

# Collaborative Conversations

*January 4, 2016*

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It all begins and ends with conversation.

~ Maria Nichols

*Classroom discourse is the ocean  
on which all else floats.*

~ James Britton

*School knowledge is the knowledge which someone else presents to us. We partly grasp it, enough to answer the teacher's questions, to do exercises, or to answer examination questions, but it remains someone else's knowledge, not ours.*

~ Douglas Barnes

*But dialogue ... is a coming to an intellectual exchange willing to see and hear something new in the exchange, and actually creating a newer, stronger understanding...*

~ David Bohm

*For intellectual engagement, the most powerful lever comes when children disagree and take each other seriously.*

~ Peter Johnston

# Getting Started



## 1. Start Small:

Our directions for discussions matter. Protocols and games that are quick and timed build practice for student accountability during classroom conversations. These strategies work best with vocabulary, prior knowledge, and open-ended questions where students can think and work quickly.

Turn and Talks, Dance to Find a Partner, and "Speed Interviews" (think speed dating, where students stand in a line and shift every one or two minutes so they talk with five to 10 others in 10 minutes) all involve two students exchanging information with each other.

In the beginning of implementation, posting a timer on the projector or using a big teacher-timer helps students self-regulate. For students who have a tough time listening, offer strategies for keeping quiet for 10 seconds to one minute, depending on the topic. Phrases like, "Partner A: lips zipped!" or "Partner A: silent listener, ready?" remind students of their role. The short amount of time keeps students focused on the task at hand, while creating a positive classroom energy. As the teacher, it's important to have a consistent method for switching speakers and to never lose track of the time. Use cold calling after the structured talk so that students learn you are holding them accountable for talking on topic. Ask students to share what their partners said to lower the pressure and encourage active listening.

## 2. Practice and Perfect with Resources, Roles, and Rubrics.

Once students are accustomed to learning from talking with peers for short periods of time, the length of the conversations and number of students should increase along with the structures to support the discussions. Graphic organizers, scripted question stems, and note-taking guides encourage students to stay on task and ask the right questions. These tools also reinforce learning when students translate their conversation into writing.

When students work on more complex tasks, like creating an algebraic word problem, or constructing three arguments for and against a social cause, they need guidance for distributing the work. In addition to titles, be sure to include descriptions and responsibilities for each of the roles. Provide students with feedback when you notice they are or are not following their roles. Finally, if their work together is regular or sustained over time for a lab or project, allow them to evaluate each other at the end of their work, and make sure they know this will happen before they begin. If you're freaking out that this sound like a lot of work—stop now! There is no need to reinvent the wheel. Get on the Internet and search for "group roles" and "group rubrics."

### **3. Keep Kids Communicating.**

Once your students have learned that you maintain a classroom environment where student voice is the norm, the variety of strategies that you implement can increase and evolve to meet the needs of your students. By integrating protocols like gallery walks, "stand up" partners, learning stations, and four corners; students participate in timed and focused discussions with controlled movement.

Teachers can integrate other instructional technology supports like Class Dojo or the low-tech version, popsicle sticks with students' names, to assess the quality of discussions at stations or corners. It's important to create a sense of urgency to maintain student focus. Many teachers have found that using odd times, like eight or 11 minutes and posting the time on a large timer works to maintain student productivity.

### **4. Every Student, Every Day.**

As a teacher, the role is not just a facilitator of learning, but an assessor of understanding.. Strategies like verbal exit tickets and one-on-one conferencing reinforce the classroom culture for speaking about learning while allowing me to gauge what my students know beyond what they were able to write on paper or on a computer. The Common Core State Standards are holding students accountable for developing speaking and listening skills. To me, this means it is even more essential that teachers of all content areas provide students with opportunities to ask and answer each other's questions, prepare for conversations, and discuss texts. The third Standard for Mathematical practice, states that students should be able to critique the reasoning of others, and math talks require students to listen, paraphrase, and question the thinking of their peers.

For some students, these daily safe and structured opportunities to talk and be heard are the only ones in their day. To support their development as learners and communicators who can collaborate while creating products and thinking critically, teachers must provide daily opportunities for students to talk about what they are learning and practice academic conversations.

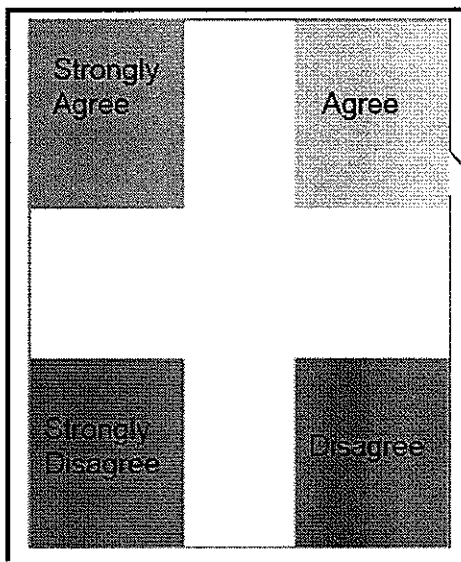
## Collaborative Talk Examples



Numbered Heads Together  
Reciprocal Teaching  
Opinion Stations  
Conversational Round-Table  
Turn and Talk

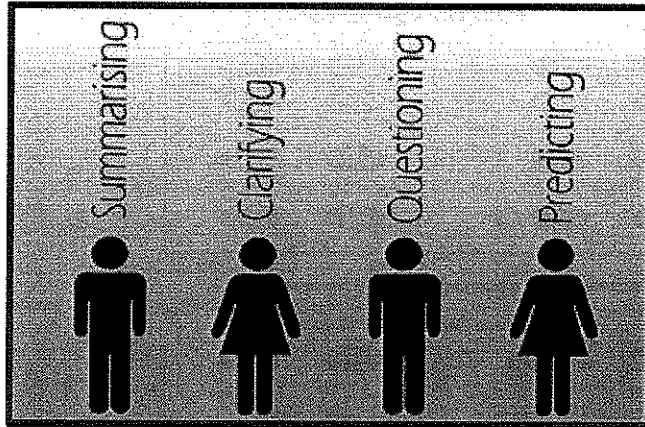
Think-Pair-Square  
Jigsaw  
Collaborative Poster  
Rotation Stations  
Gallery Walk

## Opinion Stations



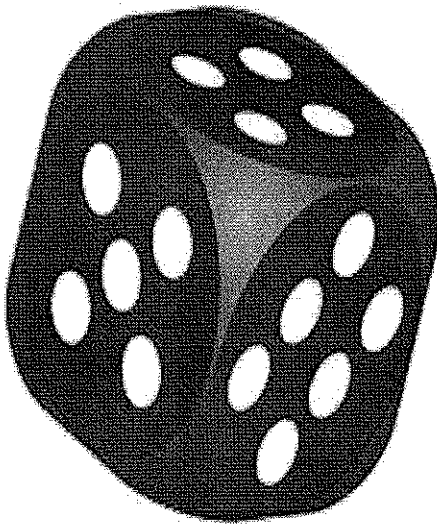
- Display a statement -- have students move to a spot in the room that corresponds to their beliefs
- Students discuss in their corner or spot in the room and then to the whole class
- Post sentence frames in each corner

# Reciprocal Teaching



- Student-directed groups
- Text is chunked in smaller parts
- Teacher or students can choose stopping points

# Numbered Heads Together



- Each person at table assigned a number
- Question is posed
- Die is rolled
- Everyone prepares that numbered person to answer
- Die is rolled again to call on a table number
- Person at that table answers

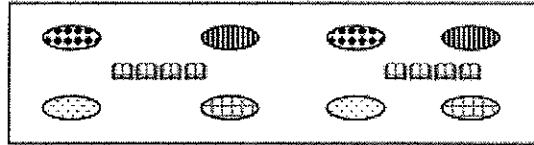
# Jigsaw

Home Group

Expert Group

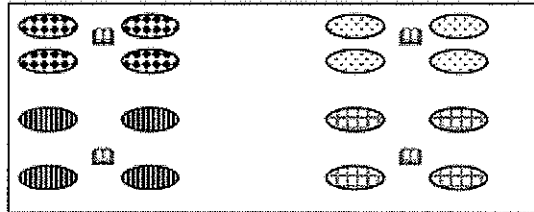
Home Group

*Phase One: Home Groups*



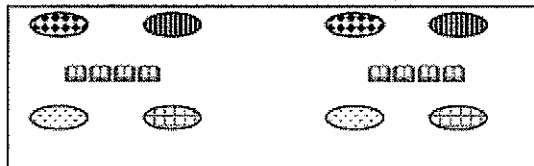
Students meet in home groups to divide the readings among themselves.

*Phase Two: Expert Groups*



Students meet in expert groups to discuss one of the readings.

*Phase Three: Home Groups*



Students reconvene in expert groups to discuss all of the readings.

## Collaborative Poster

- Students create a poster with specific visual information (drawings and text).
- All students participate in making the poster using their own colored marker.
- They sign the poster in their color.
- Students discuss **critically**, explain, and make decisions to complete this task.

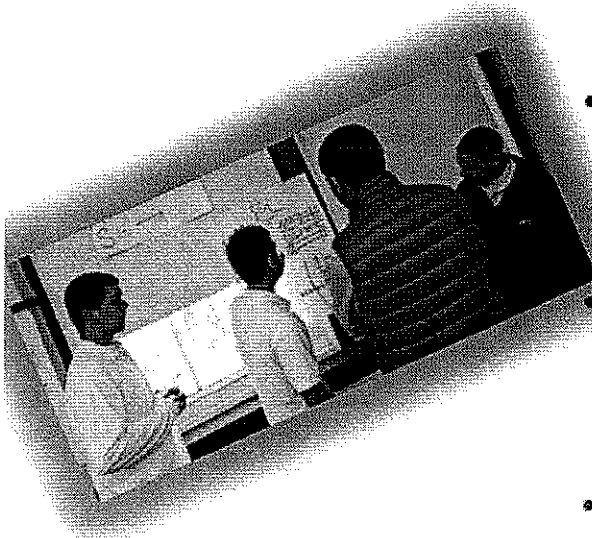


# Conversational Roundtable

Your Notes:	Group Member #2:
Group Member #3:	Group Member #4:

A diamond-shaped graphic with the text "SUPPORTS" is centered in the middle of the four quadrants of the table.

## Rotation Stations— 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and higher



- Teams around the classroom place their answers on posters.
- Teams rotate to other teams' posters and reflect on the answers.
- Comments are added via post-it notes or on the chart paper.
- **Sentence FRAMES** can be used.

### Bloom's Taxonomy Questions Stems Math

**Knowing** questions focus on clarifying, recalling, naming, and listing

Which illustrates...?

Write... in standard form....

What is the correct way to write the number of... in word form?

**Organizing** questions focus on arranging information, comparing similarities/differences, classifying, and sequencing

Which shows... in order from...?

What is the order...?

Which is the difference between a... and a...?

Which is the same as...?

Express... as a...?

**Applying** questions focus on prior knowledge to solve a problem

What was the total...?

What is the value of...?

How many... would be needed for...?

Solve....Add/subtract....Find....Evaluate....Estimate....Graph....

**Analyzing** questions focus on examining parts, identifying attributes/relationships/patterns, and main idea

Which tells...?

If the pattern continues,....

Which could...? –

What rule explains/completes... this pattern?

What is/are missing?

What is the best estimate for...?

Which shows...?

What is the effect of...?

**Generating** questions focus on producing new information, inferring, predicting, and elaborating with details

What number does... stand for?

What is the probability...?

What are the chances...?

What effect...?

**Integrating** questions focus on connecting/combining/summarizing information, and restructuring existing information to incorporate new information

How many different...?

What happens to... when...?

What is the significance of...?

How many different combinations...?

Find the number of..., ..., and ... in the figure below.



**Evaluating** questions focus on reasonableness and quality of ideas, criteria for making judgments, and confirming accuracy of claims

Which most accurately...?

Which is correct?

Which statement about... is true?

What are the chances...?

Which would best...?

Which would... the same...?

Which statement is sufficient to proven...?

### Higher Order Thinking Skills Question Templates

Recall	
<p>Note: Any question becomes a recall question if the answer has already been explicitly provided to the student in class or in the text.</p> <p>When did _____ take place?</p> <p>List the _____ .</p>	<p>Define the term _____.</p> <p>What is a _____?</p> <p>Who did _____?</p> <p>Name _____.</p>
Analysis	
<p>How does _____ work?</p> <p>Sort these _____ .</p> <p>Use the table to determine _____ .</p> <p>Use the graph to determine _____ .</p> <p>Graph _____ .</p> <p>What caused _____ ?</p> <p>What is another possible cause of _____ ?</p> <p>Outline the _____ .</p> <p>Based on the written description, draw a diagram.</p> <p>Draw your own map of _____ without tracing or copying.</p> <p>Use the map to determine _____ .</p> <p>In what sequence did _____ happen?</p> <p>Break _____ down into its component parts.</p> <p>Give an example of _____ .</p> <p>What literary form is being used?</p> <p>What technique is being used?</p> <p>What information is needed?</p> <p>Is the information relevant?</p> <p>Into what groups can you organize these?</p> <p>Draw a picture that illustrates what's described in the story _____ .</p>	<p>What does _____ symbolize?</p> <p>Find examples of [a literary device] in your readings.</p> <p>Analyze the _____ in _____ .</p> <p>Classify these _____ according to _____ .</p> <p>Separate the _____ from the _____ .</p> <p>Translate _____ .</p> <p>Analyze how _____ .</p> <p>Explain how _____ works.</p> <p>What was the author's point of view?</p> <p>How did the author convey _____ ?</p> <p>What words does the author use to paint an image of _____ in your mind?</p> <p>How were _____ used to _____ ?</p> <p>What kind of a _____ is this?</p> <p>Which one doesn't belong in this group?</p> <p>What is the function of _____ ?</p> <p>What is the purpose of _____ ?</p> <p>What is the relationship between _____ and _____ ?</p> <p>What is the pattern?</p> <p>Use manipulatives to illustrate a concept.</p> <p>Build a model of _____ .</p> <p>Measure _____ .</p>

### Comparison

How is \_\_\_\_\_ like \_\_\_\_\_ ?  
How are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ different?  
Compare the \_\_\_\_\_ before and after \_\_\_\_\_ .  
Compare the character \_\_\_\_\_ at the beginning of the story and at the end.

Distinguish between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ .  
Compare \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_ .  
On what dimensions might you compare \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ ?  
Which one is the biggest/oldest/tallest?

### Inference

Hypothesize what will happen if \_\_\_\_\_ .  
Predict what will happen if \_\_\_\_\_ .  
Apply the rule to \_\_\_\_\_ .  
Solve the problem \_\_\_\_\_ .  
Predict how the story \_\_\_\_\_ will end.  
What is the main idea of the story \_\_\_\_\_ ?  
What is the overall theme of \_\_\_\_\_ ?  
What is the moral of the story?  
Develop of plan to \_\_\_\_\_ .  
Propose and describe an invention that fills some need.  
Write a research paper on \_\_\_\_\_ .

Based on your readings, what can you conclude about \_\_\_\_\_ ?  
What was the author's point of view?  
Solve a logic puzzle.  
What if \_\_\_\_\_ ?  
What rule applies here?  
What generalization can you make from this information?  
Create a \_\_\_\_\_ .  
Design a \_\_\_\_\_ .  
Propose a solution to the problem of \_\_\_\_\_ .

Evaluation

Was \_\_\_\_\_ worth the costs? Explain your answer.

Was the argument convincing? What makes you think so?

Did \_\_\_\_\_ behave appropriately? Why?

What would you have done in this situation? Why?

Write a critique of \_\_\_\_\_ .

Was this experiment well designed? Defend your answer.

Judge which is the best solution to the problem of \_\_\_\_\_ ? Why do you think so?

How well are the conclusions supported by the data/ facts/evidence? Explain.

Did \_\_\_\_\_ choose a wise course of action? Give reasons.

Apply a scoring rubric to this piece of work. Explain why you are assigning each score.

What would you have done in this situation? Why?

Review a book, performance, or exhibit. Justify your evaluation.

Which \_\_\_\_\_ is the best? Why do you think so?

Whose arguments/evidence was more convincing? Why?

If you were the judge, what would your decision be? Why?

Give and justify your opinion on \_\_\_\_\_ .

# Anchor Charts

**LITERATURE DISCUSSION**

**S** Sit up  
**L** Look at the person talking  
**A** Act like you care  
**N** Nod your head  
**T** Take turns talking

**CONVERSATIONAL MOVES**

I agree... or I disagree  
 I'd like to add  
 I don't understand  
 The text says  
 I think the author meant  
 It sounds like  
 That made me think of  
 I'm interested

Turn and Talk	
1) Make eye contact - Eye to Eye, Knee to Knee 2) One person talks at a time 3) Listen carefully as your partner speaks 4) Switch	
<b>Agree</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I agree...</li> <li>I was thinking the same thing...</li> </ul>	<b>Disagree</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I disagree because...</li> <li>I was thinking...</li> <li>No, I don't think...</li> </ul>
<b>Agree and Add On</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I agree with you but I also...</li> <li>That's true...</li> <li>I think...</li> </ul>	<b>Clarify</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I didn't understand...</li> <li>Can you please repeat what you said...</li> </ul>

**"Pushing our Thinking"**

For example...  
 Another example is...  
 This makes me realize...  
 This is important because...  
 The reason for this is...  
 Another reason is...  
 On the other hand...  
 I used to think... but now I realize...  
 Many people think... but I think...

To add on...  
 An example of this is...  
 I'm realizing...  
 The surprising thing is...

**Turn and Talk**

**What I Do**

Eye and eye partner  
 Eye on partner  
 Listening to partner  
 Stay on task and stay focused  
 Hear my voice

**What I Say**

I think that... because...

My partner said...

I agree with... because...

I disagree with... because...

