To create a culture of active participation, students need to be active learners where there is effortful engagement in a disruption free environment.

Michael Chiles

“Developing a culture where students want to ask and answer questions is not automatic and is fundamentally difficult. By rehearsing routines, we can help them move from passive to active learning and engage them in more meaningful discussions.

The Question Lag
Consider Hidden Factors
Before responding to your question, students often think about hidden factors. For example, they may consider the type of response to give (short recall or extended response); how to respond based on prior knowledge or have anxiety about not knowing the answer.

Students May Not Engage in Questioning Because Of:

Peer Pressure
Naturally Quiet Students
Some pupils may feel uncomfortable answering questions because they are naturally quiet and do not want the spotlight on them. These students often go under the teacher’s radar.

Feelings Shy
Self-Conscious Students
Fear of embarrassment can impact the questioning process and often water down meaningful discussion. Students may be affected by external factors such as social situations.

Already Know It
Passive Students
Some students disengage in the questioning process because they feel they already know the answer. Passively allowing others to contribute diverts attention away from them.

Peer Pressure
Dissengaged Students
Often, students will actively avoid participating in discussion because they don’t enjoy or value the subject. They put in minimum effort and are difficult to engage in questioning.

Context Is Key
Troubled Students
Students may misunderstand the context of a question. The topic of discussion may recall upsetting memories making students not wanting to take part in questioning.

Increase Participation

1. Explain
   Clearly explain the expectations and routines for classroom talk. Set high expectations and model this to your students through the language you use.

2. Rehearse
   Give students opportunities to rehearse your expectations.
   Regular verbal cues help to build routines: Remember to track the speaker when someone is answering.

3. Reinforce
   Once expectations and routines are established, be consistent in reinforcement. Praise students for positive participation: Good tracking of the speaker Tom.