

Session 6: Conversations and Questions

Session Overview

This session is one of four *Apply and Refine* sessions. The focus of this session is on conversations and questions, and the key role they play in supporting learning and meaning making of ideas and concepts for learners. Conversation can be a window into learners' prior knowledge, skill-level, personality, previous experience, and ability to articulate ideas. Three patterns of talk are introduced through role-plays that depict typical interactions between educators and learners, followed by discussions about the impact on learners when an educator sees his/her role as either "sage on the stage" or "guide on the side."

Participants then discuss how they may influence the types of conversations they have with their learners through the questions they ask and how they follow up on those questions.

Session Objectives

In this session, participants:

- . Discuss the purpose and value of conversations in the learning process;
- . Read short excerpts from the research literature to become aware of such ideas as, IRE (Initiate, Respond, Evaluate), and the value of (1) peer to peer conversations, (2) dialogue in learning, and (3) guidance in learning science;
- . Experience and reflect on the different effects of focused and broad questions on thinking and discussions with learners; and
- . Note the impact on learners when an educator sees his/her role as either "guide on the side" or "sage on the stage."

Session Activities at a Glance

Quick Write & Discussion: Key Characteristics of learning conversations. Participants reflect on and write about their thoughts from the reading. They share their ideas on the role of conversations in learning and determine key characteristics of learning conversations.

Research Discussion: Learning & Talking. Participants do a jigsaw discussion about talking and learning. They include their own reactions to the information and questions they have about it, leading a discussion on the topic within their group.

Activity: Types of Conversations. Three brief skits are acted out, depicting the types of conversations between an educator and museum visitors. The first illustrates the Educator monologue, the second

demonstrates IRE (teacher **initiates**, student **responds**, teacher **evaluates**), and third portrays Reflective discourse.

Research Discussion: Questions, Teachers, & Discussion Map.

Participants are introduced to broad and focused questions and discuss how educators may influence the types of conversations they have with their learners through the questions they ask and how they follow up on those questions.

Science Briefing: Deep sea. Participants learn about the deep-sea environment as they participate in an interactive PowerPoint presentation highlighting questioning strategies, the Discussion Map, and the interplay between the kinds of conversations.

Homework. Readings and tasks are assigned.