Inspiring Dynamic Discussion in the Classroom

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Discussion can help elicit higher-level thinking and talent-spotting

Project Focus uses professional learning (PL) to support teachers’ facilitation of discussion

By measuring high-quality discussion we can identify its key features and track success of Professional Learning
What is high-quality discussion?

How can we measure it?

How can we support it?
What is high-quality discussion?
Using sticky notes answer the following prompt
(1 sticky = 1 behavior):

What behaviors might you see from students in a high-quality discussion?
What behaviors might signal that a student needs more challenge?
Sort your stickies into like-groups

What themes do you see across the behaviors?
Reflection

• How many groups did you sort your stickies into?
• What is the theme of each group?
• What behaviors seem important for discussion?
Collaboration
Contributes to an inclusive environment in which they work together with others to develop shared understanding.

Critical Thinking
Uses reasoning and logic to analyze and construct consistent and coherent judgements, arguments, and understandings.

Divergent Thinking
Generates a broad range of ideas, makes links between different ideas, and elaborates on their thinking.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Collaboration</th>
<th>Critical Thinking</th>
<th>Divergent Thinking</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actively contribute to</td>
<td>Articulate reasoning</td>
<td>Provide different types of responses</td>
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<tr>
<td>discussion</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Pose questions to each other</td>
<td>Question own assumptions</td>
<td>Generate unusual ideas</td>
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<td>Adhere to discussion norms</td>
<td>Differentiate between relevant and irrelevant</td>
<td>Propose multiple outcomes</td>
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<td>information</td>
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How can we measure high-quality discussion?
Student Ratings: Teachers rate the likelihood that students engage in high-quality discussion behaviors.

Teacher Self-Efficacy: Teachers rate their confidence in facilitating high-quality discussion.

Text Features: Key words and patterns in classroom transcripts.

Observations: Instructional quality is rated while reviewing video recordings of classroom discussion.
<table>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Student Scale</strong></td>
<td>Actively contributes to discussions</td>
<td>Articulates their reasoning</td>
<td>Provides different types of responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Scale</strong></td>
<td>Make sure students speak at least as much as the teacher</td>
<td>Press students to give reasons to support their conclusions</td>
<td>Ask questions that invite many responses</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Text Features</strong></td>
<td>Turns of talk, proportion of words per speaker</td>
<td>Keywords e.g., “so” or “because”</td>
<td>Differentiating between authentic and inauthentic questions</td>
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How can we support high-quality discussion?
Pavlov's Dog

LESSON

CULTURAL

SOCIAL

PSYCHOLOGICAL

COGNITIVE

(Michaels & O'Connor, 2015)
TALK MOVES

Conversational moves to orchestrate equitable and productive discussion

(Godfrey & O’Connor, 1995; O’Connor, 1996; O’Connor, 2001; O’Connor & Michaels, 1993, 1996)
Revoicing
Paraphrase a contribution in a clearer way (Chapin et al., 2009)

Marking
Orient on a student’s utterance (McKeown and Beck, 2004)

Repeating
Paraphrase another’s contribution (Chapin et al., 2009)
Facilitating Collaboration

Fostering an inclusive atmosphere in which all members collaborate towards shared understanding.

Facilitating Deeper Thinking

Facilitating discourse that engages students in critical and divergent thinking.
With a partner, discuss the following:

What can you do to support collaboration during a class discussion?
Complete the sentence:

One barrier to collaboration in a class discussion is _________. 
Balance Talk Time
Students speak as much as the teacher

Elicitation
Draw out students’ contributions

Wait Time
Allow 3-5 seconds for students to think before discussing

Productive Disagreement
Help students navigate disagreements

Encouragement
Students are safe to speak their minds without fear of ridicule (Skidmore 2006)

Compliments
Recognize students efforts (Stewart-Mitchell, n.d.)
Revoicing
Paraphrase a contribution in a clearer way (Chapin et al., 2009)

Marking
Orient on a student’s utterance (McKeown and Beck, 2004)

Repeating
Paraphrase another’s contribution (Chapin et al., 2009)

Uptake
Incorporate others’ ideas or comments into a response (Nystrand et al. 1997)

Sharing Knowledge
Invite students to share what they know about a topic

Adding On
Prompt students for further participation (Chapin et al., 2009)
Revoicing
Paraphrase a contribution in a clearer way (Chapin et al., 2009)

“Who can put that in their own words?”

Marking
Orient on a student’s utterance
(McKeown and Beck, 2004)

“____ just said something really interesting.”

Repeating
Paraphrase another’s contribution
(Chapin et al., 2009)

“Can you repeat what they just said in your own words?”
QSSSA

1. Ask a Question
2. Use a Signal
   - pencils down, stand up, point to nose
3. Give a Stem
   - giving vocabulary, scaffolding language
4. Share Out
   - elbow partners or turn & talk
5. Assess Learning
   - random pickers like popsicle sticks

(Seidlitz & Perryman, 2008)
Facilitating Collaboration

Fostering an inclusive atmosphere in which all members collaborate towards shared understanding.

Facilitating Higher-Level Thinking

Facilitating discourse that engages students in critical and divergent thinking.
Critical Thinking

Uses reasoning and logic to analyze and construct consistent and coherent judgements, arguments, and understandings.

Divergent Thinking

Generates a broad range of ideas, makes links between different ideas, and elaborates on their thinking.
With a partner, discuss the following:

What can you do to support deep thinking during a class discussion?
One barrier to deep thinking in a class discussion is __________.
Authentic Questioning
Open-ended questions that do not have a prespecified answer (Nystrand et al., 2003)

Predicting
Anticipating what will happen next

Elaboration
Press students to detail a new idea

Connecting
Finding commonalities between responses (Teo, 2016) or ideas
**Instructional Groups**
Leverage advantages of whole, small, and partner groups (e.g., Howe and Abedin, 2013)

**Critique**
Evaluate others’ contributions (Mercer and Littleton 2007)

**Reference Evidence**
Providing reasons to support conclusions

**Reasoning**
Apply own reasoning to another’s contribution (Chapin et al., 2009)
Let’s do some deep thinking

The following is an activity you can implement with your students
Generate as many questions as you can
1. Do not answer, judge, or discuss
2. Write down every question as stated
3. Change any statements into questions

What are the pros and cons of open-ended questions? Closed-ended?

Which 3 questions are most important? Why?

What’s your action plan?
Can you connect information to action?
How did the activity stir deep thinking?

Were there times you were thinking divergently? Critically?
Project Focus – Research Participation

Project Focus at UConn is seeking participants for a research study. We are conducting a survey focused on teacher self-efficacy, especially related to questioning and discussion. We are seeking responses from currently and recently practicing teachers at grades K-12. Teachers who participate are eligible for a $10 electronic gift card. Please use the QR code to access the survey. Contact Catherine Little at catherine.little@uconn.edu or project.focus@uconn.edu with any questions.
Project Focus at UConn is seeking participants for a research study. We are conducting a survey about how teachers describe their students’ participation in classroom discussion. We are seeking responses from U.S. teachers at grades K-12. Teachers who participate are eligible to enter a drawing for one of 25 $25 electronic gift cards. Please use the QR code to access the survey. Contact Catherine Little at catherine.little@uconn.edu or project.focus@uconn.edu with any questions.
Project Focus – Research Participation

Project Focus at UConn will be inviting schools in 2024-2025 to participate as professional learning and research sites. We will be looking for schools with multiple potential teacher participants at grades 3-5. Contact Catherine Little at catherine.little@uconn.edu or project.focus@uconn.edu to learn more.
Thank You!
References


