

Strategies for supporting a culture of talk in your classroom

Fish bowl

Conduct a fish bowl to model how you want your students to talk to each other or anything else that you think might be relevant based on your observations of your students. You can do this with a small group of students, an inner and outer circle during a science talk, or another teacher. A checklist that you might use with a fishbowl and some possible discussion prompts/sentence frames to give to students are attached.

Appoint a peer observer

During partner shares or small group discussions, appoint an observer to take notes. Based on your classroom norms and any discussion or argumentation goals you have set, the "observer" in each group can take notes on what they see the participants doing and not doing. In a partner share, for example, you would have two students talking and a third student observing. Generally this works best if the observer is given explicit instructions about what to look for and some sort of a check sheet or note-taking sheet to record thoughts. For example, the observer might use the fish bowl checklist to take notes. At the conclusion of the discussion, students might change roles. You should end by having a whole-class debrief of what students did well and what they still need to work on. This can inform class goals for next time you have a discussion. Alternatively, you may collect the observer checklists and use them in conjunction with your own notes to determine what you will focus on to support the next student discussion.

Exit tickets

At the conclusion of class or a discussion, have students complete an "exit ticket" regarding their participation in discussion. The exit ticket should require students to rank themselves in any areas you want them to reflect on. These categories might come from classroom discussion norms. The goal is to make students reflect on how well they are engaging in whatever you want them to engage in and how they might improve. Part of the exit ticket might include students writing a participation goal for the next time you have a discussion.

Watch a video of a class discussion with your students

Videotape a classroom discussion and share it with your students. Have the students watch the discussion with particular goals in mind (e.g., are they sticking to the norms? are they providing evidence to support their ideas? are they relying on you to move the discussion forward?). They might watch the video using the same checklist provided for the fish bowl activity. Allowing students to watch back their discussion might provide a powerful tool for helping the class evaluate where they are now and where they want to go. As a class, you might be able to generate a list of goals for future discussions.

Discussing Evidence and Active Listening Checklist

You know we are using *evidence* to support our thinking because you *hear* us say things like:

_____ I think _____ because _____.

You *hear* that we are listening to each other's ideas because we say things like:

_____ I agree with that idea because _____.

_____ I disagree with that idea because _____.

_____ I think I understand what you're saying. I think you said _____.

_____ Could you show me what you mean?

You *see* that we are listening to each other because we are:

_____ Making eye contact with each other

_____ Waiting to talk until the other person has finished

_____ Keeping respectful expressions on our faces (no funny/mean faces)

Discussing evidence

I think _____ because I observed/read that _____. This makes me think that _____.

I agree with that idea because _____.

I disagree with that idea because _____.

I think I understand what you're saying. I think you said _____.

Could you show me what you mean?

Discussing evidence

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I agree with that idea because _____.

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