






Center on
**GREAT TEACHERS
& LEADERS**
at American Institutes for Research ■



Incorporating Social and Personal Learning into Classroom Instruction and Educator Effectiveness

Module 6: Classroom Discussions

Importance of Classroom Discussions

	% Agree or Strongly Agree
 I have at least one teacher who takes time to listen to what I have to say.	79%
 Students at my school respect each others' differences.	34%
 Students at my school trust each other.	34%

Source: Tennessee Department of Education, 2013–14

10 Teaching Practices That Promote SEL



Social Teaching Practices



Classroom Discussions

Classroom Discussions refers to dialogue between teachers and students about content.





Introduction to Classroom Discussions



Goal: To support positive social interactions between students and teachers through purposeful, content-related dialogue for improved

- comprehension,
- problem solving,
- questioning, and
- perspective taking.



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Objectives for This Module



- Learn how classroom discussions influence student social, personal, and academic behaviors.
- Identify strategies to increase student participation and management of increasing responsibility in discussions.
- Identify strategies to support students in posing thoughtful questions and perspective taking.
- Develop next steps to implement classroom discussions.





Benefits for Students



Students:

- Engage in self-management strategies linked to increased metacognitive awareness and cognitive flexibility.
- Regulate their emotions through content-based, purposeful dialogue, questioning, and collaborative problem solving.
- Have improved confidence related to comprehension, questioning, problem solving, and perspective taking.
- Have decreased misunderstandings or uncertainty of content.



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Alignment to TEAM Evaluation



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1. **Motivating Students**

- The teacher consistently develops learning experiences where inquiry, curiosity, and exploration are valued.

2. **Presenting Instructional Content**

- Presentation of content always includes effective modeling of thinking process by the teacher and/or students guided by the teacher to demonstrate performance expectations.

3. **Activities and Materials**

- Activities and materials elicit a variety of thinking, provide opportunities for student-to-student interaction, and induce student curiosity and suspense.

4. **Questioning**

- Questions require students to regularly cite evidence throughout lesson.
- A high frequency of questions is asked.
- Questions regularly require active responses.
- Students generate questions that lead to further inquiry and self-directed learning.

5. **Academic Feedback**

- Teacher engages students in giving specific and high-quality feedback to one another.



Self-Assessment and Self-Reflection



How well do I implement classroom discussions?



How do students respond when I implement classroom discussions?



See Handout 1



See It in Action



Elementary Example



Secondary Example



See Handout 2



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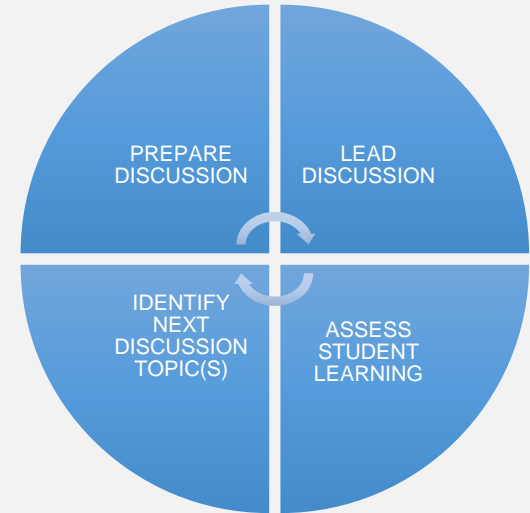
Exploring Classroom Discussions

General Principles of Effective Discussions



Effective discussions ...

- Are prepared in advance
- Are purposefully led
- Are assessed with student learning in mind
- Are primed to lead to more discussion



Source: Center for Instructional Development and Research (1999); Barton et al (nd)



General Principles Activity



- Review examples of classroom discussion norms
- Identify/write the classroom discussion norms in your classrooms
- Determine how you will teach them to your students
- Create strategies to reinforce the norms



See Handout 3

Learn About Classroom Discussions



- Types of Purposeful Student Talk
- Questioning and the Question Formulation Technique (QFT)
- Perspective Taking
- Accountable Talk
- Routines for Promoting Quality Discussions

5





Purposeful Student Talk



Objectives

- Help students co-construct knowledge
- Develop skills to communicate thoughts

Process

- Gradually release responsibility to students



Source: Fisher and Frey, 2008.



Four Steps of Purposeful Student Talk



- Teacher Modeling
- Guided Instruction
- Collaborative Tasks
- Independent Tasks



Seed Questions:

- Focus student thinking and stimulate discussion
- Are open ended, advance discussion, require critical thinking, call for evidence, promote rigor, and provide relevance

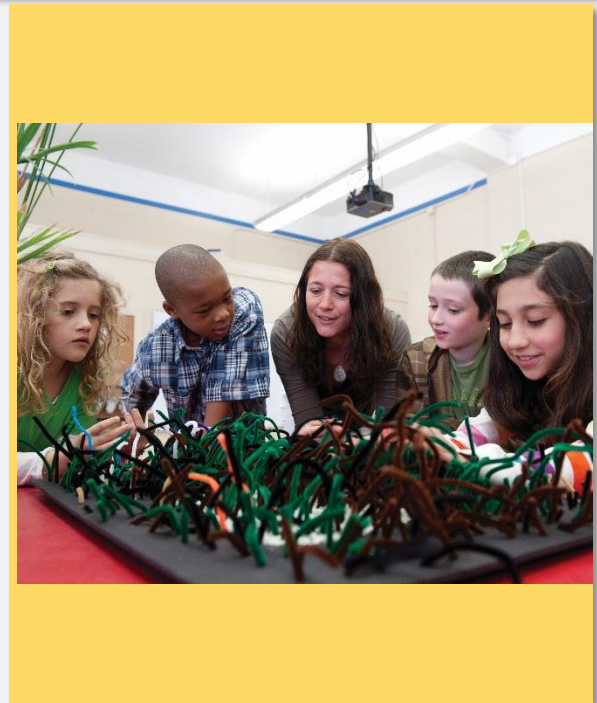
Source: Fisher and Frey, 2008.



Purposeful Student Talk Activity



- Handout 4 provides a six-step process as you create lessons to implement the different steps of purposeful talk.



See Handout 4



Questioning



Questioning provides opportunities to:

1. Pursue intellectual curiosities
2. Probe for details and elaboration
3. Check for accuracy
4. Clarify their contributions to discussions

Source: Rothstein & Santana (2011).





Question Formulation Technique (QFT)



QFT includes four steps:

1. Produce questions
2. Improve questions
3. Prioritize the questions
4. Next Steps



Produce Questions

- Pose as many questions as possible.
- Do not respond to or judge the question.
- Write your questions exactly as stated.
- Change any item posed as a statement into a question.

Refine/Improve Questions

- Determine if questions are closed- or open-ended.
- Name the advantages and disadvantages of each type question.
- Change open-ended questions to closed-ended questions and vice versa.

Order questions in terms of importance

- Choose the top three questions.
- Justify your choices.

Next steps

- Explain how you plan to use your questions.

Source: Rothstein & Santana (2011).



Questioning Activity



1. Produce questions

- Pose as many questions as possible.
- Do not respond to or judge the question.
- Write your questions exactly as stated.
- Change any item posed as a statement into a question.

2. Improve questions

- Determine if questions are closed or open ended.
- Name the advantages and disadvantages of each type question.
- Change open-ended questions to closed-ended questions and vice versa.

3. Prioritize the questions

- Choose the top three questions.
- Justify your choices.

4. Next Steps

- Explain how you plan to use your questions.



Source: Rothstein & Santana (2011).





Perspective Taking



- Helps us better understand how others experience the world
- Important for teachers to perspective take to help students do the same

Teacher Support of Perspective Taking

- Suspend your emotional response; listen for the subtext
- Establish norms; seek to understand
- Ask students to step back and reflect
- Guide students in addressing the issue
- Note issue; address later with strategy

Source: Warren, L, & Derek Bok Center (nd).





Perspective-Taking Activity



Identify lessons that can incorporate multiple perspectives

1. Have students identify the perspective of the first character
2. Have students identify the perspective of the other character
3. Allow students to compare and contrast perspectives





Accountable Talk and Conversation Moves



- Allows students to engage in peer-led discussions that:
 - Articulate personal contribution
 - Appreciate others contributions
- Enhanced through sentence frames and conversation moves

Conversation Moves

- Marking
- Challenging
- Keeping channels open
- Linking contributions
- Verifying and clarifying
- Pressing for accuracy
- Building on prior knowledge
- Pressing for reasoning
- Expanding reasoning
- Recapping

Source: Fisher & Frey (2013); Michaels, O'Connor, Hall, & Resnick (2010)



Perspective Taking and Accountable Talk Activity



Use Handout 5 to...

- Reflect on your use of perspective taking
- Identify the ways in which you use or would like to use accountable talk



See Handout 5



Instructional Routines that Promote Good Discussions



- Annotation
- Text Rendering
- Socratic Seminars



Source: D. Fisher, & N. Frey. (2013).





Additional Tips for Classroom Discussions



- Change the role of teacher and students
- Ensure appropriate content knowledge
- Focus on skill development
- Provide time for everyone to speak
- Avoid praise or evaluative feedback
- Ensure students know the norms, expectations, and structures of the discussion
- Provide time for self-assessment

Source: Walsh, 2017





Reflect and Plan for the Future



1. Set realistic expectations.
2. Involve students.
3. Be reflective.



See Handout 6



Module Evaluation



For more information, please contact:



Pat Conner
Executive Director
Safe and Supportive Schools
Pat.Conner@tn.gov
(615) 253-0018

Kimberly Daubenspeck
Director
Special Projects
Kimberly.Daubenspeck@tn.gov
(615) 532-0469



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