Classroom Discourse – Grade 4

This material is taken from *Classroom Discussions Grades K-6*, a multimedia professional learning resource published by Math Solutions, with only minor edits.

Five Reasons Why Talk is Critical to Teaching and Learning (page xvii)

1. Talk can reveal understanding and misunderstanding.
2. Talk supports robust learning by boosting memory.
3. Talk supports deeper reasoning.
4. Talk supports language development.
5. Talk supports development of social skills.

Common Obstacles to Using Talk Extensively in Classroom (page xix)

* We don’t have time! It takes time to conduct discussions, and I have a curriculum pacing manual to keep up with.
* What if I ask a question and don’t understand the student’s response? I’ll feel like an idiot and the student will be embarrassed.
* What if no one talks?
* Some of my students are too shy to talk in front of everyone. Some have language-based learning disorders, and some are English learners.
* I have two bright students who could talk math for hours. What if they just hog the floor, as usual?

These are real problems, and the book proposes solutions.

**Video Clips**

Mrs. Foley’s class has 19 ethnically diverse students. 43% of students at her school qualify for free or reduced lunch, and 25% are ELLs.

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| Clip | Length | Title | Grade | Description |
| 2.1e | 9:50 | Introducing Respectful Behaviors | Grade 3  Mrs. Foley | The teacher, Mrs. Foley, holds a substantive discussion about the norms for respectful discussion. |

Mrs. Foley’s Discussion Expectations

* Treat each other civilly at all times
* Participate in the discussion
* Speak loudly enough for others to hear
* Listen to the speaker’s idea
* Repeat a speaker’s idea
* Agree and disagree

Discussion Questions. Work with a new partner.

1. How did Mrs. Foley run this discussion?
2. Would you consider running a discussion like this in your classroom? If so, how would you add to, subtract from, or change elements of Mrs. Foley’s discussion?
3. Did you see adherence to Mrs. Foley’s norms already in place? If so, describe one or more instances.

Ms. Luipold’s class has 21 ethnically diverse students. This is the same West Hartford, Connecticut school as before.

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| Clip | Length | Title | Grade | Description |
| 2.1j | 1.21 | How do we agree and disagree? | Grade 4  Ms. Luipold | Ms. Luipold discusses with her students how to use the agree/disagree move. |

Discussion Questions. Work with a new partner.

1. How do you think Ms. Luipold prepared for this discussion?
2. Do you think the point of the lesson was made effectively? If so, what contributed to that? If not, why not?

Background: Students have previously worked in small groups to find all possible rectangles using exactly 20 square tiles. How many are there? What are the perimeters?

Then they had a discussion about the perimeters of the rectangles. (Clip 3.2a)

We’ll watch this clip twice. The first time, pay particular attention to the student responses. Don’t critique the teacher.

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| Clip | Length | Title | Grade | Description |
| 3.2b | 9:11 | Examining Area and Perimeter | Grade 4  Ms. Luipold | Students discuss in small groups and as a class some of their thoughts about why the perimeters of rectangles with the same area are different. |

Discussion Questions – First viewing.

Work with a new partner, even if you have to move to a new table.

1. What language did the students use to describe how the area stayed the same and the perimeter changed?
2. How did the students describe how one rectangle changed to another?
3. Describe evidence of student understanding of the key idea?
4. Do you think the students will remember the key idea a year from now? Why or why not? If they didn’t how could you remind them?

For the second viewing, focus on the teacher’s moves.

Discussion Questions – Second viewing.

Work with the same partner.

1. What did the teacher do that you thought was effective?
2. Are there any suggestions you have for the teacher so that future discussions of this type might be more effective?
3. What significant ideas for orchestrating discussion in your classroom did you get from the video, if any?

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| Clip | Length | Title | Grade | Description |
| 7.2a | 2:07 | Defining the words *Area* and *Perimeter* | Grade 4  Ms. Luipold | Students work together to define area and perimeter. Ms. Luipold assists them in defining perimeter as a length. |

Discussion Questions. Work with a new partner.

1. Were the student definitions good ones? Why or why not?
2. What did the teacher do that you thought was effective?