

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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Major Challenges

INSTRUCTION & ASSESSMENT

Oral language & communication
play minor & shallow roles

CURRICULUM & LESSON DESIGN

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

CLASSROOM CULTURE

- Students and teachers and assessments have 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
- Students 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



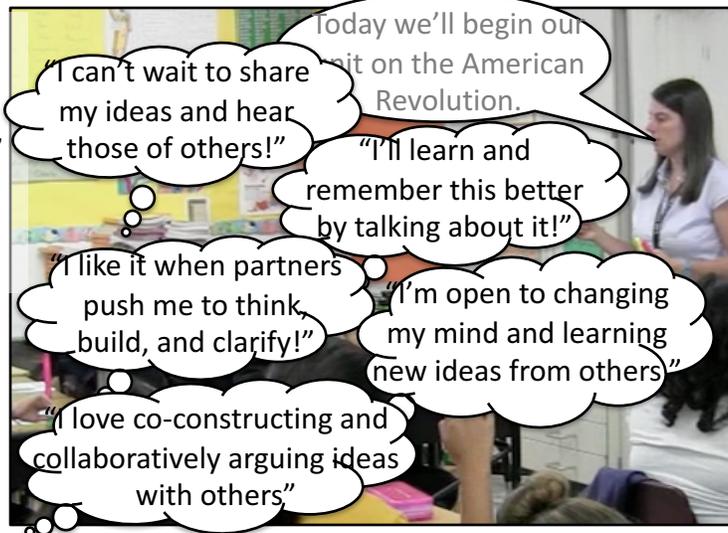
MORE

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

___ **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

	 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

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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:

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~~

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~~

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

Plant Cells

Lysosomes
(digest food and break down waste)

Centrioles
(pull chromosomes from nucleus during mitosis)

No cell wall

Ribosomes
(make protein)

Mitochondria
(turns nutrients into energy)

Cytoplasm

Cell wall
(gives plant its shape)

Large vacuole (store nutrients and waste)

Chloroplasts
(produce carbohydrates using photosynthesis)

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 _____

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

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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



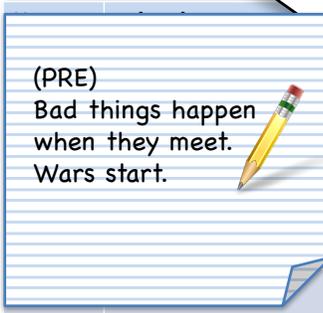
1. Prompt for an **original response**
2. Successive partners: **borrow and use the language, ideas, and evidence** each time-->
 - **Stronger** (often longer) with better supporting evidence and examples, and
 - **Clearer** with more precise terms and linked, organized, complete sentences.
3. Scaffolds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



What happens when cultures meet and why?

“Stronger & Clearer Each Time” Grid

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

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

Switch partners!
Don’t forget to use examples.

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

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.

1.	Mario	both, learn
2.	Juan	religion, Aztecs, Spain
3.		
	Me	



Manuel



2nd Partner

What happens when cultures meet and why?

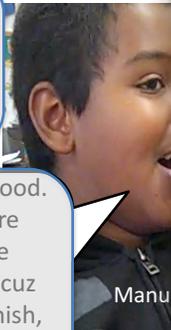
“Stronger & Clearer Each Time” Grid

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

(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.

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



Manu

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.




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.



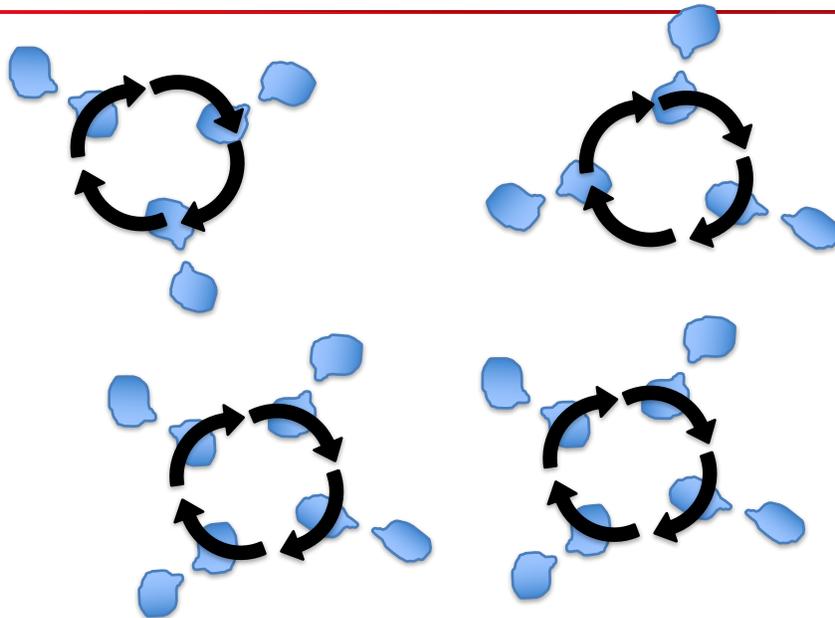
This Clip

- 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

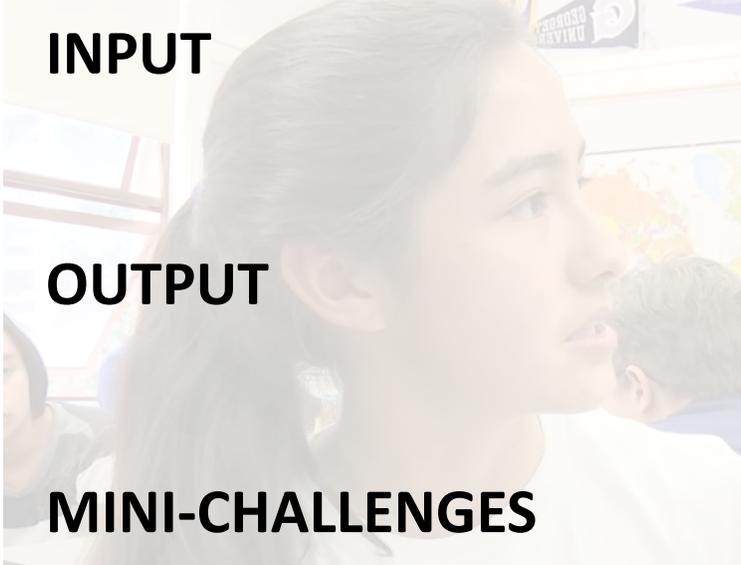


Conversations Develop LANGUAGE w/ Loads of...

INPUT

OUTPUT

MINI-CHALLENGES



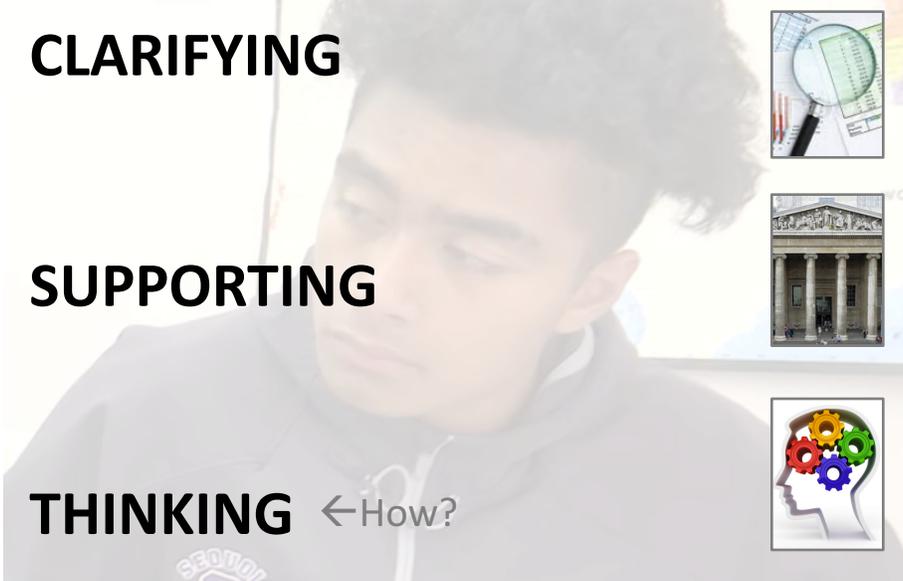
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Conversation Develops CONTENT w/ Loads of...

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.

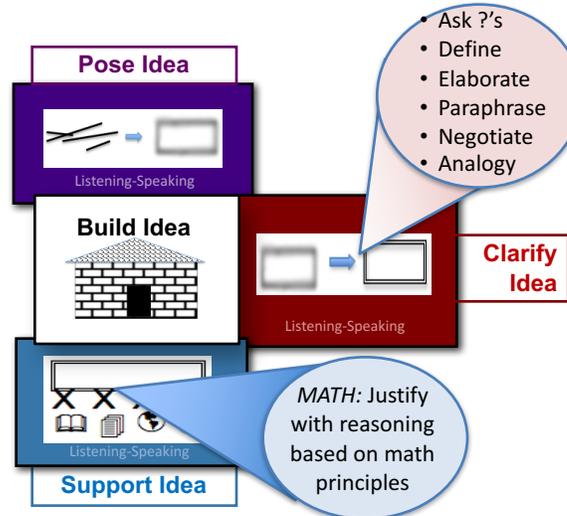
$$\frac{3a}{3c-6} \div \frac{9ab}{c^2-4} =$$

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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:**



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Constructive Conversations in 9th 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 Theory (Argue Mode)

WHEN A PERSON PAUSES IN MID-SENTENCE TO CHOOSE A WORD, THAT'S THE BEST TIME TO JUMP IN AND CHANGE THE SUBJECT!

IT'S LIKE AN INTERCEPTION IN FOOTBALL! YOU GRAB THE OTHER GUY'S IDEA AND RUN THE OPPOSITE WAY WITH IT!

THE MORE SENTENCES YOU COMPLETE, THE HIGHER YOUR SCORE! THE IDEA IS TO BLOCK THE OTHER GUY'S THOUGHTS AND EXPRESS YOUR OWN! THAT'S HOW YOU WIN!

CONVERSATIONS AREN'T CONTESTS!

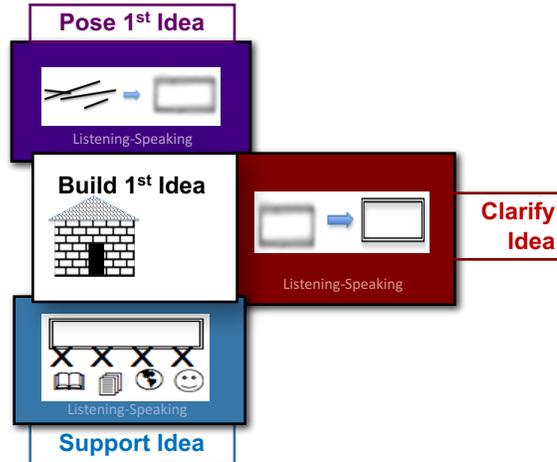
OK, A POINT FOR YOU, BUT I'M STILL AHEAD.

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WEEK 15

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:

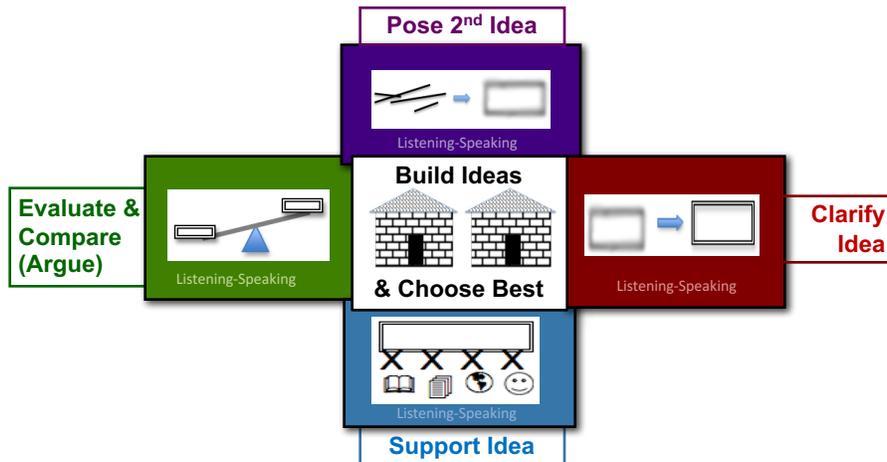


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Conversation Skills for “Build >1 & Choose (Argue)” Mode

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 5th Gr. Language Arts/ELD



Context

- 5th 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?

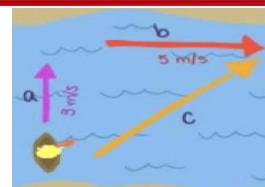
B: Why not. OK, so 30 divided by 8 is 3.75.

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

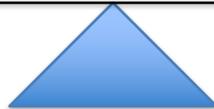
Claim

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
-------------------------------	-----------------------------	-------------------------------



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

Prevent dropouts & jail costs

Gets them to read

Kids need to eat

Stay after school

Pizza tastes good

Reason/Evidnc/Exp
Kids need to eat

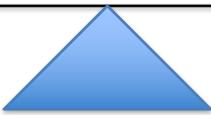
Reason/Evidnc/Exp
Prevents dropouts, crime, jail costs

Reason/Evidnc/Exp
Gets kids to read

Claim/Position
Yes

Should pizza be a reward for reading?

Claim/Position
No



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

Reason/Evidnc/Exp
Kids need to eat

Reason/Evidnc/Exp
Prevents dropouts, crime, jail costs

Reason/Evidnc/Exp
Gets kids to read

Claim/Position
Yes

Reason/Evidnc/Exp
Expensive

Reason/Evidnc/Exp
Not healthy food

Reason/Evidnc/Exp
Not good motivation

Claim/Position
n

Should pizza be a reward for reading?

Claim/Position
No

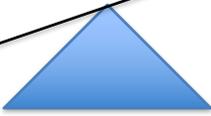
Not healthy food

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

Compare the evidence on both sides (use criteria)

Should pizza be a reward for reading?

Yes No

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

Choose a side and argue why it “weighs more”

Should pizza be a reward for reading?

Yes No

2D-Scale 3-D Version

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Video Example to Assess

CONTEXT

5th 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"> • 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

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References

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