

Utilize *Talk Moves* in the classroom

Require students to listen during conversations with *Talk Moves*

When facilitating whole-class conversations, every student is not always engaged. When one student has the floor, typically the others— the ones who weren't called on— will check out and tune out.

These “discussions” run more like a Q & A than an exchange and sharing of ideas. To change this dynamic, provide students with explicit instruction on how to engage in academic conversations. This might include an introduction to *Talk Moves*.

Begin with explicit instruction on a couple *Talk Moves*

When *Talk Moves* have been established, students are expected to listen in order to respond. Rather than every student taking the discussion in their own direction, use *Talk Moves* to develop the current conversation.

- **I AGREE:** Students can respond in agreement, chiming in their similar sentiments.
- **I'd like to ADD ON:** Students believe the initial answer is incomplete. This concept of “adding on” may include providing another example, pointing out another reason, or developing the explanation further.
- **I DISAGREE:** Students take the conversation in the opposite direction by disagreeing with the initial answer. This includes sharing alternative theories, different perspectives, or known contradictions.

Just as their name implies, *Talk Moves* are different ways to move the academic conversation in order to keep it going. It gives students various ways to enter the conversation, deepen the discussion, and/or transition the thinking. This aspect is essential in any discussion and will have students leaning in to listen to one another.

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Include the hand signals to help students engage

While introducing each *Talk Move* individually and explicitly, consider revealing a corresponding hand signal. There are many advantages to the hand gestures. Two in particular include:

- The teacher knows who is engaged and how each is thinking without calling on every student with his hand up.
- When different hand signals appear, the teacher can facilitate a more organized conversation by first calling on those who will add on information before pivoting to those who disagree entirely.



Introduce additional *Talk Moves*

Answer, *Agree*, *Add on*, and *Disagree* are the first four *Talk Moves* to begin with. Then, depending on the students and the subject matter, add in a few more.

- I can SUPPORT: When a peer can provide textual evidence for someone's inference, they should signal that they have support.
- I can CLARIFY: Sometimes the first student's answer comes out less than coherent. This makes it hard for the rest of the class to then decide how to respond. In those cases, it's powerful when a peer indicates he can clarify or restate what was initially said--rather than the teacher doing all the work.
- I can REPEAT: When students didn't hear the original answer, they can't agree, disagree, or add on. They need someone to repeat the information.
- I'm CONFUSED: Students signal when they are not understanding, in order for others to chime in with clarification.

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Execute an implementation strategy

Successful implementation of *Talk Moves* includes the following:

- Roll them out slowly, one at a time. This gives students a chance to see the different ways the same move can be used or interpreted.
- Reinforce the use of the hand signals even in short, simple, casual conversations. This makes it a habit and something kids naturally apply during longer text-based conversations.
- Provide students the questions the day before a formal whole-class discussion. This gives them all a chance to jot down thoughts and textual evidence ahead of time. It makes everyone feel prepared to contribute the day of the discussion.
- Before the whole class meets, have students spend a little time in small groups to discuss their individual answers. Encourage them to listen for new ideas or answers— things they might want to jot down in their notes. (Similarly, if someone said something brilliant, they write it down while attributing it to the peer who said it. Then, during the class discussion, they say, "Stuart said..." and even if Stuart's shy, his thoughts will still be heard.)

Whether facilitating academic conversations in math, science, ELA, or social studies, *Talk Moves* are a powerful tool. They will transition students away from simply answering teacher questions in a one-way monologue to engaging with peers in a dialogue.

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References

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