Every Child Talks With Peers About Reading and Writing

Talking with peers about reading and writing is an underused and easy-to-implement element of effective literacy instruction. This element is easily applied in any content area and provides benefits in comprehension, motivation and literacy acquisition. As students switch between writing, speaking, reading and listening, they make connections and solidify the skills they use in each area as well as their own perspectives on what they read. Peer conversation allows students to learn from each other, receive validation for their contributions and provides opportunities for teachers to be culturally responsive to their students and amplify student voice.

When students talk with peers about what they read and write, research indicates that reading comprehension and engagement increase. Educational researcher, Dr. John Hattie, lists class discussion as the seventh most effective practice out of a list of 256 and cites the practice as having an effect size of .82; anything above a .40 is considered statistically significant.

Outcomes of Talking With Peers About Reading and Writing

- Solidify mastery of course content and standards
- Analyze and synthesize concepts from what they read and write
- Acknowledge and accept multiple perspectives
- Build on others’ ideas
- Persuade and converse with one or more peers

When talking with peers about reading and writing, students practice:

Speaking
- Speak with clarity
- Focus on topic
- Contribute to extending content
- Help explain concepts to classmates

Listening
- Build on other’s contributions
- Listen to understand, not to respond
- Turn-Taking
- Foster balance in contributions

Questioning
- Ask how and why questions about a text
- Ask questions based on peers’ contributions

As we support our students in academic conversation about what they read and write, we need to remember that students at all levels will require varying degrees of scaffolding and instruction on how to talk to each other.
Every Student Talks With Peers About Reading & Writing

Speaking, Viewing, Listening & Media Literacy (K-12):

To become college and career ready, students must have ample opportunities to take part in a variety of rich, structured conversations—as part of a whole class, in small groups and with a partner—built around important content in various domains. They must be able to contribute appropriately to these conversations, to make comparisons and contrasts, and to analyze and synthesize a multitude of ideas in accordance with the standards of evidence appropriate to a particular discipline. Whatever their intended major or profession, high school graduates will depend heavily on their ability to listen attentively to others so that they are able to build on others’ meritorious ideas while expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Structures, Strategies and Protocols to Support Content Standards with Element #3</th>
<th>Opportunities to Incorporate into Instruction</th>
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| Discussion Prompts or Academic Language Scripts Pre-K Discussion Prompts | • When your students are not accustomed to structured conversation in the classroom  
• When content is challenging or unfamiliar  
• When supporting students in synthesis, debate and analysis |
| Socratic Seminar & Grade 9-12 Example | • After completing exploration of a text  
• To facilitate student-to-student debate and incorporate multiple perspectives  
• When multiple texts have been read or written |
| Students create and deliver presentations | • Sharing learning from unit inquiry or research  
• To review a book or text  
• After completing final draft of a piece of writing |
| Inquiry Circles/Literature Circles & Book Clubs | • When multiple texts (articles, books, etc.) have been read and investigated  
• To share and learn from peer writing |
| Turn-and-Talk | • During an Interactive Read-Aloud  
• After drafting a journal or interactive notebook entry  
• While examining a mentor text |
| Jigsaw & Seed Discussions | • Text or book study  
• When a text is complex and/or lengthy  
• To research and write about multiple parts of one topic |
| Discussion Mapping | • When teacher needs to gather data on and assess student contribution  
• To support student listening  
• To encourage inclusion of multiple perspectives |
| Gallery Walks | • Sharing writing  
• Collaborative learning after jigsawed reading  
• Alternative presentation format for learners who prefer a smaller group setting |
| Parallel Line Share | • Sharing learning 1-on-1  
• Provides opportunity to hear multiple perspectives on reading analysis or writing response  
• Allows students to hear standards represented in multiple ways from peers |
| Reciprocal Teaching | • Provides structure for small group discussion of a text  
• Focuses student responsibility  
• Allows for shared, differentiated learning from a common text |

Resources

AVID Academic Language Scripts
- Academic Language Scripts
- Socratic Seminar Sentence Starters
- Metacognitive Thinking
  - K-5
  - 6-12
- Engagement Strategies
  - Lead4ward

DOK Question Stems
- DOK Levels
- Hess’ Math/Science Rigor Matrix
- DOK Tool-Mentoring Minds Academic Discussion Starters

Video Examples
- Grade 1 (Science)
- Upper elementary Math
- Academic Conversation with ELL Students
- Extra discussion prompts

It is imperative that we as teachers remember that it is our job to teach our students how to talk with each other and engage with peers in the same way that it is our job to teach our content.