Classroom Discourse – Grade 5

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, but the book proposes solutions.

**Video Clips**

Mrs. Foley’s class has 19 ethnically diverse students. 43% qualify for free or reduced lunch.

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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 for You. 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.

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

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?

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| Clip | Length | Title | Grade | Description |
| 8.3a | 6:36 | Volume of Rectangular Prisms,  Part 1 | Grade 5  Mrs. Foley | Students review important vocabulary. After hearing the expectations, students work in small groups to derive methods for finding the volume of any rectangular prism |

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

1. Why did Mrs. Foley begin the lesson with a review of vocabulary?
2. Comment on student explanations of units of volume.
3. Comment on the various student methods for finding the volume. Did they all seem to be correct? If not, what misconceptions seemed to appear?

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| Clip | Length | Title | Grade | Description |
| 8.3b | 5:33 | Volume of Rectangular Prisms,  Part 2 | Grade 5  Mrs. Foley | Students describe their methods to the whole class |

Discussion Questions. Work with the same partner.

1. Describe as many methods as you can. Which can be applied to any rectangular prism?
2. What are the advantages of recording all the responses on the white board?
3. What are the advantages of Mrs. Foley not saying whether the methods are correct?

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| Clip | Length | Title | Grade | Description |
| 8.3c | 3:31 | Volume of Rectangular Prisms,  Part 3 | Grade 5  Mrs. Foley | Students work in small groups to test and refine each other’s methods. |

Discussion Questions. Work with a new partner.

1. What strategies did Mrs. Foley use to deepen student understanding?
2. Was the word “width” used consistently? If not, should Mrs. Foley have commented on that? Why or why not?

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| Clip | Length | Title | Grade | Description |
| 8.3d | 14:34 | Volume of Rectangular Prisms,  Part 4 | Grade 5  Mrs. Foley | Students discuss two of the proposed methods and explore the connections between them. |

Discussion Questions. Work with the same partner.

1. Which methods did Mrs. Foley decide to talk about during the whole class discussion? Why did she choose these methods?
2. How did the comparison of the two methods come up? How did Mrs. Foley highlight the connection between the methods?
3. What thoughts do you have about student discourse in your classroom?