SILENT DIALOG

Purpose	In a *Silent Dialog* (also “Written Discussion”, “Pinboard Discussion”, or “Running Conversation“), students share their attitudes and approaches, or their opinions and arguments regarding different topics by writing them on posters (one poster per topic). In this way, the progress of the discussion, the order of ideas, and individual thought processes are made explicit and comprehensible for all participants. Because writing slows down the discussion, individual arguments can be scrutinized more carefully, and more reserved students are more likely to participate and contribute to the conversation. Students become physically active by moving around the room, which can further improve their learning (physical activity supports neurological processes). The activity is also suitable for gauging student interest or expectations, or for collecting feedback.
Directions	1. Several posters or pin boards covered with paper are hung up across the room; permanent markers are provided as well. Each poster contains a question or proposition at the top with which students are asked to engage. 2. The instructor explains the activity (rules for discussion, time limits). 3. The students walk around and write down their opinions or arguments concerning the questions. In their written contributions, they are asked to consider both the original question and the opinions and arguments other students have added. 4. When the time is up, the instructor ends the written discussion with an audible signal. 5. All students look through the posters to get a sense of each written discussion and are asked to reflect on the results (e.g. the instructor asks “Which arguments are especially compelling? Which seem to have missed the mark?“ etc.). Alternatively, the instructor can summarize the results and expand on some of their connections. If the written discussions were productive and rich enough in themselves, it might not be necessary to elaborate on them at all.
Parameters	Group size: flexible Time required: ca. 20 minutes, depending on complexity of the topic and group size Setup: flexible, but with enough room for the posters (on the wall, on the floor, on tables) Materials: posters (with pre-prepared questions), permanent markers, flipboards (if necessary), pins / tape
Helpful Tips	Variants: — Silent Discussion: Arguments without commentary or explanations are collected first, then discussed and evaluated afterwards. — Students gather around one poster that most interests them and discuss the main question or proposition before collecting their preliminary conclusions on the poster. Then the same groups move from poster to poster to add to or comment upon the other groups’ results in another color.

As a tool for gauging student expectations about the course:
- *The workshop would be useful to me if…*
- *What I would like to learn in this class is…*
- *This seminar will have been a success for me if, at the end, I…*

As a tool for collecting feedback:
Pin boards with the following prompts (one prompt per board):

- The following helped me learn:
- The following hindered my learning:
- One thing I learned:
- One thing that remains unclear:
- One problem I still see:
- What I want to say to the group:
- My most important insight regarding Topic XY is:

Online Implementation	— via padlet.com

Adapted from:
Strittmatter-Haubold, V., & Ehlail, F. (2012). *Lernen im Aufwind. Methodenreader zur Gestaltung von Lernprozessen* (8th ed.). Heidelberg: Inst. für Weiterbildung, Pädagogische Hochschule Heidelberg.