

Developing Academic Speaking and Conversation Skills in Every Lesson



Jeff Zwiers

San Mateo Foster City

October 31, 2016

jeffzwiers.org/oct31

Overhauling the Teaching of Diverse Students

LESS

Individual
accumulating of
right answers,
“paying” for points,
& playing school



MORE

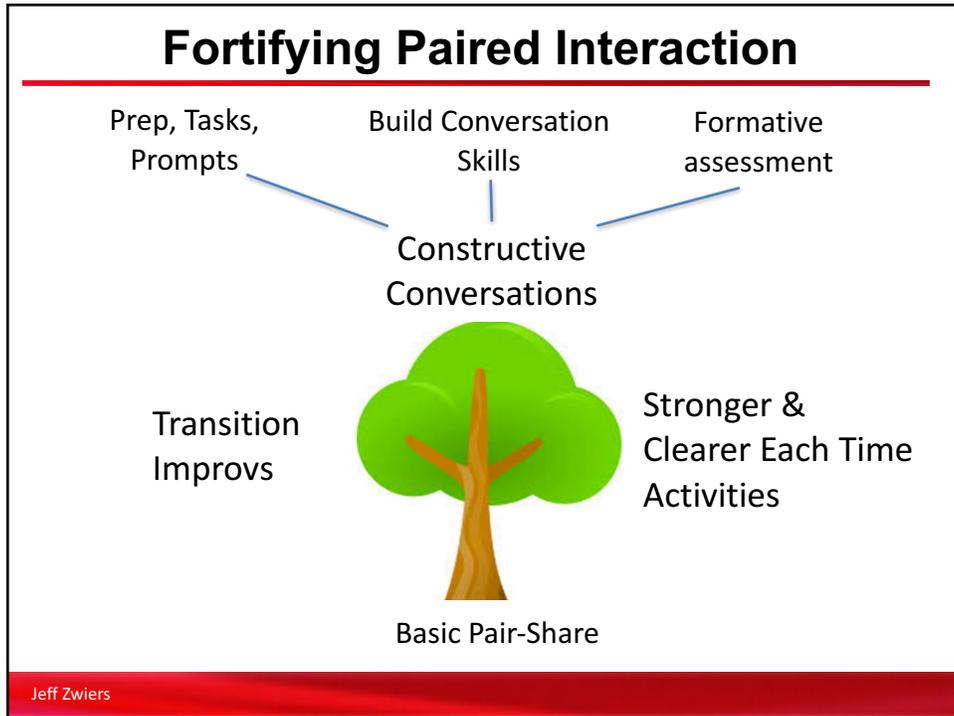
Collaborating,
understanding,
building, using, &
communicating
whole ideas



Jeff Zwiers

www.ALDNetwork.org/page/May21

Understanding Language/SCALE



Challenges

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

Jeff Zwiers
Understanding Language/SCALE



Developing Academic Language with Oral Output & Conversations



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

*Think-pair-shares,
Answering teacher
questions, Jigsaws,
Gallery walks,
Oral presentations*

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

The “Communicativeness Test” for an Activity’s Power for Developing Language

___ **Is there a useful & engaging purpose?** In the activity, do students use language to do something meaningful and engaging (beyond just to answer questions or get points)? Does it prepare students to use language for academic purposes?

___ **Is there an information gap:** In the activity, do students get or give information that they want, need, or don't have?

___ **Is there attention to language in service of communication:** In the activity, is there extra teaching and assessment focused on improving how language is used? This includes modeling, practicing, giving feedback, and/or scaffolds.



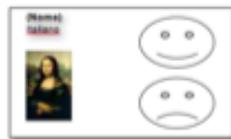


Jeff Zwiers

Developing Oral Output
with
INFORMATION GAP
Activities

Info Gap Activities for Listening and Speaking

Information Gap: **DRAW IT FOR ME**



Do these have the three features?

The “Communicativeness Test” for an Activity’s Power for Developing Language

___ **Is there a useful & engaging purpose?** In the activity, do students use language to do something meaningful and engaging (beyond just to answer questions or get points)? Does it prepare students to use language for academic purposes?



___ **Is there an information gap:** In the activity, do students get or give information that they want, need, or don’t have?



___ **Is there attention to language in service of communication:** In the activity, is there extra teaching and assessment focused on improving how language is used? This includes modeling, practicing, giving feedback, and/or scaffolds.



Jeff Zwiers

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)

Animal cells

Lysosomes
(digest food and break down waste)

Centrioles
(pull chromosomes from nucleus during mitosis)

No cell wall

Plant Cells

Cell wall
(gives plant its shape)

Large vacuole (store nutrients and waste)

Chloroplasts
(produce carbohydrates using photosynthesis)

Ribosomes
(make protein)

Mitochondria
(turns nutrients into energy)

Cytoplasm

One turn with; next turn without

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 ____

Jeff Zwiers
Understanding Language/SCALE

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 ____...

Jeff Zwiers
Understanding Language/SCALE

7

Transition Improv Activity: Positivo-Negativo

Tema: Viajar a otros países

Positivos



Puedo...

- comer comidas nuevas.
Por ejemplo, en Chile comí..
- aprender la historia del país
- descansar, leer, nadar, ...

Negativos



Tengo que...

- gastar mucho dinero. Por ejemplo, ...
- Viajar muchas horas en avión
- Buscar baños limpios

Por el otro lado,
Sin embargo,
No obstante,

~~pero~~

Una ventaja es que ... Por ejemplo, ...
Otro aspecto positivo es ... porque...
Una desventaja es que...
En los viajes, ...

A & B, Lean?



ALDNetwork.org

Understanding Language

Transition Improv Features



- Face-to-face communication
- Real time thinking to speaking
- Structure so both need to listen and speak
- Use evidence & examples
- See multiple perspectives
- Academic identity



Jeff Zwiers

Understanding Language/SCALE

The “Communicativeness Test” for an Activity’s Power for Developing Language

___ **Is there a useful & engaging purpose?** In the activity, do students use language to do something meaningful and engaging (beyond just to answer questions or get points)? Does it prepare students to use language for academic purposes?



___ **Is there an information gap:** In the activity, do students get or give information that they want, need, or don’t have?



___ **Is there attention to language in service of communication:** In the activity, is there extra teaching and assessment focused on improving how language is used? This includes modeling, practicing, giving feedback, and/or scaffolds.



Jeff Zwiers

Clear and Strong Oral Output (Teacher, Peer, Self)

- I included information needed and *expected by listeners (not too much and not too little), in order to be as clear as possible*
- I started with a clear main idea
- I clarified and/or supported the main idea (w/ evidence, details)
- I used two or more connected sentences
- I pushed myself to use academic words & long sentences
- I used nonverbal cues and stressed important words & ideas



 Jeff Zwiers

Understanding Language/SCALE

Developing Oral Output
with

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

Opinion Continuum
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” (Opinion Continuum)

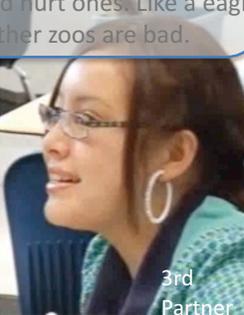
I think zoos are fun. I like seeing animals. I say yes.

I was on yes but moved a little. I don't wanna be in cages like animals. It's like jail. But I still think it's fun to go and see them.

I don't know. Animals don't like in jail and people watching. But some get hurt and need people. Those zoos are good. Like they save eagles, maybe a broken wing. And we can learn from zoos, so yes.

I say no. It's like jail for them. And I don't like all people looking at me.

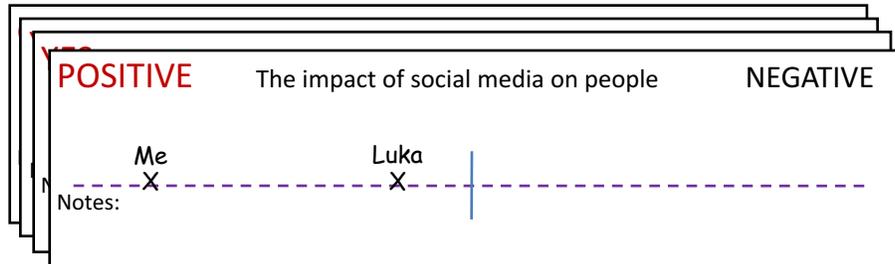
I think zoos are OK if the animals can't live wild. You know, I went to a zoo that helped hurt ones. Like a eagle. But other zoos are bad.

Do you have zoos or not?

Yes | *John* | *Maria* | NO

I. Stronger and Clearer Each Time Activity: Opinion Continuum



You can use frames such as

- In my opinion, using social media is ___ because _____.
- In spite of the reason/advantages/disadvantages of ...
- Given the points that I have heard so far, such as ...
- After talking with (name), I now lean more to the side of ___ because ...

(Teacher can have listeners ask clarifying and supporting questions)

"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

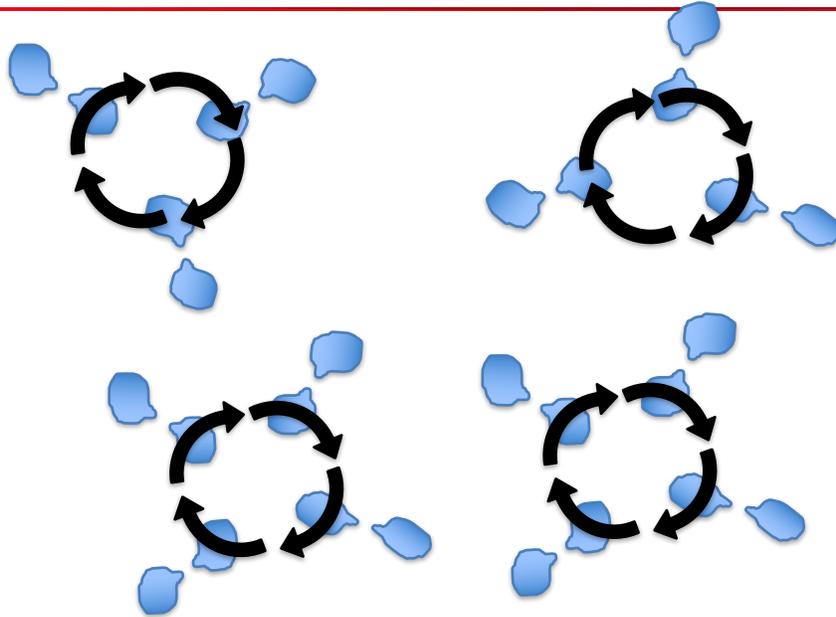
I should care about biodiversity because without the variety of living things there wouldn't be anything to provide for us for example(s) the rosy periwinkle provides a medicine that treats certain cancers including leukemia.



Jeff Zwiers

Understanding Language/SCALE

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	Why is it important to learn about history through primary source documents?
Me	(just two or three key words, if any)
1.	
2.	
3.	
Me	

Primary sources allow a person to...

In order to get a clear picture of...

It helps to compare...

(Teacher can have listeners ask clarifying and supporting questions)

Jeff Zwiers

Understanding Language/SCALE

The “Communicativeness Test” for an Activity’s Power for Developing Language

___ **Is there a useful & engaging purpose?** In the activity, do students use language to do something meaningful and engaging (beyond just to answer questions or get points)? Does it prepare students to use language for academic purposes?



___ **Is there an information gap:** In the activity, do students get or give information that they want, need, or don’t have?



___ **Is there attention to language in service of communication:** In the activity, is there extra teaching and assessment focused on improving how language is used? This includes modeling, practicing, giving feedback, and/or scaffolds.



Jeff Zwiers

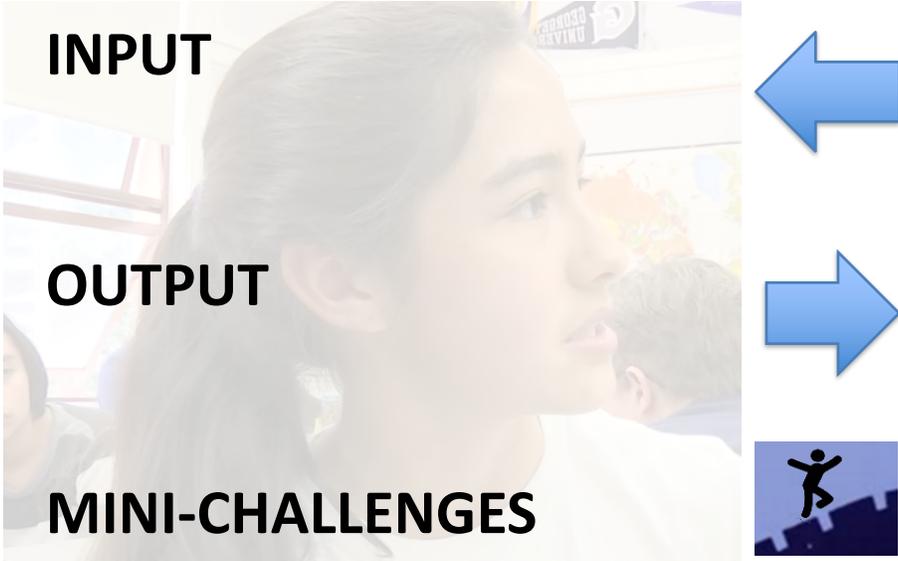
Fostering Constructive Conversations

Conversations Develop LANGUAGE w/ Loads of...

INPUT

OUTPUT

MINI-CHALLENGES



Jeff Zwiers

Understanding Language/SCALE

Conversation Develops CONTENT w/ Loads of...

CLARIFYING



SUPPORTING



THINKING

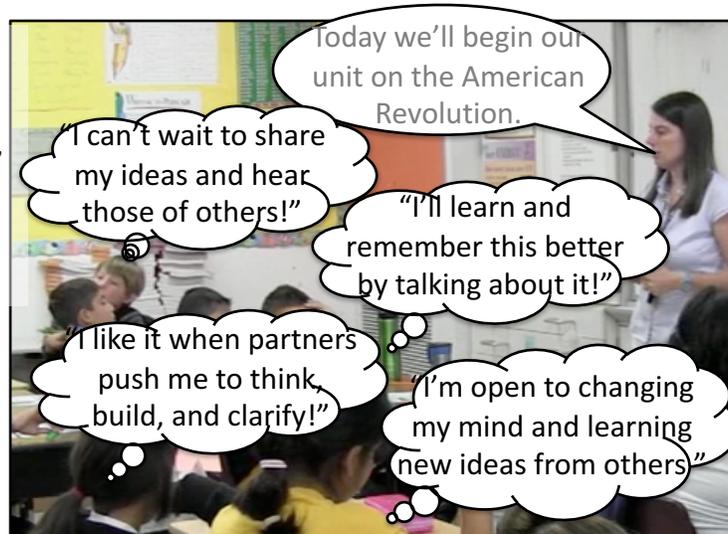


Jeff Zwiers

Understanding Language/SCALE

Cultivating a CULTURE of Conversations

Each time a topic is introduced, every student thinks,



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.

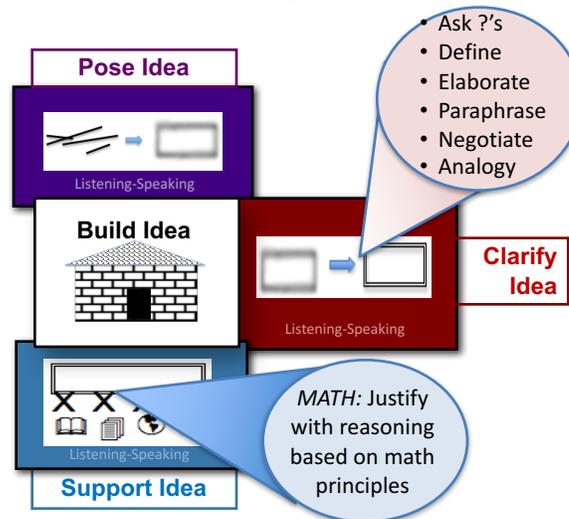


Lisa: I think the dog was his best friend in the story.
 Edgar: I would like to add to your idea. My dog ran away last year and we found him in the park.
 Lisa: Which park?
 Edgar: The one by the train station.
 Lisa: I took a train to San Jose last week.



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:**



Assessing Conversation Skills: Conversation Analysis Tool

Turns build on previous turns to build up a relevant idea(s)

_____ Students create or choose a relevant initial idea(s) that is focused on learning objective(s)

_____ Students clarify idea(s) (by paraphrasing, defining, elaborating)

_____ Students support ideas (using evidence, examples, explanations)

If there are two or more competing ideas (i.e., an argument),

_____ Students evaluate the strength/weight of the evidence of each idea

_____ Students compare the strengths/weights and choose the “strongest/heaviest” idea

_____ Students explain (and/or negotiate) final decisions



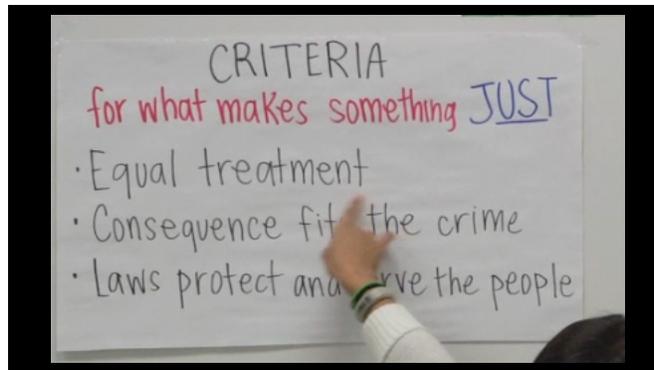
Jeff Zwiers

Understanding Language/SCALE

Scaffolding Conversations

CONTEXT

- 6th grade
History class
- Range of EL levels
- Have analyzed some of Hammurabi's laws and considered how just they are.
- Teacher models use of criteria to decide and argue



THIS CLIP

Prompt: Are Hammurabi's laws just or not?

- What does the teacher do to model and scaffold skills?
- Which conversation skills do you notice students using?



Jeff Zwiers

Understanding Language/SCALE

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 Excerpt - ELA

Sandeep: In my opinion, I think *The Giver* is about we need to know our past, even bad stuff.

Tasha: Can you elaborate on the part about the bad stuff?

Sandeep: In the book one person keeps the bad memories of of war and death; no one else knows. but it's what happened. Everyone has rights to know. And they had problems maybe cuz they didn't know the past.

Tasha: Like what?

Sandeep: Like killing people who didn't fit in, or twins. That's messed up.

Tasha: I agree, but should children know all of the bad things?

Sandeep: It's better to know our past, even if it's bad, so it teaches us.

Tasha: Everything? There's lots of terrible things that even we don't know about; maybe give us nightmares and, I don't know, maybe teach kids to do them, too? I think///

Sandeep: ///OK, maybe some stuff shouldn't be passed down to everyone. But we need to learn from mistakes, too.

Tasha: OK, maybe, but which bad things to know? What will help us learn and not do bad things?

Sandeep: I don't know, maybe things like nuclear bombs, you know, and war.

Tasha: OK, but maybe not the scary details.

Conversation Prompts

- ❑ **There is a purpose for conversing that connects to lesson objectives** (info gap)

Decide which theme in the story is most relevant for 7th graders today.

Rank the most significant effects of the Industrial Revolution

- ❑ **Require thinking and doing something with ideas:** create, clarify, argue (=>consensus), decide, rank, solve, evaluate, combine, compare, choose, fortify, build, & transform

Come to an agreement on how you would measure the speed of sound.

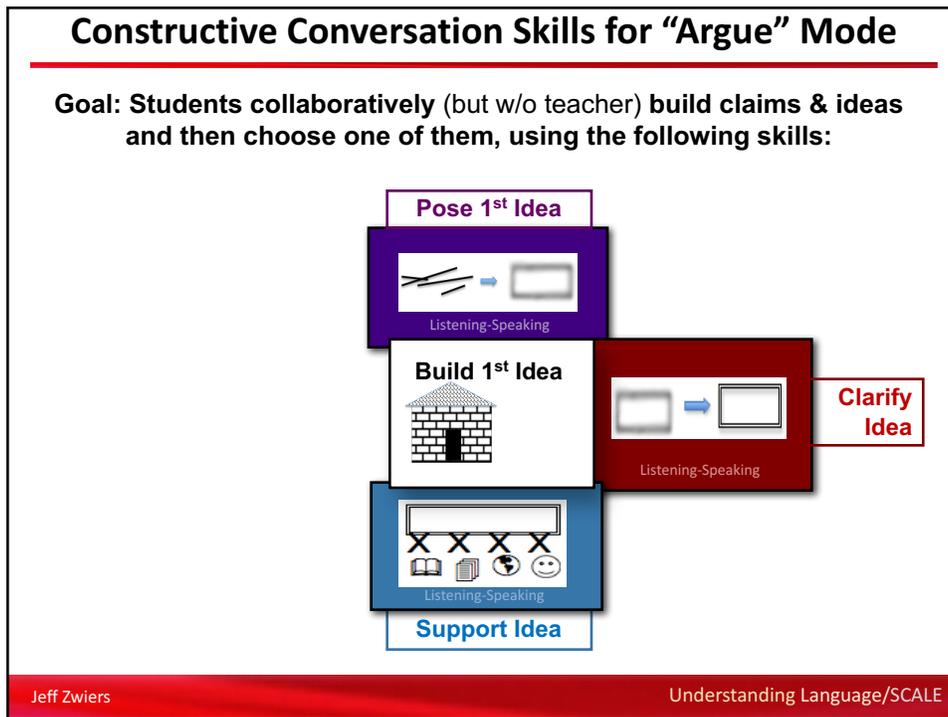
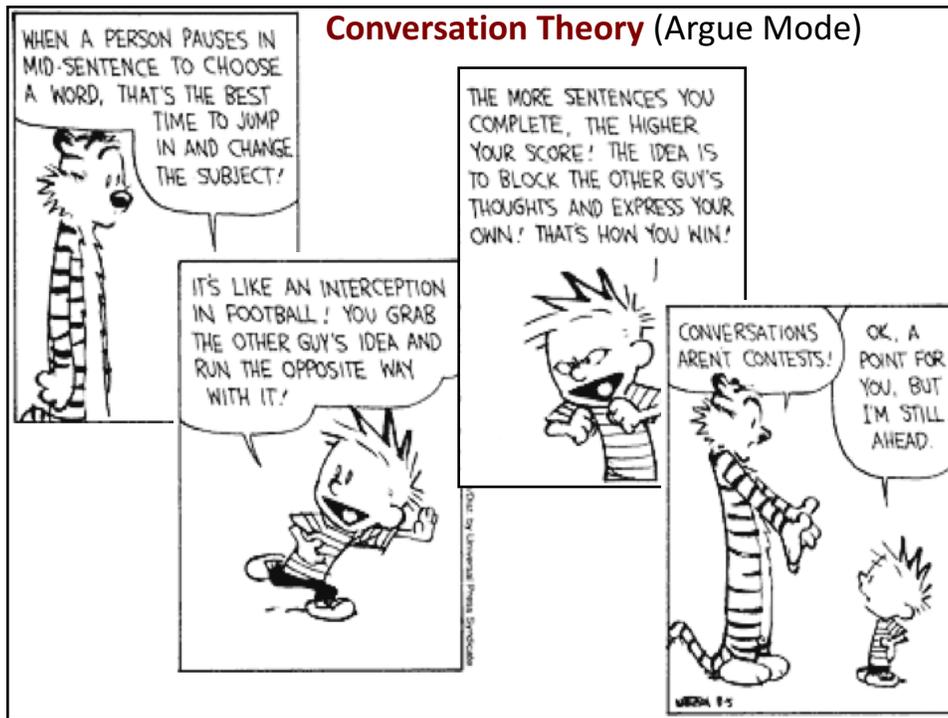
Co-create a clear way to describe to younger students how geography influences culture

Jeff Zwiers

Understanding Language/SCALE

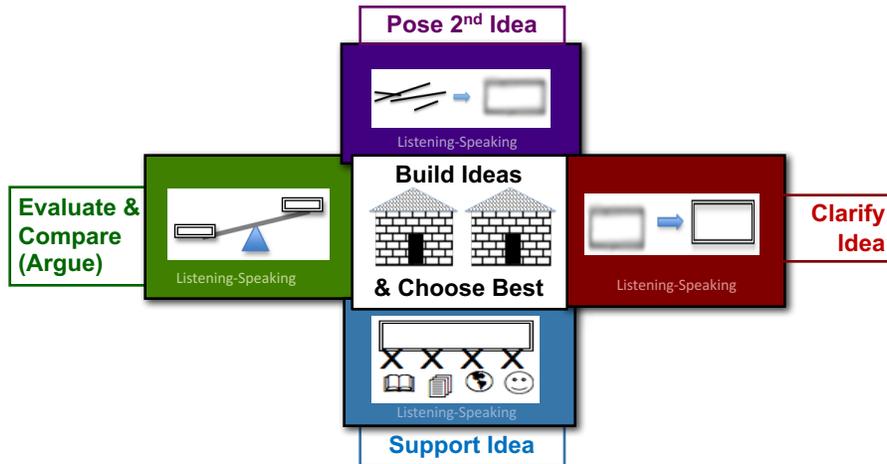
Your Turn (Prompt & Conversation)

"[...] If you don't want a house built, hide the nails and wood. If you don't want a man unhappy politically, don't give him two sides to a question to worry him; give him one. Better yet, give him none. Let him forget there is such a thing as war. If the government is inefficient, top-heavy, and tax-mad, better it be all those than that people worry over it. Peace, Montag. Give the people contests they win by remembering the words to more popular songs or the names of state capitals or how much corn Iowa grew last year. Cram them full of noncombustible data, chock them so damned full of 'facts' they feel stuffed, but absolutely 'brilliant' with information. Then they'll think they're thinking, they'll get a *sense* of motion without moving. And they'll be happy, because facts of that sort don't change. Don't give them any slippery stuff like philosophy or sociology to tie things up with. That way lies melancholy. Any man who can take a TV wall apart and put it back together again, and most men can, nowadays, is happier than any man who tries to slide-rule, measure, and equate the universe, which just won't be measured or equated without making man feel bestial and lonely. (Bradbury)



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?

Claim/Position

Good

Are humans good or evil?

Claim/Position

Evil

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

Reason/Evidnc/Exp

Healthcare costs

Reason/Evidnc/Exp

Secondhand smoke kills

Reason/Evidnc/Exp

Smoker dies every 8 sec

Claim/Position

Yes

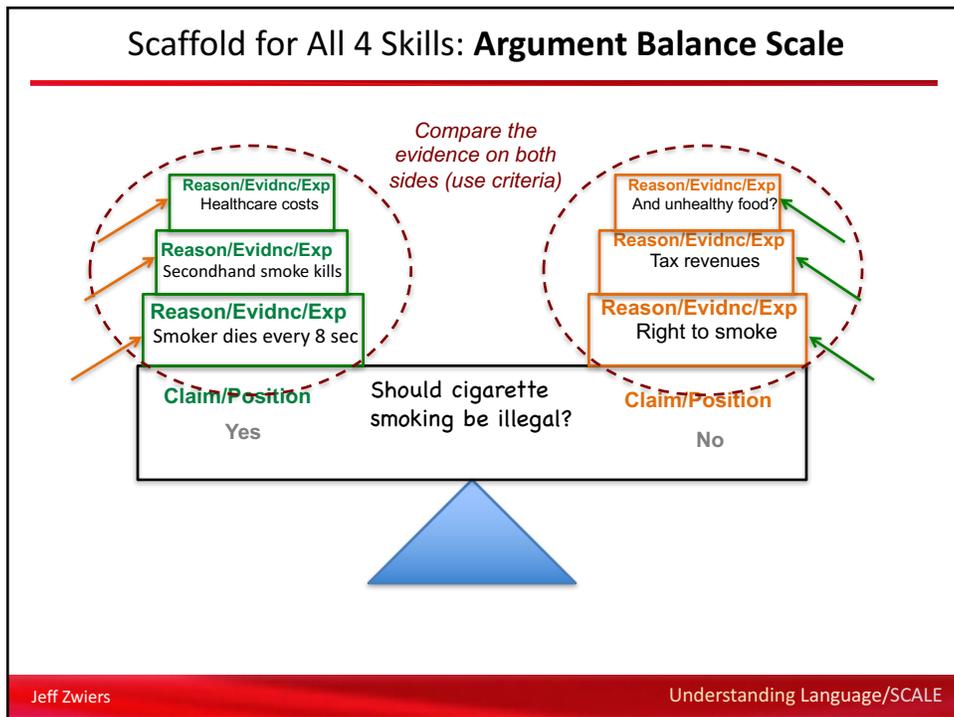
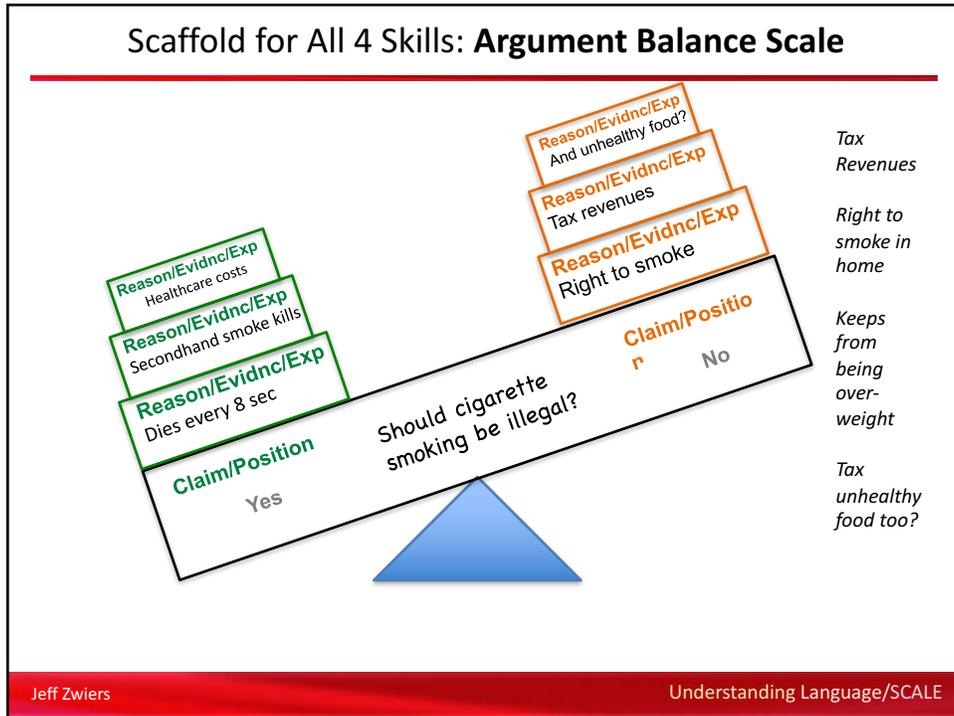
Should cigarette smoking be illegal?

Claim/Position

No

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

Your Turn with the **Argument Balance Scale (Triads → A+B with Coach)**

- Should cell phones be used in school?
- Should Lincoln have allowed the South to secede?
- Are humans more good or evil?
- Should schools be segregated by gender?
- What is the main theme of the movie, _
- Is nuclear energy better for the world than coal power?
- Electoral College Syst.
- Teaching conversation skills

Jeff Zwiers

Assessing Conversation Skills: Conversation Analysis Tool

Turns build on previous turns to build up a relevant idea(s)

_____ Students create or choose a relevant initial idea(s) that is focused on learning objective(s)

_____ Students clarify idea(s) (by paraphrasing, defining, elaborating)

_____ Students support ideas (using evidence, examples, explanations)

If there are two or more competing ideas (i.e., an argument),

_____ Students evaluate the strength/weight of the evidence of each idea

_____ Students compare the strengths/weights and choose the “strongest/heaviest” idea

_____ Students explain (and/or negotiate) final decisions



Jeff Zwiers

Understanding Language/SCALE

If-When Chart for Helping Conversations

If... or When...	You can
The conversation doesn't start well or at all,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Say, "Let's understand (clarify, define) this... What we need to do is ..." • Ask, "What does... mean in this case/context/situation?" • Say, "Let's scan through the text again and look for..." • Say, "Let's take two different sides; which one do you want?"
Your partner offers a short response,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask for specific clarification or elaboration • Ask a question (I wonder why/how...) • Ask what a word or expression means • Ask for example that supports it • Give an example and ask if your partner agrees
Your partner offers a long and confusing response,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paraphrase it and relate it to the conversation purpose • Ask to clarify the most relevant part of the response • Ask for additional evidence or examples

Jeff Zwiers

Understanding Language/SCALE

Your Turn with the Argument Balance Scale (Triads – A+ B + Coach)

- Should cell phones be used in school?
- Should Lincoln have allowed the South to secede?
- Are humans more good or evil?
- Should schools be segregated by gender?
- What is the main theme of the movie, _
- Is nuclear energy better for the world than coal power?
- Electoral College Syst.
- Teaching conversation skills

Jeff Zwiers

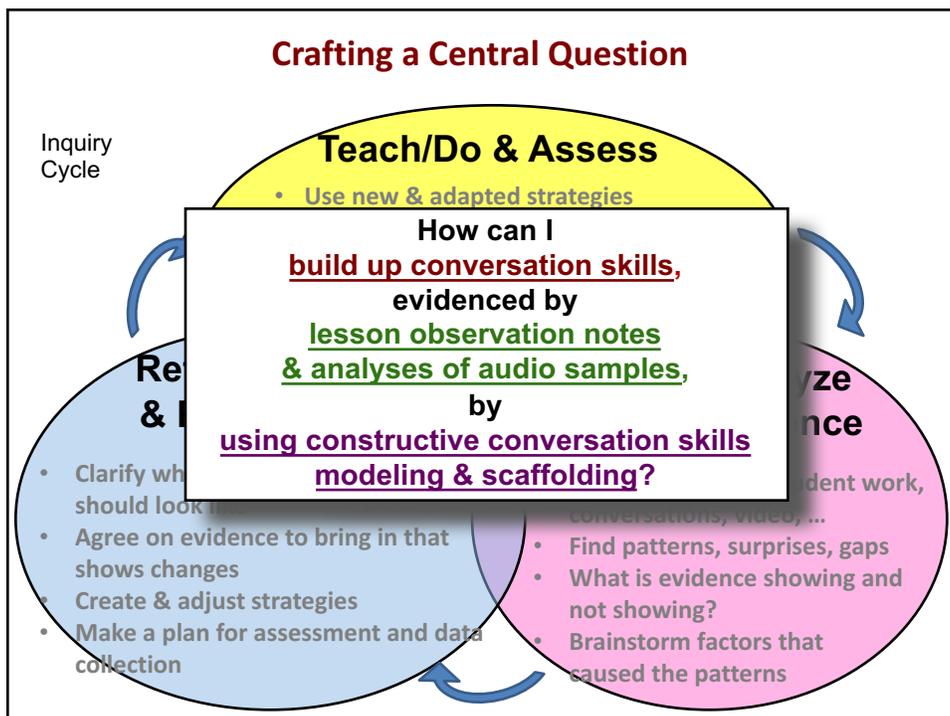
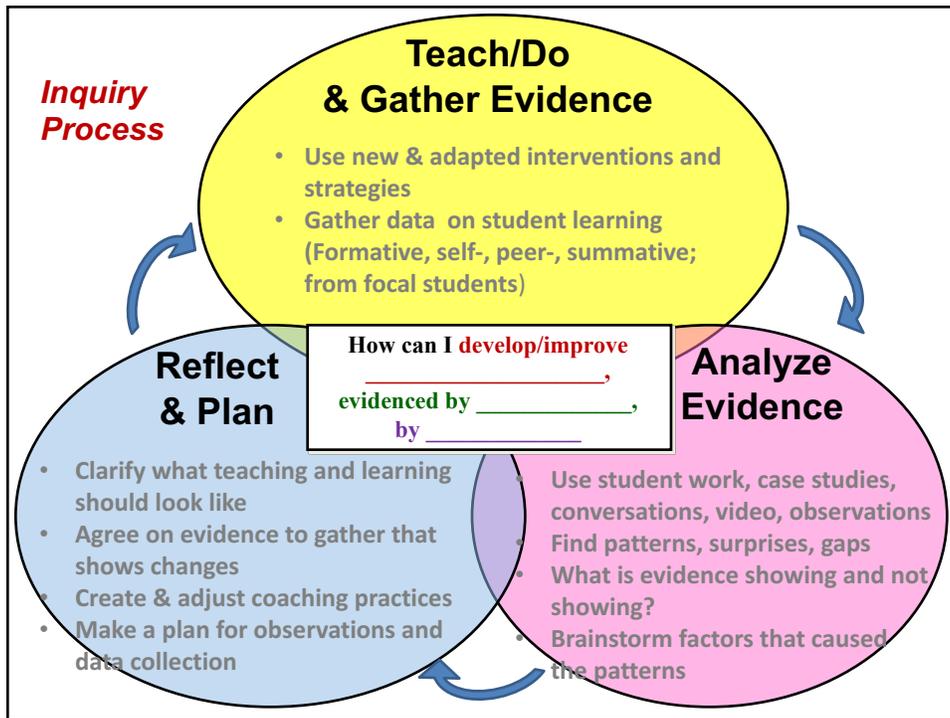
The “Communicativeness Test” for an Activity’s Power for Developing Language

___ **Is there a useful & engaging purpose?** In the activity, do students use language to do something meaningful and engaging (beyond just to answer questions or get points)? Does it prepare students to use language for academic purposes?

___ **Is there an information gap:** In the activity, do students get or give information that they want, need, or don’t have?

___ **Is there attention to language in service of communication:** In the activity, is there extra teaching and assessment focused on improving how language is used? This includes modeling, practicing, giving feedback, and/or scaffolds.

Jeff Zwiers



CONTACT INFORMATION

Email: jzwiers@stanford.edu

Email: jeffzwiers.org/oct31

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.