

Supporting Productive Talk to Promote Socializing Intelligence

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When we visit classrooms that reflect a culture of Socializing Intelligence, we notice several commonalities. We see evidence of a highly rigorous curriculum, and we see all students engaging in productive conversations around cognitively demanding tasks that are grounded in complex texts and rich content. More importantly, within those productive conversations, we see students taking responsibility for their learning by initiating their own questions, asking for clarification, and challenging the ideas of their classmates. We see students who have taken ownership of their learning and understand that they have the right and the obligation to understand things, and we see students who share the belief that they have the knowledge, the analysis, and the reasoning skills necessary to aid their own learning.

One of our goals at the Institute for Learning is to provide all students with the opportunity to sit in classrooms that reflect a culture of Socializing Intelligence, but we recognize that we cannot reach all teachers and all classrooms. As a result, we have been working on developing an *Accountable Talk* resource to support teachers in engaging students in productive conversations that move their classrooms in that direction. Our goal was to design a tool that, when paired with a cognitively challenging task and text, allowed teachers, new and experienced, to successfully implement *Accountable Talk* discussions in their classrooms. Engaging students in these productive discussions provides opportunities for all students to have a voice

and to challenge and develop their thinking, characteristics reflecting Socializing Intelligence.

This tool provides teachers with an overview of the importance of productive classroom talk and the impact it has on student learning. We emphasize the important role rich content and challenging and complex texts play in setting the stage for productive talk. In addition, the tool provides teachers with a guide to support them in the process, from preparing to engage students in productive conversations that promote Socializing Intelligence, to the actual implementation, including talk moves that keep the discussion moving and tips to help them through stumbling blocks, and finally, to reflecting on the process in order to support both teacher and student growth.

While in the process of developing this resource, we sought feedback from several teachers in an urbanized charter school in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. We provided teachers with the tool and asked for feedback using the following as guiding questions:

1. After reading the information in the tool, how confident do you feel implementing productive conversations in your classrooms?
2. How do you see productive conversations growing student learning?
3. What role do productive conversations play in allowing students to take responsibility for their own learning?
4. What additional information would support your process?

We were especially interested in Ms. S's experience with the resource since she had just begun her first teaching position one

month prior to implementing productive conversations. She shared that after reading the information in the tool and following the suggested steps for implementation, she felt confident preparing for and facilitating productive conversations. She added that the tool helped her understand the important role rich texts and challenging tasks and questions play in providing students with opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning and recognized that productive conversations are a way to make that learning happen.

Ms. S invited us into her classroom to observe one of her early attempts at productive

now see how important it is to use a text that allows for deep analysis, that encourages students to think more deeply about the ideas, and provides them with opportunities to ask each other questions as a way to figure out what those ideas mean." It was exciting to watch the students as they took ownership of their learning and worked together to try to make sense of the world, a skill often seen in classrooms that reflect a culture of Socializing Intelligence.

We will continue to observe the teachers as they facilitate productive conversations to gauge the extent to which their implementation of

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– Ms. S, teacher at a Pittsburgh Charter school

conversations. She selected the text *Separate Is Never Equal* by Duncan Tonatiuh because she felt that the content of segregation as it applied to a child of Mexican and Puerto Rican heritage might open her students' eyes to segregation and discrimination beyond their own world. As Ms. S and her students were reading the text out loud, one student stopped her and commented, "Wait, what? I thought segregation was only about black and white?" Before Ms. S could respond, students began a discussion around the topic, asking their peers about other groups who face discrimination. "So, can you discriminate against white people who are Jewish even though they are still white?" When talking to Ms. S after class, she stated, "I

productive conversations reflects their thinking around and understanding of the purpose of the resource. Promoting productive conversations that support Socializing Intelligence is not specific to any grade level or content area, so our goal is to share the tool and elicit feedback from teachers of lower elementary, middle and high school, and additional content areas. ■