



# 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 Discuss portions of the Stepping Together lessons.

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

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.