"Yes, And!" Strategy (Leonard & Yorton, 2015)

Purpose and Process: The goal is to focus on positive interactions while gaining new insights and information. Students interact with each other and create discussions or texts that are meaningful and engaging for them. All ideas are valued and included in the activity. No idea is evaluated—just embraced. All students feel valued and have the opportunity to take creative risks while learning new content.

Here's how it works: The essence of "Yes, And!" is collaborative teamwork and group creativity. It is an engaging exercise that allows team members to interact with each other in a light, creative way.

Students sit in a circle and build a story one sentence at a time. Each sentence must begin with "Yes, and . . . " Each sentence must refer to one statement from the previous sentence. Teachers may consider this activity to review any content area subject.

For example, let's consider a review of the American Revolution. One student may say, "The American Revolution was caused by growing tensions between the patriots and the loyalists." The next student could say, "Yes, and the loyalists supported British government." The student after that could say something like, "Yes, and the British government was ruled by King George III," and so on.

Because you don't know what the person ahead of you will say, you can't plan ahead. Students must think on their feet—step out of their comfort zones—to share their ideas within a friendly, respectful class discussion. If someone forgets to start their sentence with "Yes, and . . . " then the group unites as a non-judgmental and friendly buzzer by saying "Buzzzz." The person who was buzzed just tries again—remembering, this time, to begin his or her sentence with "Yes, and . . . " At any time, a participant has the choice to pass—or to repeat what the person before him said to keep the exercise moving along.

If someone disagrees with the statement just spoken, that person still must begin with "Yes, and. . ." and add any corrections he or she thinks should be made. For example, in the idea above, if one student said, "Yes, and the patriots supported King George III," the next student will have to start with "Yes, and . . ." to say. . . "Yes, and . . . it's really the loyalists who supported King George III."

One of the co-teachers or one student serves as the moderator to ensure that the conversation flows respectfully, with everyone following the procedures. When everyone has had a turn (the turn-taking can go as long as you like—but each student should have at least one turn) the moderator says, "That is the end of this story."

One of the teachers or a student may serve as note-taker by either audiotaping, videotaping, or writing down the gist of the story created.

A Bonus Co-Teaching "Yes, And!" Activity
That Promotes Teacher Collaboration

Take a few minutes to begin a co-teaching story with one co-teacher making a state- ment about either co-teaching in general or a specific statement that reflects your experiences together. The other co-teacher responds with "Yes, and . . ." and goes on. See what topics, feelings, and questions arise that can deepen your effective partner- ship in learning. Return to this activity every so often—perhaps once a month—as a valuable communication tool that is fun, engaging, and productive in co-creating a positive co-teaching relationship and teaching team with your students. Use this space to document one of your "Yes, And!" co-teaching experiences.

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