Let’s Talk
Structured Conversations
Facilitate a variety of structured academic conversations that enable students to monitor and build understanding.

**ELPS** 1C. 1D. 1E. 1G. 2D. 2E. 2G. 2I. All of Strand 3

**IP Rubric** I-2, I-3, I-4, I-8

- How do I get my reluctant students talking?
- How can I make sure students are talking on task?
- How do I get students to use academic language?

**Why it works:**
When students participate regularly in structured academic conversations, they can make better sense of new content while building academic language. Structured conversations are a way to **prepare the learner, interact with text and extend the learning**. These help students retrieve prior knowledge and connect it to new concepts and are scaffolds for writing and whole-group discussion. As we circulate, we gain insight into individual student understanding.

**Suggested strategies:**
- Flexible Grouping
- Structured Peer Conversations
- Open-Ended Responses
- Academic Language
- Non-Verbal Signal
- No Opt Out
- Pacing Tools
- 100 Percent
- Circulate
- Student-Generated Questions

**Tech tools:**
- Lead4Ward
- Class Dojo

In the Let’s Talk routine, we regularly:
- Remind students of Let’s Talk procedures.
- Plan and post conversation questions and sentence stems.
- Guide students to use academic language.
- Implement structured peer conversations strategies.
- Monitor student interactions.
- Coach students to clarify and paraphrase.
Classroom implementation:

- **Remind students of Let’s Talk procedures.**
  Students need a structure, purpose, and accountability for their academic conversations. Use flexible grouping to Huddle according to language proficiency. Post your procedures for a few go-to structures and practice them regularly. Establish and reinforce norms for protecting the talk time of reluctant speakers, such as structured peer conversations in the language of instruction.

- **Plan and post conversation questions and sentence stems.**
  Decide when during your lesson students will need to process new content or retrieve prior knowledge. Create a question, task or problem with open-ended responses and matching sentence stems to guide students’ conversations. As you plan, use visuals, realia, and Total Physical Response to enhance comprehension.

- **Guide students to use academic language.**
  Model how to respond to questions incorporating the sentence stem. Set expectations for speaking in complete sentences and using academic language by providing a word bank, reminding students, and recasting in the language of instruction, or rephrasing subtly without requiring student repetition. Allow students to use Pen/cil to Paper as needed.

- **Implement structured peer conversations strategy.**
  An example of an effective, flexible strategy of a structured peer conversation is John Seidlitz’s Q3SA (Seidlitz & Perryman, 2008):

  **Question:** Post and introduce a written open-ended question.

  **Signal:** Prompt students to use a non-verbal signal when they are “ready to finish this sentence ...”

  **Stem:** Provide a sentence stem to match the question. Provide students wait-time or thinking time. Use No Opt Out and wait for 100 Percent of students to signal before continuing.

  **Share:** Use pacing tools to instruct students to discuss with their partners for a set amount of time using the sentence stem.

  **Assess:** Call on students to share by randomizing responses, then check for agreement from others. Encourage second language learners to speak by allowing them to use their native language as needed. You should model the language of instruction by recasting responses.

- **Monitor student interactions.**
  During structured peer conversations, circulate among pairs or groups, listening in and prompting if students are having difficulties. Use Do I Really Get It? and make note of student participation.

- **Coach students to clarify and paraphrase.**
  Teach students prompts they can use to clarify and expand on their peers’ comments. Model using student-generated questions, paraphrasing and clarifying, then have students practice using phrases such as, “So what I hear you saying is ...,” “Can you tell me more about ...,” and “I agree with your idea that...”