

Instructional Strategies that Support the Implementation of Disciplinary Discussions

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FOCUS QUESTIONS

- What are some examples of instructional strategies teachers can use to implement the teaching practices in the *Disciplinary Discussions Teaching Frame*?
- How are these strategies similar to or different from ones you currently use in your teaching?
- What is one way you could use one of these strategies in your classroom?

Instructional Strategies

There are many instructional strategies that teachers can use to help build their students' discussion skills. The instructional strategies we are highlighting serve a number of purposes: (1) to deepen your understanding of the practice by looking at it through the lens of each element, (2) to see the need for purposeful planning, and (3) to acknowledge that it takes time to instruct and have students apply the skills of disciplinary discussions.

Disciplinary Discussions — Element 1: Build Conversations Skills

Instructional Strategies — *Introducing Disciplinary Conversation Skills*

Students need conversation skills in order to engage in productive disciplinary discussions. We define these skills as Create, Clarify, Fortify, and Negotiate meaning in student-to-student interactions. The strategies shared here promote explicit introductions for each skill and provide the graphics teachers and students can refer to as they build disciplinary conversation skills.

Why Use This Strategy: Disciplinary conversation skills are essential for student success in CCSS classrooms and for disciplinary learning. It is important for students to understand that engaging in disciplinary conversations is necessary for them to be successful in school. An awareness of these skills and the ability to use them effectively help students hold purposeful conversations in which they deepen their thinking and co-construct meaning through multiple exchanges with peers. These skills are necessary across contexts and disciplines and are ones students will draw on for the rest of their lives.

When to Use This Strategy: Teachers make use of this strategy when they want to introduce students to a new conversation skill or when they want to remind students of skills they have previously taught. This strategy can be useful when teachers want to provide prompts and responses associated with each skill or highlight its purpose in a discussion. The visuals included with this instructional strategy can be helpful reminders for students before they engage in disciplinary discussions.

How to Use This Strategy: Disciplinary conversation skills are essential for student success in CCSS classrooms and for disciplinary learning. It is important for students to understand that engaging in disciplinary conversations is necessary for them to be successful in school. An awareness of these skills and the ability to use them effectively help students hold purposeful conversations in which they deepen their thinking and co-construct meaning through multiple exchanges with peers. These skills are necessary across contexts and disciplines and are ones students will draw on for the rest of their lives.

Primary Grade Example Lesson: *Introducing Conversation Skills*

1. Establish one norm at a time and when students have mastered that norm, add another one. Model each of these expectations by using puppets, students, or other adults. It is also effective to demonstrate a non-model, have students identify how it affected the conversation, and discuss why that norm is important to maintaining a disciplinary discussion. To help students take turns, you can use talking sticks or rocks that are passed to a student when it is his or her turn to talk.
2. Have students practice the conversation norms by posing questions for students to ask and answer. An example is after reading *Ira Sleeps Over*, ask the students to ask each other whether they have a special stuffed animal with which they sleep.

Student A: Do you sleep with a special stuffed animal?

Student B: Responds.

Student B: Do you sleep with a special stuffed animal?

Student A: Responds.

A higher expectation would be to have them build on each other's ideas.

Student A: Do you sleep with a special stuffed animal?

Student B: Responds.

Student A: Can you tell me more?

Student B: Responds.

Student B: Do you sleep with a special stuffed animal?

Student A: Responds.

Student B: Can you tell me more?

Student A: Responds.

3. Introduce one Conversation Skill at a time. Begin with Create. Write the prompts and responses on color sentence strips using one color for the prompt "What do you notice?" and another color for the response "I noticed..." Begin with a visual text. Create a model and nonmodel conversation. Have students discuss the effectiveness of each. Develop your own hand motion or use this one: starting on each side of the head with fingers closed, make an exploding motion with hands and fingers, and finish with them spread wide on each side in the air. This demonstrates "creating" an idea. See Conversation Prompts and Responses on page 54.

4. As students master the Conversation Skill Create, move to Clarify, and continue introducing the other Conversation Skills. You can use sentence strips or an anchor chart as a point of reference. Here is an example of the introduction.
 - “Next, we clarify our idea, and it starts to come into focus. We can see the image change from blurry to clear. This hand signal is cupping your hands over your eyes as if you were focusing binoculars.”
 - “Then, we fortify our idea with supporting evidence. The graphic shows our idea propped up and gives examples of where we might find evidence to support it, such as from text, media, and our knowledge about the world or ourselves. The hand signal for this one is placing three fingers of one hand below the palm of the other as support.”
 - “Finally, we negotiate with our discussion partner regarding the strength of each of our ideas so we can reach consensus or construct a new idea. The graphic represents the ideas of two heads. The final hand signal is extending your fists in front of you and bringing them together interlacing the fingers.”
5. Have students reflect on their use of the Conversation Skills by asking these questions. “How did I state my ideas? How did I take turns sharing my ideas? How did I stay on topic? How did I build on my partner’s ideas?” Share examples of students using the skills well.

Intermediate Grade Example Lesson: *Introducing Conversation Skills*

1. In their groups have students discuss norms that are effective for a conversation. Ask the groups to share out and create an anchor chart for the classroom.
2. Have the groups discuss what a disciplinary discussion would look like. Create a T-chart on chart paper with one side with “looks like” and the other side “sounds like.” Have students share out their ideas. Ask probing questions to clarify any generalizations. Then have students discuss what a discussion would sound like and record it on the T-chart. The goal is to get students to understand that disciplinary discussions are different than the way they typically talk to their friends. They should be very explicit and intentional about the outcome.
3. Process the T-chart by asking students to answer and discuss these questions: Why are disciplinary discussions important? How do disciplinary discussions help us learn? What makes a disciplinary discussion a good disciplinary discussion?
4. Now introduce the four conversation skills by asking students to read and annotate the one-and-a-half-page description of the skills on pages 52-53. When they have finished, have students meet with a partner and discuss what they learned about Create. Have them create a one to two sentence definition and complete this sentence frame: “According to the text, the skill of create is...” Call on some students to share out their definition and sentence frame. Create your anchor chart for the conversation skills based on the agreed definition. Have students move to another partner and discuss Clarify. Write a one to two sentence definition and complete this sentence frame: “According to the text, the skill of clarify is ...”

Have students share out and add to the Anchor Chart. Have students move to a new partner and follow the same steps for Fortify. And move again to a fourth partner and follow the same steps for Negotiate.

5. Once students have an understanding of the conversation skills, have them apply them one at a time. Project a visual text and provide a model and nonmodel of how you could create an idea with this visual text. Then have students work with a partner and create an idea using the sentence stem, “I noticed...” Practice this skill for a few days until you feel they have grasped this skill. Follow the same process for the other three conversation skills.
6. You can also use the Conversation Prompts and Responses on page 55.

Instructional Strategy — Building Disciplinary Conversation Skills

In the previous instructional strategy, we introduced the four disciplinary conversation skills: Create, Clarify, Fortify, and Negotiate. By contrast, this instructional strategy provides students with a chance to build these skills through a structured and supported practice opportunity. The Conversation Skills Poster (see pages 56-57) and the Conversation Prompts and Responses provide support for students.

Why Use This Strategy: Introducing disciplinary conversation skills is not enough for students to be able to use them effectively to engage in extended, productive discussions. To gain these skills, students need to practice them in structured and supported ways. Building disciplinary conversation skills is a strategy that integrates all four skills and maintains the intellectual rigor necessary for CCSS instruction. Teachers also need to plan and think about the prompts they use to engage students in disciplinary conversations. Prompts that are at the literal level or require little thinking will produce limited responses. Rich prompts engage and excite students about the content.

When to Use This Strategy: Students need many opportunities to practice disciplinary conversation skills in structured and supported ways. This instructional strategy provides students with the assistance and encouragement they need when learning something new. The supports embedded in this strategy allow students to take risks and strengthen their skills in a safe culture of disciplinary learning. The specific support of pairing two distinct texts (the diagram and the informational text referred to below) provides greater access to the ideas within the texts and can improve students’ disciplinary understanding.

How to Use This Strategy: Explain to students they are going to have an opportunity to practice the Conversation Skills. Students are given a text (written, visual, audio, or multimedia) and asked to first create an idea with their partner. Model what this sounds like and looks like. Use the prompt starters and responses. Then have students clarify their ideas. Once they have done that move on to fortify and negotiate. The amount of scaffolding that you provide should decrease as students become more proficient.