



Designing and Teaching Communication-Focused Activities Across Disciplines

Jeff Zwiers

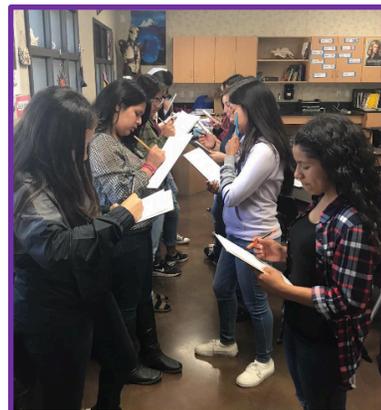
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OVERVIEW

- I. Pseudo- vs. Authentic Communication
- II. Conversation Support Activities
- III. Conversation Skills & Activities



Communicating to Learn

“Language is learned, not because we want to talk or read or write about language, but because we want to talk and read and write about the world. Especially for children, language is the medium of our interpersonal relationships, the medium of our mental life, the medium of learning about the world.”

--Courtney Cazden (1977)



Neil Mercer, Hugh Mehan, Lev Vygotsky, John Dewey, Pierre Bourdieu, Jerome Bruner, Lauren Resnick, Martin Nystrand, Patricia Gándara, Lily Wong Fillmore, Kenji Hakuta, David Pearson, James Gee, Guadalupe Valdés

Pseudo-Communication vs. Authentic Communication

Using words and other meaning-carriers to share information and do things for reasons *other than* using the information in meaningful ways (e.g., for getting points & praise, showing learning, winning, etc.)

Using words and other meaning-carriers to share information for doing meaningful things (**building**, creating, changing, deciding, clarifying, negotiating, arguing, etc.) that just one person can't do. (**R-W-L-S-C**)



So what?

Authentic Communication Features

For developing content, thinking, language, and social skills

☐ Purposeful building of idea(s)

Whenever I have two of the three variables of distance, time, & speed, I can figure out the third.

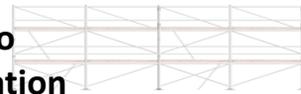
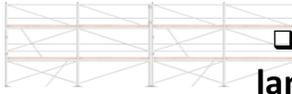
| | | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Support | Clarify | Clarify | Support | Clarify |
| Clarify | Support | Clarify | | |
| Clarify | Clarify | Support | Clarify | Support |
| Clarify | Support | Support | Clarify | |
| Support | Clarify | Clarify | Support | Clarify |

☐ Information gap(s)

| STUDENT A | STUDENT B |
|--|--|
| A shuttle enters an orbital path to catch up to an important satellite that isn't working properly. The shuttle is going faster than the satellite and mission control wants to know when the shuttle will reach it. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shuttle is orbiting at 16,800 mph - Satellite orbits at 16,000 mph - Shuttle enters orbit 1200 miles behind the satellite - Orbit is 400 miles from the Earth's surface |

☐ If needed, there is attention to language in service of communication

(Language modeling & scaffolding, sentence frames, practice, feedback, etc.)



Focus Learning on Building Ideas (from the start)

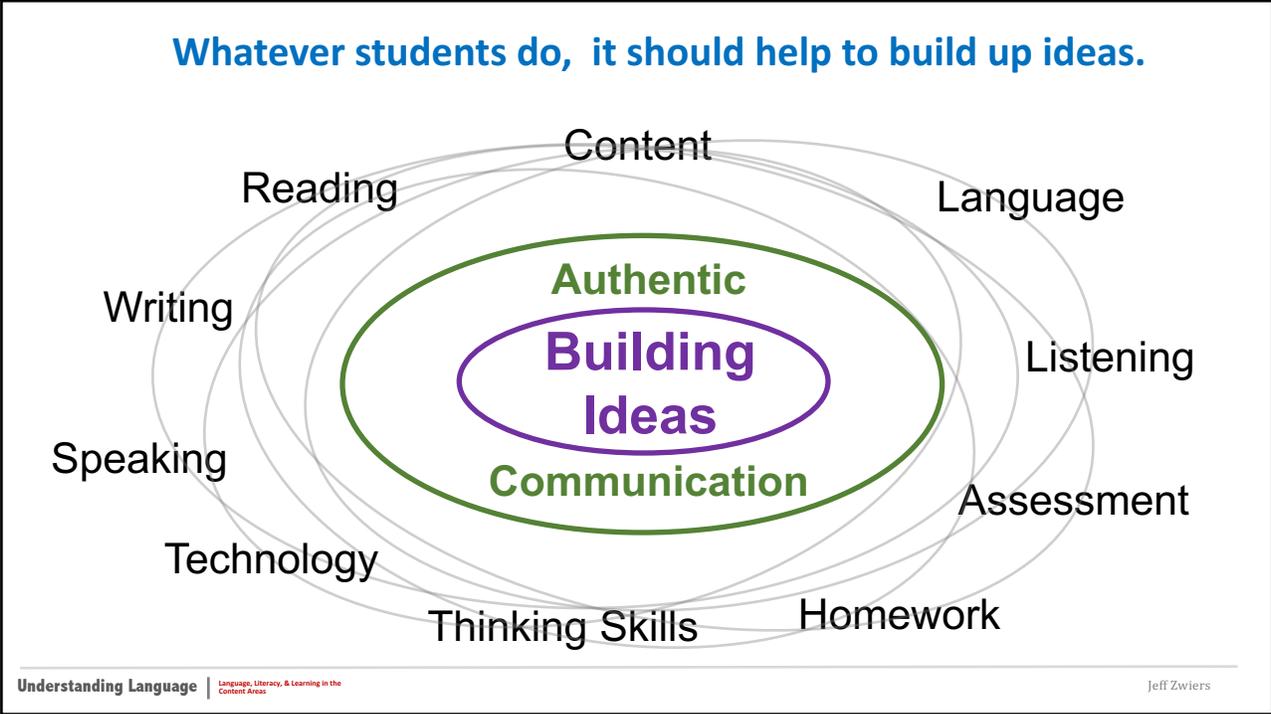
Context

- 1st grade science
- English learners
- First day of the unit on animals

This Clip

After looking at pictures in the beginning of the unit, students are asked “What helps the slow pufferfish stay alive?”





CONVERSATION SKILLS SUPPORT ACTIVITIES
for Fostering Conversation Skills & Authentic Communication

| | | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Support | Clarify | Clarify | Support | Clarify |
| Clarify | Support | Clarify | | |
| Clarify | Clarify | Support | Clarify | Support |
| Clarify | Support | Support | Clarify | |
| Support | Clarify | Clarify | Support | Clarify |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

Transition Improv Activities

Transition Improv Activity: **Pro-Con**

Topics: Camping, Shopping, TV, Uniforms, Computers, Superheroes, Cars, Conferences, Internet, Cell phones, Video games, ...

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 _____,

Listeners can & should:

- Prompt for clarification
- Prompt for support
- Offer idea seeds w/ "What about...?"

A & B, Lean?

Transition Improv

Elementary

Pros and cons of ice cream

Features:

- Build ideas?
- Clarify & Support?
- Meaning, not points?
- Value ideas & take risks?
- ?



Transition Improv: **For-Against**

Topics: Vending machines at school, Pet monkey, cell phones at school, social media, human-caused climate change, reviving dinosaurs, zoos, year-round schools, longer recess, more homework, theme parks, watching TV* (2 texts)

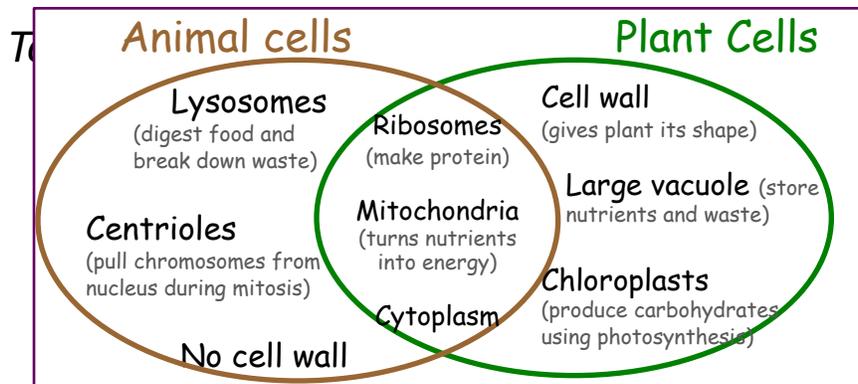
Transitions: **However,**
On the other hand,
Then again,

~~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**



SD 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 ____

However,
On the other hand,
Then again,

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 ___...

CONVERSATION SKILLS SUPPORT ACTIVITIES
for Fostering Conversation Skills & Authentic Communication

| | | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Support | Clarify | Clarify | Support | Clarify |
| Clarify | Support | Clarify | | |
| Clarify | Clarify | Support | Clarify | Support |
| Clarify | Support | Support | Clarify | |
| Support | Clarify | Clarify | Support | Clarify |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

Information Gap Activities

Information Gap Cards: If you want to live here,...

1. Model for students how you will respond to the prompt
 - o You are thinking of moving to the habitat where your partner lives. Ask him or her how you need to adapt in order to survive.
2. Act out words they will need
3. Students read own cards and try to remember the information.
4. Have them find all three other animals and learn how you would need to adapt to survive in each of their habitats.



- *What are you?*
 - *Where do you live?*
 - *How have you adapted to eat what you eat?*
 - *Because I eat ____, I have ____*
 - *How have you adapted to avoid dangers?*
 - *One trait that helps me avoid...*
 - *Can you clarify...give an example..*
 - *For example, one time I...*
- (remove these the third time)*

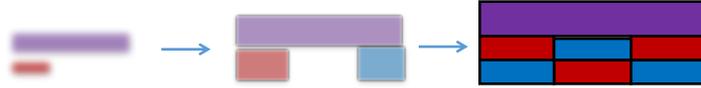
What idea can students build with this new knowledge?

CONVERSATION SKILLS SUPPORT ACTIVITIES for Fostering Conversation Skills & Authentic Communication

| | | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Support | Clarify | Clarify | Support | Clarify |
| Clarify | Support | Clarify | | |
| Clarify | Clarify | Support | Clarify | Support |
| Clarify | Support | Support | Clarify | |
| Support | Clarify | Clarify | Support | Clarify |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

Stronger-Clearer Each Time Activities

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. Listeners push for **clarification & support**, and offer ideas
4. Scaffolds are reduced during the activity.

“Stronger & Clearer Each Time” Grid

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

What's an example of fighting?

(PRE)
Bad things happen when they meet.
Wars start.

A begins and B listens and asks clarify & support questions. Go.

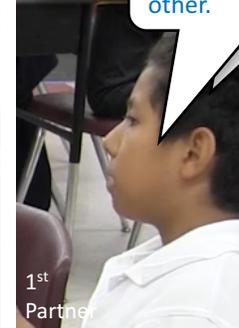
Take two-word notes. New partners! Don't forget to use examples. Stronger + Clearer!

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

The Aztecs and Spain. They didn't like each other.



Manuel



1st
Partner

What happens when cultures meet and why?

“Stronger & Clearer Each Time” Grid

Take two-word notes. Switch partners! Don't forget to use examples & ask for clarify & support. Stronger + clearer!

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

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

Cultures meet and bad things happen like fighting, like the Aztecs and Spain. But good things, too, like you can learn other language.

When cultures meet each other, it helps to learn how others live. Like religion. But wars can happen, like you said.

What do you mean they learn religion?

Maybe not learned, but like mixing religions together.

What happens when cultures meet and why?

My notes: Bad, wars

| |
|---------------|
| both, learn |
| religion, mix |
| |
| |




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

Jeff Zwiers

“Stronger & Clearer Each Time” Grid

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

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

Cultures meet and bad things happen like fighting, like the Aztecs and Spain. But good things, too, like you can learn other language.

When cultures meet each other, it helps to learn how others live. Like religion. But wars can happen, like you said.

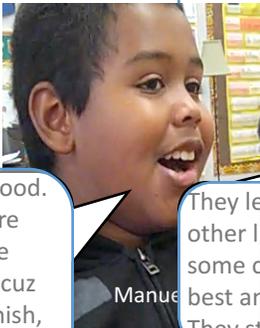
When cultures meet, is bad and good. Bad cuz they fight wars, like they're different. Spain thought they were better than the Aztecs. And good cuz you can learn languages, like Spanish, and new religion.

They learn other like some cul best and They star

What happens when cultures meet and why?

My notes: Bad, wars

| |
|---------------|
| both, learn |
| religion, mix |
| |
| |



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

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Stronger & Clearer Activity

Context

- 4th grade
Science class
- Early Advanced speakers.
- Have read and discussed energy conversion
- Focus on stronger and clearer messages using examples.



This Clip

- Prompt is: What is energy conversion?
- Daniel talks to three different partners
- Look for if and how his response becomes stronger (idea-wise) and clearer (language-wise)
- *Reflect on ways to improve his response and/or the activity.*

Stronger & Clearer Each Time: Opinion Continuum

I think zoos are fun. I like seeing animals. I say yes.

I was on yes but moved a little. I don't wanna be in cages like animals. It's like jail. But I still think it's fun to go and see them.

I don't know. Animals don't like in jail and people watching. But some get hurt and need people. Those zoos are good. Like they save eagles, maybe a broken wing. And we can learn from zoos, so yes.

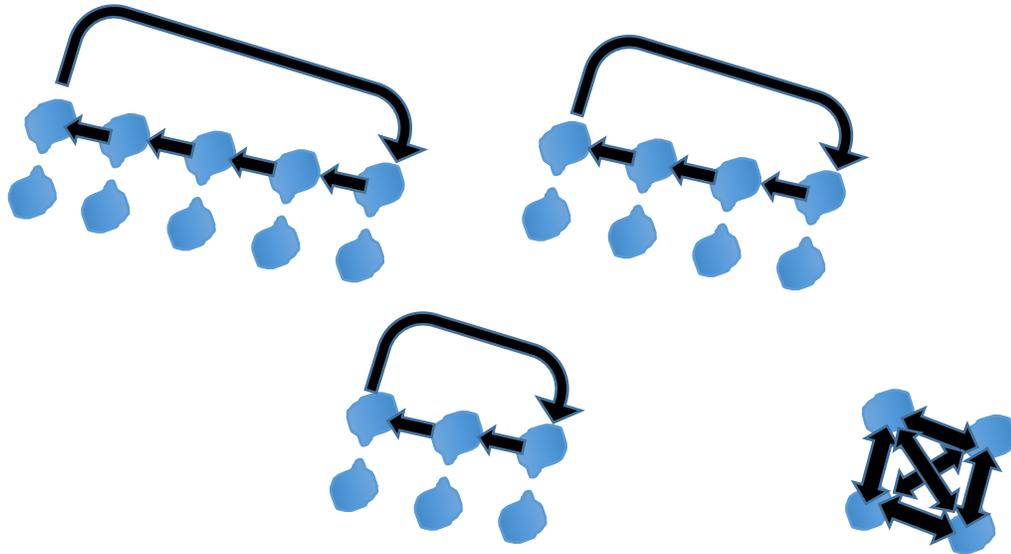
I say no. It's like jail for them. And I don't like all people looking at me.
I think zoos are OK if the animals can't live wild. You know, I went to a zoo that helped hurt ones. Like a eagle. But other zoos are bad.



Should we have zoos or not?

YES | Me | | *Jan* | *Edith* | NO

Interaction Mini-Lines



“Stronger & Clearer Each Time” Grid

| | | |
|------|--|---|
| Name | Do we need to spend more time reading and writing poetry? | <i>You are a teacher who will present on this topic to parents.</i> |
| Me | (just two or three key words, if any) | |
| 1. | | |
| 2. | | |
| 3. | | |
| Me | | |

“Stronger & Clearer Each Time” Grid

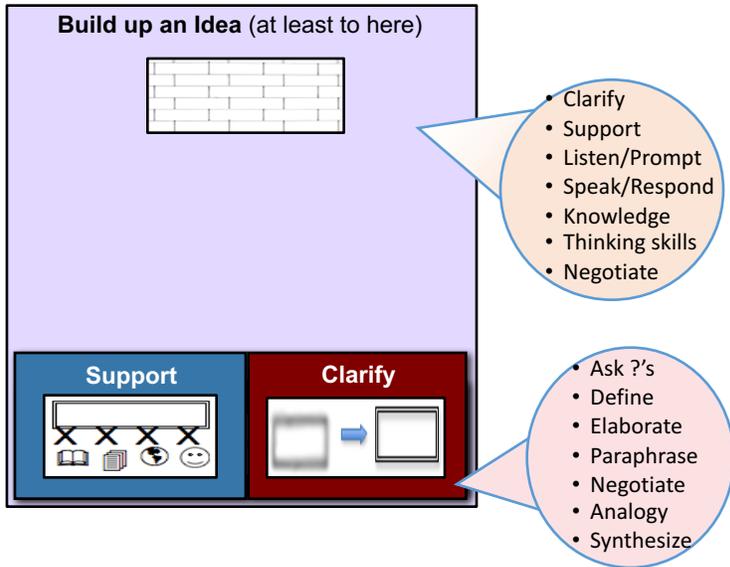
| | | |
|-------------|---|---|
| Name | How can developing students’ oral language (speaking, listening, conversing) influence reading and writing—and overall language development? | <i>You will present to colleagues on this topic.</i> |
| Me | <small>(just two or three key words, if any)</small> | |
| 1. | | |
| 2. | | |
| 3. | | |
| Me | | <i>Listeners can & should:</i> - <i>Prompt for clarification</i> - <i>Prompt for support</i> - <i>Help with “What about...?”</i> |

One way in which oral language influences reading is...because...
 A student with a strong command of oral language can read...
 Even though.....
~~I disagree with you...~~

*15 sec “take w/ me”
 Jigsaw variation
 Follow w/ conversation*

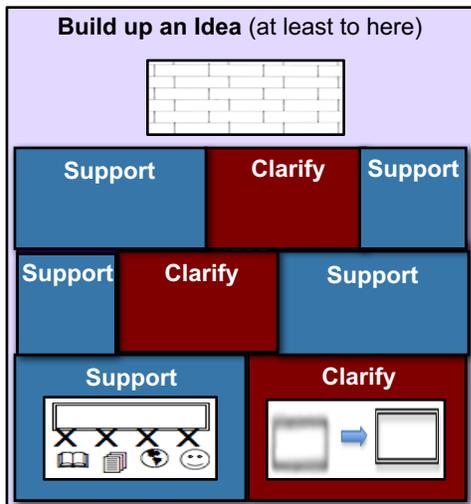


Constructive Conversation Skills: Building an Idea



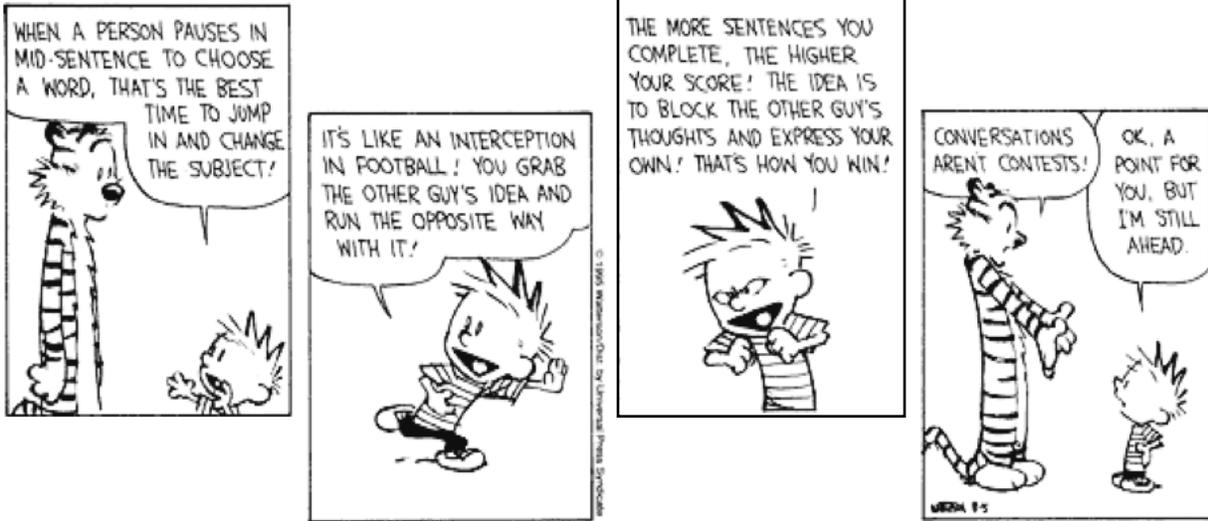
Hand motions

Constructive Conversation Skills: Building an Idea



Hand motions

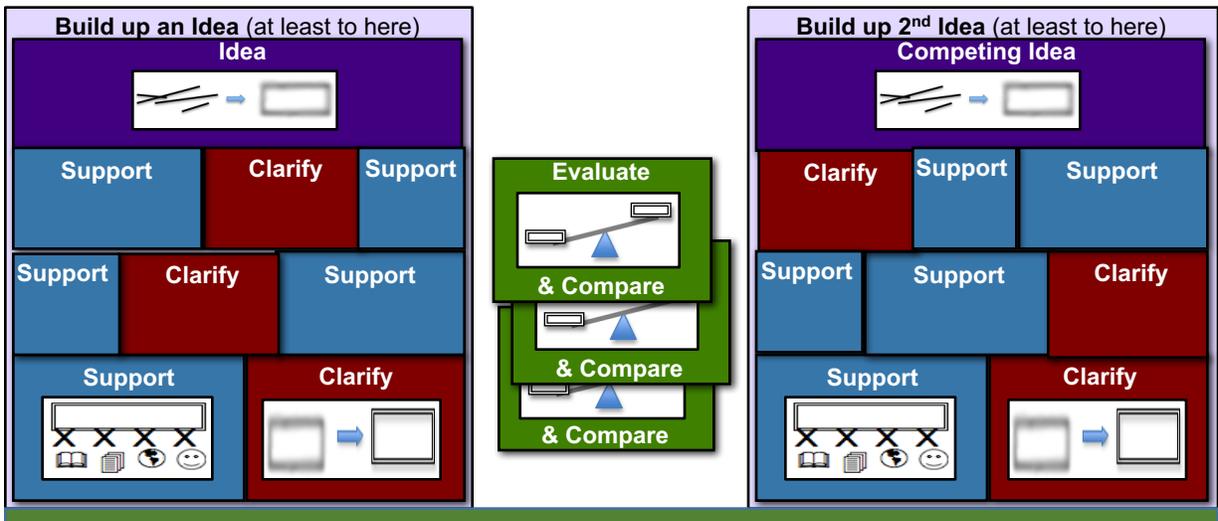
Collaborative Argumentation



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

Jeff Zwiers

Constructive Conversation Skills: Collaborative Argument



Hand motions

Improving Conversations

- L: I think the theme is forgive others.
 M: I disagree with you.
 L: Why?
 M: Cuz it's not fair. People should be punished.



**Build up the
first idea
first!!!!!!!**

- D: We should be able to vote.
 F: I agree. And drive cars around, you know, get licenses.
 D: I drove my uncle's car outside the city when I was 12.
 F: Where'd you go?
 D: On the roads by his house, but then into a pond.
 F: Maybe you shouldn't get a license yet.

Conversations at Beginning Levels of Proficiency

Learning objective: Use reasons to argue the importance of a historical figure.

Prompt: Talk about what makes Abraham Lincoln a hero or not.

- A: How Lincoln a hero?
 B: He stop slavery.
 A: How?
 B: The war.
 A: Yeah, Civil. He fought for to stop slavery.
 B: Muchos die in the war.
 A: Very bad.
 B: But how...but cuál es more bad? Slavery or die?
 A: Slavery.
 B: Why?
 A: Cuz you not free, like, como en la cárcel, like animal, y te golpean. You wanna live así? Yo no. And Lincoln stop it. He's a hero.



Conversation - 5th Gr. ELA/ELD



Context

- 5th grade Language Arts/ELD class
- Advanced and early intermediate

This Clip

- After reading an allegory for the Holocaust, students discuss what could have happened if the animals had stood together.
- They practice stating opinions, paraphrasing, and clarifying

What does building an idea look like?

(And how do we decide if it's built up enough?)

PROMPT: Why do animals adapt?

IDEA

CLARIFY

SUPPORT

Adaptation helps animals to get food.

What does building an idea look like?
 (And how do we decide if it's built up enough?)
 PROMPT: Why do animals adapt?

| |
|---------|
| IDEA |
| CLARIFY |
| SUPPORT |

Adaptation helps animals to get food.

| | |
|---|---|
| A type of animal changes its body over millions of years to get food. | |
| What does adaptation mean? | What are examples of those adaptations? |

What does building an idea look like?
 (And how do we decide if it's built up enough?)
 PROMPT: Why do animals adapt?

| |
|---------|
| IDEA |
| CLARIFY |
| SUPPORT |

Adaptation helps animals to get food.

| | | | |
|---|---|--|------------------|
| A type of animal changes its body over millions of years to get food. | Eagles have good eyes to see little animals | For example? | Tuna & swordfish |
| What does adaptation mean? | What are examples of those adaptations? | And some fish swim really fast to catch little fish to eat them. | |

What does building an idea look like?
 (And how do we decide if it's built up enough?)

PROMPT: Why do animals adapt?

IDEA

CLARIFY

SUPPORT

Adaptation helps animals to get food.

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| | Oh yeah, like rabbits run fast to get away from bobcats. | |
| And they do camouflage, too. | What about adapting to get away from things that want to eat them? | |
| A type of animal changes its body over millions of years to get food. | Eagles have good eyes to see little animals | For example? Tuna & swordfish |
| What does adaptation mean? | What are examples of those adaptations? | And some fish swim really fast to catch little fish. |

What does building an idea look like?
 (And how do we decide if it's built up enough?)

PROMPT: Why do animals adapt?

IDEA

CLARIFY

SUPPORT

Adaptation helps animals to get food.

| | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| How are those good examples? | Yeah, but remember that flat fish & the stick bug? | What's that? | Oh yeah, like rabbits run fast to get away from bobcats. |
| Like army clothes? | When they look like stuff to hide | And they do camouflage, too. | What about adapting to get away from things that want to eat them? |
| A type of animal changes its body over millions of years to get food. | Eagles have good eyes to see little animals | For example? | Tuna & swordfish |
| What does adaptation mean? | What are examples of those adaptations? | And some fish swim really fast to catch little fish. | |

What does building an idea look like?
 (And how do we decide if it's built up enough?)
 PROMPT: Why do animals adapt?

IDEA

CLARIFY

SUPPORT

Adaptation helps animals to get food.

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| The fish matches its color & patterns to the sea bottom to hide | And the stick bug look just like tree branches to hide from birds | OK, so do we fix our idea? |
| How are those good examples? | Yeah, but remember that flat fish & the stick bug? | What's that? |
| Oh yeah, like rabbits run fast to get away from bobcats. | Like army clothes? | When they look like stuff to hide |
| And they do camouflage, too. | What about adapting to get away from things that want to eat them? | Tuna & swordfish |
| A type of animal changes its body over millions of years to get food. | Eagles have good eyes to see little animals | For example? |
| What does adaptation mean? | What are examples of those adaptations? | And some fish swim really fast to catch little fish. |

What does building an idea look like?
 (And how do we decide if it's built up enough?)
 PROMPT: Why do animals adapt?

IDEA

CLARIFY

SUPPORT

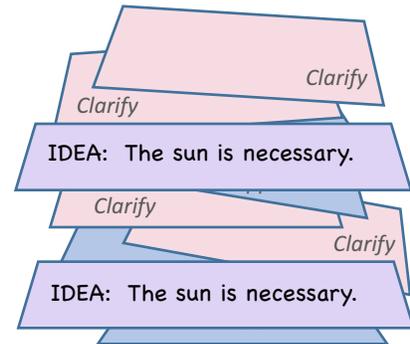
Yeah. Adaptation helps animals to get food & not be food.

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| The fish matches its color & patterns to the sea bottom to hide | And the stick bug look just like tree branches to hide from birds | OK, so do we fix our idea? |
| How are those good examples? | Yeah, but remember that flat fish & the stick bug? | What's that? |
| Oh yeah, like rabbits run fast to get away from bobcats. | Like army clothes? | When they look like stuff to hide |
| And they do camouflage, too. | What about adapting to get away from things that want to eat them? | Tuna & swordfish |
| A type of animal changes its body over millions of years to get food. | Eagles have good eyes to see little animals | For example? |
| What does adaptation mean? | What are examples of those adaptations? | And some fish swim really fast to catch little fish. |

Idea Building Cards

(Why? Can you clarify...?
Can you give another reason?)

1. Hand out cards and have students put starter idea on the Idea card.
2. Either student can then ask a clarify or support question and slip a **Clarify** or **Support** card under the **Idea** card as a way to "build it up." The other student clarifies or supports and also puts the a card underneath. (Don't write on these)
3. They continue to slip cards underneath the idea to build it up as high as possible. If it is an argument, after building up both ideas (two stacks of cards), they evaluate and compare, placing their Evaluate and Compare cards between the two stacks.
4. Both students should be prepared to describe (synthesize) the idea(s)



Idea Building Cards

PROMPT: Come to a consensus with your partner on why the painter painted the painting in this way: why he included certain figures, their composition, postures, movements, gazes. Include what the painter wanted the viewer to feel or think, empathize, and learn from the painting. Try to agree on how accurate a depiction you think this is and why.



First landing of Columbus on the shores of the New World, at San Salvador, W.I., Oct. 12th 1492. (1862) Dióscoro Puebla, Spanish painter

Idea Building Cards

PROMPT: Come to a consensus and a clear explanation of where you think the mass of trees (think Redwoods) comes from. Discuss why many people often get this answer wrong.



So where does a tree's mass come from?

The 1648 potted willow experiment of Johannes Helmont is widely discussed in biology teaching because it is the first known quantitative experiment in biology. He wrote, "But I have learned by this handicraft-operation that all vegetables do immediately, and materially proceed out of the element of water only. For I took an earthen vessel, in which I put 200 pounds of earth that had been dried in a furnace, which I moistened with rainwater and I implanted therein the stem of a willow tree, weighing five pounds; and five years being finished, the tree did weigh 169 pounds. And least the dust that flew about should be co-mingled with the Earth, I covered the lip or mouth of the vessel with an iron-plate covered with tin, and easily passable with many holes. I computed not the weight of the leaves that fell off in the four Autumns. At length, I again dried the Earth of the vessel, and there were found the same two hundred pounds, wanting about two ounces. Therefore 164 pounds of Wood, Barks, and Roots, arose out of water only" (1622). And if the tree is using soil for its mass, then there must be less soil around it. And yet, it turns out that if you ask new Harvard graduates this question, the vast majority of them answer some variant of "It comes from the soil." The answer, it turns out, is blowing in the wind.

Idea Building Cards

PROMPT: Read the excerpt from *Huckleberry Finn* (Twain, 1885) and come to an agreement on what the most important theme in the passage seems to be. Make sure to clarify and support idea(s) along the way as you build or choose your final main theme idea and prepare to present it to others.

Excerpt from *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Twain, 1885)

It made me shiver. And I about made up my mind to pray, and see if I couldn't try to quit being the kind of a boy I was and be better. So I kneeled down. But the words wouldn't come. Why wouldn't they? It warn't no use to try and hide it from Him. Nor from ME, neither. I knowed very well why they wouldn't come. It was because my heart warn't right; it was because I warn't square; it was because I was playing double. I was letting ON to give up sin, but away inside of me I was holding on to the biggest one of all. I was trying to make my mouth SAY I would do the right thing and the clean thing, and go and write to Jim's owner and tell where he was; but deep down in me I knowed it was a lie, and He knowed it. You can't pray a lie—I found that out.

So I was full of trouble, full as I could be; and didn't know what to do. At last I had an idea; and I says, I'll go and write the letter—and then see if I can pray. Why, it was astonishing, the way I felt as light as a feather right straight off, and my troubles all gone. So I got a piece of paper and a pencil, all glad and excited, and set down and wrote:(text continues on handout)

Idea Building Cards

With your partner,
clarify what is happening,
 estimate the answer, and
 come up with two ways of solving it,
justifying ideas and choices along the way.

Suppose it takes the Almond River 8 months to fill a reservoir, by itself, and it takes Belfair River 12 months to fill it, on its own. If both are flowing into the reservoir, how long will it take to fill it?



Conversation Prompts

- ❑ **There is an engaging purpose** for conversing that (a) **connects to lesson objectives**, and (b) **requires thinking & doing/building 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: You will co-author a letter to a history journal. Converse with your partner to 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..."

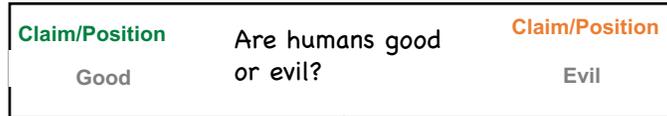
Structuring Collaborative Argument Conversations: Argument Scale

Claim

vs.

**Opposite or
Different Claim**

Which claim's reasons, evidence, and explanations 'weigh' the most?



Argument Balance Scale

Prevent dropouts & jail costs

Gets them to read

Kids need to eat

Stay after school

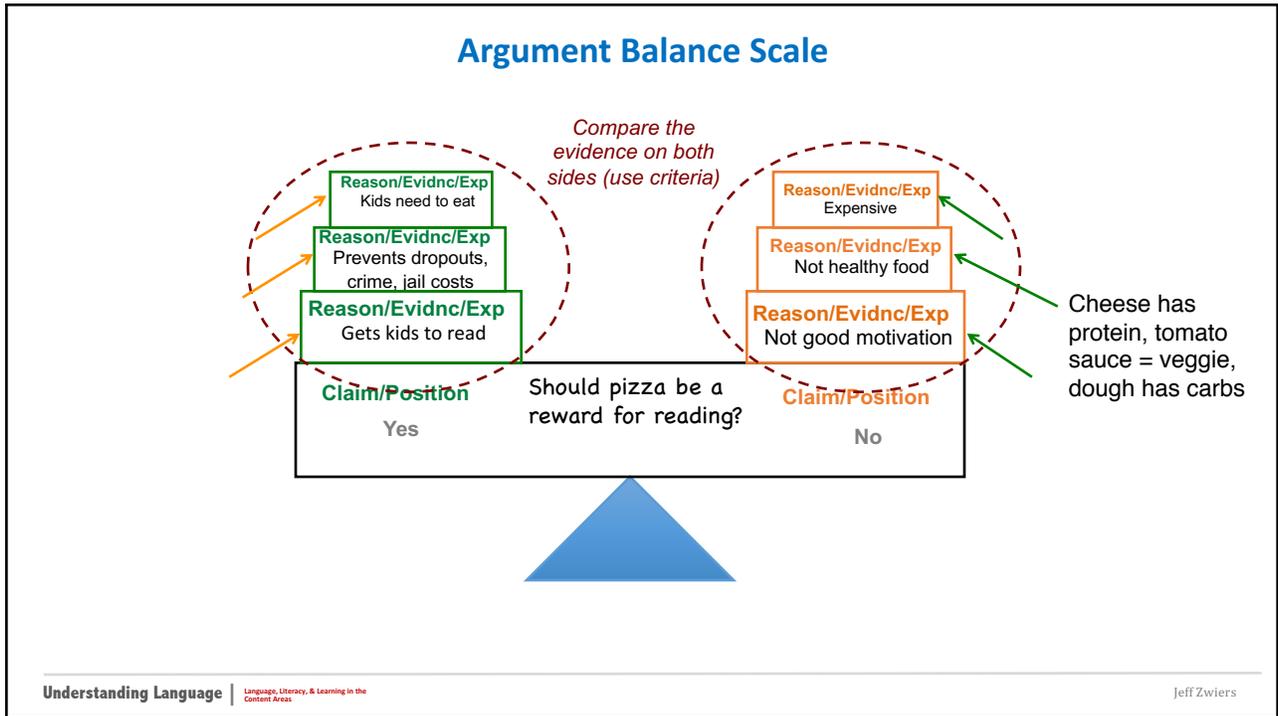
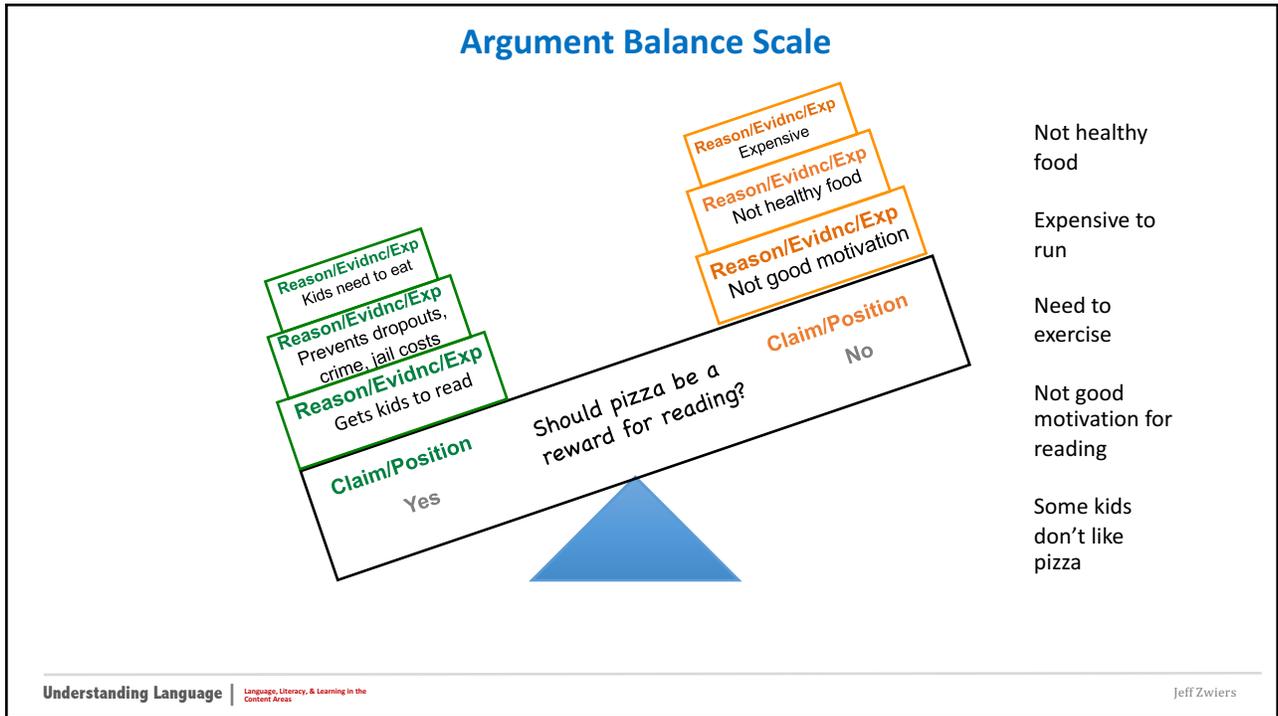
Pizza tastes good

Reason/Evidnc/Exp
Kids need to eat

Reason/Evidnc/Exp
Prevents dropouts, crime, jail costs

Reason/Evidnc/Exp
Gets kids to read





Argument Balance Scale

Choose a side and argue why it "weighs more"

Reason/Evidnc/Exp
Kids need to eat

Reason/Evidnc/Exp
Prevents dropouts, crime, jail costs

Reason/Evidnc/Exp
Gets kids to read

Claim/Position
Yes

Should pizza be a reward for reading?

2D-Scale

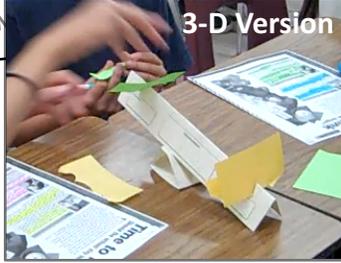


Reason/Evidnc/Exp
Expensive

Reason/Evidnc/Exp
Not healthy food

Reason/Evidnc/Exp
Not good motivation

Claim/Position
No



3-D Version

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Video Example

CONTEXT

5th grade Language Arts/ELD class Advanced and early advanced partners.

After reading an article on a program that gives pizza as reward for reading, students discuss their opinions on the issue.



THIS CLIP

- Watch for supporting opinions, turn-taking, and clarifying
- Notice if and how the balance scale helps students to extend talk
- Consider next steps based on this conversation

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