

# Developing Academic Speaking and Conversation Skills in Every Lesson



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Tulare County Office of Education Best Results for English Learners

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[jeffzwiers.org/November8](http://jeffzwiers.org/November8)

## Major Challenges

### **INSTRUCTION & ASSESSMENT**

Oral language & communication play minor & shallow roles

### **CURRICULUM & LESSON DESIGN**

Inauthentic communication pervades curricula and pedagogy of language, literacy, and content

### **CLASSROOM CULTURE**

- Memorization-regurgitation mindsets of learning
- Students are adept at minimizing their academic talk
- Students do not push selves or peers to improve their speaking and conversation skills
- Do not see long-term value of oral language skills

## CLASSROOM CULTURE: A Major Overhaul

LESS

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



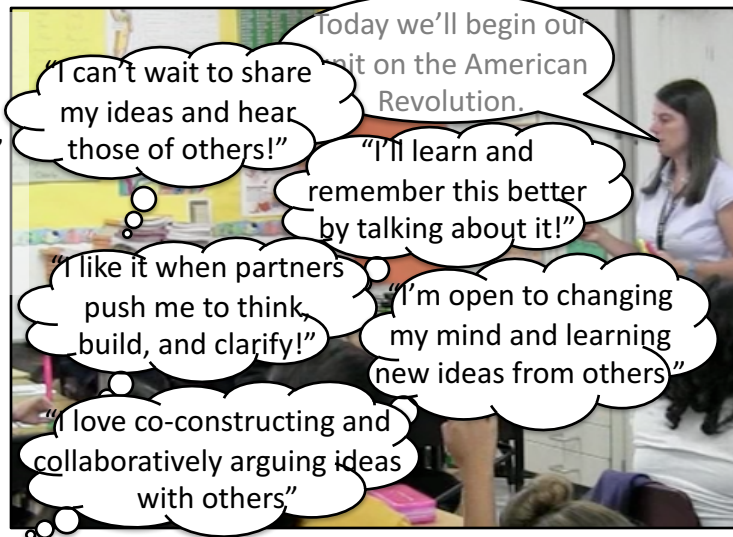
MORE

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



## CLASSROOM CULTURE: Cultivating Conversation Mindsets


Each time a topic is introduced, every student thinks,




### CURRICULUM & LESSON DESIGN: Essential Features for Language Development

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\_\_\_ **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.




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### CURRICULUM & LESSON DESIGN: Goals


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

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## Overlap & Differences: Speaking & Conversations




**Speaking**

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

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

**Conversations**

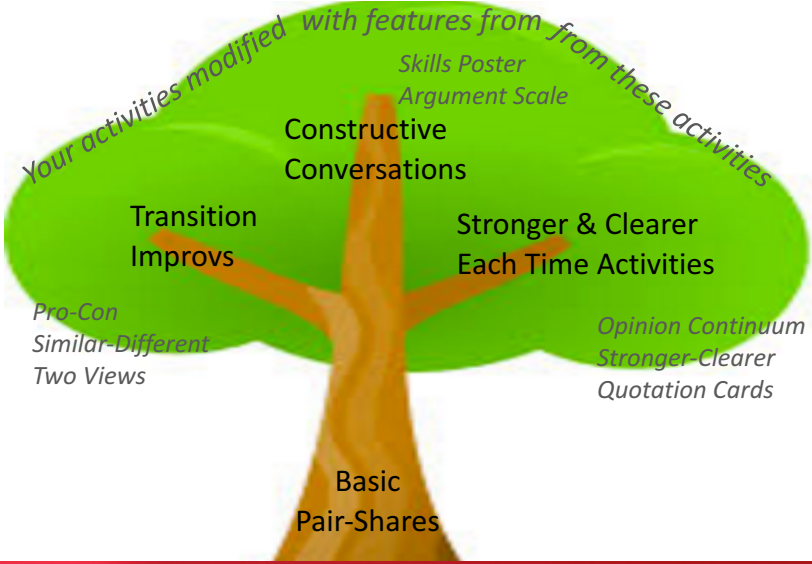
are back-and-forth interactions in which participants *build on* one another's ideas to *build up* ideas that weren't in their minds before talking.



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## CURRICULUM & LESSON DESIGN: Bulking Up Paired Interactions



Your activities modified with features from these activities

Skills Poster  
Argument Scale

Transition Improvs

Constructive Conversations

Stronger & Clearer Each Time Activities

Basic Pair-Shares

Pro-Con  
Similar-Different  
Two Views

Opinion Continuum  
Stronger-Clearer  
Quotation Cards

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## CURRICULUM & LESSON DESIGN:

Warming up 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)

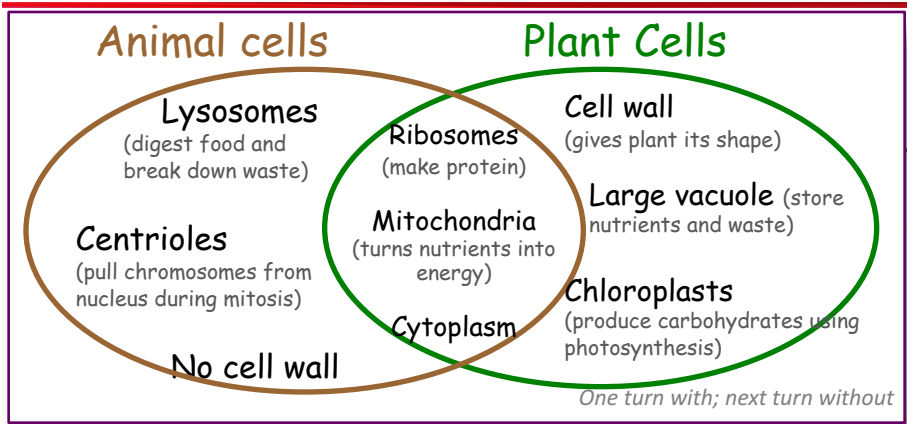
*Topics:* Fracking, adding lime to soil to lower pH, genetic engineering, nuclear energy, stem cell research, human-caused climate change, wolf reintroduction, de-extinction, zoos, preserving wetlands, corn as fuel, extraterrestrial life, desalination, ...

*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 \_\_\_\_

## CURRICULUM & LESSON DESIGN: 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?



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## ASSESSMENT: Clear and Strong Oral Output (Self, Teacher, Peer)

- 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



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## CURRICULUM & LESSON DESIGN:

Working on Listening, Speaking, & Clarifying 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.

(PRE)  
Bad things happen when they meet.  
Wars start.





Manuel 1<sup>st</sup> Partner

What happens when cultures meet and why?


### "Stronger & Clearer Each Time" Grid

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

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

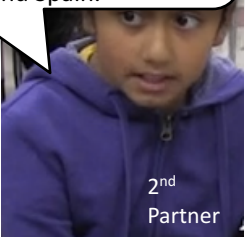
I think it's both good and bad. Like you learn from each other, but also you can fight.

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



Manuel

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.



2<sup>nd</sup> Partner

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

What happens when cultures meet and why?

## “Stronger & Clearer Each Time” Grid

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

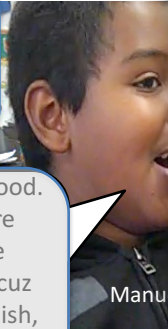
Cultures meet and bad things happen like war. But good things, too, like you can learn other language.

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?**

## 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.



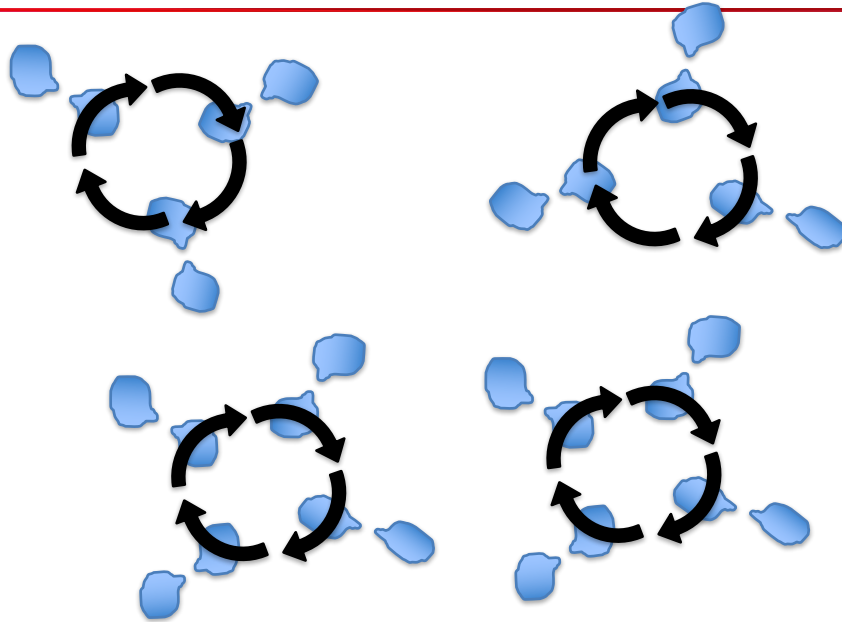
**This Clip**

- 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.*

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### Practically Speaking: Interaction Mini-Circles



### “Stronger & Clearer Each Time” Grid

Name	How can school influence the current and future lives of students?
Me	(just two or three key words, if any)
1.	
2.	
3.	
Me	

One powerful way in which school can influence students...  
 School offers a wide range of...  
 Teachers often

*(Teacher can have listeners ask clarifying and supporting questions)*

## CURRICULUM & LESSON DESIGN: The “Communicativeness Test” for an Activity’s Power for Developing Language

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## INSTRUCTION & ASSESSMENT Key Ideas

- Push students to push themselves and peers to be as clear as possible every time they say something—to value oral language and the time given to practice it.
- Encourage students to be “mini-teachers” who draw language out of peers.
- Set up situations in which students want to be clear and want to listen to others.




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**CURRICULUM & LESSON DESIGN:**

**Fostering Constructive Conversations**






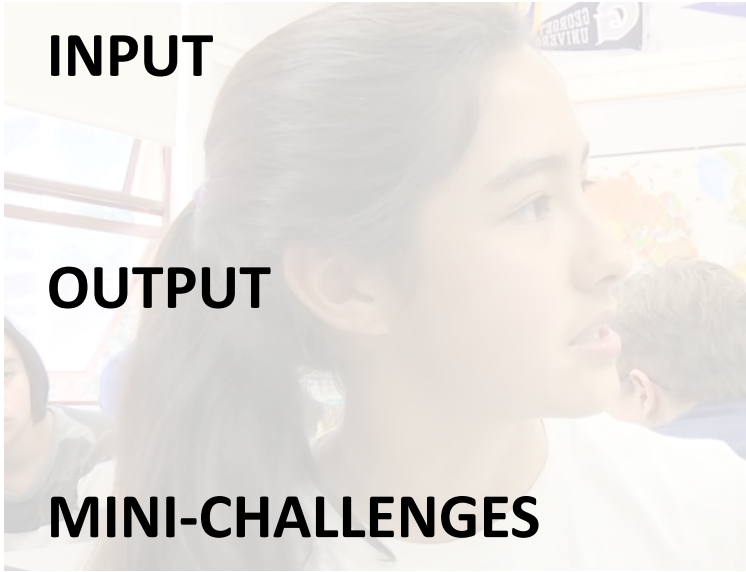
**Conversations Develop LANGUAGE w/ Loads of...**

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**INPUT**

**OUTPUT**

**MINI-CHALLENGES**



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## Conversation Develops CONTENT w/ Loads of...

**CLARIFYING**



**SUPPORTING**



**THINKING** ←How?



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## 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.



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## 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.

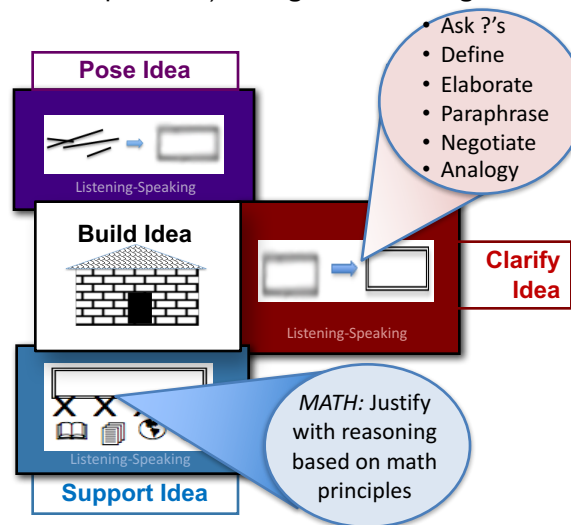


Mansur: I think there are different ways to solve it.  
 Lynn: So? Just do what the teacher did.  
 Mansur: But why did she turn the fraction over?  
 Lynn: Who cares? Just turn it over.  
 Mansur: OK.

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

## 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?"*

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## Assess a Conversation – (ELA)

A: I think she not share it (bread)

B: Why?

A: Cuz the other animals not work; just lazy.

B: Yeah. I don't think to share, too.

A: Why?

B: Like my dad. He work for money. Not work, no money.

A: Yeah, no es justo.

B: Not fair. But teacher said is good to share.

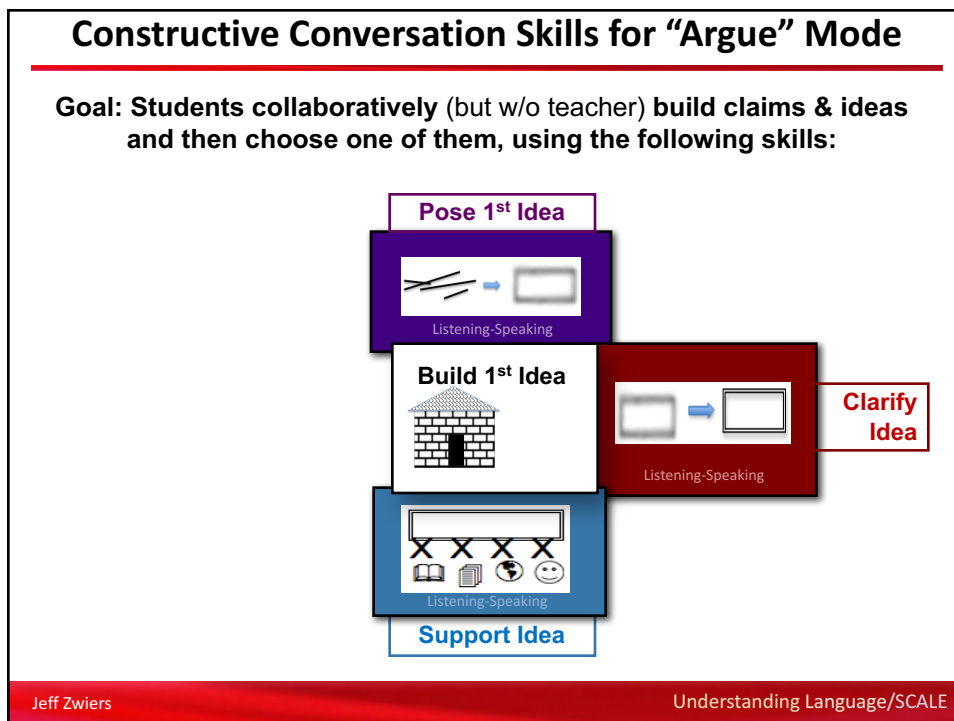
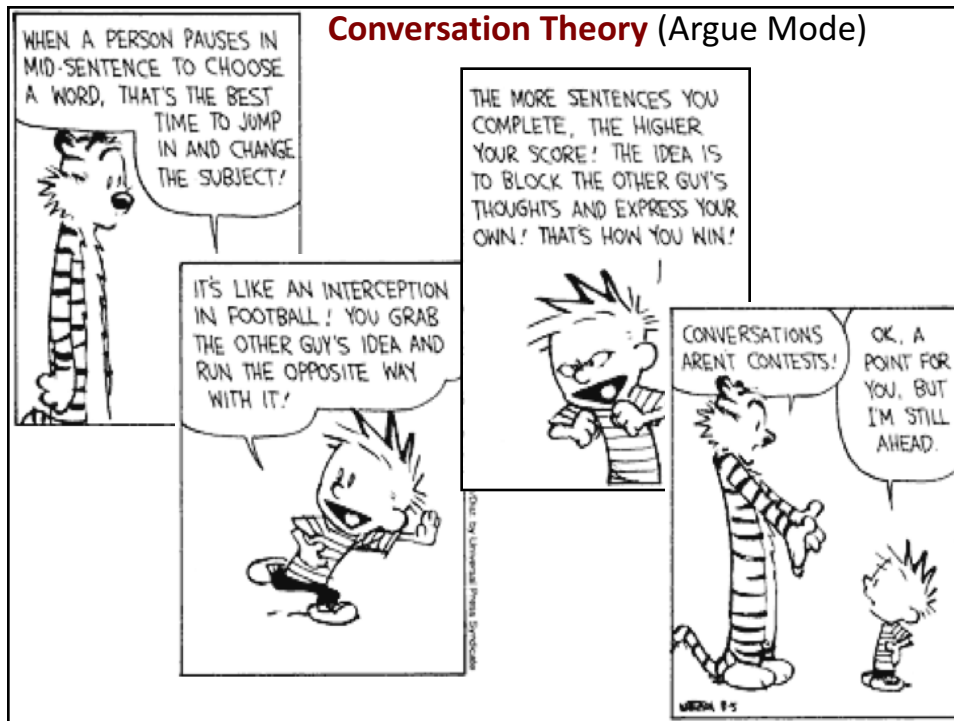
A: I share when they help. Maybe I paint the school. It's my money, you know?

B: No. Maybe if ...no pueden...trabajar (work), like they're sick, maybe. But this story animals are lazy.

A: Is good to share, but not all the time, not with lazies.

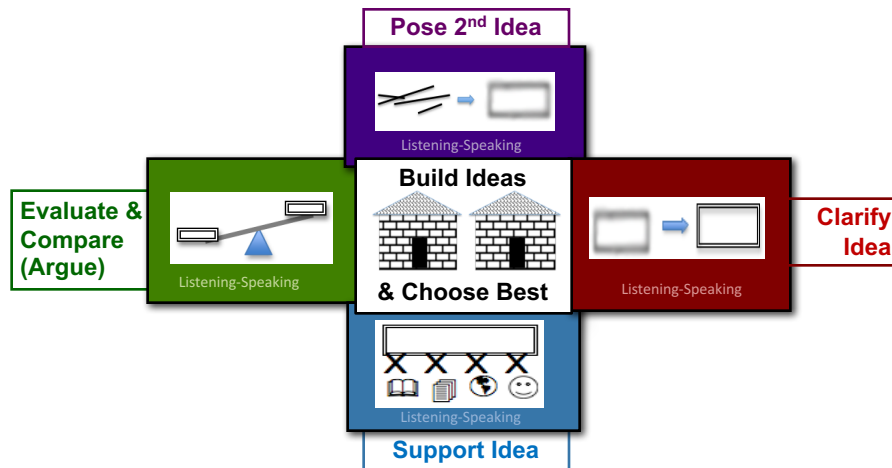






## Conversation Skills for “Build >1 & Choose (Argue)” Mode

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



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## Conversations in 5<sup>th</sup> Gr. Language Arts/ELD



### Context

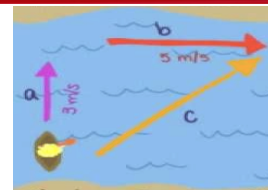
- 5<sup>th</sup> grade Language Arts/ELD class in San Francisco
- Advanced and early intermediate partners.

### This Clip

- After reading an allegory for the Holocaust, students discuss what could have happened if the animals had stood together.
- They practice stating opinions, paraphrasing, and clarifying

### Conversation Sample - Math

- A: What do we need to find?  
 B: How far the boat goes down the river.  
 A: So, how?  
 B: Maybe figure out the time to cross it, like straight, like this (a).  
 A: But I think we should just add the speeds together.  
 B: OK, that's 5 plus 3 equals 8. Then what?  
 A: We need to use the other number, 30. So divide?  
 B: Why not. OK, so 30 divided by 8 is 3.75.  
 A: 3.75 what?  
 B: Meters, I think, but that doesn't look right.  
 A: No, so what do we do?  
 B: I don't know.



**CURRICULUM & LESSON DESIGN:**  
**Fostering Conversations & Their Skills**  
 with the  
**Argument Balance Scale**

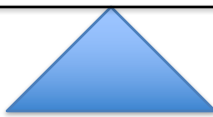
**Scaffold for Collaborative Argument Conversations:  
Argument Balance Scale**

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**Claim**                      **vs.**                      **Opposite or  
Different Claim**

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

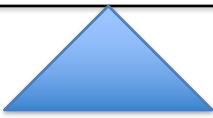
<b>Claim/Position</b>	Are humans good or evil?	<b>Claim/Position</b>
Good		Evil



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**“Constructive Conversations” Activity for All 4 Skills:  
Argument Balance Scale**

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Prevent dropouts & jail costs  Gets them to read  Kids need to eat  Stay after school  Pizza tastes good	<table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td style="color: green; font-size: small;"><b>Reason/Evidnc/Exp</b></td> <td style="font-size: small;">Kids need to eat</td> <td style="color: orange; font-size: small;"><b>Claim/Position</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="color: green; font-size: small;"><b>Reason/Evidnc/Exp</b></td> <td style="font-size: small;">Prevents dropouts, crime, jail costs</td> <td style="color: orange; font-size: small;"><b>Claim/Position</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="color: green; font-size: small;"><b>Reason/Evidnc/Exp</b></td> <td style="font-size: small;">Gets kids to read</td> <td style="color: orange; font-size: small;"><b>Claim/Position</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="color: green; font-size: small;"><b>Claim/Position</b></td> <td style="font-size: small;">Should pizza be a reward for reading?</td> <td style="color: orange; font-size: small;"><b>Claim/Position</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="font-size: small;">Yes</td> <td></td> <td style="font-size: small;">No</td> </tr> </table> 	<b>Reason/Evidnc/Exp</b>	Kids need to eat	<b>Claim/Position</b>	<b>Reason/Evidnc/Exp</b>	Prevents dropouts, crime, jail costs	<b>Claim/Position</b>	<b>Reason/Evidnc/Exp</b>	Gets kids to read	<b>Claim/Position</b>	<b>Claim/Position</b>	Should pizza be a reward for reading?	<b>Claim/Position</b>	Yes		No	
<b>Reason/Evidnc/Exp</b>	Kids need to eat	<b>Claim/Position</b>															
<b>Reason/Evidnc/Exp</b>	Prevents dropouts, crime, jail costs	<b>Claim/Position</b>															
<b>Reason/Evidnc/Exp</b>	Gets kids to read	<b>Claim/Position</b>															
<b>Claim/Position</b>	Should pizza be a reward for reading?	<b>Claim/Position</b>															
Yes		No															

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### “Constructive Conversations” Activity for All 4 Skills: Argument Balance Scale

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The diagram shows a scale tilted to the right. On the left side (labeled 'Yes'), there are three green boxes: 'Reason/Evidnc/Exp Kids need to eat', 'Reason/Evidnc/Exp Prevents dropouts, crime, jail costs', and 'Reason/Evidnc/Exp Gets kids to read'. Below them is a green box labeled 'Claim/Position Yes'. On the right side (labeled 'No'), there are three orange boxes: 'Reason/Evidnc/Exp Expensive', 'Reason/Evidnc/Exp Not healthy food', and 'Reason/Evidnc/Exp Not good motivation'. Below them is an orange box labeled 'Claim/Position No'. To the right of the scale, a list of points is shown: 'Not healthy food', 'Expensive to run', 'Need to exercise', 'Not good motivation for reading', and 'Some kids don't like pizza'. The scale is supported by a blue triangle at the bottom.

Not healthy food  
Expensive to run  
Need to exercise  
Not good motivation for reading  
Some kids don't like pizza

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### “Constructive Conversations” Activity for All 4 Skills: Argument Scale

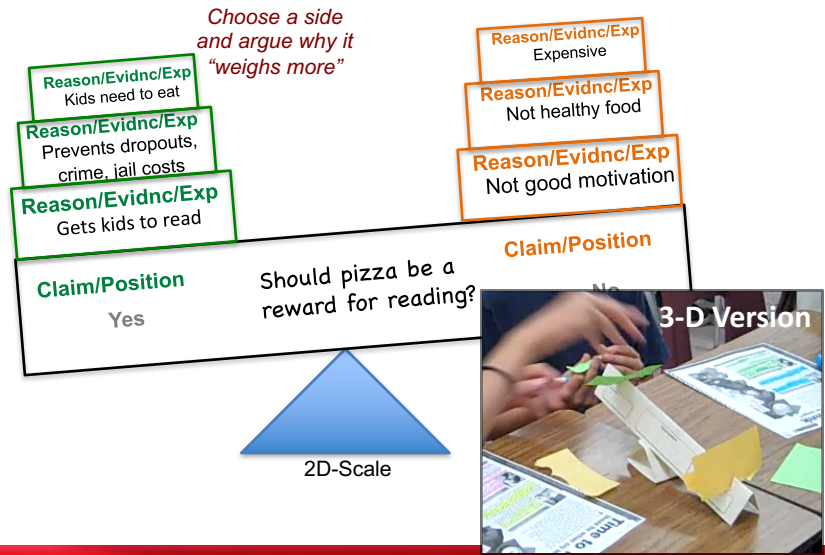
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*Compare the evidence on both sides (use criteria)*

The diagram shows a scale balanced on a blue triangle. On the left side (labeled 'Yes'), there are three green boxes: 'Reason/Evidnc/Exp Kids need to eat', 'Reason/Evidnc/Exp Prevents dropouts, crime, jail costs', and 'Reason/Evidnc/Exp Gets kids to read'. Below them is a green box labeled 'Claim/Position Yes'. On the right side (labeled 'No'), there are three orange boxes: 'Reason/Evidnc/Exp Expensive', 'Reason/Evidnc/Exp Not healthy food', and 'Reason/Evidnc/Exp Not good motivation'. Below them is an orange box labeled 'Claim/Position No'. Dashed red circles enclose the evidence boxes on both sides. Orange arrows point from the 'Yes' side to the 'No' side, and green arrows point from the 'No' side to the 'Yes' side, indicating a comparison of evidence.

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## “Constructive Conversations” Activity for All 4 Skills: Argument Scale



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## Video Example to Assess

**CONTEXT**

5<sup>th</sup> grade  
Language  
Arts/ELD class  
Advanced and early advanced partners.

After reading an article on a program that gives pizza as reward for reading, students discuss their opinions on the issue.



**THIS CLIP**

- Watch for supporting opinions, building on ideas, and clarifying
- Notice if and how the balance scale helps students to extend talk
- Consider next steps based on this conversation

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## CURRICULUM & LESSON DESIGN: The “Communicativeness Test” for an Activity’s Power for Developing Language

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## 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"> <li>• Say, “Let’s understand (clarify, define) this... What we need to do is ...”</li> <li>• Ask, “What does... mean in this case/context/situation?”</li> <li>• Say, “Let’s scan through the text again and look for...”</li> <li>• Say, “Let’s take two different sides; which one do you want?”</li> </ul>
Your partner offers a short response,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask for specific clarification or elaboration</li> <li>• Ask a question (I wonder why/how...)</li> <li>• Ask what a word or expression means</li> <li>• Ask for example that supports it</li> <li>• Give an example and ask if your partner agrees</li> </ul>
Your partner offers a long and confusing response,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paraphrase it and relate it to the conversation purpose</li> <li>• Ask to clarify the most relevant part of the response</li> <li>• Ask for additional evidence or examples</li> </ul>

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## Did We Address These Challenges?

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### INSTRUCTION & ASSESSMENT

Oral language & communication play  
minor & shallow roles

### CURRICULUM & LESSON DESIGN

Inauthentic communication pervades curricula and  
pedagogy of language, literacy, and content

### CLASSROOM CULTURE

- Memorization-regurgitation mindsets of learning
- Students are adept at minimizing their academic talk
- Students do not push selves or peers to improve their speaking and conversation skills
- Do not see long-term value of oral language skills

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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### References

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