Developing Academic Speaking and Conversation Skills in Every Lesson

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November 17, 2016
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Major Challenges

CLASSROOM CULTURE

- Students, educators, and assessments have "memorization-regurgitation" mindsets of learning
- Students don't see long-term & learning value of oral language
- Students are adept at minimizing their academic talk
- Students do not push selves or peers to improve their speaking and conversation skills

CURRICULUM & LESSON DESIGN

*In*authentic communication pervades curricula and pedagogy of language, literacy, & content

INSTRUCTION & ASSESSMENT

Oral language & communication play minor & shallow roles

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 <u>in service of communication?</u>** 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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GOALS

	ORAL OUTPUT	CONVERSING
Increasing Quantity	# of students # of minutes	# of students in back-and-forth conversations
Increasing Quality	Strength Clarity	Co-construction Collab 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.

Idea UNDER CONSTRUCTION

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CURRICULUM & LESSON DESIGN:

Fortifying Speaking & Listening with

TRANSITION IMPROV

Activities

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?

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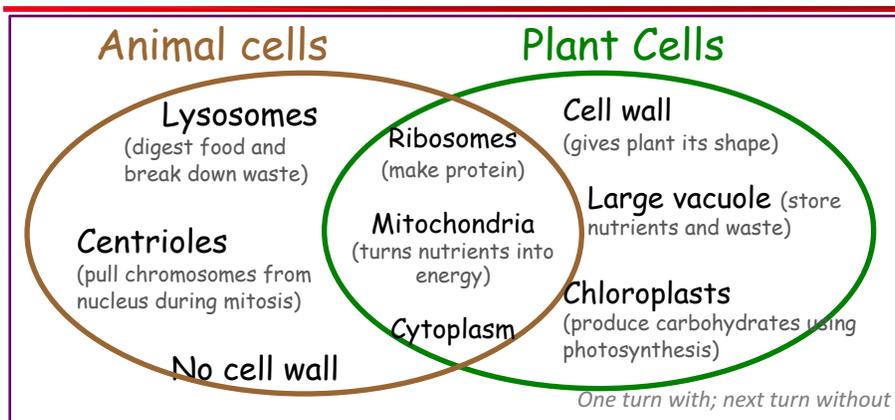
Transition Improv **(For-Against)**

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?

Transition Improv **(Similar-Different)**

Animal cells — Plant Cells

Lysosomes (digest food and break down waste)

Ribosomes (make protein)

Cell wall (gives plant its shape)

Mitochondria (turns nutrients into energy)

Large vacuole (store nutrients and waste)

Centrioles (pull chromosomes from nucleus during mitosis)

Chloroplasts (produce carbohydrates using photosynthesis)

Cytoplasm

No cell wall

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 _____

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?

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

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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.

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.

Lisa

(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 varity 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.

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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
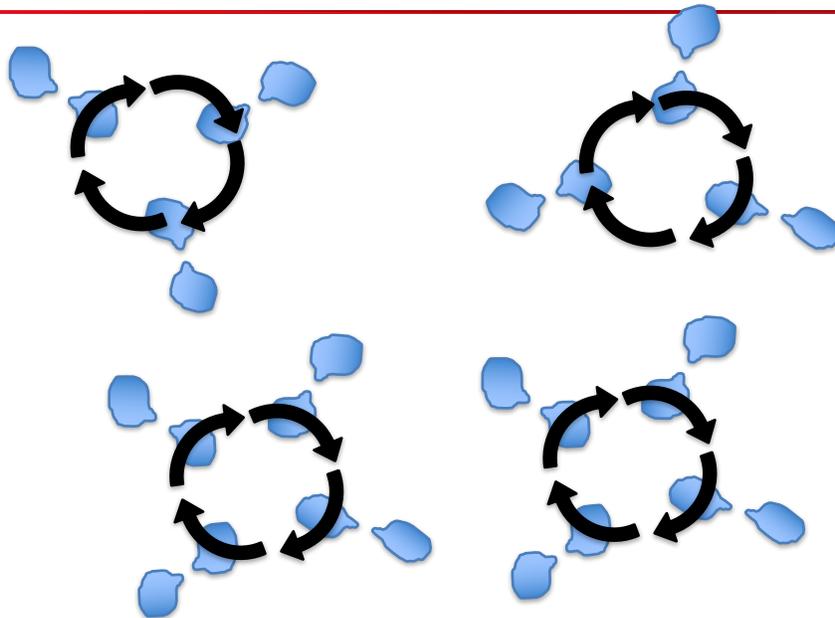
"Stronger & Clearer Each Time" **Grid**

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)

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Fostering Constructive Conversations

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.
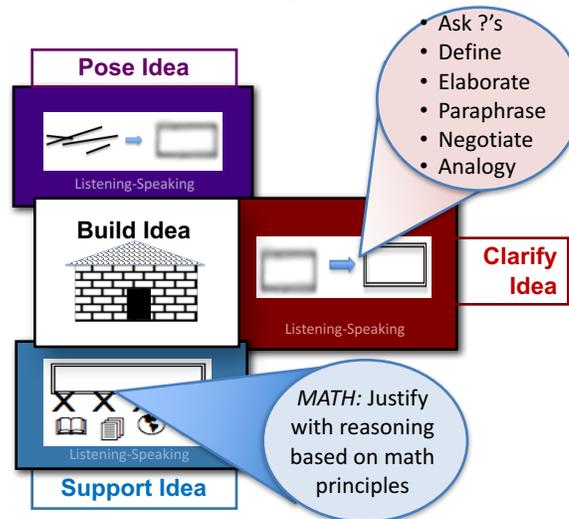Carlos: All of them, I guess.

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:**

- Ask ?'s
- Define
- Elaborate
- Paraphrase
- Negotiate
- Analogy

Pose Idea

Listening-Speaking

Build Idea

Clarify Idea

Listening-Speaking

MATH: Justify with reasoning based on math principles

Listening-Speaking

Support Idea

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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?"*
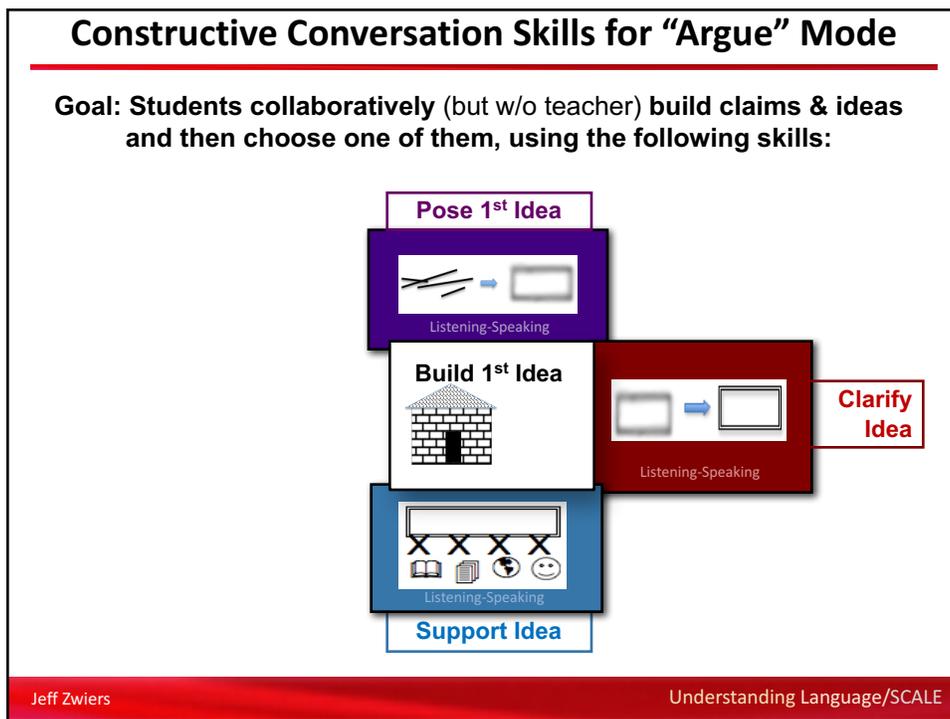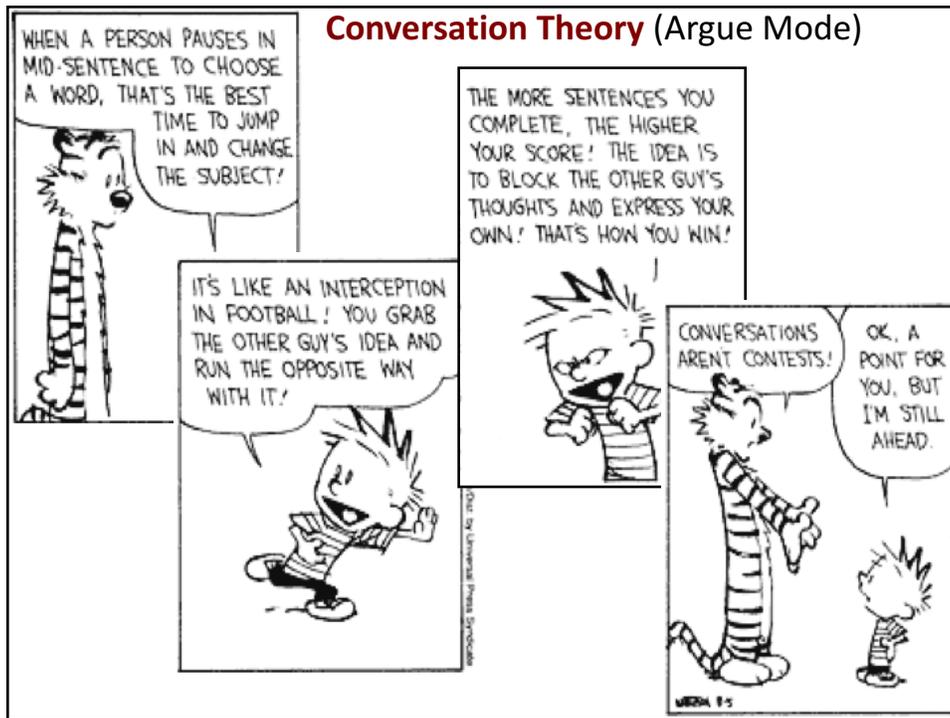
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Constructive Conversation Excerpt - Geometry

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.
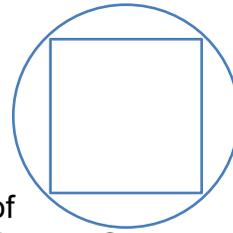
A: It says to "write down the length of a side of the inner square in terms of r." What does it mean?

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.

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.

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:**

Pose 1st Idea

Listening-Speaking

Build 1st Idea

Clarify Idea

Listening-Speaking

Listening-Speaking

Support Idea

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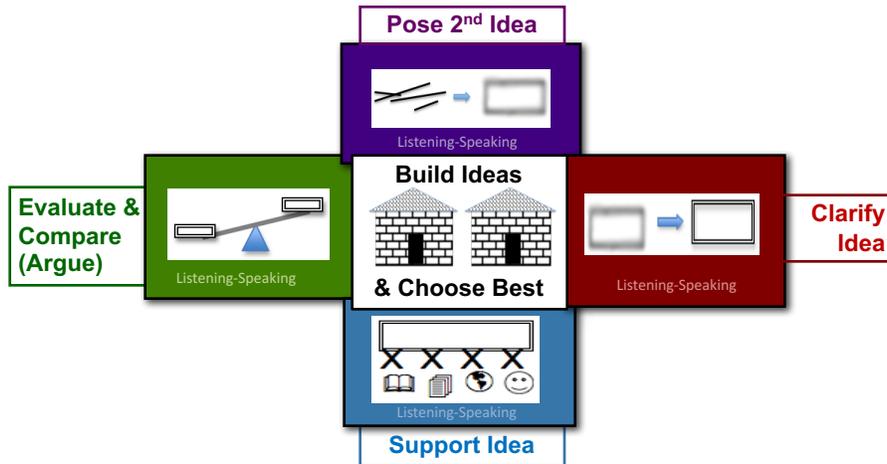
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Fostering Conversations & Their Skills
with
Argument Balance Scale

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	Are humans good or evil?	Claim/Position
Good		Evil

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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

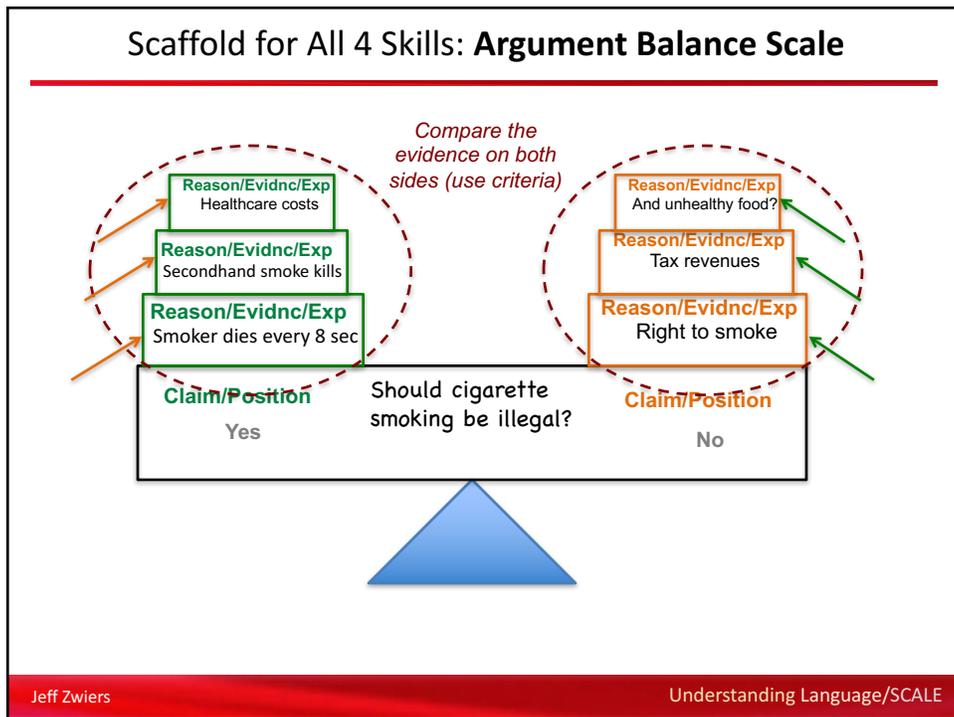Reason/Evidnc/Exp — Smoker dies every 8 sec

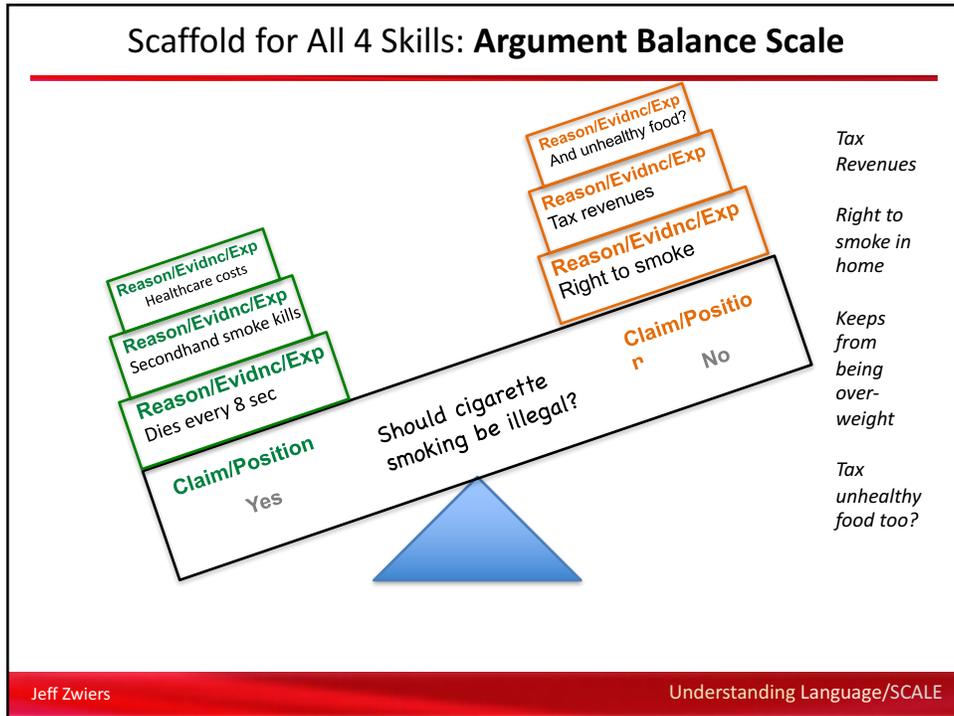| Claim/Position	Should cigarette smoking be illegal?	Claim/Position
Yes		No

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

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

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

Choose a side and argue why it "weighs more"

Reason/Evidnc/Exp And unhealthy food?

Reason/Evidnc/Exp Healthcare costs

Reason/Evidnc/Exp Tax revenues

Reason/Evidnc/Exp Secondhand smoke kills

Reason/Evidnc/Exp Right to smoke

Reason/Evidnc/Exp Smoker dies every 8 sec

Claim/Position

Claim/Position Yes

Should cigarette smoking be illegal?

No

3-D Version

2D-Scale

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Constructive Conversations in 8th 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*

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