Fostering Communication and Conversation Skills in Every Lesson

Jeff Zwiers
February 15, 2018
jeffzwiers.org/february15
jzwiers@stanford.edu

AGENDA

I. Authentic Communication
II. Conversation Skills
III. ACTIVITY: Transition Improv
IV. ACTIVITY: Stronger & Clearer Each Time
V. Modifying Activities for Conversation Skills
I. Authentic Communication Features (for Accelerating Language Development)

_____ Purposeful building of idea(s).
Students use language to do something beyond just answering questions for praise or points. Clarity & support matter. (Agency)

+ _____ Information gap(s). Students get or give information that they want, need, or don’t have. (Natural or created) (Students need one another.)

_____ Attention to language in service of communication, if needed. There is extra work on language to be used by students.

Understanding Language

II. Conversation Skills

Students (w/o teacher) collaboratively build an idea (e.g., claim, answer, solution, interpretation)—not just ask & answer questions—using the skills on the right:

- Language modeling & scaffolding (e.g., sentence frames)
- Practice
- Formative feedback

MATH: Justify with reasoning based on math principles & the problem
III. Transition Improv Activities
for Fostering Conversation Skills:
☐ Speaking  ☐ Listening
☐ Clarifying  ☐ Supporting

& Language Development (AC) Features:

Transition Improv Activity: Pro-Con

Topics: Using sentence frames for writing, speaking, and conversation activities

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

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

Listeners can & should:
- Prompt for clarification
- Prompt for support
- Offer idea seeds w/ “What about...?”

A & B, Lean?
Video of Pro-Con

High school ELA/ELD

Pros and cons of communism

Aspects?
- Meaning, not points?
- Student agency?
- Info gaps?
- Value ideas & take risks

Transition Improv: **For-Against**

**Topics:** Genetic engineering, electoral college, nuclear energy, social media, human-caused climate change, wolf reintroduction, de-extinction, zoos, year-round schools, corn as fuel, extraterrestrial life, desalination, going to college* (2 texts)

**Transitions:** However,

On the other hand,

Then again,

---

**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 ...

---

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

Jeff Zwiers
**Transition Improv: Similar-Different**

**Topic:** Plant cells & animal cells

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

**Frames:**
- Unlike animal cells, plant cells have ____ which ...
- Plant & animal cells both have ____ which serve to ...
- ... are similar to ____ in that they both _____
- Animal cells differ from plant cells in that _____

---

**Transition Improv: Similar-Different**

**Topic:** old Brian & new Brian

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

**Frames:**
- Unlike the old Brian, new Brian ____ which came from
- Both new and old brian ____ which ...
- New Brian differs from old Brian in that _____
- An important trait that didn’t change in Brian was ...
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: Math Situations

Topics: Area-Perimeter, Sine-Cosine, Volume-Surface Area,
Linear-Quadratic, Fractions-Decimals, Integral-Derivative,
Constant-Variable, Correlation-Causation, Equations-Inequalities

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

but

Frames: You need to use integrals when ... because...
When you ... you need to use derivatives because...
You need to calculate ... when... because...
When you ... you need to use .... because...

Director can prompt for clarification and/or spark ideas, if needed.
How do Transition Improv Activities foster conversation skills?

☐ Speaking  ☐ Listening
☐ Clarifying  ☐ Supporting

BUILDING

& language development (AC) features?

IV. Stronger & Clearer Each Time for Fostering Conversation Skills:

☐ Speaking  ☐ Listening
☐ Clarifying  ☐ Supporting

BUILDING

& Language Development Features:
“Stronger & Clearer Each Time” Activities

1. Prompt for an original response (>sentence)
2. Successive partners: borrow and use the language, ideas, and evidence each time-->
   - **Stronger** with better supporting evidence and examples, &
   - **Clearer** with more precise terms and linked, organized, complete sentences.
3. Listeners push for **clarification & support**, and offer ideas
4. Scaffolds are reduced during the activity.

“Stronger & Clearer Each Time” Grid

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

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

What happens when cultures meet and why?

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

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

What happens when cultures meet and why?
What happens when cultures meet and why?

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.

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.

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

Wars start. But others also learn new things from the other cultures. And sometimes they learn new languages and religions.

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

When cultures meet each other, 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.
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

Video of Stronger-Clearer

Bryant High School
ELA/ELD
Teachers: Ghrawi and Fotopoulos
Opinion Continuum: Communism vs. Capitalism
“Stronger & Clearer Each Time” Grid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Why do we need a circulatory system?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td>[just two or three key words, if any]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You are doctor answering this question from a patient.
### “Stronger & Clearer Each Time” Grid

#### Name

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>How does dialogue in a story help us get to know characters?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td>[just two or three key words, if any]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(You are an author answering this question from a reader)

---

#### Name

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>How should history textbook publishers decide what should go into their books?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td>[just two or three key words, if any]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You are going to give a presentation on this topic to college history majors.
“Stronger & Clearer Each Time” Grid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Suppose it takes the Almond River 6 months to fill a reservoir, by itself, and it takes Belfair River 10 months to fill it, on its own. If both are flowing into the reservoir, how long will it take to fill it? Solve in two or more ways, and justify and explain your ideas.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Me</th>
<th>(just two or three key words, if any)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You need to know how long you have before announcing its opening.

listeners can & should:
- prompt for clarification
- prompt for support
- help with “what about...?”

15 sec “take w/ me”

Understanding Language | Language, literacy, & learning in the content areas
Jeff Zwiers
How do Stronger-Clearer Activities foster conversation skills?

☐ Speaking
☐ Listening
☐ Clarifying
☐ Supporting

& language development features?

HW: Modify activities for more fostering of conversation skills

Read & answer questions
Create a group poster
Write a lab report
Take notes
Create a story
Writers’ Workshop
Whole class discussion
Simulation/dramatization
Solve a word problem in pairs

Four Corners
Oral Presentation
Gallery Walk
Think-Pair-Share
Literature Circles
Jigsaw
Socratic Seminar
Watch a video
Games (Bingo, Jeopardy, etc.)
NEXT STEPS

Engaging Purpose (Clarity and strength matter)
Prepare an estimate of the costs and financial benefits of using an electric car. Should I buy one?

Information Gaps
3 articles from different perspectives (maker, consumer, environmental)

Bulking Up an Activity for Language* Development

Attention to language
Model and frames for coming up with and estimating costs

Jigsaw

Expert groups practice synopsis in pairs, then in expert group, others ask 1 clarify/support each; then share in home groups; others also ask to clarify/support each

Pushing selves and others to clarify and support ideas to build them
Engaging Purpose
(Clarity and strength matter)

Information Gaps

Pushing selves and others to clarify and support ideas to build them

Attention to language

Think-Pair-Share

Bulking Up an Activity’s Communication