

Considerations for Facilitating the Read-aloud Lesson in Making Meaning Part 2 of 3

By Kathy King-Dickman | Categories: Making Meaning, Implementation

*Note to reader: This is Part Two of a three-part series; you can read Part One here. In this blog I share my revised thinking from *Is Calling on Hands an Archaic Practice?* (part of the *Engaging the Disengaged* series).*

Techniques That Spur Great Thinking, Discussion, and Learning

The following techniques are essential for spurring great thinking and discussion in the classroom:

- Using wait-time
- Asking open-ended questions
- Using cooperative structures
- Encouraging students to use prompts to build on one another's thinking:
 - "I agree with [Jayda] because..."
 - "I disagree with [Malik] because..."
 - "In addition to what [Gabriela] said, I think..."

When I first started using these techniques, they did not feel natural; I had to follow the *Making Meaning* plans closely to remind myself how and when to use them. With practice they will become as natural as telling children to raise their hands once was. In fact, you will find yourself using these engagement strategies in other content areas. That is why at Collaborative Classroom we often brag that our programs are not just programs, but excellent training in best practice teaching.

Prompts That Encourage Students to Build Conversations with One Another

In the discussion portion of a *Making Meaning* read aloud lesson, students often direct their thoughts to the teacher. In doing so they miss the opportunity to have a true, rich discussion with a peer in which they can share and wrestle with diverse thoughts. Peter Johnston, author of *Opening Minds* says, "Turn and talk doesn't mean merely turn and talk; it means building a conversation. Building a conversation means building on each other's ideas." (p.103, 2012.)

When the questions in the *Making Meaning* lessons are asked exactly as scripted and these probes are used, even kindergartners begin to learn how to "build a conversation." The teacher's job is to listen carefully to the students' ideas and decide which responses to probe. Below is a list of teacher probes we use at Collaborative Classroom that encourage students to build conversations in which

each student listens intently to others and responds with thinking of their own:

- Can you tell me more about your thinking?
- What in the text made you think this?
- What do others think about [Savanna's] idea?
- Can anyone add to [Zak's] thinking?
- Do you agree or disagree with [Yasmine's] idea? Why?
- What questions would you like to ask [André]?
- Would anyone like to add to what [Micah] said?
- What is an example of that?
- Defend your thinking.
- Evaluate what [Amelia] said.

It is also effective to use probes that encourage thinking by saying, "Maybe...Perhaps... I wonder..." (Johnston, p. 56).

When students offer differing points of view, take time to capitalize on this opportunity to deepen the discussion and teach students to present their arguments using evidence from the text. Simply point out the differences without any judgment or opinion of your own. Encourage discussion in pairs first and large group second.

You might say: "[José] thinks _____ whereas [Estella] thinks _____. Discuss with your partner which idea most closely matches your own or share your own thinking. Use evidence from the text to support your thoughts."

Abandon Paraphrasing and Repeating Questions

Another technique that helps move children away from directing their thoughts to the teacher instead of the group is to abandon the practice of paraphrasing what the students say. I can remember years ago, when I would have a soft spoken student or one who struggled to explain their thinking, I thought it was kind of me to restate what that child said in a clearer or louder manner. This not only tells that child that they aren't capable of explaining something, it lets them off the hook for learning to do so in an effective manner. It also signals to the other students that they do not have to listen to one another as they quickly learn that I will restate all that is said.

Rather than paraphrasing what these students say, teach them to ask clarifying questions such as, "Could you say what you said a bit louder. I couldn't hear you?" or "Could you say that in another way? I am a bit confused."

It is also important to avoid repeating questions unless the students need clarification or did not hear, or you need to get the students back on topic. This encourages engagement and active listening.

In the third blog of this series, I will address neutral stance and research supporting collaboration.