

TRANSCRIPT

Effective Expressions, Video 3: Scaffolding Structures to Support Academic Conversations for English and Diverse Learners

PRESENTER Johnpaul Lapid, WestEd

LORI VAN HOUTEN

Hello, and welcome. My name is Lori Van Houten, and on behalf of the CORE districts, REL West is excited to bring you “Scaffolding Structures to Support Academic Conversations for English and Diverse Learners.” This is the third in the series of online professional learning sessions, focused on the development of academic language and extended academic discourse. Today, you’ll learn about relevant research-based strategies and supports for academic conversations. They’ll be modeled with a class of young English and diverse learners, but they can be adapted to support all students.

I’m Lori Van Houten from the Regional Educational Laboratory, or REL West at WestEd. For nearly 30 years I’ve been providing technical assistance to schools, districts, counties, and other organizations to improve educational outcomes for all students, but particularly for student groups considered at risk for educational success. I’ll be your host for this session. Our content will be presented by Johnpaul Lapid. Johnpaul is with the Comprehensive School Assistance Program at WestEd, and works with diverse high-poverty school districts on their improvement efforts. Many of the California schools with which Johnpaul has worked have experienced increased achievement gains for all groups of students; several have met state and federal accountability targets for the first time.

This session is a continuation of the Effective Expressions Learning Series. Earlier webinars are archived and available for viewing as are the materials and resources referenced in this session. You can go to <http://relwest.wested.org/events/311>.

The information we’ll be presenting is designed to support your work within a community of practice, specifically as it relates to small, intentional changes that you can make in your classroom to support the needs of English and diverse learners. Key to the success of a community of practice is systematically addressing a well-defined problem of practice. As you listen to this presentation, consider your problem of practice, and how what Johnpaul shares about the specifics of academic conversations fits with your district’s, school’s, or classroom’s needs. Don’t try to push a square peg in a round hole. Consider how you might adapt or vary his recommendations to align with your context and still get the desired result. Now let me pass this over to Johnpaul.

JOHNPAL LAPID

Thank you so much. It's a pleasure to present on a topic so near and dear to my heart:
"Improving Learning Experiences for English/Diverse Learners and their Teachers."

Why should we spend time on talk? There is a strong relationship between language and reading. Oral language is the primary tool that students use to discover how the world works. We know that children will benefit from talking in the early years, and certainly throughout the grades as children begin to make progress toward expressing themselves effectively. They use their developing language to make their wishes and opinions known. They convey information in such a way that others can understand. They ask questions to meet their cognitive and other needs and satisfy their curiosity.

In this session, we take the concepts about procedures and routines from the first two sessions, and examine the strategies through a primary classroom lens. The objectives for this session are to: examine the routines and procedures necessary to facilitate an academic conversation; reflect upon the scaffolds provided by the teacher to support an academic conversation; and consider small changes in our classroom we can make to better support academic conversations for English/diverse learners. We consider diverse learners—and not limited to the following—as students who are in need of linguistic support to process and understand complex text. These diverse learners include English learners, standard English learners, long-term English learners, as well as English-only students. Because of the demands of the California Common Core, California English Language Development Standards, and including the Next Generation Standards, students are expected to make meaning of rich, complex text.

Our focus is speaking and listening to support academic conversations in a primary classroom. The following information, that I'm excited to share with you, is from the California ELA/ELD Framework, Chapter 2. The Framework is an excellent guide for administrators, coaches, and teachers to learn, plan, and implement the five patterns and themes that cut across TK through 12th grade. You can see in this graphic that effective expressions are one of the five key themes of the California ELA/ELD Framework, the focus for this session. Within the effective expressions are academic conversations. So, what are academic conversations? Academic conversations are sustained and purposeful conversations centered around school topics. Partners take turns talking, listening, and responding to each other's comments.

From the earliest grades, students engage in collaborative conversations regarding grade-level topics and text. The teacher's role is to guide students to engage respectfully and effectively in these classroom conversations, which requires a structured approach. Promoting rich classroom conversations requires planning and preparation of the routines and procedures. Teachers need to consider various aspects including the physical environment of the classroom, including the arrangement of seating; the skills of an active listener. Please pause this video and take a moment to review these strategies.

Teachers must also consider the routines for interaction, including behavioral norms and ways for students to build on one another's ideas. Here are some key elements of routines for interaction: establish a signal; choreograph students' position and behavior, for example, knee-

to-knee and eye-to-eye; state your expectations and be consistent; begin with easy content; and Practice, Practice, Practice.

Beyond setting up the rules and procedures for successful academic conversations, diverse learners also need scaffolding supports to promote rich classroom conversations. These may include: presenting sentence starters or sentence frames; establishing effective questioning techniques, including the capacity to formulate and respond to good questions; and flexible grouping and structures for group work encourages all students to participate equitably. Consider student needs when assigning partners, particularly early in the year when they are less familiar with their classmates and teacher expectations. Factors to take into consideration include: second-language proficiency, reading proficiency, maturity level, ability to focus, gender, personality, confidence, and attendance.

Now, I'd like to show you a brief video of a vocabulary lesson in a K-1 classroom from a school in Northern California. This school serves a high-poverty population of students and has a large percentage of English learners and diverse learners. I selected this video because it demonstrates the routines and procedures in place to support an academic conversation even for our youngest students. As you watch this video, I ask you to consider the following: What routines are in place to support a conversation between students? What supports does the teacher provide to facilitate an academic conversation? What modifications can be made for older students?

[Video Clip Begins]

Teacher: Okay, boys and girls, today we're going to work a little more on the word *extraordinary*. Remember yesterday when we read our story, we came across that word, and when we're done, you're going to be able to say a sentence with the word *extraordinary*, okay? Everybody say *extraordinary*.

Students: Extraordinary.

Teacher: Again. So now that we've seen and looked at *extraordinary* in some different ways, I want to talk to you about what we're going to work on today, okay? I want you to think of something that's extraordinary, something that is extremely wonderful or different. So think of something, but before you do I want to show you a few examples. Our sentence is going to be...well, let's read it together:

[with students] "It would be extraordinary if _____ because _____."

Let's fix that "B" a little bit, okay. One more time:

[with students] "It would be extraordinary if _____ because _____."

Well, here's one example:

[with students] "It would be extraordinary if _____ because _____."

Teacher: Okay. So here's what I want you to do now. Think of something that's extraordinary; so everybody, some think time. You come up with your own example, or if you can't come up with one, you can use one of mine, but try to come up with your own, something that would really be extremely wonderful or different, *extraordinary*: "It would be extraordinary if _____ because _____."

Okay. Now get your microphones, let's practice it. You're ready to go? Okay. Let's do it together:

"It would be extraordinary if Mr. Rosenfield came in here in a tuxedo and then did a big dance in front of all the kids, because you've never seen me in a tuxedo."

You need to get your microphone up and be practicing. Practice it, because remember, practice is what gets you ready for when you're with your partner.

"It would be extraordinary if Ms. Solas came in here in a tutu because wouldn't that be wild to see her looking that way."

Okay, put your microphones down. Good job. Okay, now turn to your partner. Get eye-to-eye, knee-to-knee, get yourselves ready; eye-to-eye, knee-to-knee; good, good. Okay, pick an A, pick a B. Okay, this day Bs go first, okay? Just remember if you get done, what do you do?

Students: Talk.

Teacher: Keep going. You can do other examples, or you can do the same one over again, okay? So everybody go, "It would be extraordinary if..." with your partners.

[All students talking]

Student 1: "It would be extraordinary if I got a job because I could save money and live better."

Teacher: Wow, would that be cool if you had your own job? Wow.

Student 2: "It would be extraordinary if I went to Disneyland because I wanted to see Mickey Mouse."

Teacher: You don't need to put your hands, you know, guys; I'll just call on you. Eyes on Edwin.

Student 3: "It would be extraordinary if an astronaut came to class because we could see a rocket ship."

Teacher: Okay. Here's what I want you to do. When you go home tonight...I already told your parents; I already told your parents when you were lining up coming in. I want you to go home and I want you to think of something that's extremely wonderful or different and you use the word—what word you going to use?

Students: Extraordinary.

Teacher: In a sentence. You might go up to mom and say, “Mom, you don’t just look amazing today, you look *extraordinary*.” Or “Wow, what a meal, this meal is *extraordinary*.” So think of a time when you go home today and when you’re home, use that word, and you know what they’re going to say?

Students: No.

Teacher: “You’re *extraordinary*.” Give yourselves a hand. Good job!

[Video Clip Ends]

JOHNPAUL LAPID

Let’s consider what we saw in the video and how we can apply these strategies in our own classroom. What routines were in place to support a conversation between the students? Even for these young students, they knew what was expected of them. They knew to track the teacher during whole discussion, they knew to look at their partners sitting knee-to-knee and eye-to-eye, and they knew they had roles—A and B—that represent a speaker and a listener. A few of the students needed a reminder to be an active listener, but the majority of students were practicing the SMART concept. Did we hear any open-ended, thought-provoking questions in this video clip? Remember, it had to be appropriate for very young learners and fit in this vocabulary lesson. The teacher asked the students to help him decide which events are extraordinary and to justify their claim. These students need several scaffolds to be able to do this. This would clearly be an area that would be modified for older students.

Finally, what scaffolding for linguistic supports did the teacher provide to support an academic conversation? This was difficult to observe, but the teacher partnered English learners with language-experienced students. The teacher told students the learning target, modeled for students, asked an open-ended question, provided a sentence frame, provided think time, reminded students to use the word, and required students to rehearse or practice before sharing with partners. This allowed all learners to feel confident about what is being shared.

What modifications can be made for older students? How would you modify the seating and physical environment of the classroom to facilitate an academic conversation? What are the active listening skills you want students to practice and use during an academic conversation? What types of questions will you ask? For more information, refer to the California ELA/ELD Framework, Chapter 2. Students should have multiple opportunities each day to engage in academic conversations about text with a range of peers. Some conversations will be brief and others will involve multiple exchanges.

I want to leave you with a quote from Cesar Chavez: “Real education should consist of drawing the goodness and the best out of our own students. What better books can there be than the book of humanity?” Thank you so much.

LORI VAN HOUTEN

Thank you, Johnpaul. That was a really helpful look into some specifics for supporting academic conversations for diverse learners in the early grades. As you consider what Johnpaul shared, we'd like to leave you with a few questions to think about in your community of practice. How does your problem of practice align with the information presented around routines, procedures, and supports for students? Are the modifications that were described appropriate for your context? How might you need to adapt these strategies for your context? How might these strategies change as you work with older students in your schools or district? Finally, how much variation can we tolerate in implementation and still get the desired results? What are the key elements of these strategies that **MUST** occur to help all students have successful academic conversations?

Thank you so much for joining us. We hope you find this information useful as you move forward to implementation. Here are a few more resources that you might find useful in this effort.

Additional Resources:

- **ELA/ELD Framework:**
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/rl/cf/>
- **CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy Standards:**
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/finalelaccsstandards.pdf>
- **CA ELD Standards:**
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/eldstandards.asp>
- **CA ELD Standards Online Professional Learning Modules:**
<http://www.myboe.org/>