



Improving Students' Academic Conversations

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Conversation

In the Bantu language, the word **ubuntu** means that a person becomes a person only through other people.

Neuroscientists agree, arguing that our brains and minds are shaped in continuous interaction with other people.

During conversation, participants orient towards the other person's mind, inferring meanings and relevancies, rather than just decoding and encoding verbal messages (as robots might do).

Understanding Language | Kim & Kupst: 2007, Brain Basis of Human Social Interaction: From Concepts to Brain Imaging | jeffzwiers

The Power of Conversations
 (Why face-to-face communication is worth it)

CONTENT: Clarify, Use, & Reinforce

LANGUAGE: Input + Output

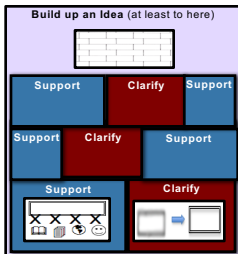
FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

ACADEMIC THINKING: Critical & Creative

**Social Skills, Relationships
 Voice, Empathy, Equity,
 Agency, Identity, Belonging**

REVIEW: Constructive Conversation Skills: Building an Idea

Build up an Idea (at least to here)



Hand motions

Formative Assessment Tools:
 (e.g., Conversation Observation & Analysis Tool (COAT))

PROMPT:

Useful & Engaging Purpose Need to talk + Unique ideas Clear and Helpful Directions

QUANTITY

of Turns Length of turns Equity

QUALITY

Use conversation skills:
 Pose Clarify Support Evaluate
 to authentically build and argue useful ideas

OTHER KEY SKILLS

Listening Speaking Thinking Content Nonverbal Valuing Ideas

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Improving Conversations

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

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

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

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

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|------------------|
| 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 over millions of years to get food. | changes its body | 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. | | |

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| 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? | | |
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| Yeah. Adaptation helps animals to get food & not be food. | | | | |
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How do we get students to do this?

Idea Building Cards
(Why? Can you clarify...?
Can you give another reason?)

- Hand out cards (2-I, 4-C, 4-S, 3-E per student) and have students put an initial idea on the Idea card.
- 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 cards.
- 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), students evaluate and compare, placing their Evaluate and Compare cards between the two stacks.
- Both students should be prepared to describe (synthesize) the idea(s)

Idea Building Cards
(Why? Can you clarify...?
Can you give another reason?)

A: Give an example for the sun is necessary.
B: Plants, like a tree, need light to live.
A: But can't we live without the sun?
We are OK at night.
B: But we need plants for food, right?
A: Yeah, I guess it all starts with plants. Like all the animals eat plants.
B: OK, I thought of something. Oh it's warm.
B: Can you explain more?
A: Think about how cold it'd be without the sun. It warms us up every day.
B: Yeah, everything would freeze. Even all the water.
A: Yeah, and we need water, not ice.

Idea Building Cards
(Why? Can you clarify...?
Can you give another reason?)

Prompt:
Build up a major takeaway concept from today's presentation so far.
or
Choose a text or topic and build up an idea based on it.

Using the Idea Building Cards

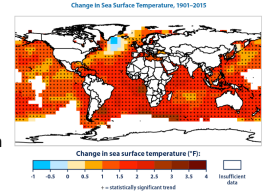
PROMPT: Come to a consensus with your partner on why the painter painted the painting in this way: why he included certain figures, their composition, postures, movements, gazes. Include what the painter wanted the viewer to feel or think, empathize, and learn from the painting. Try to agree on how accurate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

Using the Idea Building Cards

In the last century, the overall temperatures of the Earth's atmosphere and oceans have increased. In addition to the rise in sea level resulting from melting ice, seawater also expands when it warms. Most of this warming happens in the top 500 meters. Work with a partner to come up with a way to predict, with data from an experiment that you design, how many centimeters the sea level will rise if the top 500 meters increases by 1 degree Celsius in the next century.



Using the 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. (Huck had just written a letter to tell Jim's owner where he was.)

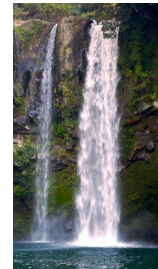
Excerpt from The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (Twain, 1885)

And got to thinking over our trip down the river; and I see Jim before me all the time: in the day and in the night-time, sometimes moonlight, sometimes storms, and we a-floating along, talking and singing and laughing. But somehow I couldn't seem to strike no places to harden me against him, but only the other kind. I'd see him standing my watch on top of his'n, 'stead of calling me, so I could go on sleeping; and see him how glad he was when I come back out of the fog; and when I come to him again in the swamp, up there where the feud was; and such-like times; and would always call me honey, and pet me and do everything he could think of for me, and how good he always was; and at last I struck the time I saved him by telling the men we had small-pox aboard, and he was so grateful, and said I was the best friend old Jim ever had in the world, and the ONLY one he's got now; and then I happened to look around and see that paper.

I took it up, and held it in my hand. I was a-trembling, because I'd got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself: "All right, then, I'll GO to hell!"—and tore it up.

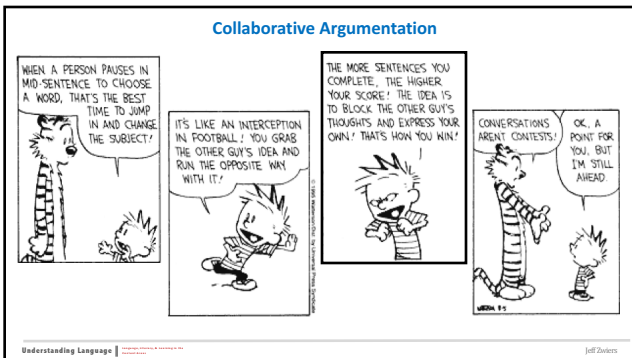
Using the Idea Building Cards

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.

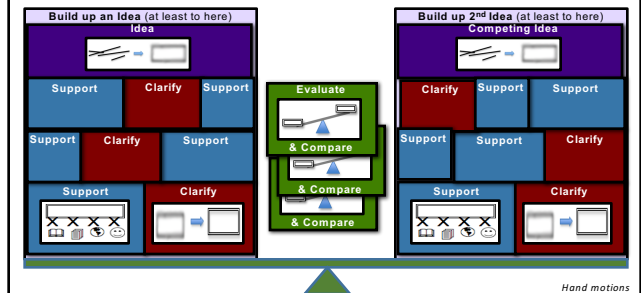


Suppose it takes the Almond River 6 months to fill a reservoir, by itself, and it takes Belfair River 10 months to fill it, on its own. If both are flowing into the reservoir, how long will it take to fill it?

Collaborative Argumentation



Constructive Conversation Skills: Collaborative Argument



Silent Cards for a Conversation - 5th Gr. ELA/ELD



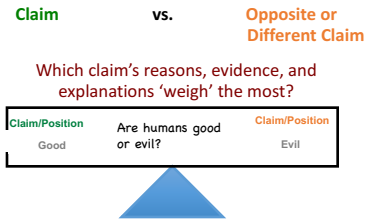
Context

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

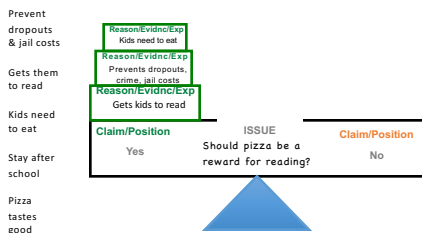
This Clip

- 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

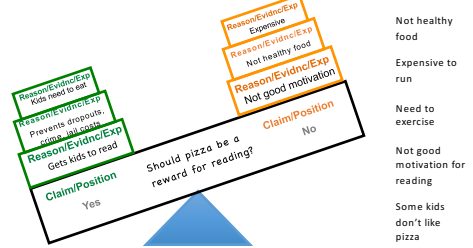
Structuring Collaborative Argument Conversations:
Argument Scale



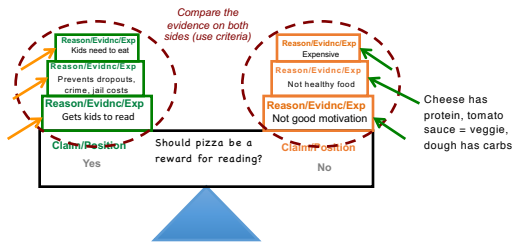
Argument Balance Scale



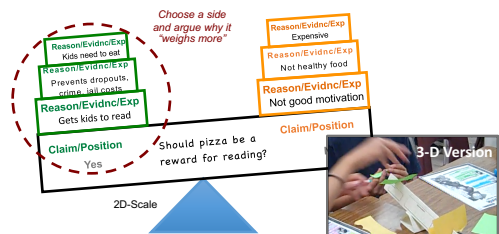
Argument Balance Scale



Argument Balance Scale



Argument Balance Scale



Possible Next Steps

Have students **engage in conversations** about learned topics, then self-assess. (10K hrs)

Model conversations & analyze them for skills (**clarify & support**) for **building ideas**

Weave building ideas, clarifying, and supporting into all interaction activities and discussions (whenever students read, write, listen, speak)

Have **2nd and 3rd pair-shares** (e.g., Stronger-Clearer) in which students practice, push and are pushed to **support** ideas and **clarify**, to improve ideas

Improve pair-shares:

- A) More prompting for purposeful **building of ideas**
- B) Listener prompts talker to **clarify** and **support** in order to help build up idea
- C) Structure time for A and B students

CONTACT INFO



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