

## Developing Academic Speaking and Conversation Skills in Every Lesson



Jeff Zwiers  
New Haven

October 24, 2016

[jeffzwiers.org/oct24](http://jeffzwiers.org/oct24)

## Fortifying Paired Interaction

Prep, Tasks,  
Prompts

Build Conversation  
Skills

Formative  
assessment

Constructive  
Conversations



Transition  
Improvs




Stronger &  
Clearer Each Time  
Activities

Basic Pair-Share


## Challenges

	 <b>ORAL OUTPUT</b>	 <b>CONVERSING</b>
<b>Increasing Quantity</b>	# of students # of minutes	# of students in back-n-forth conversations
<b>Increasing Quality</b>	Strength Clarity	Co-Construction Collaborative Arguing Conversation Skills

Jeff Zwiers Understanding Language/SCALE




### Developing Academic Language with **Oral Output & Conversations**



---

- 1. Oral Output** is one-way, one-time, clear & strong communication of ideas & thinking.

*Think-pair-shares,  
Answering teacher questions, Jigsaws,  
Gallery walks,  
Oral presentations*
  
- 2. Conversations** are back-and-forth interactions in which participants *build on* one another's ideas to *build up* ideas that weren't in their minds before talking.



Jeff Zwiers Understanding Language/SCALE

Developing Oral Output  
with  
**TRANSITION IMPROV**  
**Activities**



### **OUTPUT: Transition Improv Activity (Pro-Con)**

*Topics:* Camping, Shopping, TV, Uniforms, Computers, Superheroes, Cars, Conferences, Testing, Internet, Cell phones, Video games, Social Media

*Transitions:* **However,**  
**On the other hand,**  
**Then again,**

~~but~~

*PC Frames:* One advantage is ... For example, ...  
Another positive of ... is... because...  
A negative aspect of \_\_\_ is ...  
In spite of the positives of \_\_\_\_\_,

*A & B, Lean?*

### Transition Improv (For-Against)

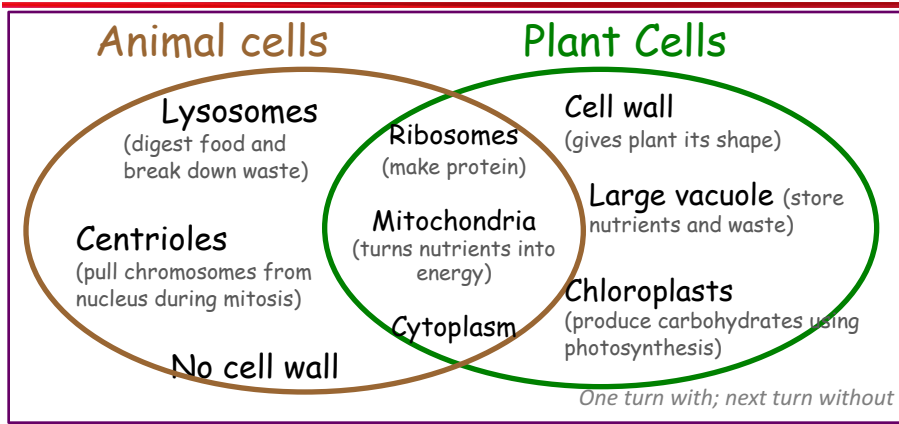
*Topics:* Fracking, adding lime to soil to lower pH, genetic engineering, nuclear energy, stem cell research, human-caused climate change, wolf reintroduction, de-extinction, zoos, preserving wetlands, corn as fuel, extraterrestrial life, desalination, ...

*Transitions:* **However,**  
**On the other hand,**  
**Then again,**      ~~but~~

*PC Frames:*      One reason for ... is ... For example, ...  
 Evidence that supports ... is... because...  
 A reason against ... is ... For example, ...  
 Evidence that does not support ... is ... because ...

A & B,  
 Lean?

### OUTPUT: Transition Improv (Similar-Different)



**However,**  
**On the other hand,**  
**Then again,**

Unlike animal cells, plant cells have \_\_\_\_, which ...  
 Plant & animal cells both have \_\_\_\_, which serve to...  
 ... are similar to \_\_\_\_ in that they both \_\_\_\_  
 Animal cells differ from plant cells in that \_\_\_\_

## Transition Improv (Two Views)

Views: Patriots  
Loyalists



Transitions: **However,**  
**On the other hand,**  
**Then again,**

~~but~~

Frames: The \_\_\_ thought that ...  
Many \_\_\_ believed that...  
A different perspective held by \_\_\_ was that...  
In the eyes of \_\_\_...

Developing Oral Output  
with

**“STRONGER Y CLEARER  
EACH TIME” Activities:**

Stronger-Clearer Grid



## Designing “Stronger & Clearer Each Time” Activities



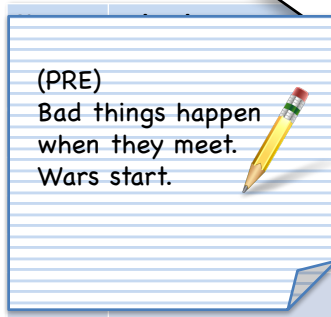
1. Prompt for an **original response**
2. Successive partners: **borrow and use the language, ideas, and evidence** each time-->
  - **Stronger** (often longer) with better supporting evidence and examples, and
  - **Clearer** with more precise terms and linked, organized, complete sentences.
3. Scaffolds **are reduced during** the activity.

## “Stronger & Clearer Each Time” Grid

I think bad things happen when cultures meet, like wars.

**Switch partners!**  
Don't forget to use examples.

I think it's both good and bad. Like you learn from each other, but also you can fight.



**What happens when cultures meet and why?**

### “Stronger & Clearer Each Time” Grid

I think bad things happen when cultures meet, like wars.



Cultures meet and bad things happen like war. But good things, too, like you can learn other language.

1. Mario	<i>both, learn</i>
2. Juan	<i>religion, Aztecs, Spain</i>
3.	
Me	

**Switch partners!**  
Don't forget to use examples.

I think it's both good and bad. Like you learn from each other, but also you can fight.

When cultures meet each other, it helps us to learn how others live, like their religion. But wars can happen, like the Aztecs and Spain.

What happens when cultures meet and why?

### “Stronger & Clearer Each Time” Grid

I think bad things happen when cultures meet, like wars.

Cultures meet and bad things happen like war. But good things, too, like you can learn other language.

When cultures meet, is bad and good. Bad cuz they fight wars, like they're different. Spain thought they were better than the Aztecs. And good cuz you can learn languages, like Spanish, and new religion.

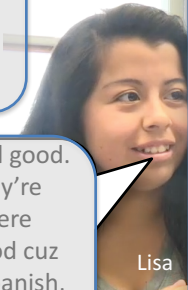
(PRE)

Bad things happen when they meet.  
Wars start.

---

(POST)

When cultures meet, is both bad and good. Bad cuz they fight, like the Aztecs and Spain. Spain thought they were better so they took over. Good cuz of new food and languages and religion.



What happens when cultures meet and why?

### Looking at Student Work (Before & After Grid Partners)

**PRE**

**INTERVIEW TIME!**  
(Listen in, Share out, Create together)

QUESTION: Why should I care about biodiversity?

MY ANSWER: Because the food chain

**POST**

I should care about biodiversity because without the variety of living things there wouldn't be anything to provide for us for example(s) the rosy periwinkle provides a medicine that treats certain cancers including leukemia.

### Looking at Student Work (Before & After Grid Partners)

**Essential Question:** How do you find a solution to a system of equations when both equations are in standard form?

First Attempt

System is 2 equations  
I know that at the end of the steps your answer needs to be in co-ordinate pairs.

Stronger

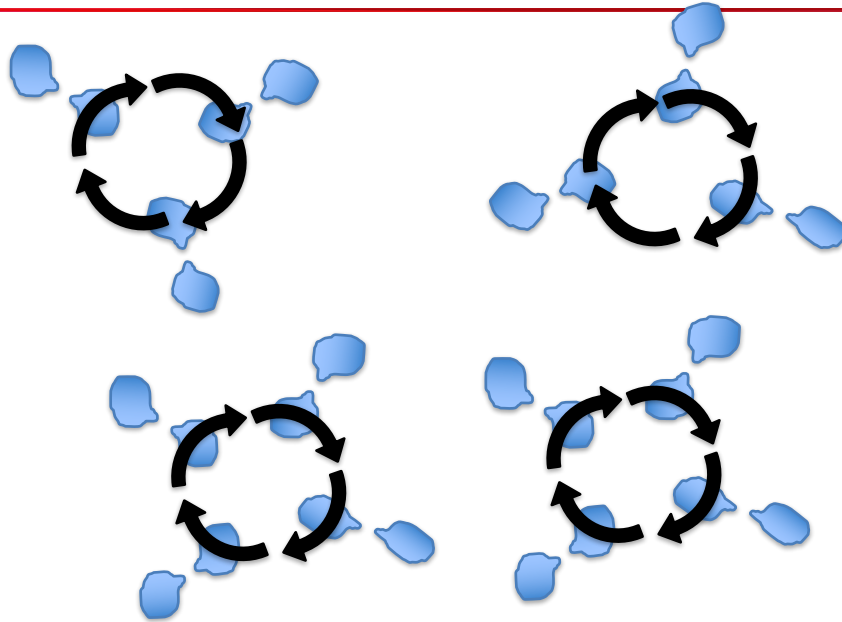
$x - 3y = 14 \rightarrow 2 - 3y = 14$   
 $y - 2 = 0 \quad -2 = 2$   
 $(2, -4)$   
 $y = -4$   
 At least one variable needs to be isolated. Replace (plug in) solve. Answer becomes co-ordinate pair.

Clearer

Make sure 1 variable is isolated & it has to be  $y = mx + b$ . After that plug in using parentheses. When you solve it. To get out of the parentheses use multiplication. When the terms are combined, divide the  $x$  and the number. You now need to find  $y$ . Choose any equation and plug in. Then are you get your answer you write it in co-ordinate pair.



## Practically Speaking: Interaction Mini-Circles



## Stronger & Clearer Activity

### Context

- 4th grade Science class
- Early Advanced speakers.
- Have read and discussed energy conversion
- Focus on stronger and clearer messages using examples.



**This Clip**

- Prompt is: What is energy conversion?
- Daniel talks to three different partners
- Look for if and how his response becomes stronger (idea-wise) and clearer (language-wise)
- *Reflect on ways to improve his response and/or the activity.*

### “Stronger & Clearer Each Time” Grid

Name	How can literature inspire readers how to be better people?
Me	(just two or three key words, if any)
1.	
2.	
3.	
Me	

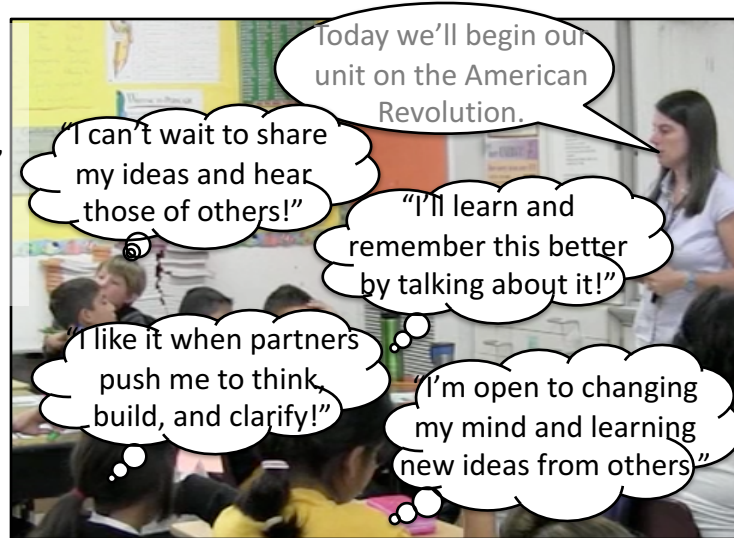
(Teacher can have listeners ask clarifying and supporting questions)

## Fostering Constructive Conversations



## Cultivating a CULTURE of Conversations

Each time a topic is introduced, every student thinks,



Jeff Zwiers

Understanding Language/SCALE

## Feedback

Laura: I think air has weight. Remember the balloon?

Eli: I disagree.

Laura: Why?

Eli: Cuz I can't feel it. Can you?



Lisa: I think the dog was his best friend in the story.

Edgar: I would like to add to your idea. My dog ran away last year and we found him in the park.

Lisa: Which park?

Edgar: The one by the train station.

Lisa: I took a train to San Jose last week.



Jeff Zwiers

Understanding Language/SCALE

## Feedback

Alex: What caused the fall?  
 Carlos: The book said disease and war.  
 Alex: It also said crops and politics.  
 Carlos: All of them, I guess.

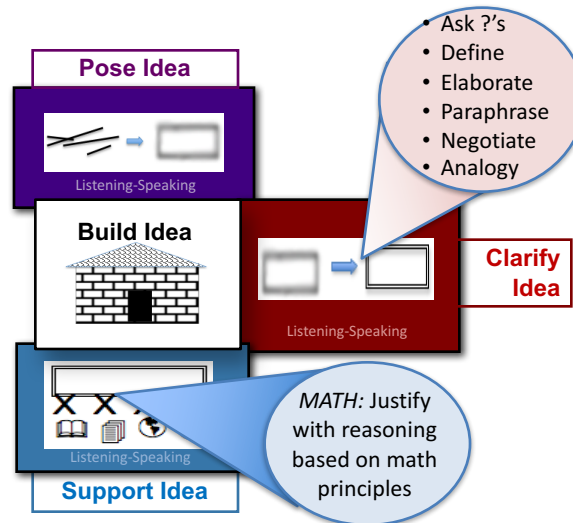


Mansur: I think there are different ways to solve it.  
 Lynn: So? Just do what the teacher did.  
 Mansur: But why did she turn the fraction over?  
 Lynn: Who cares? Just turn it over.  
 Mansur: OK.

$$\frac{3a}{3c-6} \div \frac{9ab}{c^2-4} =$$

## Constructive Conversation Skills for “Build Up 1” Mode

**Goal: Students collaboratively (but w/o teacher) build an idea**  
 (e.g., claim, answer, solution, interpretation), using the following skills:



## Constructive Conversations in 9<sup>th</sup> ELA

### Context

- Sheltered 9th grade English class (taught by Patrick Hurley)
- Intermediate and early advanced speakers.
- Have read *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Of Mice and Men*
- Focal conversation skill: supporting your ideas with examples from a text.
- Prompts on the board



### This Clip

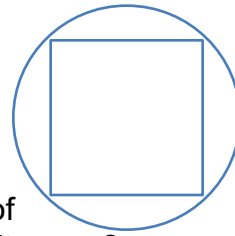
- Discuss the main theme: "what do you think an important theme in this book is?" *"An important theme of this book is real courage"*
- They prompt each other: *"What does courage mean?"*  
*"Can you elaborate on that?"* *"Can you give an example from another book?"* *"How does this apply to our life?"*

Jeff Zwiers

Understanding Language/SCALE

## Constructive Conversation Excerpt - Geometry

**Conversation Prompt:** Talk about ways to approach and answer the question (i.e. What is the length of a side of the square, given the radius of the circle?) and justify your ideas.



- A: It says to "write down the length of a side of the inner square in terms of  $r$ ." What does it mean?
- B: There's no numbers so we gotta use  $r$ , maybe.
- A: We can measure it. Here's a ruler. You do it.
- B: OK. Just half across the circle. That's the radius. Looks like 1 inch. And the square side is like around 1 and a half.
- A: So  $r$  is 1, and it's another half. So, like 1 and a half times  $r$ .
- B: But what if  $r$  isn't 1?
- A: What do you mean? We measured.
- B: It says 'in terms of  $r$ .' We got a number; not with  $r$ .
- A: Maybe it's close enough.

## Constructive Conversation Excerpt - History

B: The article's about the Boston Massacre.  
But I don't think it was a massacre.

A: What do you mean? Look at the picture.

B: I don't think it happened like that, and like  
only five people were killed. That's not a  
massacre. A massacre means lots of people die.

A: Maybe they wanted to make it sound really bad. Like in the  
painting.

B: But why?

A: Maybe get people mad to fight against the British. They didn't all  
want to fight. Like rich people, maybe.

B: They might lose their money or die.

A: So was it a lie to call it a massacre?

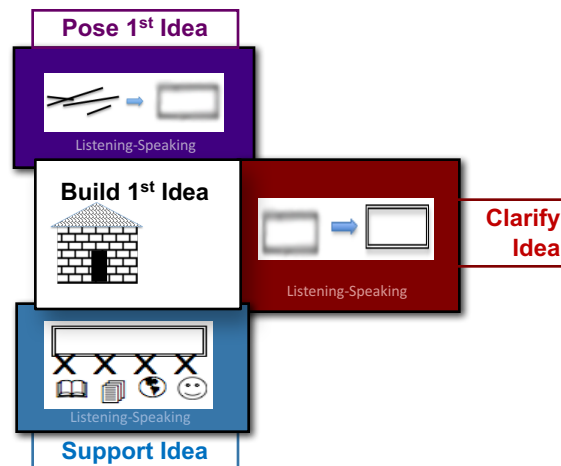
B: I don't know. Probably, but it worked, right? It got the war going.

A: But it was lying. I don't think people should lie, even if it helped  
us get free from England.



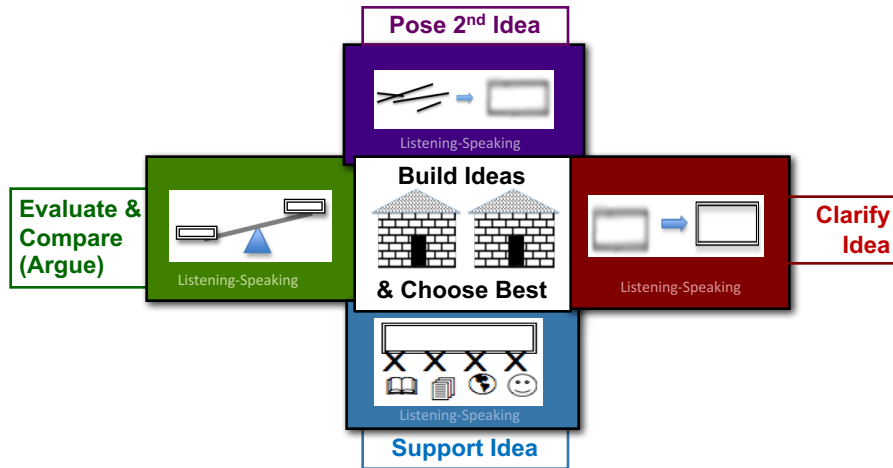
## Constructive Conversation Skills for "Argue" Mode

**Goal: Students collaboratively (but w/o teacher) build claims & ideas and then choose one of them, using the following skills:**



## Conversation Skills for “Build >1 & Choose (Argue)” Mode

**Goal: Students collaboratively (but w/o teacher) build claims & ideas and then choose one of them, using the following skills:**



Jeff Zwiers

Understanding Language/SCALE

## Fostering Conversations & Their Skills with **Argument Balance Scale**

### Scaffold for Collaborative Argument Conversations: Argument Balance Scale

---

**Claim**

vs.

**Opposite or  
Different Claim**

Which claim's reasons, evidence, and explanations weigh the most?

<p><b>Claim/Position</b></p> <p>Good</p>	<p>Are humans good or evil?</p>	<p><b>Claim/Position</b></p> <p>Evil</p>
--	---------------------------------	--

Jeff Zwiers

Understanding Language/SCALE

### Scaffold for All 4 Skills: Argument Balance Scale

---

*Smoker dies every 8 sec*

*Second-hand smoke kills*

*Health-care costs*

*Bothers people a lot*

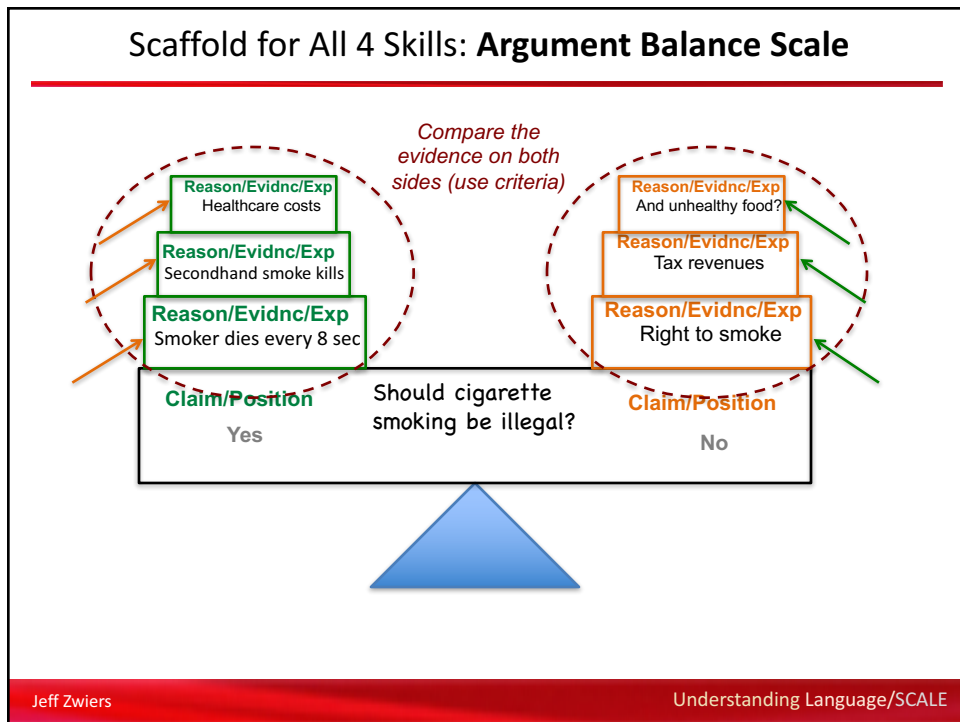
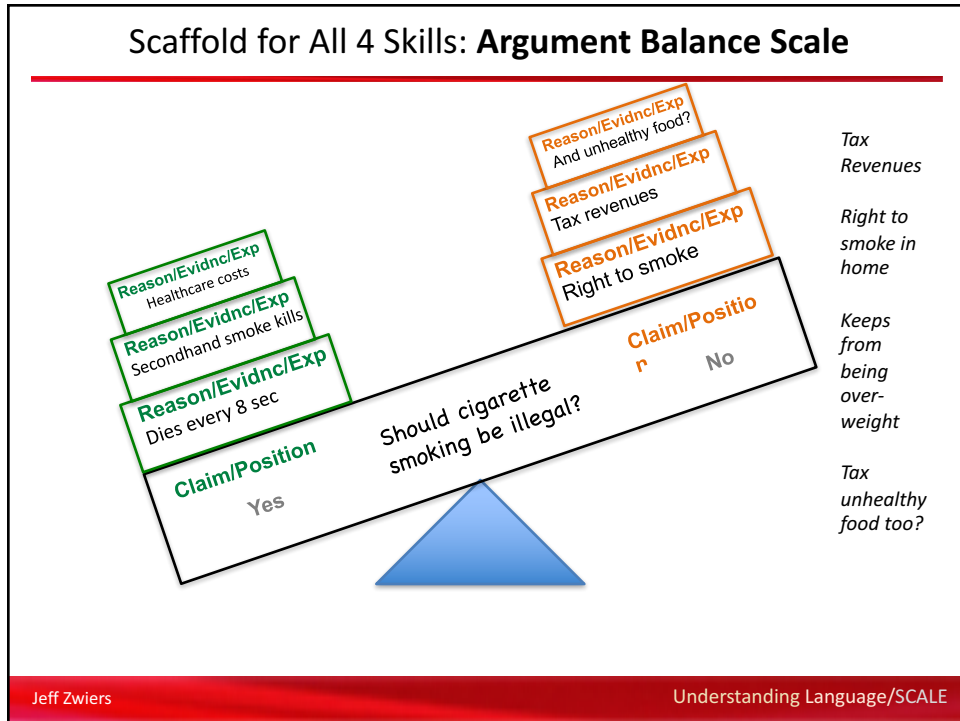
*Lots of litter*

<p><b>Reason/Evidnc/Exp</b></p> <p>Healthcare costs</p>	<p><b>Reason/Evidnc/Exp</b></p> <p>Secondhand smoke kills</p>	<p><b>Reason/Evidnc/Exp</b></p> <p>Smoker dies every 8 sec</p>
<p><b>Claim/Position</b></p> <p>Yes</p>	<p>Should cigarette smoking be illegal?</p>	<p><b>Claim/Position</b></p> <p>No</p>

Jeff Zwiers

Understanding Language/SCALE





## Scaffold for All 4 Skills: Argument Balance Scale

---

*Choose a side and argue why it "weighs more"*

2D-Scale

3-D Version

Jeff Zwiers
Understanding Language/SCALE

## Constructive Conversations in 8<sup>th</sup> ELA

---

**Context**

- 8th grade English class
- Early Intermediate to Early Advanced speakers.
- Have read articles on smoking
- Focal conversation skill: supporting your ideas with examples and evaluating them.

**This Clip**

- Each student chose a side to argue on whether or not to ban smoking.
- They use balance scale visual and paper clips to show "weight" of evidence
- They prompt each other to support and evaluate with "Why?" questions

Jeff Zwiers
Understanding Language/SCALE

**Suppose it takes the Almond River 6 months to fill a reservoir, by itself, and it takes Balfair River 12 months to fill it, on its own. If both are flowing into the reservoir, how long will it take to fill it?**

PROBLEM:

<b>Paraphrase and clarify problem for one another (in pairs)</b> <i>(Talk about what is asked; what is given; what happens; what the units are, etc.)</i>			
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>TALK</b>			
<b>Estimate the answer</b> <i>(Each partner generate and justify your own estimate; then compare them)</i>			
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>TALK</b>			
<b>METHOD A</b> <i>(name it)</i>	Justify method <input type="checkbox"/> <b>TALK</b>	<b>METHOD B</b> <i>(name it)</i>	Justify method <input type="checkbox"/> <b>TALK</b>
Visuals, Drawings, Charts, Symbols, Calculations, Solution	Justify what you do  <input type="checkbox"/> <b>TALK</b>	Visuals, Drawings, Charts, Symbols, Calculations, Solution	Justify what you do  <input type="checkbox"/> <b>TALK</b>

## CONTACT INFORMATION

---

**Email:**            [jzwiers@stanford.edu](mailto:jzwiers@stanford.edu)

**Email:**            [jeffzwiers.org/oct24](http://jeffzwiers.org/oct24)

**References**

Mercer, N. (2000). *The Guided Construction of Knowledge: Talk amongst teachers and learners*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Zwiers, J. & Soto, I. (2016) *Academic Language Mastery: Conversational Discourse in Context*. Corwin Press.

Zwiers, O’Hara, & Pritchard (2014) *Common Core Standards in diverse classrooms: Essential practices for developing academic language & disciplinary literacy*. Stenhouse.