviewed by his/her teammates.
Numbered Heads Together	After the teacher asks a question, students write their own answer, discuss it in their groups, signal they are ready, and the teacher calls a number. Students with that number respond using a range of simultaneous response modes.
Sage-n-Scribe	One student ("Sage") dictates to another ("Scribe") who records the answer. The boss receives praise and then students switch roles.
Mix-N-Match	Students circulate in the room with cards, quizzing each other and then finding their match. For example, the person who has the picture of a shoe searches for the one who has the word "shoe."

All Kagan structures by definition have students develop Social & Emotional skills by WORKING WITH OTHERS, LISTENING & RESPONDING, voicing opinions and therefore developing CONFIDENCE IN SPEAKING.