



Anika had raised her hand for the last time.

She'd wanted to answer several of her teacher's questions, especially the one about the clouds that look like wispy, spun cotton. She had not been called on once, even though she had volunteered several times. Anika tried to follow along, but after awhile she lost interest and laid her head on her desk.

Dean did get called on once, but he didn't raise his hand too often. It was much easier to just sit there. He thought if he could just be quiet and still like Anika, then he wouldn't have to think about learning all this weather stuff. Then it got too hard to just sit and be quiet, so Dean found some marbles in his pocket and began to roll them around on his desk. This got his teacher's attention several times.

"Dean, please pay attention."

"Stop that, Dean!"

"Dean, how do you expect to learn this material for tomorrow's test if you don't pay attention?"

The next day, to no one's surprise, Anika and Dean did poorly on the meteorology test. As with other students with long histories of poor school achievement, their teachers sometimes used terms like inattentiveness, slow learner, attention deficit disorder, learning disabilities, and behavioral disorders to "explain" Anika and Dean's lack of academic success. But another explanation for the two students' poor test scores is also possible. Perhaps their low scores—as well as their chronic underachievement in school—were directly influenced by the instruction they typically received.

Neither Anika nor Dean had had an opportunity to actively participate in the previous day's lesson. Instead of being active learners making frequent responses to the lesson's content, both students had been, at best, passive observers. Had the teacher designed the lesson to provide every student with frequent opportunities to respond to the content, Anika, Dean, their classmates, and their teacher would all have benefited (see box, "Benefits of Increasing Active Student Response").

Everyone Participates in This Class

Using Response Cards to Increase Active Student Response

William L. Heward
Ralph Gardner III
Rodney A. Cavanaugh
Frances H. Courson
Teresa A. Grossi
Patricia M. Barbetta

■