Collaborative Conversations: Cultivating Thinkers Inside Classrooms and Beyond

Presented by:
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Big Ideas

• The Power of Language
• Comprehension Conversations
• A Dynamic Learning Stance
• The Keys to Collaborative Conversations in PLCs

A Portrait of a Student Who Meets the Common Core Standards

• Becomes a self-directed, independent learner
• Builds strong content area knowledge
• Adjusts communication based on audience, task, purpose, and content
• Comprehends as well as critiques
• Seeks to understand others’ perspectives and cultures
• Evaluates other points of view critically and constructively
• Values evidence
• Uses technology and digital media strategically and capably

Adapted from: Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts (NGA Center/CCSSO, 2010), p. 7

What the Common Core Standards Say About Reading Aloud

“By reading a story or nonfiction selection aloud, teachers allow children to experience written language without the burden of decoding, granting them access to the content that they may not be able to read and understand by themselves. Children are then free to focus their mental energy on the words and ideas presented in the text, and they will eventually be better prepared to tackle rich written content on their own” (CCSS, p. 27).
The Power of Connecting Reading and Writing Instruction

### Hallmarks of Proficient Literacy Learners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proficient Readers/Listeners</th>
<th>Proficient Writers/Speakers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Construct meaning while reading by integrating and applying comprehension strategies and while listening by asking clarifying questions.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Convey meaning through writing or speaking by integrating and applying writing strategies and asking themselves questions to ensure the clarity of the message.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Search for text- or illustration-based evidence to support their understanding of the message.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Provide text- or illustration-based evidence to support their communication of the message.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adjust their reading or listening based on their purpose, the genre, and type of text.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Design their written work to match their audience, task, purpose, and content.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Activate their schema and build background knowledge for a wide variety of text.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Are active collectors of ideas and insights for writing and speaking through careful observation and wide reading.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Develop an understanding of how words work.</strong> <em>(Foundational Skills)</em></td>
<td><strong>Apply their growing knowledge of words as they stretch out words and spell them using the sounds they know.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use decoding or fix-up strategies flexibly to figure out unknown words.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Apply strategies (word patterns, words endings, prefixes and suffixes and so on) and utilize resources (word walls, environmental print, personal word banks, and dictionary) to figure out how to spell words while writing.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clarify the meaning of the vocabulary in the books they read or hear.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Choose precise, interesting words when they write and speak.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Use emerging knowledge of the conventions of standard English and grammar to help better understand the ideas of others.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Use emerging knowledge of the conventions of standard English and grammar when writing and speaking.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Read with fluency and expression.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Write and speak with fluency and expression.</strong> <em>(Revised 7-31-13)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from *Literature Is Back!* (Fuhler & Walther, 2007) for *Transforming Literacy Teaching for the Common Core K-2* (Walther, In Press, Scholastic)
The Coordinated Structure of the Common Core Standards
Reading Comprehension Structure

• Key ideas and Details: What does the text say?
• Craft and Structure: How does the text say it?
• Integration of Meaning and Ideas: What does the text mean? What is its value? How does it connect to other texts?

Mentor Text to Model the Reading-Writing Connection

Viorst, J. (2010). *Lulu and the brontosaurus*. (L. Smith, Illus.). New York: Atheneum. Bratty Lulu wants a brontosaurus for a pet, so she runs away to the forest to find one. The tables turn when the brontosaurus decides he wants Lulu for his pet. Viorst interjects her author’s voice throughout the book and offers readers three different ending options.

Teaching Ideas: Reading-Writing Connection; 2013 Monarch Award List

Let’s Write a Book Review
(CCSS Writing Standard 1)

• Introduce the book to your readers—Don’t give away the ending!
• Talk about what you liked (or didn’t like) about the book. Explain your reasons.
• Recommend this book (if you liked it) to your readers.

Connecting Words and Phrases that Help Writers Explain More Than One Reason

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For example,</th>
<th>For instance,</th>
<th>Also,</th>
<th>In addition,</th>
<th>Furthermore,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Similarly,</td>
<td>Likewise,</td>
<td>Lastly,</td>
<td>Finally,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources:


Mentor Texts for Book Reviews

http://www.spaghettibookclub.org

Reading Rainbow Book Reviews
Read Like a Writer: Collaborative Conversations

Reading aloud IS teaching writing, even if no writing activity follows the reading.
Vicki Spandel, Creating Young Writers (2008)

Turn and Talk Teaching Tips:
Before you begin, model “turn and talk” with another adult or student. Emphasize the importance of having a two-way conversation with one person speaking at a time. Assign students a “turn and talk” partner or small group.

During read aloud, stop several times at natural breaking points and pose the following queries for students to “turn and talk” about:

• WHAT DO YOU NOTICE?
• WHAT ARE YOU WONDERING?
• CAN YOU CHOOSE TO DO THIS IN YOUR OWN WRITING?
• Where do you think this author got his/her ideas for this book?
• Listen to this! Let me reread the beginning of this book. Did the lead make you want to read the story?
• Did you hear any words that you want to remember and use in your writing?
• Can you picture this setting/character/event in your mind? How did the author help you do that? What words did he or she use?
• Notice the way the sentences flow. Talk about how the author did that.
• Does this writing have voice?
• Who is telling this story? How do you know that?


We need to marinate students in literature so that, over time, it soaks into their consciousness and, eventually, into their writing.
Ralph Fletcher, Roots and Wings: Literature and Children’s Writing (1993)
OBSERVING A TEACHER IN ACTION

THE KEYS TO AN EFFECTIVE PREBRIEFING

Created by: Dr. Robert Allison, St. Charles School District, St. Charles, IL

Facilitator begins by reminding participants of the following:

• We don’t learn from experiences, we learn from processing experiences
• We learn as we participate in the thoughtful, reflective conversations that surround the observation
• It is essential to focus on BIG IDEAS as we observe
  o Refrain from zooming in on tips or tricks
  o Your purpose is not to affirm the teacher, rather it is to see how his or her teaching impacts student learning

Prior to the observation, it is helpful to discuss what the kinds of things they should be thinking about and looking for as they observe the demonstration lesson.

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR OBSERVATION/REFLECTION:

What did you notice?
What are you wondering?
What were the students able to do?

THE KEYS TO AN EFFECTIVE DEBRIEFING

• Assign facilitator the guide the conversation
• Assign a participant to record thinking on chart paper (see suggested charts below)
• Remind participants to use non-evaluative language when sharing such as
  o I saw . . .
  o I heard . . .
  o I noticed . . .
  o I wonder . . .
  o AVOID using I liked . . .

HOW WILL THIS EXPERIENCE IMPACT MY TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING?

• What will you take away from your observation?
• What is the one thing you will do differently in your literacy teaching as a result of this experience?

Make three charts to record thinking and guide conversations

• OUR THEMES/BIG IDEAS
• I COMMIT TO...
• FOLLOW-UP...

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OBSERVING A TEACHER IN ACTION
Professional Learning Experience Goals

• Understand how reading like a writer elevates the conversations that surround read aloud experiences.
• Observe a teacher using language that encourages a dynamic learning stance.
• Notice how the language of “noticing and naming” is used throughout the learning experience.
• Discover the power student-led conversations.

Video Note Catcher

What did you notice?

What are you wondering?

What were the students able to do?

After Video Conversation

• How does the act of “noticing and naming” impact the learning and learning stance of the students?
• How can you encourage teachers in PLCs to use the same language and adopt a dynamic learning stance?
• Like writing, teaching is a decision-making process. How can you help teachers become professional decision makers?
What to look for . . .

- Various Text Structures
- Sensory Language
- Creative Conventions
- Repetition
- Word Play
- Onomatopoeia
- Interjections
- Illustration Techniques

What to say . . .

Source: Choice Words by Peter H. Johnston (Stenhouse, 2004)

"Oh, I love that line!"

"Did anyone notice
* any interesting words?
* any new punctuation?
* any new ways of arranging
  the words on the page?

"Are there any favorite words or phrases, or ones you wish you had written?"

"Why would an author do something like that?" "How else could the author have done that?"

"Why did the author choose that word?"

Note about Teaching Ideas References:

M-by-M Reading = Month-by-Month Reading for the Differentiated Classroom (Walther & Phillips, 2012)
M-by-M Writing = Month-by-Month Trait-Based Writing Instruction (Walther & Phillips, 2009)
Poetry = Teaching Struggling Readers With Poetry (Walther & Fuhler, 2010)
L. I. B. = Literature Is Back! (Fuhler & Walther, 2007)

A Few of My Favorite Mentor Texts

Yes Day! (Rosenthal, 2009)

My Very Own Yes Day!—Invite students to write their own Yes Day! book for their families and display their polished books at Open House or Curriculum Night.

Read Like a Writer—Enjoy reading the endpapers that display a calendar of ways that parents say, "No!"

Back Cover Blurbs—After reading this book for enjoyment, point out the humorous back cover blurb. Search the backs of other books for blurbs. (See M-by-M Writing p. 103 for a mini-lesson on blurbs.)

Mentor Texts to Spark Ideas


Begin reading this boldly illustrated picture book on the front flap and continue to read, notice, and laugh at the young narrator’s adventures as he narrowly escapes a tiger again and again!

Mentor Texts with a List Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiction</th>
<th>Informational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beetle Bop (Fleming, 2007)</td>
<td>Move! (Jenkins &amp; Page, 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken Cheeks (Black, 2009)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Like Books (Browne, 1989)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lots of Dots (Frazier, 2010)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things I Like (Browne, 1989)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Common Core Says . . . Read, Think, Converse, & Write!

"Children in the early grades—particularly kindergarten through grade 3—benefit from participating in rich, structured conversations with an adult in response to written texts that are read aloud, orally and comparing and contrasting as well as analyzing and synthesizing" (CCSS, p. 27).

Mini-Lesson found on pages 52-53 of Month-by-Month Reading Instruction for the Differentiated Classroom (Walther & Phillips, 2012)

Also see Blog Post by Lois Bridges: The Having of Grand Conversations
http://frizzleblog.scholastic.com/post/having-grand-conversations

What the Common Core Standards Say About Comprehension Conversations

• Develop students’ understanding that thinking and reading occur at the same time

• Encourage listeners to participate in thoughtful, collaborative conversations

• Include complex informational texts from the content areas like history and science

• Driven by high-quality, text dependent questions

• Invite readers to think carefully about texts and find evidence in text to support their response

BOOKS TO SPARK COMPREHENSION CONVERSATIONS

Inferring Big Ideas

A sweet story about a horsefly and honeybee that decide to nap in the same flower, have a fight, and each lose a wing. Later, when the bullfrog wants to eat them, they work together to fly away.
Teaching Ideas: Comprehension Conversations—Inferring Big Ideas (K), Social Studies—Friendship, Teamwork

Feeling alone in a world of periods, the exclamation mark tries everything to fit in and is about to give up when he meets the question mark. Question mark helps exclamation mark discover his unique talent—exclaiming!
Teaching Ideas: Comprehension Conversations—Inferring Big Ideas; Social Studies—Accepting Differences

Chloe learns a life lesson when her teacher points out the power of kindness. After this compelling lesson, Chloe wishes she would have shown kindness to the new girl, Maya, instead ignoring her because she was less fortunate and different. Unfortunately, Chloe never gets the chance to show kindness because Maya moves away.
Teaching Ideas: Comprehension Conversations—Inferring Big Ideas; Social Studies—accepting differences, friendship

Accepting Differences Text Set Ideas: Odd Velvet by Mary E. Whitcomb, The Rag Coat by Lauren Mills.

Little Cloudette wants to do big and important things like her fellow clouds. When a storm blows her to a new neighborhood she discovers that even a little cloud can make a big difference.
Teaching Ideas: Comprehension Conversation—Inferring Big Ideas; Weather, Pair with Clouds (Rockwell, 2008).

Asking and Answering Questions

When Tim's parents can't afford to buy him a new skateboard for his birthday he is looking for ways to earn money. Along comes Mr. Peters, a homeless man dubbed "The Can Man" for collecting cans, giving Tim an idea. Soon, Tim discovers that he has taken away Mr. Peters' only source of income.
Teaching Ideas: Comprehension Conversations—Inferring Big Ideas; Social Studies—homelessness; Pair with Fly Away Home by Eve Bunting

Comparing and Contrasting Texts on the Same Topic

The Keys to Collaborative Conversations in PLCs

- Core Beliefs
- Community
- Celebration
- Common Language

Creating a Culture of Thinking In Classrooms and Beyond
Gwendolyn Brooks Thinking Meetings

Outcomes
- Develop a common language for discussing literacy instruction
- Engage in curricular conversations to extend learning gained from graduate courses, professional readings, attending workshops, and working with students each day
- Discuss how we learn and how we teach
- Answer questions about instructional practices

Expectations
We expect to leave each thinking meeting . . .
- Energized and feeling better than when we came
- Motivated to continue to create a culture of thinking in our own classroom

Meeting Agenda:
- Celebration of new and abandoned ideas
- Sharing of children’s literature
- Discussion related to instructional question
- Selection of next month’s discussion topic (to be determined by group)
How the ASSESS-DECIDE-GUIDE Framework Provides Common Language for PLCs

ASSESS
• Know students’ reading habits and preferences
• Pinpoint each child’s developmental word knowledge
• Understand whether a learner can comprehend in various reading (or listening) situations
• Determine the child’s instructional reading level
• Identify the skills and strategies the student needs to learn in order to become a better reader

DECIDE
• Make data-based decisions
• Differentiate reading instruction

GUIDE
• Select texts that will compel readers to think
• Scaffold reading instruction to guide readers toward independence
• Incorporate word study and vocabulary instruction
• Connect reading and writing
• Motivate readers!
The Common Core Says . . . Know Your Books, Know Your Readers

## A Few of My Favorite Graphic Novel Series

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Series/Publisher</th>
<th>Title, Author, Brief Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Babymouse/Random House</td>
<td>Babymouse #13: Cupcake Tycoon (Holm, 2010) Babymouse is determined to raise the most money and win the grand prize in the school library fundraiser.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea Pig Pet Shop Private Eye/Graphic Universe/Lerner</td>
<td>The Ferret's a Foot (Venable, C. AF, 2011) In the third book of this series, Sasspants and her sidekick Hamisher are trying to solve another pet shop mystery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonics Comics/Innovative Kids</td>
<td>Teeny Genie (Katschke, 2009) The Teeny Genie is helping kids who need him with one wacky wish after another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toon Books/Toon Books</td>
<td>Stinky (Davis, 2008) Stinky and his pet Wartbelly enjoy their smelly days in the swamp until a kid comes along. Will Stinky and the kid become friends?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Month-by-Month Reading Instruction for the Differentiated Classroom (Walther & Phillips, 2012)

## A Portrait of an Accomplished Teacher

- Independently seeks out self-directed professional learning experiences
- Actively participates in professional learning communities
- Builds strong content area knowledge
- Adjusts instruction based on students’ interests and learning needs
- Analyzes as well as critiques their own teaching practices
- Values evidence and uses data to make instructional decisions
- Seeks to understand the perspectives and cultures of their students, their students’ families, and their colleagues
- Evaluates other points of view critically and constructively
- Uses technology and digital media strategically and capably

Adapted by Maria Walther from: *Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts* (NGA Center/CCSSO, 2010), p. 7 for *Transforming Literacy Teaching for the Common Core K-2* (Walther, In Press, Scholastic)

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Professional Books That Have Shaped My Thinking


Richardson, J. (2013). *Next Step Guided Reading in Action*, featuring grades K-2 and 3-5 DVDs. Scholastic.


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