

## Academic Conversations as a Gateway to Academic Literacy



Jeff Zwiers  
New York City  
March 7, 2017  
[jeffzwiers.org/march7](http://jeffzwiers.org/march7)  
[jzwiers@stanford.edu](mailto:jzwiers@stanford.edu)

**Download  
slides right  
now from  
here**

### 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 academic 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 or parts 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

**Communicativeness "Dad"**  
(Essential Features for Language Development)

... Is there a useful & engaging purpose to the activity, as stated in our package to do something meaningful and thought-provoking (beyond just the research question or goal stated)?

... Do I have enough resources to use language for academic purposes?

... Is there an information gap? If the activity or student set of questions requires that you search, read, or find things.

... Is there a challenge to language in terms of of comprehension for the activity, in terms of reading and assessment focused on improving how language is used? This includes reading, writing, using feedback, and/or speaking.

**Transition Improv 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 Focus:** One advantage is... For example... Another problem is... In addition... A major benefit of... is... In terms of the potential of...

**"Stronger & Cleaner Each Time" Grid**

... I have a clear purpose for my activity, as stated in our package to do something meaningful and thought-provoking (beyond just the research question or goal stated)?

... Do I have enough resources to use language for academic purposes?

... Is there an information gap? If the activity or student set of questions requires that you search, read, or find things.

... Is there a challenge to language in terms of of comprehension for the activity, in terms of reading and assessment focused on improving how language is used? This includes reading, writing, using feedback, and/or speaking.

**Focus (20 Min)**

**Practice & Compare (Repeat)**

**Build Ideas & Create Best**

**Classify**

**Support Ideas**

**Argument Scale**

... I have a clear purpose for my activity, as stated in our package to do something meaningful and thought-provoking (beyond just the research question or goal stated)?

... Do I have enough resources to use language for academic purposes?

... Is there an information gap? If the activity or student set of questions requires that you search, read, or find things.

... Is there a challenge to language in terms of of comprehension for the activity, in terms of reading and assessment focused on improving how language is used? This includes reading, writing, using feedback, and/or speaking.

**Write/Use Model Conversations**

A:

B:

Notes:

### Conversations with Support Cards (Nikki Rank and Gabriella Foto)

Notes: The two videos show our students practicing academic discussions with stronger and clearer sentence stems. The ELL students had access to sentence stem cards to help guide their conversations. Because this was the second time that we used the stronger and clearer routine, we were happy to see that the students were already having much deeper and more natural academic discussion.

#### Expressing an opinion

- In my opinion...because...
- I believe/I think that...because...
- It seems to me that...because...



#### Asking for clarification

- what do you mean?
- Can you explain that one more time?
- I have a question about that.



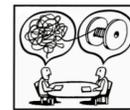
#### Asking for a response

- what do you think?
- Do you agree?



#### Paraphrasing

- So, you are saying that...
- In other words...



### Conversations with Support Cards (Nikki Rank and Gabriella Foto)

Notes: This video shows a former ELL (Fabrizio) with a native English speaker (Yarden) discussing the advantages and disadvantages of cell phone usage.



#### Prompt

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

#### 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

- 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

## Conversations with Support Cards (Nikki Rank and Gabriella Foto)

Notes: This video shows an entering ELL (Angus) with a former ELL (Jhon) discussing the dangers of child labor.



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

## 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

3. Have students read the text and identify quotations that support different sides of the issue.

4. Students form groups and discuss the quotations, identifying the main points of each side.

When I was teaching, all too often I turned around from writing a student's cell phone-based report to find a student who had written a report on the dangers of cell phone use. The principal argued: "I don't know if cell phone use is a good thing or a bad thing. I know that it has many advantages, but I also know that it has many disadvantages. I think that we should have a discussion about it." The principal argued: "I don't know if cell phone use is a good thing or a bad thing. I know that it has many advantages, but I also know that it has many disadvantages. I think that we should have a discussion about it."

*You can*



**Should cell phone use be banned in school?**

- 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.

Switch partners!

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

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."*



**Should video games be banned?**

## 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* opinion.
3. Have students read their own card and think about how it supports, contradicts, or even changes their opinion.
4. Students then meet with students who have different points (different colors), read quotations to each other, and both state their current opinion on the issue. (They can also ask questions and prompt for elaboration.) (They can also first meet with a partner with the same quotation to clarify its meaning.)



**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 ...

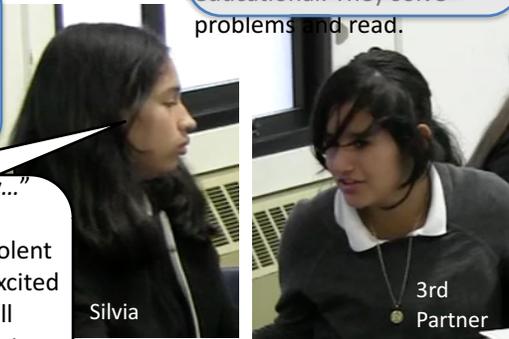
## Student Model of Opinion Formation Cards

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

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

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.

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.



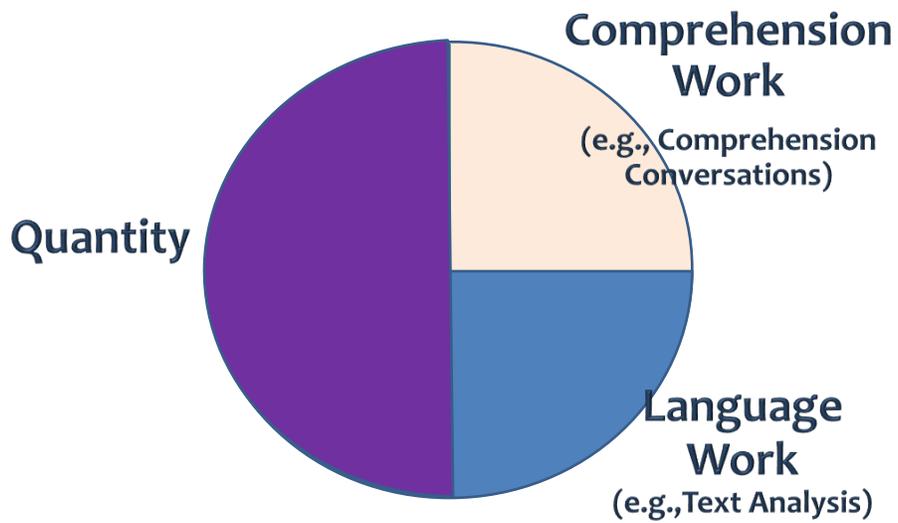
**Should video games be banned?**



**If academic language essential for learning and showing learning, then every activity that students do in class should be leveraged to develop it.**

### Building Academic 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



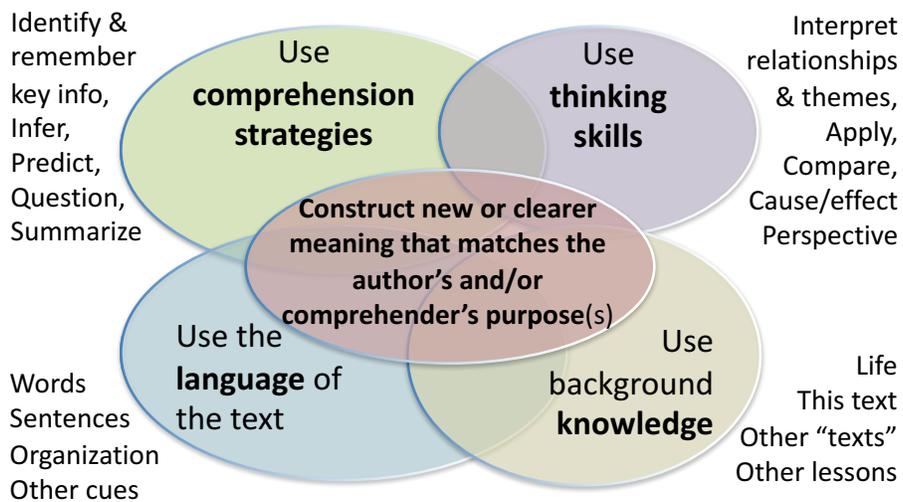
Jeff Zwiers

jeffzwiers.org/march7

Understanding Language

## What is comprehension & what influences it?

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



Jeff Zwiers

jeffzwiers.org/march7

Understanding Language

## 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?

Jeff Zwiers
 Understanding Language

## Comprehension Conversations

---

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

*Ask each other*

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

Jeff Zwiers
 Understanding Language

## Comprehension Conversations

---

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?



Jeff Zwiers

Understanding Language

## Comprehension Conversations

---

Use  
background  
**knowledge**

Ask each other:

- For *helpful* 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?”



Jeff Zwiers

Understanding Language

## Comprehension Conversations

---

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**

## Comprehension Conversations

---

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

## ELA Text

### *Seedfolks* Chapter 1 - Kim

I stood before our family altar. It was dawn. No one else in the apartment was awake. I stared at my father's photograph, with his thin face stem, lips latched tight. his eyes peering permanently to the right. I was nine years old and still hoped that perhaps his eyes might move. Might notice me.

The candies and the incense sticks, lit the day before to mark his death anniversary, had burned out. The rice and meat offered him were gone. After the evening feast, past midnight, I'd been wakened by my mother's crying. My oldest sister had joined in. My own tears had then come as well, but for a different reason.

I turned from the altar, tiptoed to the kitchen, and quietly drew a spoon from a drawer. I filled my lunch thermos with water and reached into our jar of dried lima beans. Then I walked outside to the street.

The sidewalk was completely empty. It was Sunday, early in April . An icy wind teetered trash cans and turned my cheeks to marble. In Vietnam we had no weather like that. Here in Cleveland people call it spring. I walked half a block, then crossed the street and reached the vacant lot.

## ELA Text

I stood tall and scouted. No one was sleeping on the old couch in the middle. I'd never entered the lot before, or wanted to. I did so now, picking my way between tires and trash bags. I nearly stepped on two rats gnawing and froze. Then I told myself that I must show my bravery. I continued farther and chose a spot far from the sidewalk and hidden from view by a rusty refrigerator. I had to keep my project safe.

I took out my spoon and began to dig. The snow had melted, but the ground was hard. After much work, I finished one hole, then a second, then a third. I thought about how my mother and sisters remembered my father, how they knew his face from every angle and held in their fingers the feel of his hands. I had no such memories to cry over. I'd been born eight months after he'd died. Worse, he had no memories of me. When his spirit hovered over our altar, did it even know who I was?

I dug six holes. All his life in Vietnam my father had been a farmer. Here our apartment house had no yard. But in that vacant lot he would see me. He would watch my beans break ground and spread, and would notice with pleasure their pods growing plump. He would see my patience and my hard work. I would show him that I could raise plants, as he had. I would show him that I was his daughter.

My class had sprouted lima beans in paper cups the year before. I now placed a bean in each of the holes. I covered them up, pressing the soil down firmly with my fingertips. I opened my thermos and watered them all. And I vowed to myself that those beans would thrive.

## 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?
  - ?

## Model: 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

## 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.



## 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"> <li>— Turns build on previous turns</li> <li>— Students pose or choose a relevant initial idea(s) that is focused on learning objective(s)</li> <li>— Students clarify idea(s) (by paraphrasing, defining, elaborating, asking questions, negotiating, etc.)</li> <li>— Students support ideas (using evidence, examples, explanations)</li> <li>— <i>If there are two or more competing ideas (argue/decide):</i> students build up both ideas and                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— (a) evaluate the strength/weight of the evidence of each idea</li> <li>— (b) compare the strengths/weights and choose the "strongest/heaviest" idea</li> <li>— (c) explain and/or negotiate final decisions &amp; conclusions</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<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	

## 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 Analysis with the COAT

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"> <li>— Turns build on previous turns</li> <li>— Students pose or choose a relevant initial idea(s) that is focused on learning objective(s)</li> <li>— Students clarify idea(s) (by paraphrasing, defining, elaborating, asking questions, negotiating, etc.)</li> <li>— Students support ideas (using evidence, examples, explanations)</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— If there are two or more competing ideas (argue/decide): students build up both ideas and               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) evaluate the strength/weight of the evidence of each idea</li> <li>(b) compare the strengths/weights and choose the "strongest/heaviest" idea</li> <li>(c) explain and/or negotiate final decisions &amp; conclusions</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<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	

## Video 1

- Context**
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade
  - Had read a story about hobbies and learned the word 'obsess'
  - *Prompt:* Are some hobbies better than others?
  - Look for strengths and areas to improve based on the COAT



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

Jeff Zwiars

## Video 2

- Context**
- 4<sup>th</sup> Grade ELD
  - Working on supporting claims with reasons and evidence
  - *Prompt:* What do you like to do in your free time?
  - Look for teacher supports, student strengths and areas to improve based on the COAT



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

Jeff Zwiars

## Video 3

### Context

- 6<sup>th</sup> Grade History
- Using cards to support discussion moves: paraphrase, clarify, support...
- *Prompt:* Was Xi Huang-Di's building of the Great Wall good or bad?
- Look for usefulness of supports, student strengths and areas to improve based on the COAT



Jeff Zwiers

<p><b>Prompt</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Relevant & Engaging Purpose <input type="checkbox"/> Need to talk (info gaps) <input type="checkbox"/> Clear Expectations (language to use, thinking, content)		<p>— <i>If there are two or more competing ideas (argue/decide):</i>            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 &amp; conclusions</p> <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
<p><b>Quantity</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> # of turns <input type="checkbox"/> Length of turns <input type="checkbox"/> Equity of voice		
<p><b>Quality</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> 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 ideas(s) (by paraphrasing, defining, elaborating, asking questions, negotiating, etc.) — Students support ideas (using evidence, examples, explanations)		

## Video 4

### Context

- 12<sup>th</sup> Grade English
- Preparing for Socratic Seminars (*Brave New World*)
- *Prompt:* Should we decide on traits for babies?
- Look for use of supports, student strengths, and areas to improve based on the COAT



Jeff Zwiers

<p><b>Prompt</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Relevant & Engaging Purpose <input type="checkbox"/> Need to talk (info gaps) <input type="checkbox"/> Clear Expectations (language to use, thinking, content)		<p>— <i>If there are two or more competing ideas (argue/decide):</i>            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 &amp; conclusions</p> <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
<p><b>Quantity</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> # of turns <input type="checkbox"/> Length of turns <input type="checkbox"/> Equity of voice		
<p><b>Quality</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> 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 ideas(s) (by paraphrasing, defining, elaborating, asking questions, negotiating, etc.) — Students support ideas (using evidence, examples, explanations)		

## **Conversers' Choice (Triads)**

---

**As a pair, think of an academic topic that you want to talk about, develop a prompt, and engage in a conversation.**

**The observer observes with the COAT and takes notes. If the conversation stalls, the observer can help get it going (and can use support cards/sticky notes).**

## **Create a Model Conversation**

---

**Think of an upcoming lesson and write a conversation between two (or more) 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

Jeff Zwiers

Understanding Language

## 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



Jeff Zwiers

Understanding Language

## 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.



Jeff Zwiars

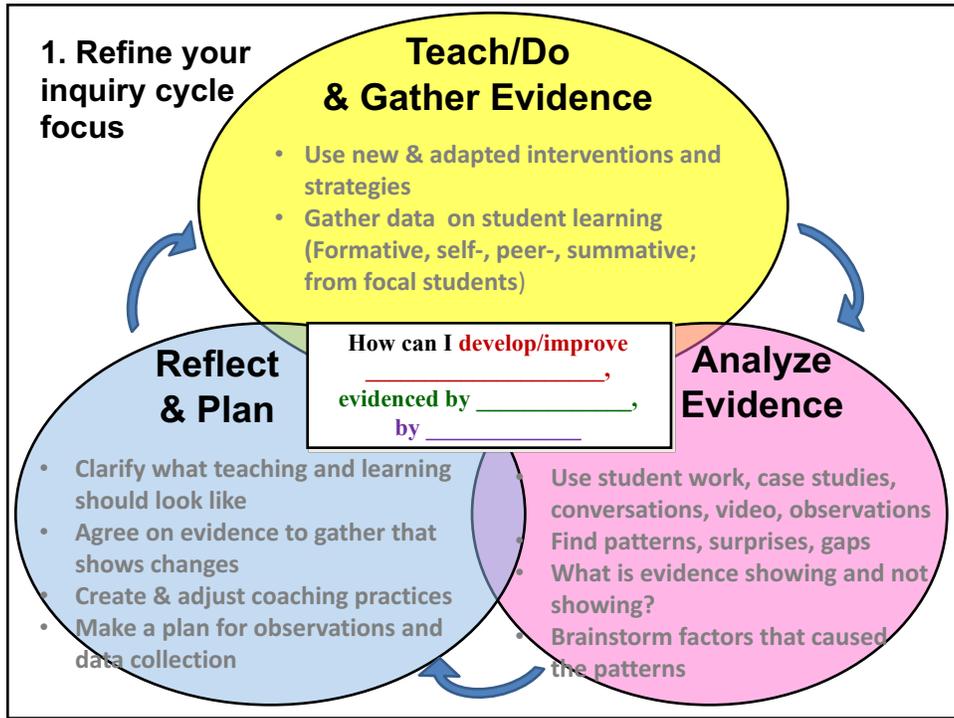
Understanding Language/SCALE

## 3 x 3 x 3 Framework

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

Jeff Zwiars

Understanding Language



**TASK**

**Communicatives "Ier"**  
(Essential Features for Language Development)

... Is there a need to engage students in the activity, or do they use language to do something meaningful and engaging themselves? Just to answer questions or get things done?  
Do it prepare students to use language for academic purposes?

... Is there an information gap? If the activity, do students get to give information that they aren't used to or don't know?

... Is there a need to engage students in the activity, or do they use language to do something meaningful and engaging themselves? Just to answer questions or get things done?  
Do it prepare students to use language for academic purposes?

... Is there an information gap? If the activity, do students get to give information that they aren't used to or don't know?

... Is there a need to engage students in the activity, or do they use language to do something meaningful and engaging themselves? Just to answer questions or get things done?  
Do it prepare students to use language for academic purposes?

**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, but, Then again.**

AI Prompts: One advantage is... For example... Another problem is... In addition... A major aspect of... In terms of the position of...

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

How do I feel about...? (Stronger & Clearer Each Time)

What do I think about...? (Stronger & Clearer Each Time)

What happens when...? (Stronger & Clearer Each Time)

**Flowchart**

Flowchart showing steps: Plan, Do, Check, Act.

**Argument Scale**

Argument Scale showing levels: 1. Claim, 2. Evidence, 3. Reasoning, 4. Conclusion.

**Write/Use Model Conversations**

A:  
B:

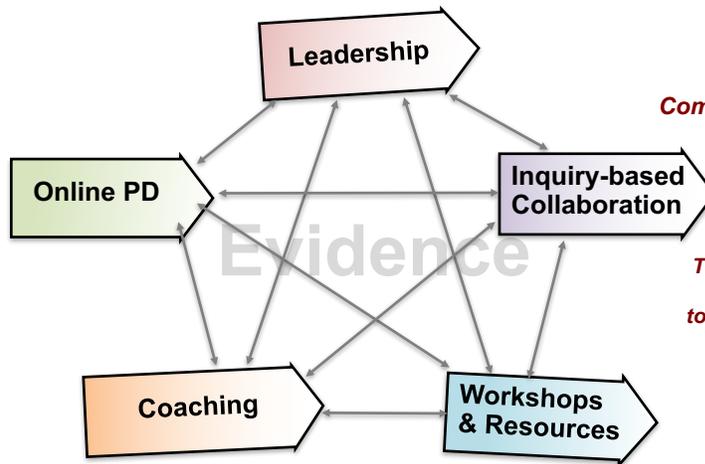
2. Draft three back-to-back lesson plans that include activities that develop speaking & conversation skills. You will share these with the group. Please use at least two new activities (from our times together) and feel free to modify existing activities in ways that use some of the features we have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

**TASK**

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**



*Communication-Based Teaching of Language, Literacy, Thinking Skills, & Content to EIs and AELs*

## CONTACT INFORMATION

---

**Email:** [jzwiers@stanford.edu](mailto:jzwiers@stanford.edu)

**Web sites:** [jeffzwiers.org/March7](http://jeffzwiers.org/March7)  
[ell.stanford.edu](http://ell.stanford.edu)



### References

Mercer, N. (2000). *The Guided Construction of Knowledge: Talk amongst teachers and learners*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Zwiers, J. & Soto, I. (2016) *Academic Language Mastery: Conversational Discourse in Context*. Corwin Press.

Zwiers, O'Hara, & Pritchard (2014) *Common Core Standards in diverse classrooms: Essential practices for developing academic language & disciplinary literacy*. Stenhouse.