

**Creating a Discourse-Rich Classroom Culture to Enhance Academic Discussions Across
Content Areas**

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Abstract:

Today's students struggle with effectively communicating their ideas in the classroom. Despite constantly being asked to think, write, read and respond students respond negatively when asked to interact verbally in an academic setting. The solution is not to force students to engage in dialogue, but to provide various opportunities for students to interact with both the teacher and their peers. "By allowing students to take responsibility for their own education we can close the gaps in our students learning". (Turney) These interactions are crucial to student achievement and growth because they require students to explain their high-level thinking. When students are immersed in relevant classroom discussions, their engagement and participation increases which in turn promotes learning. As the curriculum evolves, students should be granted additional autonomy of their learning experiences. Academic discourse is a foundational skill that benefits all students.

Chapter One: Introduction

Problem Statement: Schooled in an assessment-oriented educational system, today's students and teachers are often focused on getting the "right answer." Equally important, however, is a focus on critical thinking, training students to effectively communicate and examine multiple ideas, and to enhance their verbal discourse across all content areas. It often begins with a discourse-rich classroom culture and yet that focus is not always present in many secondary schools.

"It is critical that we address the challenges of engaging students in the classroom. Classroom discussion, dialogue, and discourse are the principal means of exchanging ideas, evaluating mastery, developing thinking processes, and reflecting on content and shared thoughts." (AMLE) Discussions have the ability to empower students, because they challenge recitation and invite students to make their thinking observable. "Seeing what others have made of the text, seeing others' interpretations, will enable him to discover elements of the text that he has ignored or exaggerated. Or he may learn that what he brought to the text – either in knowledge of language and literature, or in experience of life". (Rosenblatt) By encouraging students to make-meaning, they in turn promote intellectual engagement among students with similar interests and life experiences to bond in a positive and educational environment.

"Today's teachers must be aware and think about how to adapt their instruction to better serve the unique characteristics of the individual students in their classrooms". (AMLE) Meaningful student involvement occurs when a student ignores the role of a passive recipient and becomes an active partner in their educational process.

Traditional classroom cultures have proven to be restrictive, permitting student responses only when directly addressed. This type of culture stifles meaningful thinking in that it prohibits students from challenging themselves and others. A discourse-rich classroom culture, however; engages students in deep-learning, encourages and demands critical thinking and problem-solving in ways that teacher-to-student interactions do not. “Teachers have the challenge of presenting information that is going to be interesting enough to obtain, but fast and concise enough where they will not lose interest”. (International Education Advisory Board)

Teachers can transform their teaching instruction and classroom learning opportunities by implementing discourse protocols. Many schools; however, lack the necessary training and professional development to introduce discourse in the classrooms. “In fact, many school districts lack any emphasis on professional development opportunities as it is, let alone training for discourse in the classroom”. (AMLE) Research results show that teacher-student talk dominates the classroom discourse by 94%. “Despite the importance of these discourse practices, many middle and high school students are not afforded these opportunities or the necessary teacher support in their classrooms”. (Hindin) If teachers lack the resources to implement effective discourse in their classrooms, then they cannot provide their students with the skills necessary for success. To best serve out students, schools, administrators and policymakers must alter their traditional expectations of the past and adopt a discourse driven approach to learning that is adaptable, inspires creative and critical thinking, and focuses on collaborative problem-solving (Pacific Policy Research Center).

Significance of the Problem:

The teachers that take into account the individual needs and experiences of the students in their classroom create opportunities for success. Yet, this is not enough exposure for students

who do not see the value in what they are learning. Interactions are crucial to student achievement and growth. Students are no longer only required to absorb information from long-standing lectures of which they share little to no profound connection with. Student talk is proven to enhance student learning and increase achievement across disciplines, thus encouraging teachers and administrators alike to move curriculum away from lectures and towards making implications about the topics they are engaging with. Teachers and students, together, are responsible for leading whole classes of students and for the setting of high expectations and directing student learning toward measurable ends through discourse. Discourse is important for student success in higher education. Students who engage more frequently in discourse are more successful in college, where students are required to produce more written work. “Speaking, listening, and writing skills are also the key to success in most 21st century careers, because they are such an inherent part of critical thinking and because they are the means of communication with colleagues”. (ASCD) For that reason, these skills are now more important than ever. It is imperative that students are afforded the opportunity to engage in rich, meaningful discussions at the high school level.

It is obvious that discourse is important within the classroom to help students prepare for the future. For that reason, these skills are now more important than ever. Their thinking and communication skills grow as part of a single process that connects speaking and listening with writing. “The profound connection between literacy and critical thinking helps clarify why both classroom discourse and writing should be consistently taught and practiced in school”. (ASCD) Since education has evolved, the skills needed to be successful has changed as well. In the past, education was sufficient when a student would read a text, write something, and perform some type of assessment. Current day students are required to comprehend texts as well, but also are responsible for much more. English Language Arts teachers are no longer responsible to provide

primarily reading and writing instruction. This generation of students is not going to maintain engagement or remain motivated to learn if teachers approach their learning in the same ways that were done in the past; simply reading a text and responding to text-dependent questions is not going to keep their attention or provide them the necessary skills to become successful in their future education or career paths. When teachers assign tasks that involve expressing their thinking verbally rather through traditional forms of writing, students tend to be more engaged and recognize relevancy in the assigned task.

Additionally, English Language Arts classrooms that lack proper use of discourse risk stifling student learning and often prohibit further engagement. For example, if an urban school, with a population of predominantly Hispanic and African American students, were to focus on issues that do not directly affect or influence their lives, then those students are more likely to suffer because of their discourse imbedded skills. The problem in the English Language Arts classroom is that we struggle to see the whole child when we're told to look at the target and want the flexibility to give our pupils the learning experiences that engage and inspire them to go further. We want to give them practice in useful skills, such as social skills, which will enable them to be successful citizens in our ever more complex world, and manual skills, which can lead to the deep satisfaction of creativity.

Teachers must find ways to balance traditional forms of written assessment with formative discourse to better suit the needs and wants of their students to maintain their attention and ensure that what they are learning and how they are learning is relevant to their lives now and in the future. If curriculums are going to be continually evolving and encouraging more learning for future students, then teachers must do so as well.

Purpose:

Most English Language Arts classrooms begin the writing process by first introducing argument. Argumentative writing is one of the most complex, challenging concepts to both learn and teach. Arguing is a skill that is never fully developed and can always use room for improvement. The goal of argumentative writing should be to “better prepare students to function within the social realm” and by doing so “seek the best or most just solution to a problem while observing all available evidence, listening with an open mind to the views of all stakeholders, clarifying and attempting to justify your own values and assumptions, and taking responsibility for your argument”. (Knoblauch) Teachers not only have the responsibility to teach argumentative writing, but also to teach argumentative writing across all disciplines. Thus, it is important that administrators realize how argumentative discourse is a priority within the classroom to be relevant to students and to ensure their success. Teachers must incorporate a balance of a variety of different strategies and protocols within their instruction. If a teacher only uses one pedagogical method, soon enough it will become redundant and boring because these modern students are used to things challenging them immediately. Therefore, teachers’ training in relevant and engaging protocols should reflect the same variation.

Discourse should be included within each lesson within the English Language Arts classroom in some form or another. Argumentative writing is a skill that improves due to the influence and exposure of other students’ discourse. Having students converse in the classroom allows teachers and students to have an untapped supply of formative assessment opportunities. The benefit of this unlimited evaluation is that student’s misconceptions can then be instantly addressed right there in the moment. This lead-in assessment would be easy to implement within

a lesson before a summative assessment to ensure that all students are prepared and provided with every opportunity to succeed.

I am going to provide resources that adhere to New York State Common Core Standards and address academics within a more discourse-oriented approach to teaching. The specific skills that my unit will address, to encompass the needs of all learners, will include collaboration amongst homogeneous and heterogeneous groups, open-mindedness, development of thinking and speaking skills, ability to communicate effectively, accountability, critical thinking, problem-solving and argumentative strategies. If teachers maintain authentic writing assignments in the classroom, students are more likely to be engaged.

Rationale:

The characteristics and needs of students required to become proficient in argumentative writing are much different than past generations. These students need to be in control of their own learning, have choice, collaborate, and engage in topics that interest them personally. To help these students learn to the best of their abilities, teachers need to teach within their terms to maintain motivation and engagement. Without both motivation and engagement there is no learning happening within those classroom walls. Teachers must have the appropriate means of resources and training to create and implement creative lessons that students can relate to and find a purpose within. In short, it is apparent that students can help each other to learn; however, it is important that teachers then provide high-quality help and that this help is provided at an appropriate time so the student who needs it can use it.

Definition of Terms:

- **Discourse:** the verbal interactions between teacher and students, and between student and student.
- **Professional Development:** learning and engaging with formal coursework by attending conferences and informal learning opportunities to grow in practice.
- **Protocols:** set of step-by-step guidelines used by educators to structure professional conversations or learning experiences.
- **Disciplinaries:** a specific area or field of study within higher education.
- **Formative Assessment:** assessment procedures administered by teachers during the learning process in order to modify teaching and learning activities to improve student learning.
- **Lead-in Assessment:** an assignment that directly correlates and prepares students for a larger scale assessment.
- **Summative Assessment:** “used to evaluate student learning and academic achievement at the conclusion of a unit of study”. (Partnership)
- **Homogeneous Group:** a group of students with the same or similar learning styles, abilities and/or interests.
- **Heterogenous Group:** a group of students with different or varying learning styles, abilities and/or interests.

Chapter Two: Do Students Embody Dispositional Qualities?

“Critical discourse analysis is a research method that seeks to uncover how discourse reflects and constructs social practices” (Shaw & Bailey) Student discourse has been proven to enhance student learning and increase achievement across disciplinaries by promoting both

critical thinking and problem-solving, thus moving students away from absorbing information and making implications about the texts they are engaging with. Research has proven that student discourse helps students to “develop social networks; reason with others to improve society; reflecting on their experiences; communicate professionally and academically; and build relationships with others, including friends, family, and like-minded individuals; and engaging in aesthetic experiences”. (NCTE, *Professional Knowledge for the Teaching of Writing*) “At the heart of it, student discourse could be defined as the verbal interactions between teacher and students, and between student and student” (Discourse 101). Student talk includes verbal discourse regarding academic material. This communication may take place both in and outside of the classroom and dialogue may be teacher-to-student, student-to-teacher, or student-to-student. Student talk may occur in large group, small group, one-on-one conferences or virtually. “Student talk, in these forms, is essential to Vygotsky’s (1978) theory that social learning is of the utmost importance in education. These interactions are crucial to student achievement and growth.” (Imbertson).

The same instructional approach to student discourse that has been taught in the past is irrelevant to today’s student populations. Literature “calls on the reader to engage with the text, to more deliberately bring to the reading his or her experience as a way of filling the gaps in the text” (Sparkes) However, in more and more English Language Arts classrooms, the literature or discussion topics students engage with has prohibited them from learning, ultimately, discouraging students to engage with rigorous texts, explore controversial topics or expand their vocabulary. “We have to tell others about our experiences and perspectives; we have to listen to the interpretations of other witnesses” (Sparkes).

Providing Opportunity

Providing students with the opportunity to discuss topics that are relevant and appealing to them has been proven to increase student engagement and participation in classrooms across disciplines. “Engaging students in partner talk (e.g., think-pair-share, turn-and-talk) or small group before whole group discussions, encourages more students to participate by first allowing them to articulate, clarify, and reorganize thoughts with a partner.” (AMLE) Eventually, through repeated exposure to the use of these protocols in their groups, children learn to internalize them and they become part of the repertoire of skills they use to understand a text.

It is evident that student learning requires autonomy, authenticity and an “openness to receptivity of literature”, thus when students are granted autonomy in the classroom and opportunities to make a product that is fully their own, they connect opinions, ideas, questions, and values to their own. (Holland) This can be done without the traditional paradigm, “that stresses working with students during the writing process” by balancing student “talk about literature in a teacher-centered classroom” (McLead). Any text has the potential to promote discussions among a wide variety of students: those with disabilities, those who are seen as able, those from majority-dominant backgrounds, and those from minority cultures. “Although life in the classroom is a social experience, it does not necessarily constitute a community” (Meltzof). This idea is pertinent more so in an English classroom more so than in any other because literature serves this model should be taught more than just “the book” in the classroom. “Student talk enhances learning and increases student achievement in text comprehension when students receive varied and open-ended questions”, a key variable missing from classrooms that shun discourse. (Imbertson) Students should be encouraged to “compare [the text] to others, associating to it, bringing one's knowledge or expertise to bear, evaluating it, placing it in a

tradition, treating it as an encoded message to be decoded”. (Holland) By allowing students to take responsibility for their own learning we can close the gaps in our students learning.

Teachers and students, together, are responsible for leading whole classes of students and for the setting of high expectations and directing student learning toward measurable ends through discourse.

Student Engagement and Achievement

Engaging students in effective classroom talk begins by creating a discourse-rich classroom culture, “one of both exploration and reflection, characterized by the ongoing formative assessment of students’ speaking, listening, and writing skills as well as the thinking that drives those skills” (Dougherty, Billings, & Roberts) Discussions also empowers students to move away from strictly absorbing the material and into becoming meaning-makers. If students are not engaged and motivated their learning is directly affected.

“As they hear a text discussed—and occasionally participate verbally—they are gleaning insights into the text as well as the language with which to express those ideas”. (ASCD) If they then capture some of those ideas and some of that language on paper immediately following the seminar, they have the raw material with which to jump-start the writing process. (Dougherty) Classrooms that embrace student talk have shown increases in achievement which happen across all backgrounds and abilities. “Seeing what others have made of the text, seeing others’ interpretations, will enable him to discover elements of the text that he has ignored or exaggerated. Or he may learn that what he brought to the text – either in knowledge of language and literature, or in experience of life”. (Rosenblatt)

Reading is an inherently social activity which requires engagement and lends itself to social encounters from the moment the text has been read. “Opportunities to discuss literature with peers are critical to students' development of literary understanding. The goal of student discourse is to promote higher-order thinking through consistent exposure to higher-order questions and opportunities for verbal expression and to increase the rigor of instructional practice and therefore to increase the achievement of all students” (Discourse 101) However, research results show that teacher-student talk dominates the classroom discourse by 94%. “Classroom talk is frequently limited and is used to check comprehension rather than develop thinking” (Dougherty) Despite the importance of these discourse experiences, many middle and high school students are not afforded these opportunities or the necessary teacher support in English classrooms.

Student talk has been proven to enhance student learning and increase achievement across disciplines by promoting both critical thinking and problem-solving, thus moving students away from absorbing information and making implications about the texts they are engaging with. “Their thinking and communication skills grow as part of a single process that connects speaking and listening with writing.” (Dougherty) When classroom talk becomes an integral part of writing instruction, students benefit immeasurably. Students who engage more frequently in discourse are more successful in college, where students are required to produce more written work. Speaking, listening, and writing skills are also the key to success in most 21st century careers, because they are such an inherent part of critical thinking and because they are the means of communication with colleagues. For that reason, these skills are now more important than ever. Their thinking and communication skills grow as part of a single process that connects speaking and listening with writing. The profound connection between literacy and

critical thinking helps clarify why both classroom discourse and writing should be consistently taught and practiced in school.

Standardized Argumentative Discourse

In the last few years, there has been a strong focus on argumentative writing across all disciplines, but many students still have difficulty expressing their ideas on paper. “Arguments seldom if ever have only two sides: rather they present a dizzying array of perspectives” (Knoblauch). This further creates frustration on behalf of the student who struggles to organize “a dizzying array of perspectives” into a timed exam. Test scores are informing administrators and educators that students can only share the information that is presented, not the information they have gained throughout their education process. This gap is important to recognize and adhere within the classroom instruction since it is often being overlooked as teachers and administrators only concentrate on sticking to the standards. If the standards are lacking some of the most important skills to learn, students are still going to go into the workforce lacking experience and practice in all areas needed for success.

The Common Core State Standards are a great foundational framework for school districts to use in creating their learning objectives. However, these standards should not be other only means of curriculum development. Many of the challenges with these Common Core State Standards is how students are still being assessed with standardized tests and not able to apply the skills they need are supposed to be practicing with relationship to discourse. Therefore, the only way that educators are going to be able to stay ahead of the curve and support students to the best of their learning abilities is through supportive administration, high standards and constant professional development supported by the district. However, “research data suggests

that public schools are requiring less and less in-depth discussion and writing and that the writing they do assign tends to be more personal narrative than academic argument” (Dougherty).

21st Century learners must become problem-solvers who can both collaborate with people from diverse backgrounds, practice the arts of persuasion and at the same time think critically for themselves in order to effect change in the social realm. However, The Common Core Standards put written argument front and center of the American education system, and even young readers are now expected to clarify and support the reasons presented while adhering to the precise [written] standards for handling evidence. The goal of argumentative writing should be to “better prepare students to function within the social realm” and by doing so “seek the best or most just solution to a problem while observing all available evidence, listening with an open mind to the views of all stakeholders, clarifying and attempting to justify your own values and assumptions, and taking responsibility for your argument”. (Knoblauch) While discourse is used in most classrooms, it has the potential to be more effective if used to assist student’s cognitive beliefs. In language, there are important connections “among saying (informing), doing (action), and being (identity)” (Gee).

Rather than embedded in inquiry, discovery, or communication, the purpose of argumentative writing in the high school setting has arguably become recall, not creativity. Students memorize formats and organizers for structured writing, looking for prescribed evidence to retort back into a writing formula. A suggested teaching practice comes from Knoblauch’s article, *A Textbook Argument: Definitions of Argument in Leading Composition Textbooks*, when he suggests asking “students to pair up, trade paragraphs, and decide whether or not their partners’ experiences fit into the category listed. If not, students are encouraged to find the problem”. “It requires listening carefully and responding politely to what others say, looking

for shared concerns and ways to work together”. (Knoblauch) Often, in school, students write only to prove that they did something they were asked to do, to get credit for it, “being prompted to view the essay only as a finished product serving as an ultimate weapon for conversation”. (Corder)

Developing Discourse-Driven Skills

What must also be considered is the long-term goal, the vision of a radically revised curriculum that is more overtly learner-centered and skills focused and not necessarily subject based. Therefore, these skills should be authentic to the individual student or student group, they are difficult to control, however; the goal is that these skills will lead to improvements in self-esteem, motivation, and exam performance as well as the more specific skills needed for employment. “We must teach students crucial skills needed not only in school, but also on the job and in daily life.” (Rich) For instance, these new skills, such as social skills, will enable students to be successful citizens in our ever more complex world, and manual skills, which can lead to the deep satisfaction of creativity and it is apparent that these individuals become more successful later on in life.

The Value Behind Student-Driven Discourse

Discourse and various forms of communicating effectively the classroom grows as a result of experience, and what students experience throughout their lives is just as imperative to their development as the texts they learn in their classrooms. The challenge facing our educators is that we need to teach our students to be able to communicate effectively to be able to thrive in a world that is extremely diverse. If we want students to gain a love of reading and writing in

English Language Arts class, and learning in general then we must create learning for them and their specific and targeted needs.

Traditional learning is not relevant to their lives because they do not see the value in what they are learning. Classroom talk is not only a means of students supporting each other, but also of holding each other accountable by helping clarify, restate, and challenge ideas. “When students challenge one another, it may raise the individuals or group’s awareness of their lack of understanding or the need to provide them with additional help.” (Willis) Students are often more aware than their teachers of what others do not understand. “Student-to-student discourse makes thinking visible and helps the teacher determine the most effective subsequent instructional moves.” (Willis) We need to teach these students that there is a benefit to making their thinking visible to both themselves and their teachers.

Allowing students to choose and discuss topics that are relevant and appealing to them has been proven to increase student engagement and participation in discourse. “Any individual shapes the materials the literary work offers him”. (Holland) This applies to the American school system in that many students do not feel like they are represented in the classroom. These same classrooms are comprised of students from different socioeconomic backgrounds, many who have only known failing schools, and have diverse family backgrounds. Each student carries with them their own experiences, “each reader, in effect, re-creates the work in terms of his own identifying theme” (Holland).

Chapter 3: Solution to Developing Discourse-Driven Instruction

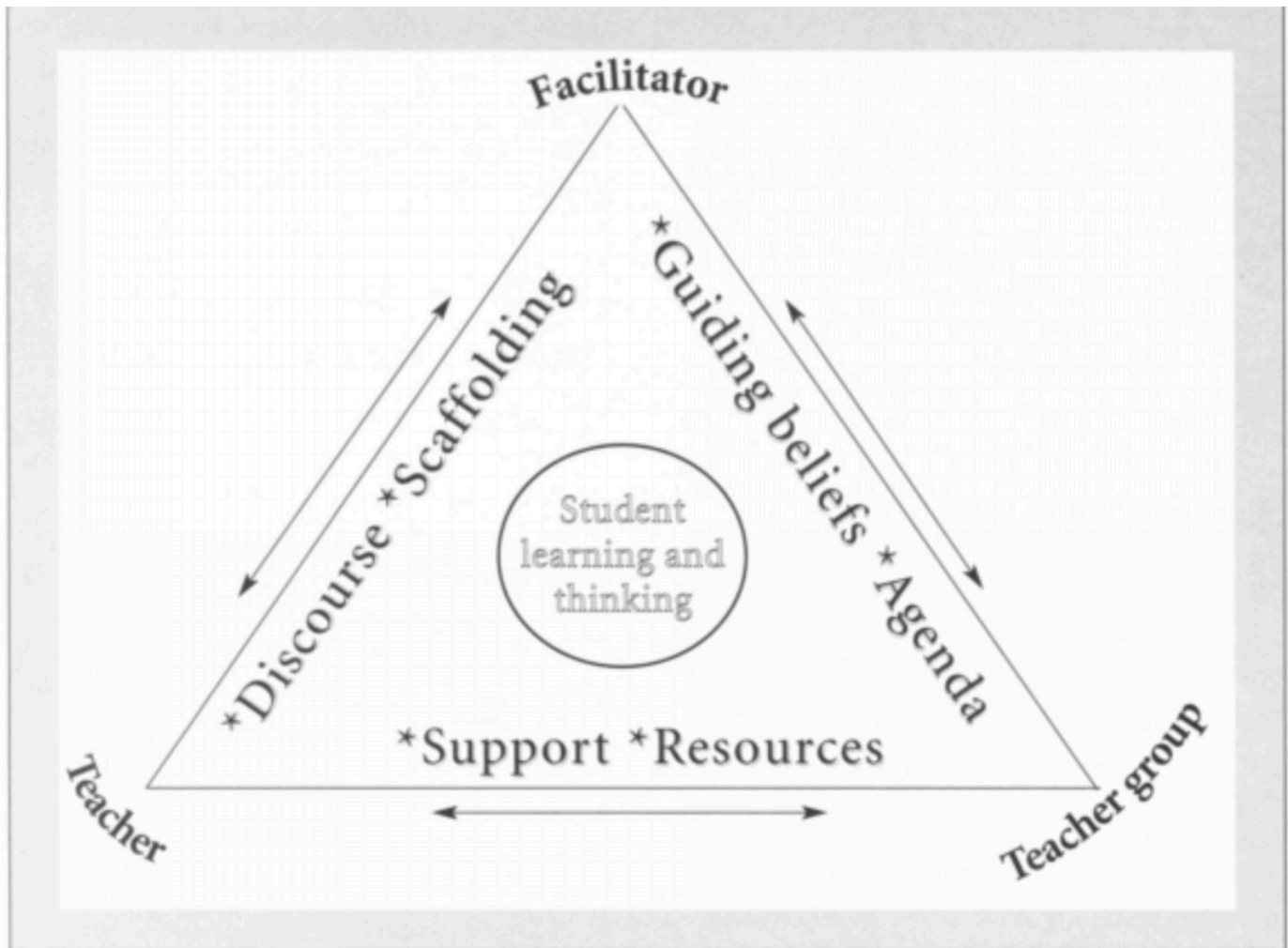
Research has proven that there are many advantages to student discourse including developing social networks, reasoning with and building relationships with others, personal and spiritual growth, analyzing one's own experiences, professional and academic skills, and engaging with authentic experiences. Student discourse and other forms of student-facilitated discussions have become more prevalent in our classrooms today than ever before due to their capability to increase achievement across all backgrounds and abilities.

Because our society is demanding a more independent, self-advocating student, educators must teach using valued discussion protocols, involving a prescribed teacher-set exchange. That is, the student is doing the brunt of the work and the learning while the teacher is guiding the student interactions. Jeffrey A. Fryholm and Mary E. Pitman agree that "if students are to engage in these new curriculum materials authentically, teachers must invigorate classrooms; model problem solving; explore relevant contexts; and allow students time to create, discuss, refute, hypothesize, and investigate." This is a large concern among many classrooms because teachers must create dynamic classroom environments and our curriculum(s) need revising to support our students for success in their future(s).

It has been mentioned previously, that educators need proper and consistent professional development training to stay up-to-date with the changing classroom environments, but it is also possible to transition into the shift from teacher-led to student-facilitated learning. "For many teachers, making the transition from didactic, expository teaching practices to ones that promote student-directed investigations is no small task". (Fryholm and Pittman) If educators are provided with additional Professional Development time to collaborate and research in order to develop a more student-centered approach to teaching and learning, both students and teachers

will benefit tremendously. Each teacher is accountable for creating a classroom culture that fosters authentic communication in the classroom. In fact, research has proven that schools that have created dynamic classroom environments have already had significant benefits for students' education in comparison to students who are still learning with a less discourse-driven approach. Not only are these schools overperforming on state assessments and increasing graduation numbers in comparison to their counterparts, but most importantly, these students are better-prepared for their future.

Research proves that student discourse is one of the most effective skills for student learning in preparing for both college and career readiness. But, what exactly is student discourse? "Discourse refers to the true interaction among a variety of voices." This type of instruction is all about collaboration with peers and mastering the art of communication, which is deemed to be a necessary skill for college and career success. Applebee, co-author of the *Closing The Gap Between Concept And Practice: Toward More Dialogic Discussion In The Language Arts Classroom*, (1993) states "the term discussion is widely used to refer to any whole-class interaction around a text or experience. It is the most common instructional activity in high school English classes and second only to seatwork in middle school." The following is a sample for dialogic facilitation towards student learning and teacher professional growth published by Keith R. Sawyer in his article *Creative Teaching: Collaborative Discussion as Disciplined Improvisation*:



(Figure 1)

According to *Discussion as a Way of Teaching* (2005), Stephen D. Brookfield and Stephen Preskill go on to list fifteen benefits of discussions:

1. It helps students explore a diversity of perspectives.
2. It increases students' awareness of and tolerance for ambiguity or complexity.
3. It helps students recognize and investigate their assumptions.
4. It encourages attentive, respectful listening.
5. It develops new appreciation for continuing differences.
6. It increases intellectual agility.

7. It helps students become connected to a topic.
8. It shows respect for student voices and experiences.
9. It helps students learn the processes and habits of democratic discourse.
10. It affirms students as co-creators of knowledge.
11. It develops the capacity for the clear communication of ideas and meaning.
12. It develops habits of collaborative learning.
13. It increases breadth and makes students more empathic.
14. It helps students develop skills of synthesis and integration.
15. It leads to transformation.

Therefore, student discourse fosters student learning in a way where they are teaching themselves and their peers the knowledge required within the specific discipline, while the teacher monitors and provides them with the support for academic success. In fact, learning remains more long-term when students learn from their peers because it resonates more relevant and a more student-friendly approach to knowledge, making it easier to understand. Thus, to implement an effective dialogic learning environment, instruction must be student-centered and no longer teacher-centered while, still remaining engaging and maintaining student's interests.

The Impact of Discussion in the ELA Classroom

At this point, it is evident that discussions must be infused within all disciplines to meet the needs of our communicatively reliant students, but also to meet the Common Core State Standard requirements. These requirements are precisely important within the English Language Arts classroom, because this is where students are still required to perform college-ready scores in order to graduate. However, educators must reinvent instruction to be innovative, engaging, and motivating for high school students, including opportunities to communicate effectively in

order to be successful on traditional tasks such as reading and writing. According to Robert T. Oliver, author of “Group Discussion in the English Class”, [discourse] helps educate students so that they may express what they know, believe and feel with effectiveness, awaken the interest of those who are slow learners and to provide additional stimulation for those who are quick-witted, provide a constant check on the work being done by the students, and encourages toleration for the views of others.” After all, being a part of a classroom is an experience, meant to “emphasize the goals of human solidarity, community, sense-making, coping, and improving life conditions” (Bochner). Thus, discussions have had a massive impact on the kinds of instruction that foster student engagement and the effects of such instruction on achievement. Additionally, Robert T. Oliver, author of “Group Discussion in the English Class” states, “English teachers who are keenly aware of the demand that education be realistic in meeting the actual needs of the general community are generally agreed on the value of considerable oral discussion in the classroom.”

Embedding Skills in an ELA Classroom

In this section, to encompass the needs of all learners, I am going to illustrate how to include the following skills in a traditional ELA lesson: collaboration amongst homogeneous and heterogeneous groups, open-mindedness, development of thinking and speaking skills, ability to communicate effectively, accountability, critical thinking, problem-solving and argumentative strategies.

(1) Collaboration among homogeneous and heterogeneous groups:

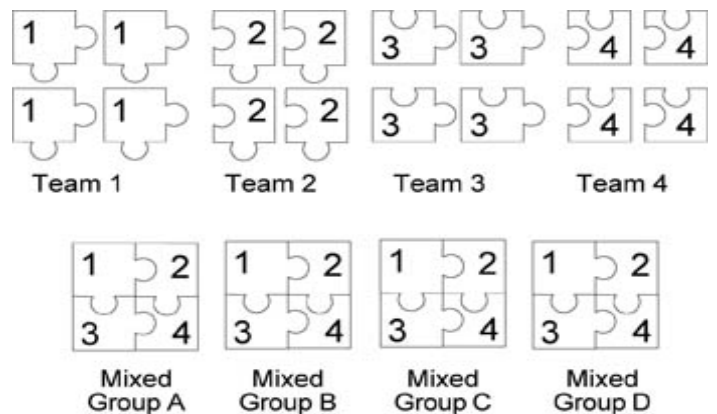
Collaboration requires all students to work together to accomplish a shared goal or outcome.

“The reasoning behind heterogeneous grouping is that it maximizes opportunities for peer tutoring and support, improves cross-gender and cross-ethnic relations, and ensures that each group has at least one student who can do the work.” (Kagan) An example of a teaching protocol that ensures collaboration among both homogenous and heterogeneous groupings, with the purpose of shared learning is a Jigsaw. “Members of a group become “experts” in a particular area of a mutual pursuit and share their learning/ research with the other group members.”

(School Reform Initiative)

Jigsaw Protocol (Expeditionary Learning)

1. Students begin reading a section of a text looking for key points, new information, or answers to questions in their homogeneous groups. (Teams: 1, 2, 3, 4)
2. Students begin to collaborate with their group members, gathering and preparing evidence to share.
3. Students re-group heterogeneously taking several minutes to share important points or summaries of the text with their group members. (Groups: A, B, C, D)
4. Debrief: Students then return to their original groups and share their share insights and discoveries. (Teams: 1, 2, 3, 4)



(Image: Barbara Tewksbury)

(2) Open-mindedness:

Open-mindedness requires receptiveness to new ideas and communicates different perspectives.

“Once students are able to distinguish their own perspectives from those of others and to recognize that people may have legitimate reasons for seeing things differently, they have the foundation for studying more complex and significant differences in perspectives.” (Merry M. Merryfield) One technique that can be used in the classroom to stimulate open-mindedness through movement and discussion, is the Four Corners Protocol. Four Corners also promotes listening, verbal discourse, critical thinking, and decision-making.

Four Corners

1. Prepare: The teacher generates a controversial statement or question and create four different opinions (often teachers use “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Disagree,” and “Strongly Disagree”) related to the statement or four possible answer choices to the question.

2. Present: Students then read the statement or problem and independently think about an answer to the statement/question.

3. Commit to a Corner: Students gather in the corner of the room that corresponds to their choice and discuss their opinions and reasons for selecting a particular choice.

4. Discuss: Students present a group summary of their opinions and ask probing and clarifying questions to students who chose to stand in opposing corners. (Students may change corners at any time during discussion).

(Image: Strategic Education Research Partnership)

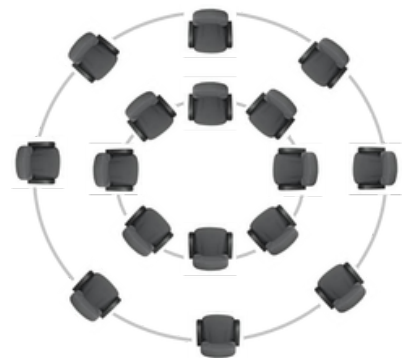


(3) Development of thinking and speaking skills:

Effectively thinking and speaking are important communication skills that students will be required to obtain in order to be successful in the future. “Critical thinking and communication competence are recognized by educators as vital skills required for mastery of school subjects. However, it is observed that these two skills are underdeveloped in students.” (FA Yusuf, EA Adeoye) Socratic Seminars are a great way to coach students in vital 21st century skills—especially critical thinking and speaking and listening skills. “In the Seminar, participants systematically question and examine issues and principles related to a particular content, and articulate different points-of-view. The group conversation assists participants in constructing meaning through disciplined analysis, interpretation, listening, and participation.” (Active Learning through Socratic Seminar, 2018)

Socratic Seminar with Coaches

1. Students sit in one of two circles (inner circle for participants, outer circle for coaches).
2. Teacher poses the essential or opening question.
3. Students cite evidence from the text, speak, listen, make connections, and add insight to discuss their point of view or use additional questions to move the discussion along.
4. After the discussion, the coaches provide feedback to the participants to acknowledge their strengths and identify their weaknesses in a post-conference.
5. Students then continue the discussion after having been guided to a deeper and clarified consideration of the ideas of the text by their coaches. When satisfied that the opening question has been thoroughly explored, the two circles switch places.



(4) Ability to communicate effectively:

The purpose of effective communication is to ensure that your audience understands information without any misunderstandings. These skills are more important now, in the 21st century, than ever before. “Effective communication skills are fundamental to success in many aspects of life. Many jobs require strong communication skills and people with good communication skills usually enjoy better interpersonal relationships with friends and family.” (Improving Communication: Developing Effective Communication Skills) A protocol that helps students and others strengthen and clarify academic ideas is the Stronger and Clearer protocol created by Jeff Zwiers.

Stronger and Clearer (Jeff Zwiers)

Students begin the protocol by individually responding to a question or prompt. Students then speak with 3 partners, building on their ideas and borrowing the language of previous partners.

Students are encouraged to “make their answers *stronger each time* with better and better evidence, examples, and explanations; and try to make their ideas *clearer each time* by using a topic sentence, sentences that clarify and support the initial sentence, logical ways to organize and link sentences, and precise words. Students are encouraged to ask each partner to elaborate, explain, and/or provide more evidence.” (Jeff Zwiers)

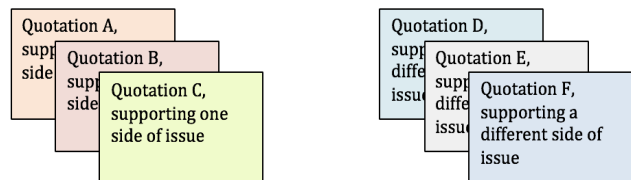
Grid

Name	Question/Prompt:
Me	Notes (just two or three key words): (Optionally, put notes here after writing a pre-paragraph on the back)
1.	Ideas, evidence, and language from this person that will help my idea to be stronger and clearer.
2.	Ideas, evidence, and language from this person that will help my idea to be stronger and clearer.
3.	Ideas, evidence, and language from this person that will help my idea to be stronger and clearer.

Opinion Continuum

(This position)	(ISSUE)	(This position)
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Opinion Formation Cards



(5) Student accountability:

Students often disregard conventional reading assignments, such as “read the text” or “discuss the reading” because these neither structure the reading or discussion processes nor hold students accountable. “Student accountability is an important trait to develop in your students. It helps them take responsibility for their actions, learning, and helps improve academic performance and achievements. Introducing student accountability in the classroom.” (How can I Introduce Student Accountability in Class to Enhance Student Performance?) A strategy that holds students accountable, “engages students in critical reading, writing and collaboration all in one activity” is the Collaborative annotation literacy strategy.

Collaboration Annotation Protocol (Erin Schwane)

1. Teachers identify a passage they would like students to read and provided each student in a group a different color pen. (This strategy can also be done online by providing a group of students access to the same document. See below.)

2. Students are challenged to annotate independently for the entire time allotted.

3. When the timer sounds, students stop writing and pass their papers to the left. Then, the process is repeated, in addition to adding original annotations, they should address the annotations that are already on the page, such as answering a question or responding to someone’s reaction.

Focus Question: What purposes can the text be made to serve, beyond being experienced and analyzed?

Text: Excerpts from Chapter 2 of “The Stranger” by Albert Camus

While we were drying ourselves on the edge of the swimming pool she said: ‘I’m browner than you.’ I asked her if she’d come to the movies with me that evening. She laughed again and said, ‘Yes,’ if I’d take her to the comedy everybody was talking about, the one with Fernandel in it]

When we had dressed, she stared at my black tie and asked if I was in mourning. I explained that my mother had died. “When?” she asked, and I said, “Yesterday.” She made no remark, though I thought she shrank away a little.]

I was just going to explain to her that it wasn’t my fault, but I checked myself, as I remembered having said the same thing to my employer and realizing then it sounded rather foolish. Still, foolish or not, somehow one can’t help feeling a bit guilty, I suppose.]

When I woke up, Marie had gone. She’d told me her aunt expected her first thing in the morning. I remembered it was a Sunday, and that put me off; I’ve never cared for Sundays.]

It occurred to me that somehow, I’d got through another Sunday, that Mother now was buried, and tomorrow I’d be going back to work as usual. Really, nothing in my life had changed.]

Revisiting our Focus Question:

(PLEASE WRITE YOUR NAME FIRST BEFORE RESPONDING)

OPTION 1 (MASTERY): In what ways does Camus’ text(s) serve a variety of purposes?

Matthew Jimenez: The text serves a variety of purposes by helping build a bigger sense of character for Meursault. We understand more on how he felt on his mother’s passing and how he felt for someone he loved. The author does this by saying things like “mother now was buried...really nothing in my life had changed.” and “Marie had gone... I remember it was a Sunday, and that put me off; I’ve never cared for Sundays”. These quotes demonstrate how the author help the reader understand Meursault by telling us how he felt after the passing helping us understand that even after the passing since they were so distant from each other Meursault didn’t really feel any different after the funeral it just felt like another normal day. The author Camus also shows how Meursault is in love telling the reader that he never cared for Sundays until he spent it with Marie. Lastly the text also helps us understand more on the protagonist Meursault by showing him as if he didn’t know how to acknowledge or act when a person passes. The text states “mother had died “when?” she asked, and I said yesterday. I remember having the same conversation with my employer and thinking it was foolish”. This quote describes and further shows the reader how Meursault has no idea how to act towards his mother’s death he treats it as though it was normal and as if nothing has ever happened. This is how the text has served a variety of purposes by helping the reader more greatly understand the protagonist Meursault.

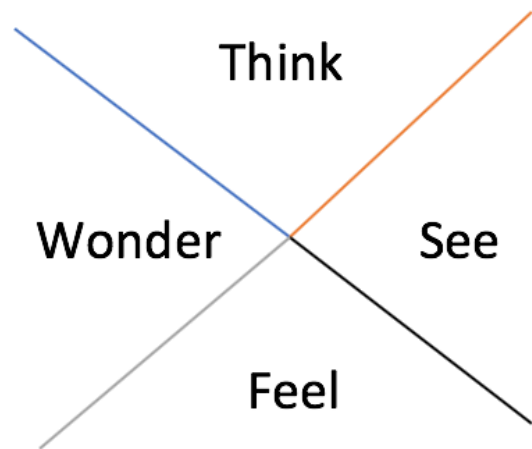
Name	Date	Annotation
Matthew Jimenez	October 05, 2018	This is important because it shows how Meursault is showing that he is perfectly fine even though his mother has recently passed. This is strange because he doesn't even acknowledge his mother's passing and shows no emotion change to him it's just another normal day
Maha Jabrane		Why did she say that she is browner
Leonardo De Ol...		Meursault is showing emotions
Moamen Hussein		Meursault is showing some sort of...
Leonardo De Ol...		as Meursault tells her that his
Matthew Jimenez		Meursault never told a word about...
Maha Jabrane		The death of his mother doesn't
Moamen Hussein		Meursault found it very strange onl...
Matthew Jimenez		This is important because it shows...
Moamen Hussein		Meursault is finding it foolish that he
Leonardo De Ol...		this is one of the few times
Maha Jabrane		He doesn't seem concerned about...
Leonardo De Ol...		even after everything that has
Moamen Hussein		Meursault said never cared for
Matthew Jimenez		This is important because it shows...
Maha Jabrane		Something happened on Sunday...
Matthew Jimenez		Even after Meursault mothers
Moamen Hussein		Meursault is trying to say that his
Maha Jabrane		It seems that even before his
Leonardo De Ol...		after the death of his own mother

(6) Critical thinking:

Thinking critically engages students in reflective and independent *thought* in turn helps students solve problems and make the right decisions at work, home and in study. “Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action.” (Glaser) A routine that encourages students to make careful observations and thoughtful interpretations. The See-Think-Wonder routine stresses the importance of inquiry-based thinking, encouraging individual “reflection, collaboration and higher order thinking challenging higher-ability students to extend their thinking whilst also being an excellent scaffolding device for weaker students”. (Visible Thinking) Students share their thinking at each step along the way before moving on to the next one building the group’s critical thinking improving the discussion.

See, Think, Feel, Wonder

1. See: Ask students to state what they noticed, only sharing what they see and no interpretations.
2. Think: Ask students what they think. The goal is to build up layers of interpretations.
3. Feel: Ask students what emotional response does this item provoke in you?
- 4 .Wonder: Ask students what they are now wondering about based on what they have seen and have been thinking. Wondering is about asking broader questions that push us beyond our interpretations to look at issues and ideas raised by the object.



(7) Problem-solving:

Problem-solving is an essential and basic life skill that can be used to improve applied and creative solutions to everyday complications. *“Problem-solving is the process of identifying a problem, developing possible solution paths, and taking the appropriate course of action.”*

(Muramatsu, DeLong, Ren) A protocol that encourages all students to analyze, reflect and discuss an issue is the Inside/Outside Protocol (Fishbowl). “The purpose of the protocol is not to solve the problem or resolve the issue, but rather to simply illuminate it so that people have greater understanding and can move toward solutions or resolutions.” (Easton)

Inside/Outside Protocol (Fishbowl) (Steve Jubb and Joel Shawn)

Participants are seated, fishbowl-style, in two concentric circles, both facing inward.

1. Framing the Issue or Problem: The facilitator states the problem or issue as succinctly as possible.
2. Group A Discussion: Group A discusses the problem or issue and the key question while Group B listens and takes notes. At the end of the specified time, Groups A and B switch seats with each other.
3. Group B Discussion: Group B discusses the problem or issue and the key question while Group A listens and takes notes. Members of Group B may want to build on what Group A has said, bring up their own topics, or do both. At the end of the specified time, Groups A and B return to their original places.
4. Reaching Consensus: Group B (inside circle) turns to face Group A (outside circle). Participants talk to each other, trying to determine the points on which the two groups have reached some kind of consensus.

(8) Argumentative strategies:

Arguments are important part of critical thinking and discourse, however many students lack the skills necessary to express their point-of-view and back their claims with supporting evidence.

“**Argumentative strategies**, are typical methods for convincing someone who holds an opposing view.” (The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) In academic discourse, an argument is usually a main idea, often called a “claim” or “thesis statement,” backed up with evidence that supports the idea. “In Mary Ehrenworth’s keynote address at the Reading Institute, she suggested working on argument during read aloud” this protocol is also known as a Flash Debate. (Teachers College, Columbia University)

Flash Debate

1. The teacher/facilitator introduces the argument or topic.
2. Students begin to gather evidence for both sides of the argument and choose a side.
3. Students conference with their side: determine the best evidence, sorting through and weighing each piece to find the strongest.
4. Students then meet with an opponent and present and listen to opposing arguments.
5. Students then repeat back to their opponent the most compelling or persuasive piece of evidence.
6. Students then conference with their side again to a plan rebuttal.
7. Students then meet with their opponent and present their rebuttals.

Argument: Malls should only be allowed to institute teen curfews if there is an incident that disrupts other shoppers.

Malls should be allowed to institute Curfews for teens without a specific reason.

Malls should not be allowed to institute curfews for teens.

Mini-Unit for Twelfth Grade

The following pages demonstrate a sample from a unit of study on *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare for a twelfth grade English class. This unit consists of two, consecutive forty eight-minute lesson plans that adhere to the New York State Common Core State Standards. This unit is part of a larger unit that is titled “Madness, Family Dynamics, Revenge, and Gender Roles”. Educators have the option of choosing either the original, even more complex version of the play, or in this case, the “modernized” version. Students are provided with a side-by-side translation of Shakespeare’s original text in “modern” language. Students performing well below the same students are provided with a graphic novel of the text. Students do, however, bring various backgrounds of personal information that adds greatly to the dynamic of conversation related to the text. Students will be challenged when reading and annotating a section in Act 4 Scene 7 of *Hamlet*. Students will also be challenged when relating evidence from *Hamlet* to the second informational text which complexity differs based on students reading level and learning style.

Although I have not provided the unit in its entirety, I have chosen to include substantial lessons that lead up to the unit assessment of students’ ability to use language that is meaningful and engaging. This objective is to explore the actions, decisions, and motivations major characters have in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Students consider the following essential questions: Why do people do what they do? How does Shakespeare make his language work using language conventions we don’t use today? How can we relate the characters’ actions, decisions and/or motivations to our own lives today? How does using a close reading of the text enhance our understanding of literature? How does Shakespeare’s language yield our attention?

First, I am going to illustrate how the important skill of collaboration amongst homogeneous and heterogeneous groups can be included in an ELA classroom, using a lesson from a unit I have designed, from William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, "Madness, Family Dynamics, Revenge, Fate vs. Free Will and Gender Roles". In the first lesson, I will be using a strategy in which students analyze the structural integrity or the relationships among the parts of writing, a discussion protocol, and writing strategy to teach the skill. You will see how including this strategy, within the more standard approach to this play, can help the students to development of thinking and speaking skills, communicate effectively, improve critical thinking, problem-solving and argumentative strategies that adds to student discourse. During this lesson, students will be able to argue and support whether adolescents are more likely to make irrational decisions, as evidenced by a 'GoGoMo' discussion protocol. This will enable the students to recognize the author's argument, purpose, and tone; evaluate author's voice, structure and style; and ultimately write a narrative which reflects on a moment, place or person from which they are able to draw a lesson. The learning objectives consist of reading the text to determine what the text says, how the text works, and compare it with other texts, or think about its implications in their lives; analyzing the structural integrity or the relationships among the parts of writing; and determining the meaning of words as they are used in the text.

In the second lesson, students will be able to argue and support whether individuals are influenced in their decision making, as evidenced by the "Stronger and Clearer" discussion protocol. The learning objectives for day two consist of: Students will be able develop their problem-solving skills, clearly explain their ideas to others, understand their peers' ideas, and develop a concept. This lesson helps students examine the decisions they make every day—those that make a difference in their lives as well as those that are easy and/or automatic. Students identify the things (values) that are important to them and relate actual decisions to the

things that are important to them. They explore focus questions such as: How did/do the things (values) that are most important to you influence the decisions made today (and every day)?

Lesson 1:

Unit of Study: Madness, Family Dynamics, Revenge, and Gender Roles

Grade Level: 12th

Subject: Hamlet by William Shakespeare

Topic/ Overview:	Unit: Madness, Family Dynamics, Revenge and Gender Roles. Students explore the actions, decisions, and motivations major characters have in Shakespeare’s Hamlet. Students consider the following Essential Questions: Why do people do what they do? How does Shakespeare make his language work using language conventions we don’t use today? How can we relate the characters’ actions, decisions and/or motivations to our own lives today? How does using a close reading of the text enhance our understanding of literature? How does Shakespeare’s language yield our attention?
Objective/ Learning Target:	Lesson/Lesson Objective(s)/Outcomes: ✓ Closely read the text to determine what the text says, how the text works, and compare it with other texts, or think about its implications in their lives. ✓ Analyze the structural integrity or the relationships among the parts of writing. ✓ Determine the meaning of words as they are used in the text. Learning Target: By the end of class I will be able to argue and support whether adolescents are more likely to make irrational decisions, as evidenced by a ‘GoGoMo’ discussion protocol.
Essential/Focus Question: Why do people do what they do?	
Do Now/ Motivation: (5 minutes)	Introductory and Developmental Activities: Pre-Assessment Data: The pre-assessment data used for this lesson is ➤ Recognize author’s argument, purpose, and tone; ➤ Evaluate author's voice, structure and style; ➤ Write a narrative which reflects on a moment, place or person from which they are able to draw a lesson; Do Now: Think. Pair. Write. Share What factors can cause a person to act, behave or think irrationally?
Differentiation: Suitability for Diverse Learners Diverse Learners: These students are classified as SWD, and students who are identified as ENL. There are (5) students in this class that are “higher” learners and will most likely require extensions and additional challenges to extend learning and thinking, students will require graphic organizers, but additional copies are made for students who need additional support. I will not offer these materials to all students, only when students are observably having difficulty with the materials should these materials be administered.	
	Intensive Group- Student receive explicit instruction by overtly teaching the steps or processes needed to understand a construct, apply a strategy, and/or complete a task. Explicit instruction includes teacher presentation of new material, teacher

<p>How will you differentiate? Explain.</p>	<p>modeling, and step-by-step instruction to demonstrate what is expected so that students can accomplish a learning task. Such interventions include these key components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explicit instruction, • systematic instruction, and • opportunities for student response and feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Guided Notes (Modern Translations and/or Graphic Novel) ○ Guided Questions to Stimulate Annotations ○ Definitions/Vocabulary Terms ○ Prompted Suggestions to Further Thinking (verbal) ○ Visual Aids (https://goo.gl/images/hy8NHR)
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<p>How will you differentiate? Explain. (e.g. grouping materials, graphic organizers, content, student choice etc.).</p>	<p>Target Group- Students receive blended self-regulation strategies with explicit instruction of new content. For example, when introducing the use of graphic organizers to facilitate learning and understanding of content in a social studies text, a teacher will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop students’ background knowledge, such as introducing the vocabulary necessary for understanding the text, • model how to use the graphic organizer and include self-instruction techniques so that students can talk themselves through the task, • support students as they practice using the graphic organizer while applying the self-instruction and self-monitoring techniques <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Guided Questions ○ Definitions/Vocabulary Terms (if needed) ○ Prompted suggestions (verbal) <p>Benchmark Group- Students work independently as they begin to demonstrate mastery of the new skills or content, providing an opportunity for students to demonstrate their ability to complete a task without teacher guidance.</p> <p>Cooperative Group- Students respond and practice with peer-to-peer feedback throughout lessons to accelerate learning. These practices can also increase engagement during instruction and improve student outcomes. Frequent student response can assist the teacher in monitoring student understanding, and feedback during student practice can be a powerful tool for refining and mastering new skills</p> <p>Accelerated Group- Instruction for gifted learners is paced in response to the student's individual needs. Often, highly able students learn more quickly than others their age. Thus, they typically need a more rapid instructional pace than do many of their peers. For example, allowing them to explore a special area of interest related to the topic being studied.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readers should approach a text with a purpose in mind. The pursuit of this purpose begins with a B?G Question.
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- Students begin the lesson **homogeneously grouped**, based on their pre-assessed Reading Levels and change mid-lesson to heterogeneous groups based on their understanding of the skill/concept.
- This resource provides **step-by-step instructions** for reading, analyzing and unpacking textual evidence.
- Students with Other Health Impairments (OHI) will receive highlighters to identify important information.
- Students with behavior and/or attention issues will have preferential seating/specialized seating arrangements.
- Students with attention deficits will receive verbal prompts to stay on task.
- Students may receive additional time to complete tasks.
- Students may use annotation guides and guided notes to provide themselves with a visual aid to facilitate learning and instruction.
- Mini-discussions will be facilitated to address comprehension and understanding. (Students may be given sentence starters)
- Students who complete the activity before others are provided with extensions for deeper understanding, vocabulary expansion, bridging the gaps in student learning and assessment.
- Struggling students receive additional built-in Checking for Understandings.

Introductory & Developmental Activities: 5 min

-Application of Knowledge: Textual Evidence Translation.

- Students will copy the Learning Target & Do Now.
- Students will complete the Do Now assignment
- Students will propel discussion; teacher will facilitate.
- Students will illicit what they believe today's lesson objective/day's activity will be based on the class discussion they just had.

Do Now: Think.Pair.Write.Share

What factors cause a person to act, behave or think irrationally?

Skill: To connect the task and new content to existing knowledge and skills.

Close Reading(s): *Hamlet* (Act 4 Scene 7) by William Shakespeare

Checking For Understanding (Individual): Where in the text is it evident that Ophelia is making an irrational decision?

Discussion: Are adolescents more likely to make irrational decisions?

Guiding Questions:

What ‘big’ decisions do adolescents make?
How does an adolescents environment impact the decisions they make?
How does ones family/friends influence the choices an adolescent makes?

GoGoMo Individual Readings:

(Intensive Group) National Library of Medicine)

(Target Group) News Public Radio)

(Benchmark Group) Psychology Today)

On the Front (blank side of the index card):

(Intensive Group) Record a word that captured your attention or struck you as powerful.

(Target Group) Record a phrase that moved, engaged, or provoked you

(Benchmark Group) Record a sentence that was meaningful to you and helped you gain a deeper understanding of the text.

On the Back (lined side of the index card): Why did you choose this word/sentence/phrase?

GoGoMo Discussion Protocol:

GIVE ONE: Student A shares his/her word/sentence/phrase with their partner, while Student B takes notes. (1 min.)

Student B asks Student A, a thought provoking question. Student A responds. (2 mins.)

GET ONE: Student B shares his/her word/sentence/phrase with their partner, while Student A takes notes. (1 min.)

Student A asks Student B a thought provoking question. Student B responds. (2 mins.)

MOVE ON: The second and third round is done without referencing notecards.

Strengths of this routine:

- gets learners on their feet
- everyone has to engage in conversation
- requires students to listen and repeat the ideas of others
- allows many learners to talk at the same time, no waiting for a turn
- patterns or groupings may be used to further instruction

GoGOMo Question Starters: (if needed)

“Why...” “How would you explain...” “What is the importance of...” “What is the meaning of”

“Compare...” “Contrast...” “What is the difference between...” “What is the similarity between...”

“What are the causes/results of...” “What connection is there between...”

“What is meant by...” “Explain how...”

Extension: Ask your partner an additional question regarding their claim.

Students Can Be Assessed On:

- ✓ Completing the written response.

- ✓ Using textual evidence in their response.
- ✓ Contributions made to their groups during the discussion activity.
- ✓ How well they used persuasive techniques to present and support their positions in the debate.
- ✓ How well they respond and/or prompt their partner to expand their response.

Quick Write (Assessment): Using evidence from Hamlet and **at least two** non-fiction sources determine whether adolescents more likely to irrational decisions? (Claim + Evidence + Reasoning Format)

Extension: Use all three sources.

Skill: Ability to understand and explain found evidence in student-friendly language.

Writing from Sources and Balance of Writing

- Students write using a variety of formats from annotations, informal notes, questions that connect, extend and challenge their thinking, evidenced based claims, hypothetical scenarios, to an extended response.

Instructional Supports:

- The students are engaged through a variety of flexible grouping options such as independent, pairs, small, and whole groups. The scaffolding is provided for ALL students through teacher modeling throughout the lessons.
- The explicit statement, "Circulate, providing feedback and ensuring that all students have an adequate and accurate set of notes" communicates to the user that this is a strategy for supporting students at varying levels of readiness. The lesson allows students to facilitate their learning and support to each other via peer-to-peer support.
- Focuses on challenging sections of text(s) and engages students in a productive struggle through discussion questions and other supports that build toward independence.
- Integrates appropriate supports in reading, writing, listening and speaking for students who are ELL, have disabilities, or read well below the grade level text band.
- Provides extensions and/or more advanced text for students who read well above the grade level text band.
- The students are engaged through a variety of flexible grouping options such as independent, pairs, small, and whole groups.
- The lesson allows students to facilitate their learning and support to each other via peer-to-peer support.

Students Are Informally and Formally Assessed On Their:

- ✓ Annotations

- ✓ Using Appropriate Evidence to Support Claims
- ✓ Peer-to-Peer Discussion (verbal)
- ✓ Listening as Evidenced by Note-Taking
- ✓ Extended Written Response (Quickwrite)
- ✓ Response to Guided Questions (verbal)
- ✓ Homework

Grading Criteria: Students used relevant textual evidence from Hamlet and at least two of the non-fiction sources provided. Students have a clear claim/thesis that answers the question: Do adolescents more likely to irrational decisions? Students use the appropriate learned format: Claim, Textual Evidence (3), Explanation (3) (in one's own words) and Analysis (relating the evidence explicitly to one's claim/thesis).

Closing: 5 min

Includes one or more:

Assessment of student learning, may include:

- Connections to previous and new learning.
- A review of the lesson objective and if it was achieved.
- An exit slip, final journal reflection, or other means of informal assessment.
- Student sharing and peer feedback.
- Celebrations of learning.

Wrap-Up: (Students will answer their daily "Ticket Out The Door" question on a colored Post-It note. Students will write until they hear the bell ring, and place their Post-It note in the Ticket Out The Door pocket chart near the door and exit the classroom).

Ticket Out The Door: Self-Assess Out The Door (Rubric Provided)

Extension: Provide one area of celebration and an area to GROW!

Homework: Complete Reading Act 4 Scene 7

Skill: Ability to begin linking student-generated questions to one's personal beliefs.

Learning Target: By the end of class I will be able to argue and support whether adolescents are more likely to make irrational decisions, as evidenced by a GOGO discussion protocol.

Hamlet (Act 4 Scene 7) by William Shakespeare

There, on the pendant boughs her coronet weeds Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke, When down her weedy trophies and herself Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide, And mermaid-like a while they bore her up, Which time she chanted snatches of old lauds As one incapable of her own distress, Or like a creature native and indued Unto that element.	Climbing into the tree to hang the wreath of weeds on the hanging branches, she and her flowers fell into the gurgling brook. Her clothes spread out wide in the water, and buoyed her up for a while as she sang bits of old hymns, acting like someone who doesn't realize the danger she's in, or like someone completely accustomed to danger. But it was only a matter of time before her clothes, heavy with the water they absorbed, pulled the poor thing out of her song, down into the mud at the bottom of the brook.
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Discussion Question: Are adolescents more likely to make irrational decisions?

Guiding Questions: - What 'big' decisions do adolescents make?

- How does one's family/friends influence the choices an adolescent makes?

- How does environment impact the decisions an adolescent makes?

(National Library of Medicine)

During adolescence, we make decisions quicker than ever; the crushes will never be better; and the thrills will never quite be the same. That's the good news. The bad news is that during this time your chances of death from putting yourself in harm's way will increase by 200% relative to your childhood. The parts of the teenage brain that handles planning and impulse control doesn't completely mature until about age 25. This means teenagers are sometimes more likely than adults to make quick decisions without always thinking through the consequences.

(News Public Radio)

People have to learn how to make good decisions and assess their risk in situations. "I don't see how they could grow up without risk-taking. We're a country of risk-takers. We have to learn to talk about how we assess risk — that's hard." Sports and developing artistic and creative abilities — be it through art or theater — are all activities that involve healthy levels of risk-taking. Teens can engage in volunteer activities, and even Internet activities. It can be as simple — and as scary — as getting up on stage, or asking somebody out. All these behaviors may satisfy a teen's need to push boundaries, but are usually in an environment where there's very little harm that could result.

(Psychology Today)

Adolescents and young adults take more risks than any other age groups. This risk-taking includes dangerous driving (e.g. texting), drug use, binge drinking, and risky sexual behavior. Despite educational efforts to provide teens with information about risky behavior, many adolescents continue to engage in risky behavior. A growing body of brain research is providing answers to these questions. People often believe that teens engage in risky behavior because they are not very good at evaluating risk. But early research in this area demonstrated that adolescents are just as good as adults at evaluating risk across a broad range of risky behavior. So, teens know that the behaviors are risky, but they still engage in them.

GOGO Individual Preparation:

On the Front (blank side):

Record a **word** that captured your attention or struck you as powerful.

Record a **phrase** that moved, engaged, or provoked you

Record a **sentence** that was meaningful to you and helped you gain a deeper understanding of the text.

On the Back (lined side): Why did you choose this word/sentence/phrase?

GOGO Discussion Protocol:

GIVE ONE: Student A shares his/her word/sentence/phrase with their partner, while Student B takes notes. (1 min.)

Student B asks Student A a thought provoking question. Student A responds. (2 mins.)

GET ONE: Student B shares his/her word/sentence/phrase with their partner, while Student A takes notes. (1 min.)

Student A asks Student B a thought provoking question. Student B responds. (2 mins.)

MOVE ON: The second round is conducted without referencing notecards.

Students Can Be Assessed On:

- Completing the 3 written responses.
- Contributions made to their groups during the discussion activity.
- How well they used persuasive techniques to present and support their positions in the debate.
- How well they respond and/or prompt their partner to expand their response.

Quick Write: Using evidence from Hamlet and **at least two** non-fiction sources determine whether adolescents more likely to irrational decisions? (Claim + Evidence + Reasoning)

Extension: Use all three sources.

Lesson 2:
Grade Level: 12th

Unit of Study: Madness, Family Dynamics, Revenge, Gender Roles
Subject: Senior English 7 of 8

Topic/ Overview	Unit: Madness, Family Dynamics, Revenge and Gender Roles. Students explore the actions, decisions, and motivations major characters have in Shakespeare’s Hamlet. The ends don’t always justify the means, how far would you go to get what you want. Students consider the following essential questions: What do characters in literature reveal about human nature? How does using a critical lens enhance our understanding of literature? What kinds of textual evidence are needed for an effective analysis of a dramatic character? by reading “Hamlet” by William Shakespeare
Objective/ Learning Target:	Lesson/Lesson Objective(s)/Outcomes: ✓ Closely read the text to determine what the text says, how the text works, and compare it with other texts, or think about its implications in their lives. ✓ Analyze the structural integrity or the relationships among the parts of writing. ✓ Determine the meaning of words as they are used in the text. Learning Target: By the end of class I will be able to argue and support whether adolescents are more likely to make irrational decisions, as evidenced by a ‘GoGoMo’ discussion protocol.
Essential/Focus Question: How do you determine the purpose of a passage or reading?	
Do Now/ Motivation: (5 minutes)	Introductory and Developmental Activities: Pre-Assessment Data: The pre-assessment data used for this lesson is > Recognize author’s argument, purpose, and tone; > Evaluate author's voice, structure and style; > Write a narrative which reflects on a moment, place or person from which they are able to draw a lesson; Do Now: What is the impact of comparing Hamlet to a soldier? Include: <input type="checkbox"/> Authors Name <input type="checkbox"/> Title of the play <input type="checkbox"/> Specific word choice used by the author <input type="checkbox"/> Comparison/Contrast of the two characters (BE SPECIFIC) <input type="checkbox"/> Effect/Implications of comparison Text: How stand I then, That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd, Excitements of my reason and my blood, And let all sleep? while, to my shame, I see The imminent death of twenty thousand men, That, for a fantasy and trick of fame, Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,

	<p>Which is not tomb enough and continent To hide the slain? O, from this time forth, My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!</p>
	<p>Differentiation: Suitability for Diverse Learners Diverse Learners: These students are classified as SWD, and students who are identified as ENL. There are (5) students in this class that are “higher” learners and will most likely require extensions and additional challenges to extend learning and thinking, students will require graphic organizers, but additional copies are made for students who need additional support. I will not offer these materials to all students, only when students are observably having difficulty with the materials should these materials be administered.</p>
	<p>Intensive Group- Student receive explicit instruction by overtly teaching the step processes needed to understand a construct, apply a strategy, and/or complete a task. Explicit instruction includes teacher presentation of new material, teacher modeling step-by-step instruction to demonstrate what is expected so that students can accomplish a learning task. Such interventions include these key components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explicit instruction, • systematic instruction, and • opportunities for student response and feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Guided Questions ○ Sentence Starters ○ Rubrics ○ Checklists ○ Definitions/Vocabulary Terms ○ Prompted suggestions (verbal) ○ Visual Aids <p>Visual Aids (https://goo.gl/images/hy8NHR)</p> <p>Target Group- Students receive blended self-regulation strategies with explicit instruction of new content. For example, when introducing the use of graphic organizers to facilitate learning and understanding of content in a social studies text, a teacher will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop students’ background knowledge, such as introducing the vocabulary necessary for understanding the text, • model how to use the graphic organizer and include self-instruction techniques so that students can talk themselves through the task, • support students as they practice using the graphic organizer while applying the self-instruction and self-monitoring techniques <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Guided Questions ○ Checklist ○ Definitions/Vocabulary Terms ○ Prompted suggestions (verbal) <p>Benchmark Group- Students work independently as they begin to demonstrate mastery of the new skills or content, providing an</p>

opportunity for students to demonstrate their ability to complete a task without teacher guidance.

Cooperative Group- Students respond and practice with peer-to-peer feedback throughout lessons to accelerate learning. These practices can also increase engagement during instruction and improve student outcomes. Frequent student response can assist the teacher in monitoring student understanding, and feedback during student practice can be a powerful tool for refining and mastering new skills

Accelerated Group- Instruction for gifted learners is paced in response to the student's individual needs. Often, highly able students learn more quickly than others their age. Thus, they typically need a more rapid instructional pace than do many of their peers. For example, allowing them to explore a special area of interest related to the topic being studied.

- Readers should approach a text with a purpose in mind. The pursuit of this purpose begins with a **B?G Question**.
- Students begin the lesson **homogeneously grouped**, based on their pre-assessed Reading Levels and change mid-lesson to heterogeneous groups based on their understanding of the skill/concept.
- This resource provides **step-by-step instructions** for reading, analyzing and unpacking textual evidence.
- Students with Other Health Impairments (OHI) will receive highlighters to identify important information.
- Students with behavior and/or attention issues will have preferential seating/specialized seating arrangements.
- Students with attention deficits will receive verbal prompts to stay on task.
- Students may receive additional time to complete tasks.
- Students may use annotation guides and guided notes to provide themselves with a visual aid to facilitate learning and instruction.
- Mini-discussions will be facilitated to address comprehension and understanding. (Students may be given sentence starters)
- Students who complete the activity before others are provided with extensions for deeper understanding, vocabulary expansion, bridging the gaps in student learning and assessment.
- Struggling students receive additional built-in Checking for Understandings.

Introductory & Developmental Activities: 5 min

-Application of Knowledge: Textual Evidence Translation.

- Students will copy the Learning Target & Do Now.
- Students will complete the Do Now assignment
- Students will propel discussion; teacher will facilitate.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will illicit what they believe today’s lesson objective/day’s activity will be based on the class discussion they just had.
	<p>Do Now: What is the impact of comparing Hamlet to a soldier?</p> <p>Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Authors Name <input type="checkbox"/> Title of the play <input type="checkbox"/> Specific word choice used by the author <input type="checkbox"/> Comparison/Contrast of the two characters (BE SPECIFIC) <input type="checkbox"/> Effect/Implications of comparison <input type="checkbox"/> <p>Text: How stand I then, That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd, Excitements of my reason and my blood, And let all sleep? while, to my shame, I see The imminent death of twenty thousand men, That, for a fantasy and trick of fame, Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause, Which is not tomb enough and continent To hide the slain? O, from this time forth, My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!</p> <p>Identify guided practice needed before releasing students to practice on their own.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cooperative groupings. • Conceptual difficulties that might arise. • How students can initiate discussion. • How tasks are differentiated and cognitively challenging. • How the tasks advance students’ understanding and learning. • How to mentally engage students with the content and aid in constructing understanding. • Ways to check for understanding or need for further support. <p>Think About for Academic Rigor and Clear Expectations: <i>Is the subject being taught in ways that press students to pose and solve problems?</i></p> <p>Skill: To connect the task and new content to existing knowledge and skills.</p> <p>Video: Act 4 Scene 4 (Fortinbras Marches Army Through Denmark) Mini-Lesson: Sample response to analyzing the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama.</p>

Red: Thesis

Blue: The impact the authors choices have on the text

Green: Evidence from the text

Purple: Explanation of evidence

Text: Act 4 Scene 4 Hamlet by William Shakespeare Excerpt.

Turn and Talk: What is your position on killing in war? Explain your argument.

(Each student is accountable for reporting on what a student in their group contributed to the discussion.)

Extension: Does your position change in response to certain wars?

When trying to determine how an author’s choices impact the text and the way it is read, ask questions like the following:

- How does the setting of the story create a particular mood?
- Why did the author choose to structure the events of the story in this order?
- What choices cause the reader to like or dislike each character?
- What does a particular description or line of dialogue reveal about a certain character that the reader would not know otherwise?

Texts: **Low:** *In Targeted Killings, the Rule of Proportionality Should Be the Guiding Principle* from the New York Times **Middle:** *A Moral Justification for Killing in War* by LTC Pete Kilner **High:** *“Euthanasia” Killings* by the U.S Holocaust Memorial Museum

Task: Stronger and Clearer

Students begin the protocol by individually responding to a question or prompt. Students then speak with 3 partners, building on their ideas and borrowing the language of previous partners. Students are encouraged to “make their answers *stronger each time* with better and better evidence, examples, and explanations; and try to make their ideas *clearer each time* by using a topic sentence, sentences that clarify and support the initial sentence, logical ways to organize and link sentences, and precise words. Students are encouraged to ask each partner to elaborate, explain, and/or provide more evidence.” (**Jeff Zwiers**)

- How will students expand and solidify their understanding of the concept and apply it?
- How will students demonstrate their mastery of the essential learning outcomes?

Skill: Ability to understand and explain found evidence in student-friendly language.

Writing from Sources and Balance of Writing

- Students write using a variety of formats from graphic organizers, literature circle roles, questions that connect, extend and challenge their thinking, annotations, graphic organizers, hypothetical scenarios, to a chart they create.

Instructional Supports:

- The students are engaged through a variety of flexible grouping options such as independent, pairs, small, and whole groups. The scaffolding is provided for ALL students through teacher modeling throughout the lessons.
- The explicit statement, "Circulate, providing feedback and ensuring that all students have an adequate and accurate set of notes" communicates to the user that this is a strategy for supporting students at varying levels of readiness. The lesson allows students to facilitate their learning and support to each other via peer-to-peer support.
- Independent Reading is available in the class from which students can choose and that teachers can confer with students to further monitor the application of the CCSS targeted in this lesson.
- Focuses on challenging sections of text(s) and engages students in a productive struggle through discussion questions and other supports that build toward independence.
- Integrates appropriate supports in reading, writing, listening and speaking for students who are ELL, have disabilities, or read well below the grade level text band. ρ Provides extensions and/or more advanced text for students who read well above the grade level text band.
- The students are engaged through a variety of flexible grouping options such as independent, pairs, small, and whole groups.
- The lesson allows students to facilitate their learning and support to each other via peer-to-peer support.

Assessment:

- ✓ Annotations
- ✓ Use of Textual Evidence
- ✓ Index Cards
- ✓ Response to Guided Questions
- ✓ Writing Sample (QuickWrite)
- ✓ Stronger and Clearer Debate/Discussion
- ✓ Homework

Elicits direct, observable evidence of the degree to which a student can independently demonstrate the major targeted grade-level CCSS standards with appropriately complex text(s).

CLOSING: 5 min

Includes one or more:

- Assessment of student learning, including student reflection on what was learned which may include:

- Connections to previous and new learning.
- A review of the lesson objective and if it was achieved.
- An exit slip, final journal reflection, or other means of informal assessment.
- Student sharing and peer feedback.
- Celebrations of learning.

Think About for Academic Rigor and Clear Expectations:

- *Do teaching and assessment focus on student mastery of a concept/content?*

How do you know? What evidence will be needed to illustrate whether it has?

Wrap-Up: (Students will answer their daily “Ticket Out The Door” question on a colored Post-It note. Students will write until they hear the bell ring, and place their Post-It note in the Ticket Out The Door pocket chart near the door and exit the classroom).

Ticket Out The Door: Self-Assessment (Discussion Checklist)

Extension: Provide one area of celebration and an area to GROW!

Homework: Complete Reading Act 3 Scene 4.

Skill: Ability to begin linking student-generated questions to one’s personal beliefs.

Stronger and Clearer Focus Question: _____

<i>(This position)</i>	<i>(ISSUE)</i>
<i>(This position)</i>	

My Response:

MY Response: _____ (Position)	Partner 1: _____ (Position)
Partner 2: _____ (Position)	Partner 3: _____ (Position)

1. How are the ideas and information presented connected to what you know and have studied?
2. What new ideas extended or pushed your thinking in new directions?
3. What is still challenging or confusing about this topic?

Chapter Four: Conclusions and Recommendations

Traditional classrooms where students listen, take notes and respond only when prompted to is no longer beneficial. If students are not engaging with one another in their classroom, they are not utilizing skills necessary for success. It is imperative that student discourse be present in their education. Students are constantly engaged in various forms of communication with their peers, teachers, and families. Students require rigorous tasks that offer them the ability to communicate verbally because they must be able to connect their own lives with their learning. This, however, often causes difficulty for teachers who are not conditioned to teach without lecture. The answer is not to forbid students from speaking in the classroom, but to instead embrace verbal discourse and create conversations centered on student's interests in a way that can supplement traditional pedagogy.

Student discourse and other forms of student-facilitated discussions have become more prevalent in our classrooms today than ever before due to their capability to increase achievement across all backgrounds and abilities. In fact, more and more employers and jobs require specific communication skills in order to seek employment. Because our society is demanding a more independent, self-advocating student, educators must seize the opportunity to provide their students with discourse in their classrooms and teach using valued discussion protocols, involving a prescribed teacher-set exchange.

It has been mentioned previously, the focus in education is shifting towards rigor and student engagement, requiring specific skills that are more complex than past generations. In order for students to be successful in their futures, students must be able to collaborate amongst homogeneous and heterogeneous groups, be open-minded, develop thinking and speaking skills,

communicate effectively, be held accountable, think critically, problem-solve and argue effectively, all while obtaining the necessary knowledge and information each discipline and content requires. Educators can ensure that students are constantly engaged in various forms of communication with their peers by encouraging student-to-student academic conversation. Not only does peer collaboration cater to the many skills necessary to be successful in the future, but it also encompasses the student-led approach to learning. Student discourse fosters student learning in a way where they are teaching themselves and their peers the knowledge required within the specific discipline, while the teacher monitors and provides them with the support for academic success. In a world filled with endless ways to communicate, students must be provided with opportunities to do so on their own terms, instead of only responding when prompted to by a teacher. Therefore, if students are communicating with peers on their own terms, they are more likely to process and retain the information for the long term because it resonates a relevant and a more student-friendly approach to knowledge, making it easier to understand.

In order to implement an effective dialytic learning environment, instruction must be student-centered and no longer teacher-centered while, still remaining engaging and maintaining students' interests. One way that teachers can implement an effective dialytic learning environment is by developing lessons and units that allow the students to collaborate with their classmates to accomplish a shared goal. It is recommended that discussions be infused within all disciplines to meet the needs of our communicatively reliant students. Therefore, in order for these procedures to be effective in the classroom, teachers must reinvent instruction to be innovative, engaging, and motivating for high school students, including opportunities to communicate effectively. There are various ways to integrate collaboration within the classroom daily, including protocols, techniques and strategies. These learning opportunities both challenge

higher-ability students to extend their thinking whilst also being an excellent scaffolding device for weaker students. Another way to support lower achieving students is to have students working in both heterogenous and homogeneous small groups according to abilities, because students who may be weak in one area will be teamed up with a peer that is strong in such an area. Anytime that peers can help one another and aide in one another's learning is an opportunity worth encouraging.

One of the biggest challenges as an educator is making this shift from a teacher-centered to a student-centered classroom, often times without being provided with adequate professional learning opportunities. If educators are provided with additional professional time to collaborate and research in order to develop a more student-centered approach to teaching and learning, both students and teachers will benefit tremendously. In fact, research has proven that schools that have created dynamic classroom environments have already had significant benefits for students' education in comparison to students who are still learning with a less discourse-driven approach. Teachers must explicitly teach and reinforce these practices to routines in order for these practices to be most effective. This requires time and proper resources in order to successfully integrate student discourse into their classrooms.

The Common Core State Standards are a great foundational framework for school districts to use in creating their learning objectives. However, these standards should not be the only means of curriculum development. One challenge the Common Core State Standards creates is the way in which students are being assessed. Standardized tests do not provide students the an opportunity to apply discourse based skills. Either way, it is important that educators do their best to adhere to the changes while still making them their own according to their own students' individual needs and abilities. Therefore, the only way that educators are

going to be able to stay ahead of the curve and support students to the best of their learning abilities is through supportive administration, high standards and constant professional development supported by the district. However, “research data suggests that public schools are requiring less and less in-depth discussion and writing and that the writing they do assign tends to be more personal narrative than academic argument” (Dougherty).

The unchanged instructional approach to student discourse that has been taught in the past is irrelevant to today’s students. Affording students with the opportunity to discuss topics that are pertinent to their lives has proven to increase student engagement and participation in classrooms across disciplines. Student discourse provides students with the opportunity to enhance their learning and increase achievement across disciplines by promoting both critical thinking and problem-solving, thus moving students away from exclusively absorbing information to making lasting and sustainable implications about the rigorous work they are engaging with. Discourse and various forms of effective communication in the classroom grows as a result of experience. What students individually experience is just as imperative to their educational growth as the information they learn in their classrooms. Traditional learning is no longer relevant to the lives of students in our classrooms because they do not see the value in what they are learning. Academic discourse is the most powerful tool by which students support, inspire and drive each other towards new levels of success.

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