The Nuts and Bolts of Using the Name Card Method

1. Write each student’s name on a 3”x5” card. (Index cards work. Popsicle sticks or tongue depressors are a good choice too. Or you can pass out playing cards and have the kids draw and take ownership of their own card.)
2. Tell students that when you use the cards, instead of calling on people who raise their hands, you will call on the person who’s name is on the card you’ve drawn randomly from the stack. Explain that you’ll ignore any hand-waving, noise-making gestures, deep sighs, rolling eyes, or other behaviors they use to try to gain your attention.
3. Group students in “discussion buddy” pairs. They will work with their partner for discussions for a specific period of time, perhaps 2 weeks or 3 weeks, and then they will be given different partners. Make it clear that you will choose the pairs, and you will change them regularly.
4. Use the think-pair-share method.
5. Ask an open ended question.
6. Give students quiet time to think.
7. Advise them to jot down more than one possible answer if they can.
8. Next, they share/discuss with their partner to come up with more responses.
9. Demonstrate the sign given when pair time is over. (Typical talk time is 30-45 seconds; any more and there is a chance for off task conversation. Advise them to use soft voices. Conversations need to end promptly. You might want to practice.)
10. Let them know that when they are called on using the name cards after a pairing, they will have to give an answer. It could be theirs or their partner’s. They don’t have to say whose idea it was.
11. Let them know that they have to be loud, so everyone can hear. That way, everyone can be sure not to repeat an answer.
12. They cannot repeat another’s answer as you bounce around the room, and they cannot say, “I pass.”

**How to pair them up:**

* Each pair should consist of students who are at different levels of competency.
* Important Exception: Students who are highly capable in that content area should be grouped with each other, especially the blurters. If there is a student who no one wants to work with, privately ask a helpful and sensitive student if he or she will be that student’s partner for a period of time.

**Important points for the teacher:**

* Don’t look at the cards before asking a question.
* Don’t show the cards to the students. You may want to call on someone other than the person whose name card you pulled, such as someone who is getting very impatient to participate.
* Once you call on a student, stay with him or her until you get a response. Don’t ask the class to help. Wait 10 seconds (no more), and if the student hasn’t responded by then, start to coach him or her. Provide a clue or hint, give a choice between two alternatives, or allow more time to consult with their partner while you call on another student; but you must always return within 60 seconds. *Important*: Don’t call on someone other than the partner to help.
* When you finish with a name card, put is somewhere inside the stack, never on the bottom, never in a separate pile. Shuffle often.
* Call on several students before commenting or giving input. Simply receive the answers in a noncommittal way. Simply say, “Thank you” or “Okay.”
* Before moving on to the next question, ask, “Does anyone have anything to add that hasn’t already been said? Raise your hand if you do.” If they repeat something already said, they forfeit the right to *add* to the discussion, but they can still be called on. Their name card stays in the stack.