



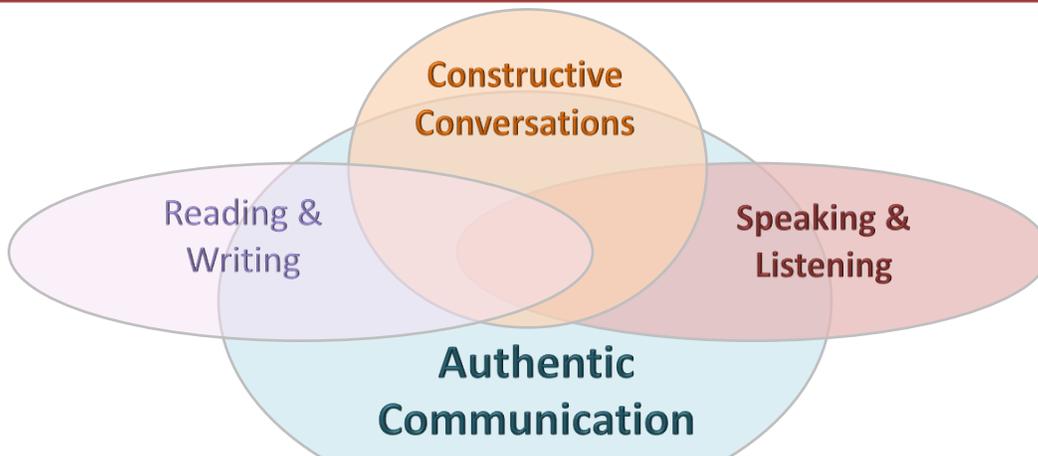
# Fostering Productive Academic Conversations

**Sanger**  
[jeffzwiers.org/august15](http://jeffzwiers.org/august15)

Understanding Language | Language, Literacy, & Learning in the Content Areas

Jeff Zwiers

## Overview



### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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**SHIFT from...**

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LESS                      to                      MORE

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



➔

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



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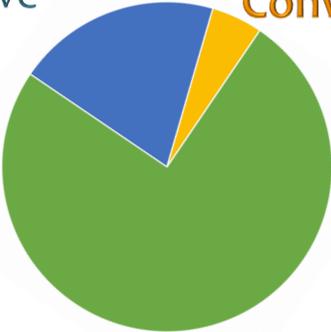
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**Types of Classroom Communication**

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**One-way** (Productive Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing, Multimedia)

(e.g., Turn and tell your partner your opinion on this issue)



**Conversational** (Collaborative Building, Exploring, Arguing)

(e.g., With your partner, decide which is the best choice. )

**Pseudo-Communication**  
(Shiny, Fake, Indirect, Display, Drills, Games, IRE)

(e.g., Turn to tell your partner the meaning of irony. Can someone tell me when WWII started? Solve this math problem. Write a response to literature essay (\$5). Make a poster about photosynthesis)

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**More Authentic Communication**

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**One-way** (Productive Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing, Multimedia)

Color	Approximate Percentage
Blue	55%
Yellow	25%
Green	20%

**Conversational** (Collaborative Building, Exploring, Arguing)

**Pseudo-Communication**  
(Shiny, Fake, Indirect, Display, Drills, Games, IRE)



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## Authentic Communication in School is

**the use of words**  
 (and/or other meaning-carriers)  
**to share information**  
**for doing meaningful things** (creating, changing,  
 deciding, clarifying, etc.)  
**that just one person can't do.**

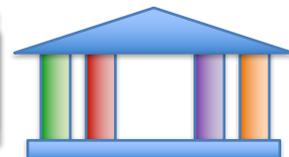


**Why is it so important?**

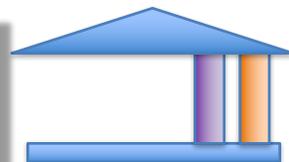
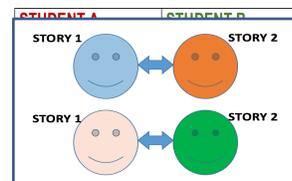
## Features of Activities that Accelerate Language Development

**\_\_\_ Is there a useful & engaging purpose?**  
 Students use language to do/build/change something beyond just answering questions for praise or points. Clarity matters.

Decide how Columbus  
 Co-design an experiment that helps you know how to best grow beans



**\_\_\_ Are there information gaps?** Students get or give information that they want, need, or don't have. (interdependence)



**\_\_\_ Is there attention to language in service of communication?** There is extra work (modeling, practicing, giving feedback, scaffolds) on language used.

- Sentence Frames
- Language modeling & scaffolding
- Practice
- Formative feedback



Building proficiencies  
in **speaking and listening**  
with:  
**TRANSITION IMPROV**  
**Activities**



*e.g., - Transition Improv Activity (Pro-Con)*

Topics:

Social media's influence  
on language development

*(You will make  
recommendations to  
teachers and students about  
the uses of social media)*

*Transitions:* **However,**  
**On the other hand,**  
**Then again,**

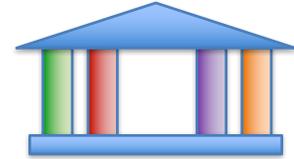
~~but~~

*Frames:* **One advantage is ... For example, ...**  
**Another positive of ... is... because...**  
**A negative aspect of \_\_\_ is ...**  
**In spite of the positives of \_\_\_\_\_,**

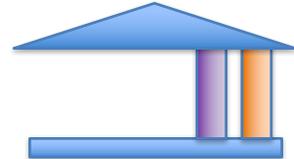
*A & B, Lean?*

## Does this Activity Accelerate Language Development?

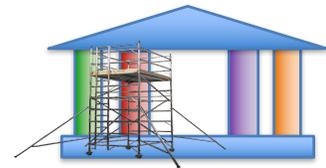
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## Transition Improv: **For-Against**

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

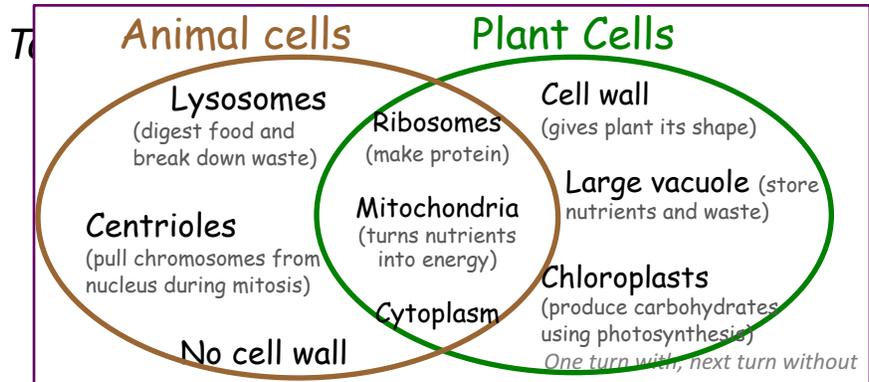
*Transitions:* **However,**  
**On the other hand,**  
**Then again,**

~~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?

**Transition Improv (Similar-Different)**



**However,** unlike animal cells, plant cells have \_\_\_\_, which ...  
**On the other hand,** & animal cells both have \_\_\_\_, which serve to...  
**Then again,** similar to \_\_\_\_ in that they both \_\_\_\_  
 Animal cells differ from plant cells in that \_\_\_\_

*Transition Improv: Two Views w/ Evidence*

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 \_\_\_\_...

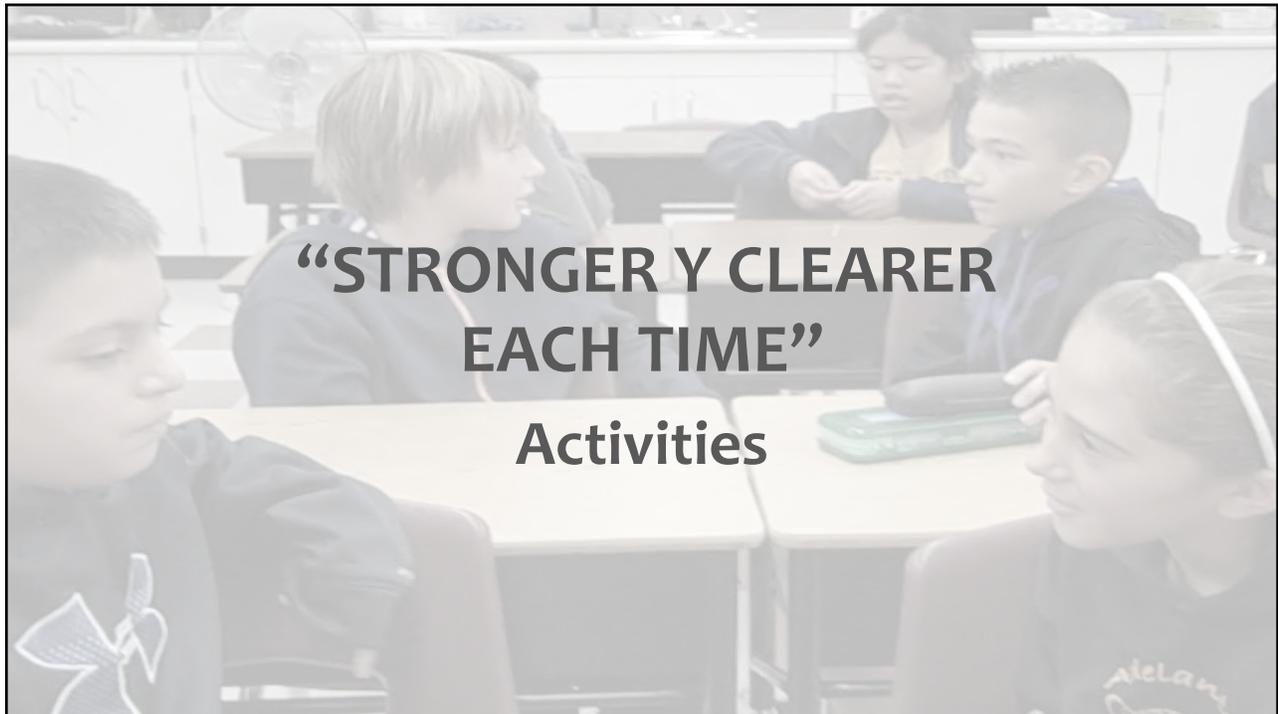
## Transition Improv Activity: Math Situations

*Topics:* Addition-Subtraction, Area-Perimeter, mm-km  
 Multiplication-Division, Volume-Surface Area  
 Fractions-Decimals, Integral-Derivative

*Transitions:* **However,**  
**On the other hand,**  
**Then again,**

~~but~~

*Frames:* You need to add when ... because...  
 When you ... you need to subtract because...  
 You need to calculate volume when... because...  
 When you ... you need to use decimals because...



## Designing “Stronger & Clearer Each Time” Activities



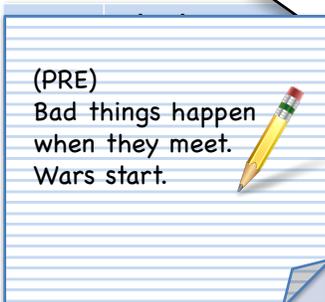
1. Prompt for an **original response**
2. Successive partners: **borrow and use the language, ideas, and evidence** each time-->
  - **Stronger** (often longer) with better supporting evidence and examples, and
  - **Clearer** with more precise terms and linked, organized, complete sentences.
3. Scaffolds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

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.

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

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

**Switch partners!**  
Don't forget to use examples; Stronger + clearer!

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

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.




What happens when cultures meet and why?

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### “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.

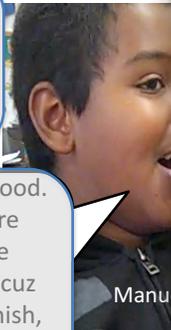
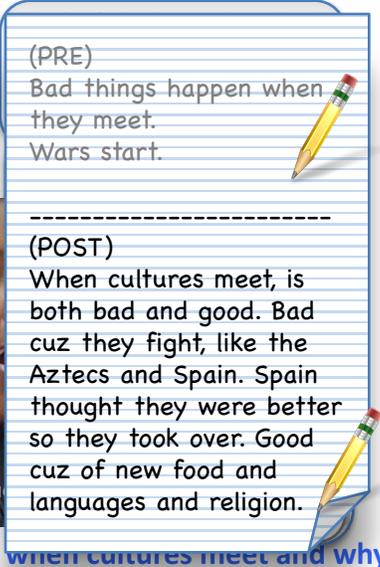
When cultures meet, is bad and good. Bad cuz they fight wars, like they're different. Spain thought they were better than the Aztecs. And good cuz you can learn languages, like Spanish, and new religion.

**Switch partners!**  
Don't forget to use examples; Stronger + clearer!

(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?

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### Looking at Student Work (Before & After Grid Partners)

PRE INTERVIEW TIME!  
(Listen in, Share out, Create together)

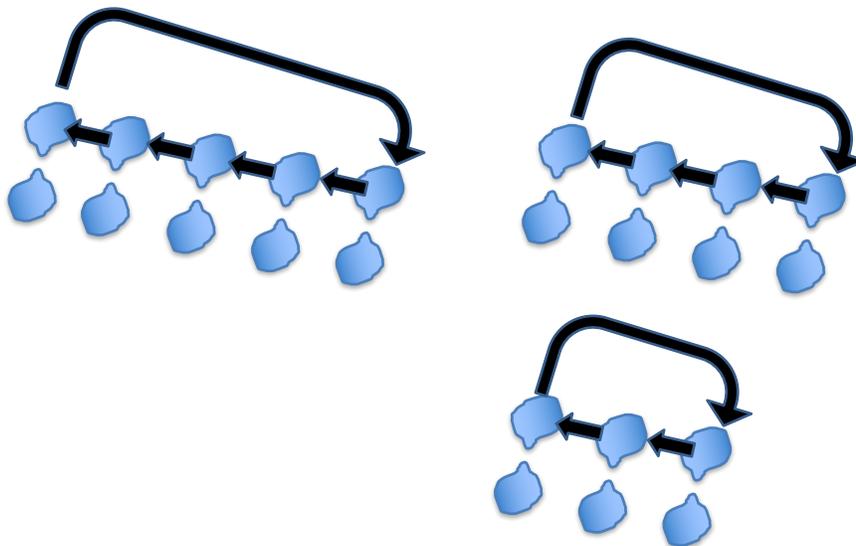
QUESTION: Why should I care about biodiversity?  
MY ANSWER: Because the food chain

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 Zwiars

### Interaction Mini-Lines



“Stronger & Clearer Each Time” Grid

<b>Name</b>	<b>Why is it important to learn about history through primary source documents?</b>	<i>You are a historian trying to convince a history textbook author to include primary sources.</i>	<i>He has not read in and had to know look for it.</i>
Me	(just two or three key words, if any)		
1.			
2.			
3.			
Me			

“Stronger & Clearer Each Time” Grid

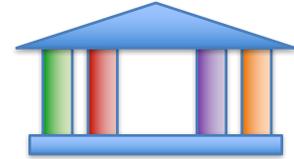
<b>Name</b>	<b>Conversations take time and energy—and many are loud, “messy,” and sometimes contain errors. So, is it worth it to have students converse during lessons?</b>	<i>You will present to your school on the value of having more conversation during lessons.</i>
Me	(just two or three key words, if any)	
1.		
2.		
3.		
Me		

One powerful way in which conversation can help students is...  
 I think educators need to know that authentic communication means...  
 Teachers can adapt their lessons in several ways, such as...  
~~I disagree with you...~~

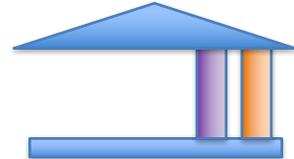
*Listeners can & should:*  
 - Prompt for clarification & support  
 - Help with “What about...?”

## Does this Activity Accelerate Language Development?

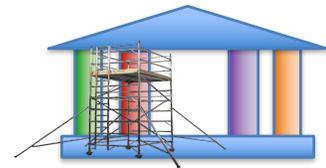
\_\_\_ **Is there a useful & engaging purpose?** Students use language to do/build/change something beyond just answering questions for praise or points. Clarity matters. Agency?



\_\_\_ **Are there information gaps?** Students get or give information that they want, need, or don't have. (interdependence)



\_\_\_ **Is there attention to language in service of communication?** There is extra work (modeling, practicing, giving feedback, scaffolds) on language used.



## Conversations

*True conversations are much rarer than we think.*



Conversation is a meeting of minds with different memories and habits. When minds meet, they don't just exchange facts: they transform them, reshape them, draw different implications from them, engage in new trains of thought. Conversation doesn't just reshuffle the cards-- it creates new ones.

--Theodore Zeldin

### What to Look For in Conversations: Conversation Observation & Analysis Tool (COAT)

#### Quantity

- # of turns
- Length of turns
- Equity of voice

#### Quality

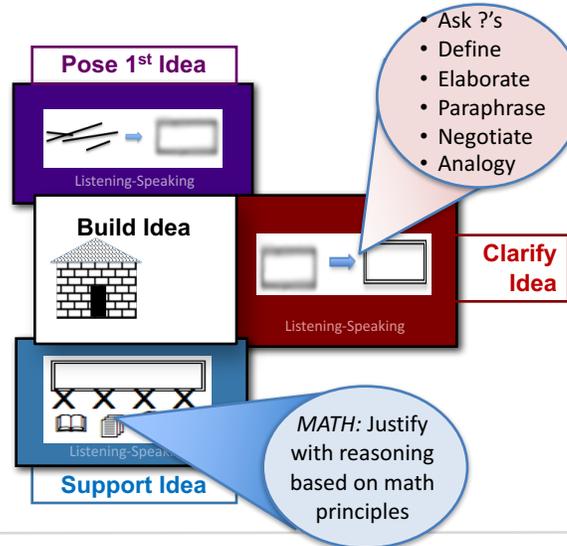
- Use conversation skills to co-construct & argue ideas
  - \_\_\_ Turns build on previous turns
  - \_\_\_ Students pose or choose a relevant initial idea(s) that is focused on learning objective(s)
  - \_\_\_ Students clarify idea(s) (by paraphrasing, defining, elaborating, asking questions, negotiating, etc.)
  - \_\_\_ Students support ideas (using evidence, examples, explanations)
  - \_\_\_ *If there are two or more competing ideas (argue/decide):* students build up both ideas and
    - \_\_\_ (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

#### Other Important Skills

- 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 (posture, nods, eye contact)
- Value one another's ideas, thinking, and feelings

## WHAT: Constructive Conversation Skills (Build one Idea)

**Goal: Students collaboratively (but w/o teacher) build an idea** (e.g., claim, answer, solution, interpretation), **using the following skills (not natural...and eventually need to be “automatic”):**



## Conversation

**Alicia:** Rosa Parks. Marcos said all she did was sit down, but I think she was a hero.

**Paty:** I agree. She has a book about her.

**Alicia:** Why do you think a whole book?

**Paty:** She was so brave to go to jail, and it was like just cuz she sat down on a bus. I still can't believe that all happened.

**Alicia:** All what?

**Paty:** The racism stuff. Just cuz of skin color? Separate drinking fountains?

**Alicia:** And she started the...what's that word?

**Paty:** Boycott.

**Alicia:** Boycott, so they change those racism rules. All cuz of Rosa! ... Where's Marcos?



## Constructive Conversations in 9<sup>th</sup> ELA

### Context

- Sheltered 9th grade English class
- 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.
- Some prompts are on the board

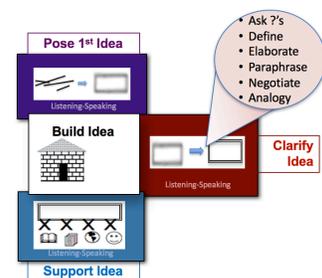


### This Clip

- Prompt: "What do you think an important theme in this book is?"
- How do they clarify and support ideas? ("What does courage mean?" "Can you elaborate on that?" "Can you give an example from another book?" "How does this apply to our life?")

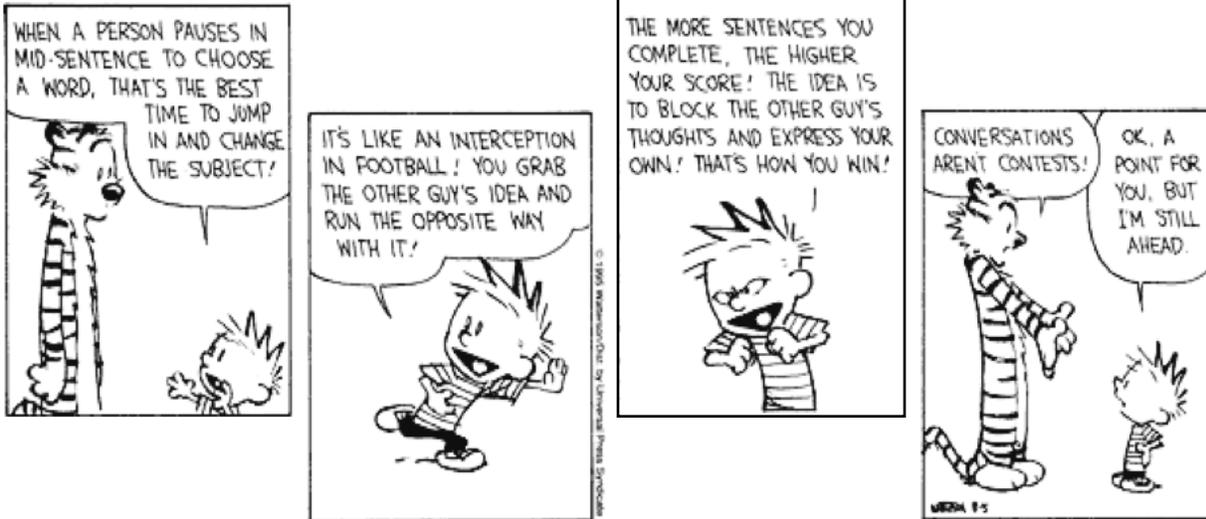
## Your Turn

"[...] 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. (Bradbury, 1953)

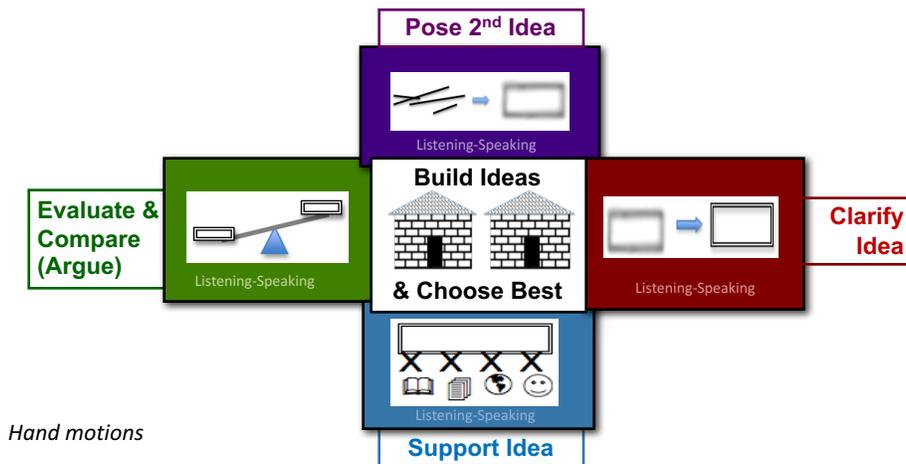


**Work with a partner to co-construct what you think is an important theme from this text and how it might connect to today. Don't forget to clarify and support your idea.**

## Collaborative Argumentation



## WHAT: Constructive Conversation Skills (*Collaborative Argument*)



*Hand motions*

## Improving Conversations

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.



## WHY: The Power of Collaborative Conversations

- CONTENT: Clarify, Use, & Reinforce**
- LANGUAGE: Input + Output + Mini-Challenges**
- Formative Assessment**
- Social Skills, Empathy, Equity, Agency, & Ownership**

## HOW: Conversation Observation Cards (de COAT)

Ask for an (another) example to support the idea

Paraphrase what your partner said

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

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

Pose an alternative idea and start to build it up

Stay focused on the conversation prompt/purpose

Encourage your partner to talk more

Summarize the conversation up until now

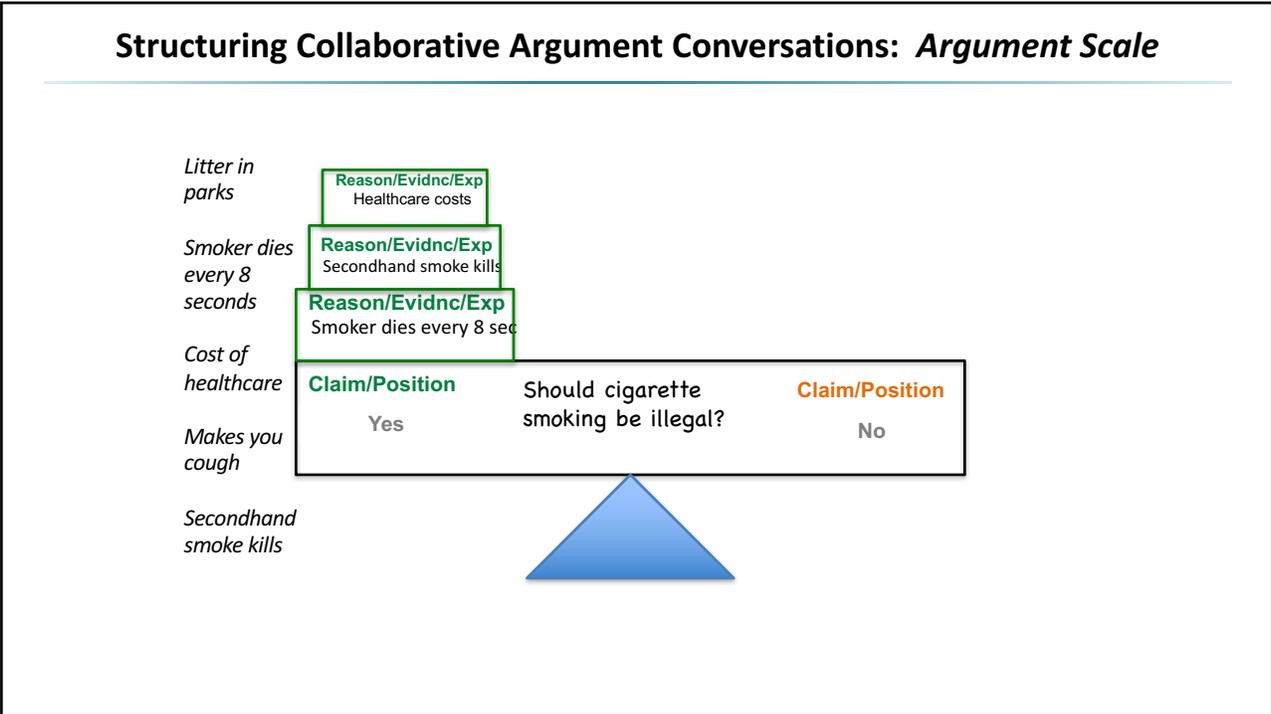
## Using the Cards

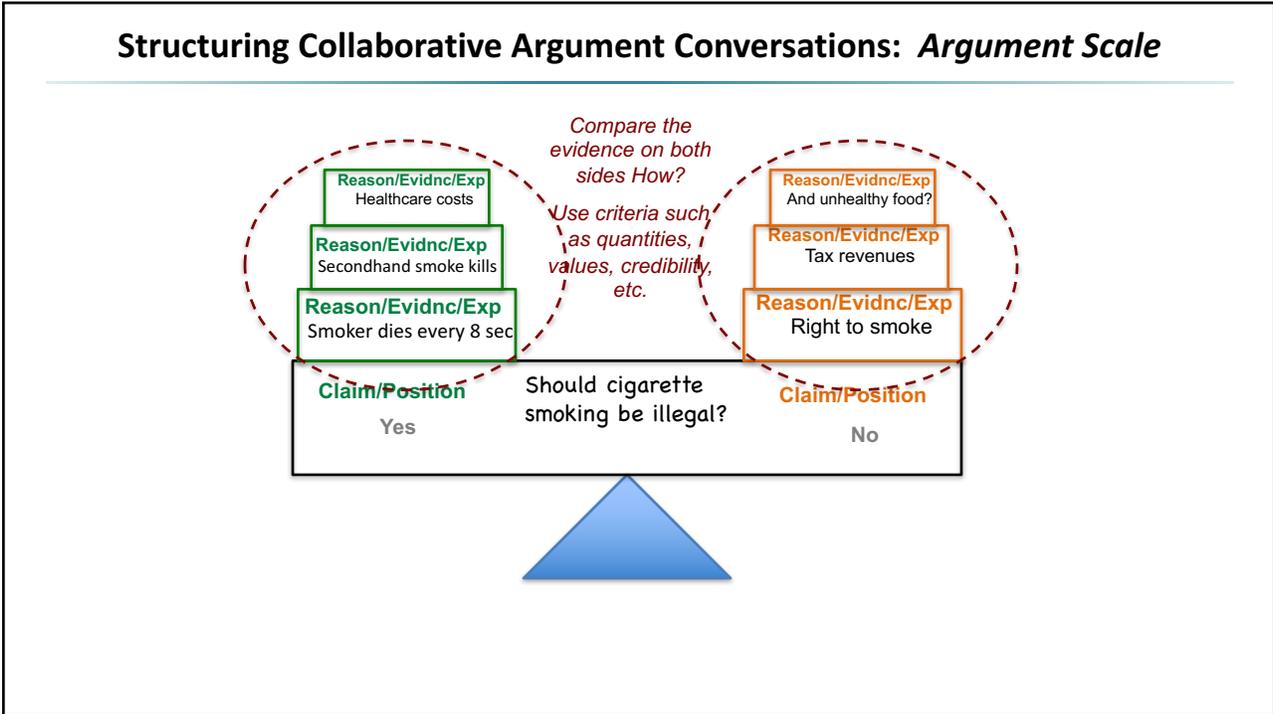
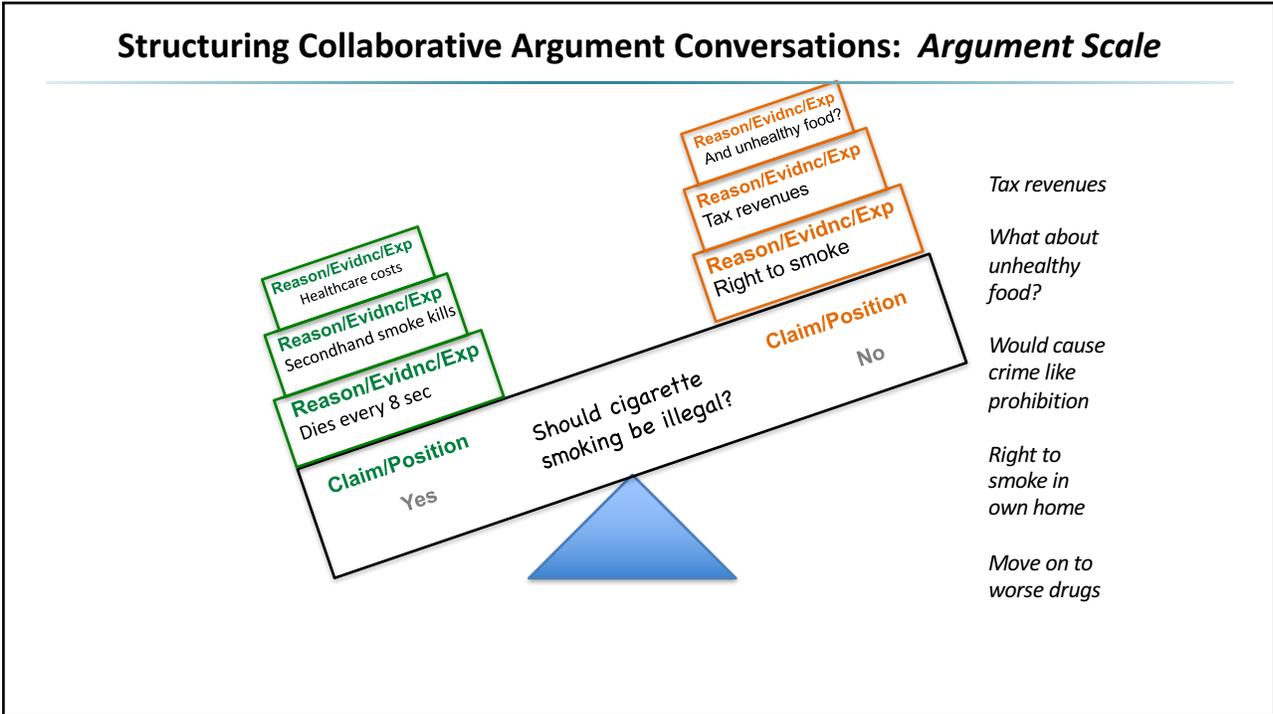
- 1 Karla: So, why do squids have ink?
- 2 Maya: For writing.
- 3 Karla: What do you mean?
- 4 Maya: Ink is for writing.
- 5 Karla: Squids can't write.
- 6 Maya: Not with pens like us, but like maybe on a rock. Like to mark their place.
- 7 Karla: I don't understand that, but I think they got ink to., they escape. Like in the book.
- 8 Maya: OK.
- 9 Karla: They let it out and it makes a cloud so they, you know, can swim away.
- 10 Maya: And maybe it poisons the fish?
- 11 Karla: I don't know; I think jellyfish have poison.
- 12 Maya: I hate jellyfish: the poison ones.
- 13 Karla: People die from their stings, I think.



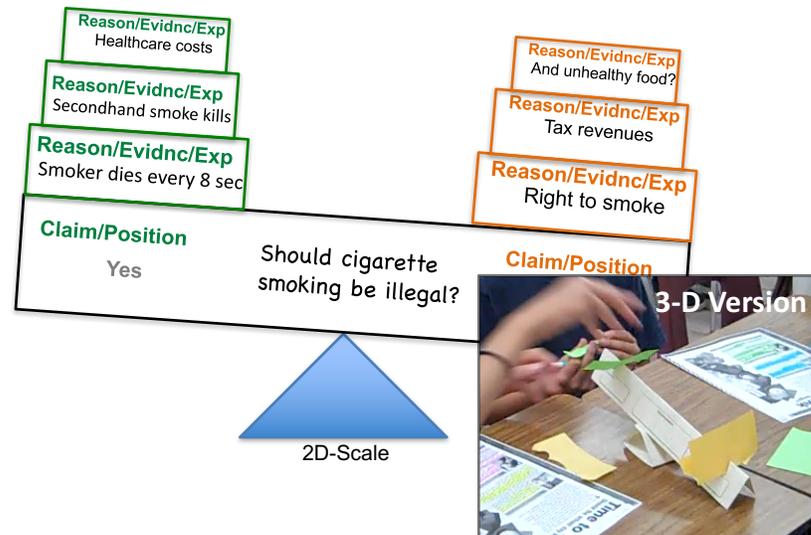
Building collaborative  
argumentation skills with the

# ARGUMENT BALANCE SCALE



## Structuring Collaborative Argument Conversations: *Argument Scale*



## What to Look For in Conversations: Conversation Observation & Analysis Tool (COAT)

### 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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    - (a) evaluate the strength/weight of the evidence of each idea
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### Other Important Skills

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- Academic thinking (+ use of thinking asked for in prompt)
- Academic content (+ talk about content asked for in prompt)
- Nonverbal communication (posture, nods, eye contact)
- Value one another's ideas, thinking, and feelings

## Structuring Collaborative Argument Conversations: *Argument Scale*

### 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

## 8<sup>th</sup> History – Using the Argument Scale

Mayra: One side is that industrialization was bad.

Ben: What do you mean by ‘bad’?

Mayra: For example, there was crime and it was dangerous. You saw the pictures. right?

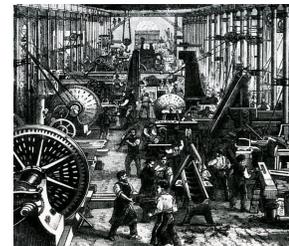
Ben: Yeah, and they showed some sick people. And the article said people got hurt a lot, and died.

Mayra: I think a lot of people got sick and some did crime cuz machines took their jobs.

Ben: And there was lots of pollution.

Mayra: Say more about that. Like how did industrialization make pollution more bad?

Ben: The factories just dumped it into rivers.



### 8<sup>th</sup> History – Using the Argument Scale

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Mayra: And lots of smoke in the air, too.

Ben: Yeah, so what about the good side of it?

Mayra: On this card it says it helped people buy cheaper things.

Ben: How?

Mayra: The factories made lots of things in a day, so they could cost less.  
For example, cars.

Ben: And people got jobs in factories so they got work and got paid.

Mayra: And they maybe had better lives at home with inventions they made in factories.

Ben: OK, so which side is stronger or heavier?

Mayra: I dunno. Like the job thing is on both sides/

### 8<sup>th</sup> History – Using the Argument Scale

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Mayra: /Some people lost jobs and some people got jobs. I don't know what was better. And they are the same size card.

Ben: Yeah, so maybe they are even. But the pollution got way worse, and it's a big card.

Mayra: Yeah. But does pollution weigh more than some of the inventions that made life better? We got cars and airplanes and they pollute.

Ben: I think pollution is way more bad. Pollution kills animals and makes people sick. And it lasts forever.

Mayra: I agree, but factories also make medicines.

Ben: They make bombs, too.

Mayra: OK, so let's say it is more on the bad side.

Ben: OK.

### Text: Schoolgirl loses veil legal case

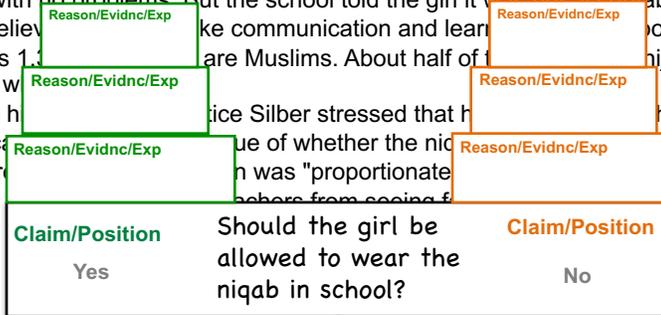


A 12-year-old schoolgirl has failed in a legal challenge to her school's ban on a full-face veil. Justice Silber had been told that the girl's three older sisters had attended the same school and had worn the niqab with no problems. But the school told the girl it was not acceptable because teachers believed it would make communication and learning difficult. About 120 of the school's 1,300-plus pupils are Muslims. About half of them wear the hijab headscarf, which is permitted.

In his judgement, Justice Silber stressed that he was dealing with one particular case - not the wider issue of whether the niqab should be worn, in schools or anywhere else. He said the ban was "proportionate" in the light of certain factors:

- the veil prevented teachers from seeing facial expressions - a key element in effective classroom interaction
- the necessity to enforce a school uniform policy under which girls of different faiths would have a sense of equality and identity
- security - the head teacher had said an unwelcome visitor could move around the school incognito
- the need to avoid peer pressure on girls to take up wearing the veil

The girl's lawyer, Shah Qureshi, said: "It's surprising that he decided that the school had not infringed my client's freedom to manifest her religion given the fact that she entered the school on the understanding that the wearing of the veil was allowed when being taught by male teachers." Costs in the case were awarded against the family.



### Text: Schoolgirl loses veil legal case



A 12-year-old schoolgirl has failed in a legal challenge to her school's ban on a full-face veil. Justice Silber had been told that the girl's three older sisters had attended the same school and had worn the niqab with no problems. But the school told the girl it was not acceptable because teachers believed it would make communication and learning difficult. About 120 of the school's 1,300-plus pupils are Muslims. About half of them wear the hijab headscarf, which is permitted.

In his judgement, Justice Silber stressed that he was dealing with one particular case - not the wider issue of whether the niqab should be worn, in schools or anywhere else. He said the ban was "proportionate" in the light of certain factors:

- the veil prevented teachers from seeing facial expressions - a key element in effective classroom interaction
- the necessity to enforce a school uniform policy under which girls of different faiths would have a sense of equality and identity
- security - the head teacher had said an unwelcome visitor could move around the school incognito
- the need to avoid peer pressure on girls to take up wearing the veil

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Growing conversation skills in math with the

# Math Paired Conversation Protocol



### Math Paired Conversation Protocol

**PROBLEM:** Suppose it takes the Almond River 4 years, by itself, to fill a reservoir, and Campbell Creek, on its own, 6 years to fill it. If both are flowing into the reservoir, how long will it take to fill it?

<b>Paraphrase and clarify problem for one another (in pairs)</b> <i>(Talk about what is asked; what is given; what happens; what the units are, etc.)</i>			
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>TALK</b>			
<b>Estimate the answer</b> <i>(Each partner generate and justify your own estimate; then compare them)</i>			
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>TALK</b>			
<b>METHOD_A</b> <i>(name it)</i>	Justify method <input type="checkbox"/> <b>TALK</b>	<b>METHOD_B</b> <i>(name it)</i>	Justify method <input type="checkbox"/> <b>TALK</b>
Visuals, Drawings, Charts, Symbols, Calculations, Solution	Justify what you do <input type="checkbox"/> <b>TALK</b>	Visuals, Drawings, Charts, Symbols, Calculations, Solution	Justify what you do <input type="checkbox"/> <b>TALK</b>



## Conversation Prompts

- ❑ **There is an engaging purpose** for conversing that (a) **connects to lesson objectives**, and (b) **requires thinking & doing something with ideas**  
(e.g., create, clarify, argue (=>consensus), decide, rank, solve, evaluate, combine, compare, choose, fortify, build, & transform) (+ Agency)
- ❑ **There is a need to talk**  
(info gaps; bring unique ideas)
- ❑ **There are clear directions** for how to converse (language use, thinking, content concepts...)

**ELA Literature:** Collaboratively decide

**ELA Expository:** Decide whether or not to

**Math:** Work with your partner to create a

**Science:** In your conversation, compare

**History:** With your partner, decide if Lincoln was more interested in abolishing slavery or more interested in preserving the Union.

Use evidence to support the claims on each side and evaluate the value of the evidence, along with any bias that might exist in the sources. Use historian language such as "This is strong evidence because..."

## Create a Model Conversation

**Think of an upcoming (or past) lesson and write a prompt and conversation between two students that shows their learning.**

**A:**

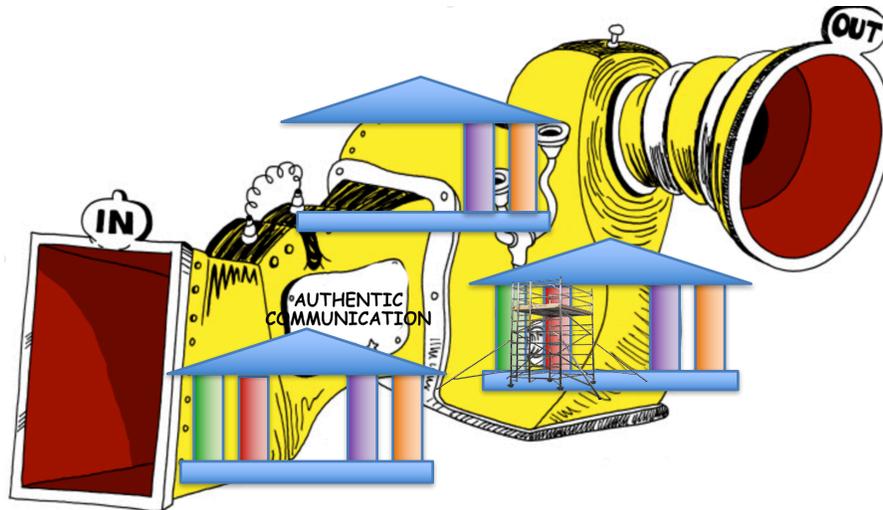
**B:**

**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.

## Transforming Curriculum, Lessons, Activities



## Strengthening Communicativeness in every Activity

*Write essay, report, letter*  
*Read & answer questions*  
*Use graphic organizers*  
*Take notes*  
*Create a poster*  
*Write a lab report*  
*Solve a word problem*  
*Writers' Workshop*  
*Simulation*  
*Analyze a painting*

*Give One, Get One*  
*Four Corners*  
*Games (Bingo, Jeopardy)*  
*Oral Presentation*  
*Gallery Walk*  
*Answer teacher questions*  
*Think-Pair-Share*  
*Literature Circles*  
*Jigsaw*  
*Socratic Seminar*

*Create a story*  
*Video*  
*Dramatization*  
*Debate*  
*Readers Workshop*  
*Write a Prequel/Sequel*  
*Make a Podcast*

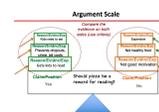
## Sample Lesson Plan: History

- I. **Objectives:** Argue a historical claim.
- 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 about likely causes
- IV. **Transition Improv:** For-Against on topic
- V. **Academic Conversation Modeling of use of Argument Balance Scale:** Emphasize skills of supporting and evaluating evidence and importance, and arguing for one cause over another.
- VI. **Creativity Conversations:** Co-Write a final argument article.



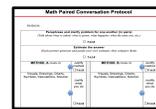
## Sample Lesson Plan: Science

- I. **Objectives:** Describe the circulatory system.
- II. **Activity in pairs:** Heart rate resting and after running.
- III. **Stronger & Clearer Grid:** (Read text about system and share ideas with each partner; use heart rate activity as an example.
- IV. **“No-Look Write”** write a description of the circulatory system without looking at texts or notes.
- V. **Academic Conversations:** Read articles on the effects of diet and smoking on the circulatory system. Co-create posters that argue for better diet, exercise, and quitting smoking.



## Sample Lesson Plan: Math

- I. **Objective:** Collaborate to solve word problems with multiple solution methods
- II. **Launch Problem in Pairs:** Pairs try to talk through ways to solve a new problem (find the price point) with whole group sharing of strategies and questions.
- III. **Stronger & Clearer:** Students meet with successive partners to improve, clarify, and expand their solution ideas
- IV. **Info Gap Problem:** A has situation; B has data
- V. **Math Paired Conversation Protocol:** Emphasize skills of supporting solution ideas with the words of the problem and math principles.
- VI. **Co-Crafting Conversations:** Co-Write a similar but more challenging word problem.



## Conclusion



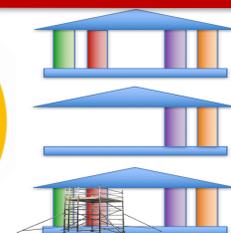
*Learners must use language in order to learn it!*



*Shift from solo piling up pieces to co-constructing whole ideas!*



*Increase authentic speaking, listening, reading, writing, & conversing*



*Language features include purpose, info gaps, and attention to language*



*Conversations clarify content, foster language input & output, show learning, & cultivate noncognitive skills & agency*