

Academic Conversations as a Gateway to Academic Literacy



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Goals for this Session

Overarching Goal: Learn ways to develop and assess academic conversation skills in order to promote sustained and effective academic conversations among students.

1. Share what we have done up until now
2. Share key findings from our teaching and observations
3. Deepen understandings of features of language development and apply them to existing activities.
4. Refine your plan for working on and with conversations this year.



Steps Leading Up Until Today

- Taught the lesson you designed and took notes to share with us today. Wove activities into other lessons and took notes for your partner teachers and us.
- Used some form of the COAT.
- Gathered audio samples of student conversations to share today. Optionally, transcribed any interesting portions of one or more of them, and sent to me (Thanks!).
- Updated your Inquiry Cycle focus, evidence, and progress



PROGRESS

The collage contains several educational materials:

- Communications 'Fit'**: A document with questions about language use in different contexts.
- Transition Improv Activity (Pro-Con)**: A document with a 'Pro-Con' table and a 'Transition' section.
- 'Stronger & Cleaner Each Time' Grid**: A grid with text and images related to language improvement.
- Write/Use Model Conversations**: A document with a table for 'A:' and 'B:' responses.
- Argument Scale**: A diagram showing levels of argumentation from 'Claim' to 'Evidence'.

Notes:

NEW: "Stronger and Clearer Each Time" Activity: Opinion Formation Cards

1. Choose text quotations that support different sides of the issue and put them on small cards or strips.
2. Tell students the topic and have them start forming their

OWN

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With the same quotat

Cell phones make cheating much easier.

When I was teaching, all too often I turned around from writing something on the board to find students text-

The principal argued: "I don't know a businessperson, lawyer, or doctor out there who doesn't use a cell phone to learn and connect with others in professional ways. Why shouldn't students also learn to learn and communicate with them in schools?"

's cell phone-based a student could draw a showing the relationship er cycle processes, create illustrating how it all looks, a text report on what ed—all centralized on a interface on the smartphone's screen.



Should cell phone use be banned in school?

You can use frames such as:

- In my opinion, ____ because ____.
- Despite the advantages of ...
- Given the points that I have heard so far, such as ...
- I think I lean more to the side of ____ because ...

Student Model of Opinion Formation Cards

My quote says, "In a recent... This supports my idea. I think video games are bad cuz they show violence."

Switch partners!

My quote is, "Parents claim... In my opinion, video games are bad. Like war games show kids how to shoot other people."

"In a recent study of children who played violent video games, the children were found to exhibit more violent behaviors, drawings, and language than children who didn't play violent games."



Should video games be banned?

Student Model of Opinion Formation Cards

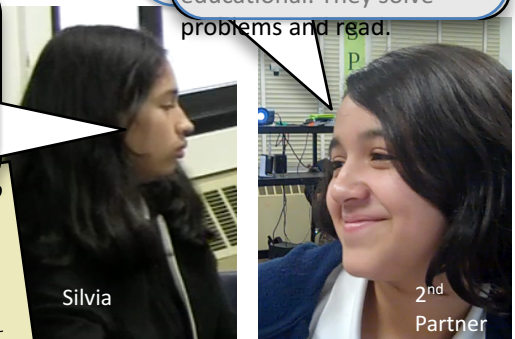
My quote says, "In a recent... This supports my idea. I think video games are bad cuz they show violence."

My quote says..."In a recent..." In my opinion, violent video games should be banned because they show violence that kids copy. For example, in a war video game kids shoot others.

"In a recent study of children who played violent video games, the children were found to exhibit more violent behaviors, drawings, and language than children who didn't play violent games."

Switch partners!

My quote is, "Parents cl... This card says, "Even though... ga... Even though some video ga... games fill kids' minds with sh... violence, a lot are educational. They solve problems and read."



Silvia 2nd Partner

Should video games be banned?

Student Model of Opinion Formation Cards

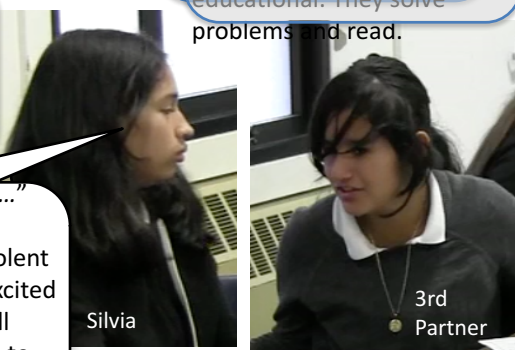
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My quote says..."In a recent..." In my opinion, violent video games should be banned because they show violence that kids copy. For example, in a war video game kids shoot others.

My quote says..."In a recent study..." Even though some video games are educational, many are very violent and should be banned. Kids get excited to shoot others and their minds fill with violence. Games might teach to solve problems, but in my opinion kids will be less violent without them.

Switch partners!

My quote is, "Parents cl... This card says, "Even though... ga... Even though some video ga... games fill kids' minds with sh... violence, a lot are educational. They solve problems and read."



Silvia 3rd Partner

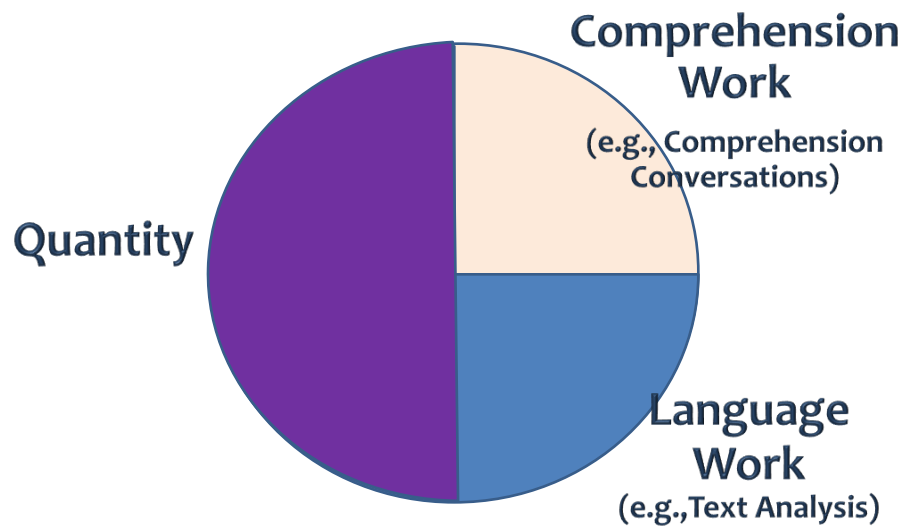
Should video games be banned?



Is language essential for learning and showing learning?

If so, then every activity that students do in class should be leveraged to develop language.

Building Language through Reading



The Elasticity of Comprehension

“It is a mistake to believe that there is some kind of precise “mathematic” or “formulaic” rendering that is possible.



Meaning making is never precise; it is not a form of exact mapping of sounds or meanings onto text. Meaning making involves approximation or a form of allowable band of interpretations or elasticity to the meaning making between author or web-creator or film maker and reader and the world.”

--Tierney, 2009



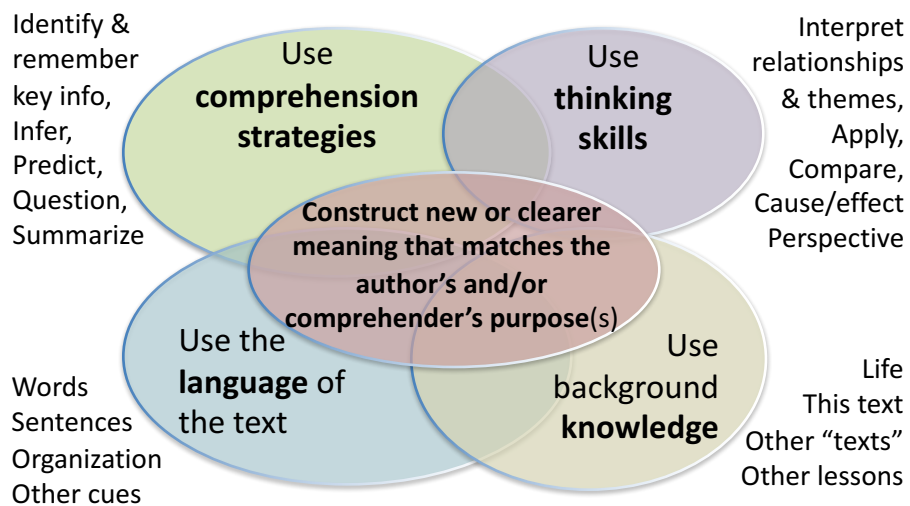
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Understanding Language

What is comprehension & what influences it?

(Includes comprehension of written, spoken, visual, multimedia messages)



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Comprehension Conversations

Why did the author use the term *grossly*?

Does this remind you of something we already read?

Why do you think they adapted to have babies in pouches?

How can we apply what we learned in this article?

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CONVERSING TO COMPREHEND: How can conversations foster this?

Ask each other

Construct new or clearer meaning that matches the author's and/or comprehender's purpose(s)

- Why are we reading this?
- Why did the author write this?
- What do we need to learn from this?

Conversing to Comprehend

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CONVERSING TO COMPREHEND: How can conversations foster this?

Use the
language of the
text

Ask each other

- Why did the author use this word, sentence, or paragraph?
- How is this text/message organized? Why?
- What words or other clues show us which thinking skills to use for this text?

CONVERSING TO COMPREHEND How can conversations foster this?

Use
background
knowledge

Ask each other:

- For connections to previous texts, problems, and life
- What you both are visualizing when reading a portion of text
- (when your partner makes an inference or prediction)“Why?” or “How does the text and your experience make you predict/infer that?”

CONVERSING TO COMPREHEND: How can conversations foster this?

Use
comprehension
strategies

Ask each other to:

- **summarize** what was heard or read so far
- **make inferences** (Why do you think he...?)
- **generate predictions**
- **pose & answer questions**

CONVERSING TO COMPREHEND: How can conversations foster this?

Use
thinking
skills

Ask each other to:

- **interpret** themes, arguments, and data
- **evaluate evidence**
- **infer relationships**
- **compare**
- **take other perspectives**
- **apply ideas** to novel contexts

The Tragedy of Dying Languages

I've listened to last speakers of many languages—dignified elders—who hold in their minds a significant portion of humanity's intellectual wealth. What can we learn from these languages before they go extinct? And why should we lift a finger to help rescue them? As the last speakers converse, they spin individual strands in a vast web of knowledge, a noosphere of possibilities. They tell how their ancestors calculated accurately the passing of seasons without clocks or calendars and how humans adapted to hostile environments, from the Arctic to Amazonia.



Boa Sr was the last speaker of the 70,000-year-old Bo language

We imagine eureka moments taking place in modern laboratories or classical civilizations. But key insights of biology, pharmacology, genetics, and navigation arose and persisted solely by word of mouth, in small, unwritten tongues. And this web of knowledge contains feats of human ingenuity—epics, myths, rituals—that celebrate and interpret our existence. Language revitalization will prove to be one of the most consequential social trends of coming decades. This push-back against globalization will profoundly influence human intellectual life, deciding the fate of ancient knowledge, wisdom, and culture. --K. David Harrison

Text Analysis (Close Reading for Language)

Procedure

1. Listen to students read aloud and identify sentence and organization (discourse/structure) level challenges.
2. Look in the text for language examples of these challenges.
3. Read the examples(s) aloud and have pairs answer:
 - Why did the author write it like this?
 - Is there a clearer way to write this?

Model: The Tragedy of Dying Languages

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Chaos Theory

Chaos theory, a modern development in mathematics and science, provides a framework for understanding irregular or erratic fluctuations in nature. A chaotic system is defined as one that shows "sensitivity to initial conditions." That is, any uncertainty in the initial state of the given system, no matter how small, will lead to rapidly growing errors in any effort to predict the future behavior. For example, the motion of a dust particle floating on the surface of a pair of oscillating whirlpools can display chaotic behavior. The particle will move in well-defined circles around the centers of the whirlpools, alternating between the two in an irregular manner. An observer who wants to predict the motion of this particle will have to measure its initial location. If the measurement is not infinitely precise, however, the observer will instead obtain the location of an imaginary particle very close by. The "sensitivity to initial conditions" mentioned above will cause the nearby imaginary particle to follow a path that diverges from the path of the real particle. This makes any long-term prediction of the trajectory of the real particle impossible. In other words, the system is chaotic. Its behavior can be predicted only if the initial conditions are known to an infinite degree of accuracy, which is impossible.

ELA Text

"[...] 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, topheavy, 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.



APPLICATION TIME

Think about how you might use
**Comprehension Conversations and Text
Analysis** in your upcoming lessons.

Teacher, Peer, and Self-Assessment

How can we adapt the COAT (on right) for peer and student self-assessment?

What do your students need to work on the most?

Prompt	
<input type="checkbox"/> Relevant & Engaging Purpose	<input type="checkbox"/> Need to talk (Info gaps)
<input type="checkbox"/> Clear Expectations (language to use, thinking, content)	
Quantity	
<input type="checkbox"/> # of turns	
<input type="checkbox"/> Length of turns	
<input type="checkbox"/> Equity of voice	
Quality	
<input type="checkbox"/> Use conversation skills to co-construct & argue ideas	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Turns build on previous turns — Students pose or choose a relevant initial idea(s) that is focused on learning objective(s) — Students clarify idea(s) (by paraphrasing, defining, elaborating, asking questions, negotiating, etc.) — Students support ideas (using evidence, examples, explanations) — <i>If there are two or more competing ideas (argue/decide):</i> students build up both ideas and <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) evaluate the strength/weight of the evidence of each idea (b) compare the strengths/weights and choose the "strongest/heaviest" idea (c) explain and/or negotiate final decisions & conclusions 	
<input type="checkbox"/> Effective listening	
<input type="checkbox"/> Clear speaking (+ use of language asked for in prompt)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Academic thinking (+ use of thinking asked for in prompt)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Academic content (+ talk about content asked for in prompt)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Nonverbal communication	

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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 explain more 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 stuff.
- Tasha: Like what?
- Sandeep: Like killing people who didn't fit in, or twins. That's messed up.
- Tasha: 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 little 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, 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 not the really violent stuff.

Video 1

Prompt

- Relevant & Engaging Purpose Need to talk (Info gaps)
 Clear Expectations (language to use, thinking, content)

Quantity

- # of turns
 Length of turns
 Equity of voice

Quality

- Use conversation skills to co-construct & argue ideas
- Turns build on previous turns
 - Students pose or choose a relevant initial idea(s) that is focused on learning objective(s)
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 - (c) explain and/or negotiate final decisions & conclusions
- Effective listening
- Clear speaking (+ use of language asked for in prompt)
- Academic thinking (+ use of thinking asked for in prompt)
- Academic content (+ talk about content asked for in prompt)
- Nonverbal communication

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Video 2

Prompt

- Relevant & Engaging Purpose Need to talk (Info gaps)
 Clear Expectations (language to use, thinking, content)

Quantity

- # of turns
 Length of turns
 Equity of voice

Quality

- Use conversation skills to co-construct & argue ideas
- Turns build on previous turns
 - Students pose or choose a relevant initial idea(s) that is focused on learning objective(s)
 - Students clarify idea(s) (by paraphrasing, defining, elaborating, asking questions, negotiating, etc.)
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- Nonverbal communication

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Create a Model Conversation

Think of an upcoming lesson and write a conversation between two students that shows their learning.

A:

B:

A:

B:

- 1) You analyze the conversation for the skills and language you will need to teach.
- 2) You use the model conversation with students to show them what you are looking for when they have conversations.

Lesson Planning

Sample Lesson(s) Plan: ELA

- I. **Objectives:** Infer and support themes in short stories.
Argue the most important theme for students your age.
- II. **Stronger-Clearer Each Time:** Read same story, share theme, support
- III. **Modified Jigsaw:** Think-Pair-Square: Read different stories, share theme and evidence with partner, then w/ other pair.
- IV. **Transition Improv:** Two Differing Themes (e.g., 'Two Brothers')
- V. **Academic Conversation Model:** Emphasize skills of supporting and evaluating evidence and importance, and arguing for one theme over another.
- VI. **Argument Balance Scale Conversations:** 2 Themes



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Sample Lesson Plan: Nonfiction

- I. **Objectives:** Argue a claim about an issue.
- II. **Opinion Formation Cards:** Read cards and share opinions; read article.
- III. **Gallery Walk:** (Read different articles on same issue, share posters of opinion and evidence)
- IV. **Transition Improv:** Pro-Con on topic of social media
- V. **Academic Conversation Modeling of use of Argument Balance Scale:**
Emphasize skills of supporting and evaluating evidence and importance, and arguing for one theme over another.
- VI. Write a final paragraph or two.

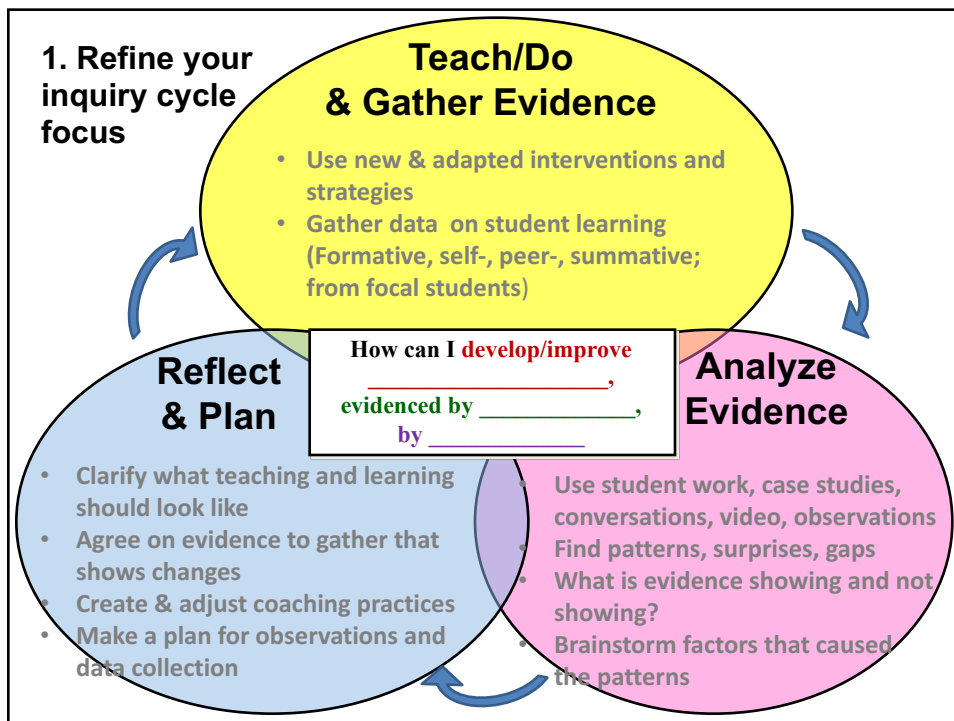
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3 x 3 x 3 Framework

				3 MODES		
				Comprehension (Interpretive) (Reading/Listening)	Expression (Productive) (Talking/Writing)	Conversation (Collaborative)
3 DIMENSIONS	<i>Organization/ Discourse</i>	Does an activity that emphasizes comprehension of <i>discourse</i> include: an engaging purpose, information gap, & attention to language?	Does an activity that emphasizes expressing with new <i>discourse</i> include: an engaging purpose, information gap, & attention to language?	Does an activity that emphasizes conversing with new <i>discourse</i> include: an engaging purpose, information gap, & attention to language?		
<i>Sentence (grammar & syntax)</i>	Does an activity that emphasizes comprehension of <i>sentences</i> include: an engaging purpose, information gap, & attention to language?	Does an activity that emphasizes expressing new <i>sentences</i> include: an engaging purpose, information gap, & attention to language?	Does an activity that emphasizes conversing with new <i>sentences</i> include: an engaging purpose, information gap, & attention to language?			
<i>Vocabulary</i>	Does an activity that emphasizes comprehension of <i>vocabulary</i> include: an engaging purpose, information gap, & attention to language?	Does an activity that emphasizes expressing with new <i>vocabulary</i> include: an engaging purpose, information gap, & attention to language?	Does an activity that emphasizes conversing with new <i>vocabulary</i> include: an engaging purpose, information gap, & attention to language?			

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TASK

Communicativeness "Isar"
(Essential Features for Language Development)

... Is there a world & engaging purpose in the activity, or do you use language to do something meaningful and purposeful?

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

... Is there an incentive to language (beyond of course/obligation) in the activity, or have you teaching and assessment focused on improving language use?

... Do you include such as answer questions to get started? Do you prepare students to use language for academic purposes?

... Do you include modeling, practicing, giving feedback, and/or activities?

Transition Impover Activity (Pro-Con)

Topic: 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**

AI Prompt: One advantage is... For example... Another problem of... In... because... A helpful aspect of... is... The trouble of the position of... is...

"Stronger & Clearer Each Time" Grid

Ask for an (another) example to support the idea

Show that you are listening with your eyes, body, posture

Encourage your partner to talk more

Paraphrase what your partner said

Press a competing idea and start to build it up

Summarize the conversation so far

Ask your partner to clarify (Why... How...)

Stay focused on the conversation prompt

Ask for details used to evaluate evidence

Flow of Use

Expand & Clarify (Open)

Build Ideas (Close)

Choose Best (Close)

Support Ideas

Argument Scale

Should give to a friend for reading?

Yes No

Write/Use Model Conversations

A:

B:

2. Draft three back-to-back lesson plans that include activities that develop speaking & conversation skills. You will share these with the group. Please use at least two new activities (from our times together) and feel free to modify existing activities in ways that use some of the features we have discussed to strengthen language and conversation skills. Include a model conversation.

TASK

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(Essential Features for Language Development)

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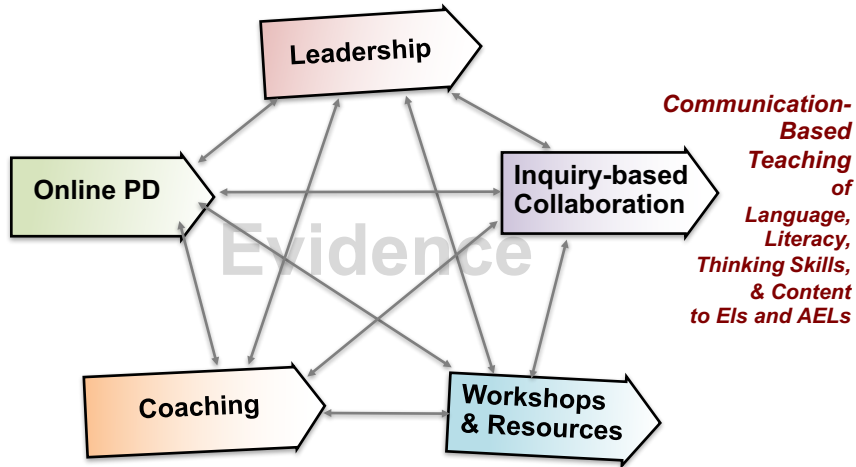
A:

B:

3. Share your lessons with another person (who hasn't seen them) and provide constructive feedback to one another related to:

- Their potential for developing language & convo skills
- 3 Communicativeness Features
- Lesson coherence and flow
- Formative assessment & scaffolding of language

Align & Connect Dimensions of PD



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