

How to Facilitate Effective Discussions

Teaching students how to respectfully and effectively communicate about their thinking promotes a positive, student-centered learning environment. Understanding how to listen and respond to a partner and/or others within a group about academic thinking will enhance overall comprehension and critical thinking skills. This chart is a resource to support academic conversations during the Book Discussion portions of the Phonics Launch lessons.

	Teach and Model	Practice
Active Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening to another talk • Taking turns without interrupting 	Have students practice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking and answering the question in a clear and audible voice. • Sitting quietly while their partner responds. • Responding to the question in a complete sentence. • Looking at their partner when they are speaking.
Asking Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying when you don't understand something • Identifying when you are curious to know more • Identifying when you need clarification to understand 	Have students practice using a sentence starter: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Can you tell me more about ____?</i> • <i>That makes me wonder ...</i> • <i>I am confused about ...</i>
Responding to Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreeing with someone's thinking • Disagreeing with someone's thinking • Adding on to someone's thinking 	Have students practice using a sentence starter: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I agree because ...</i> • <i>I disagree because ...</i> • <i>I would like to add that ...</i>
Explaining Your Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using evidence to support your thinking • Adding on to your thinking 	Have students practice using a sentence starter: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I think _____ because _____.</i> • <i>I also think _____.</i>

Hand signals are an effective way to encourage all students to participate and respond during discussions. We recommend teaching and incorporating hand signals and/or gestures to enhance the strategies above during discussions. For example, students can put their thumbs up if they agree or their thumbs down if they disagree with another student.