



A Structured Peer Conversation is a process for grouping students in order to allow for academic conversation, social interaction, and peer thinking. In a structured conversation, the teacher leads the group through a set of prescribed steps or protocol. The process is guided by criteria for speaking and listening and includes: a focused question, time limits, and a description of how the academic conversation will be shared with others in the class. Structured conversations are essential in developing the skills and culture necessary for collaborative work. It increases learning and builds trust by accomplishing respectful and substantive tasks as the students work together.

- Determine the learning objective and desired outcome for the conversation.
- Decide on the best group structure (partners, small groups, or whole groups) that will most effectively and efficiently support students to reach the desired outcome.
- Present a sample question or sentence stem for students to practice.
- Model exemplar responses using the prompt.
- Model how to clarify, paraphrase, and acknowledge different viewpoints.
 - So you're saying that...
 - Let me see if I understand you correctly...
 - I agree with you because...
 - I see where you're coming from but I do not agree that...
- Model how students can revise their thinking based on new learning.
 - After listening to you, I now see it differently...
 - After hearing what you have to say, I now think...
- Establish time limits.
- Ask groups to practice the process. Monitor to see if the groups are ready for the next step.
- When students feel comfortable with the process, present the focused question or sentence stem that is aligned to the objective to guide academic conversations.
- Monitor group conversations, conduct verbal check-ups, and redirect groups back to the question/stem as needed.
- Have groups report their ideas to other groups or to the whole class.



Additional Tools

Think-Pair-Share

Anytime throughout instruction, the teacher can pose a question or problem and invite students to *think* about it for a minute. Then the teacher will ask the students to *pair* up with a partner. They are given another minute to *share* their ideas with each other. The teacher calls on volunteer pairs to share with the whole group.

Community Circle

Students gather in a circle to have a structured, student-centered discussion with each other and the teacher. This practice builds a sense of community, develops problem solving skills, strengthens bonds between student and teacher, and provides an opportunity for students to practice their listening, speaking, and interpersonal skills.

For more strategies and/or resources, visit houstonisd.org/EffectivePractices



ALERTS

To prevent groups from veering away from the topic, set instructional and behavioral expectations, model, practice, and monitor engagement by circulating around the class during the activity.



QUICK TIPS

Consider using this process for peer revision of writing assignments. Provide questions that students can ask one another about their compositions.