Strategies and Routines for Active Engagement & Collaboration

As you navigate through the rest of your life, be open to collaboration. Other people and other people’s ideas are often better than your own. Find a group of people who challenge and inspire you, spend a lot of time with them, and it will change your life.

-Amy Poehler
Table of Contents

Teacher Roles and Responsibilities........................................... 2

Academic Language Scaffolds..................................................... 4

Discussion Scaffolds: Transition Starters................................. 6

Strategies for Pairs/Small Groups............................................. 8

Strategies for Whole Class Discussion.................................... 13

Structured Discussion Protocols............................................. 15

Reflection and Accountability Tools....................................... 19
Teacher Roles and Responsibilities in Collaborative Discussions

*Guide on the Side*
The teacher, as always is a key factor in the success of a lesson. During a discussion, the teacher’s role is just as crucial, but in a different way. The teacher as a guide on the side, implies that his/her main job is to step aside and let the students take on the learning. Not step out of the room or away from the learning, but hover on the side, as a facilitator.

*Facilitator*
In the facilitation role, teachers can set the objectives and goals of the discussion, review the guidelines and expectations for the process and structure, and pose guiding questions. This involves prior modeling and explicit teaching of the processes, as well as opportunities for practice and reflection. Once students are clear on process, a skilled facilitator is crucial for keeping the discussion moving, prompting further exploration of ideas, corralling outliers, and allowing for all students to be actively engaged in the sharing of ideas.

*Encourager*
This also necessitates a little prodding and encouraging when the discussion stalls or becomes too contentious. Reminders of norms, discussion scaffolds and the discussion objective can help to keep things on course.

*Redirector*
When the discussion veers off track, becomes overly sensitized or fraught with charged emotions, sometimes the teacher must redirect the conversation and remind students of the goal and objective of the discussion, as well as the agreed upon norms. It is to be expected that sometimes discussions may become heated or passionate, what matters is how it is handled, so that students learn to not shy away from these types of situations.
### Academic Language Scaffolds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Casual Register</th>
<th>Academic Register</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What?</td>
<td>I have a question about that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huh?</td>
<td>I don’t quite understand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What you talkin’ ‘bout?</td>
<td>What do you mean by.....?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can you explain that in another way?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I need clarification.....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I continue to be confused by....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I’m perplexed by.....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He said</td>
<td>My partner concluded that...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She said</td>
<td>____ pointed out to me...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>____ shared with me...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>____ mentioned that...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>____ emphasized that...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>____ observed that...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I said the same as him</td>
<td>My answer was similar...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We concluded that...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I agreed with ...... perspective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>____ already mentioned...., but I would add...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We concurred that...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We would further add that......</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think</td>
<td>It seems to me...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In my opinion...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Based upon___, I inferred that...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I predict, guess, imagine...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There is evidence of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I find that......</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My conclusion was.....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our group said</td>
<td>We decided / agreed upon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We concluded that....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We came up with...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our idea coincides with...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our group took a different approach...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We have an opposing position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our idea conflicts with the previous one....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our rebuttal to the previous point is....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You said</td>
<td>In other words, you think that…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What I hear you saying is that…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>So you are saying…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Let me rephrase what I heard…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My understanding of your position is ….</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>We’re done, the end</th>
<th>To sum up……</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In conclusion…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A synthesis of what was shared would be….</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A theme throughout the discussion was……</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The most important points were….</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repetition</th>
<th>Can you repeat/restate/explain what</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>_________________________________  just said?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adding on</th>
<th>I’d like to add on to what ____________ said.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreeing/On the same page</th>
<th>I agree with __________________ because……</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revising our thinking</th>
<th>I’m starting to wonder/change my mind…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Everyday classroom directions:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pass out these papers</th>
<th>Kindly distribute</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pick up….</td>
<td>Please collect or gather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line up for ….</td>
<td>Assemble, congregate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stop it/Don’t</th>
<th>Refrain from….</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Halt!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Abstain from …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cease…..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I wish you would/wouldn’t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My preference is that you…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I would appreciate it if…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I would encourage you to….</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My recommendation is……</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion Transition Sentence Starters

Rooting Ideas in the Text
Your comment reminds me of [quote, idea]... On page...
A related idea/question/comment is...
Where do you see that in the text?
I would like to (re)direct our attention to the [text]. On page...

Transitioning to a New Topic
So far we have discussed [summarize discussion]. I would like to transition us to a new question/ topic...
To further our discussion, let’s move on to the idea of...

Developing Ideas Further
A related idea/question/comment is...
I am unsatisfied with our discussion of [idea] because...
I agree/disagree with the notion that... because...
Building off of [person's] idea...
I have a clarifying question for [person]. Are you asking...
I would like to return to our previous discussion of [idea] because...
I would like to elaborate upon [person’s] idea...

Inviting Someone
I’m interested in hearing your thoughts on this question, [person]
Who can add to this thought?
(person), what are your ideas related to this?
Thank you! I’m still thinking. Can you come back to me?

Advanced Transitions
Synthesize
What I am hearing X, Y, and Z say is... These ideas fall beneath the greater question... because...
According to both X and Y, ____________. These ideas suggest that... because...
Based X, Y, and Z’s comments... it seems that we are wrestling with... This is important because...

Going Deeper in the Text
According to both X and Y, ____________. Although I agree with these ideas up to a point, I cannot accept the overall conclusion that... because...
Even if we accept... we cannot overlook the ambiguity of... because...
While I concede that... I still disagree with the notion that... because...
I think we might be overlooking [author’s] assertion that... because...
Even though on first read it may seem that... a closer reading of the passage
suggests that...
X’s claim that... rests upon the assumption that... which is questionable because...
I am not convinced that the text suggests... Let’s go back to the passage where... in order to consider...
By focusing on..., we overlook the deeper problem of... because...
Strategies for Pairs and Small Groups

**Novel Ideas Only**  
*A strategy for encouraging thinking outside of the box*

1. Students write down 3 ideas.  
2. Everyone stands up.  
3. Teacher randomly calls on students to share. Students sit when they hear one of their ideas 3 times.  
4. The last one standing “wins” for having a novel idea.

**Opinion Stations**  
*A protocol for taking positions*

Designate 4 stations in the room: Agree, Strongly Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

- Students are given a statement and asked to the opinion station that matches their position
- Students discuss in their groups reasoning and evidence.
- Half of the group crosses over to the opposite position

**Think, Pair, Share & Square**  
*A strategy for improving collaboration*

1. Students take a minute to first silently think about an answer to a prompt or question
2. At the signal, students turn to their partner and tell their answer, taking turns to listen to one another
3. Students share either their own ideas or those of their partner
4. *Think-Pair-Square: each set pairs up and shares with opposite partner*

**Give One-Get One**
A strategy for collaboration with diverse partners

1. Students write their name at the top of a paper and then list 3-5 ideas on the assigned topic
2. Students draw a line after their last idea to separate their ideas from others
3. Students get up and find another person to share ideas with. They write interesting ideas on their paper- noting the source
4. Whole class debrief-Students share ideas they thought had merit, using a sentence starter (i.e. Peter pointed out that....., Juan shared.....)

Hand-up, Stand-up, Pair-up
A strategy for new/diverse partners

1. Students prepare what they will be sharing (ie. notes, question responses, 30-second speech)
2. When all are ready, raise your hands, make eye-contact and meet another student
3. Greet your partner
4. Review the procedure for the activity and the time limit
5. Signal the students to begin
6. At the conclusion of the activity thank your partner and return to seat

Numbered Heads
A strategy for accountable collaboration

1. Students number off in teams, 1-4
2. Teacher asks a series of questions, one at a time
3. Students discuss possible answers to each question, for a set amount of time (30-90 seconds)
4. Teacher calls a number (1-4), and all students with that number raise their hand, ready to respond
5. Teacher randomly calls on students with the specified number to answer on behalf of their team
6. Teacher continues with questions, rotating numbers until all review is complete.
   (Prizes can be awarded to the table or number with the most correct answers)

Partner Teach
A strategy for collaboration
1. Assign partners A and B.

2. Each partner shares 2 major learnings from the lesson

3. Turn to another pair and share what your partner taught you

**Text Rendering**
*A strategy for summarization*

1. Select a piece of text for students to work with

2. Provide each student with:
   a. A full sheet of 8.5 X 11 plain paper (sentence)
   b. A half sheet of the 8.5 X 11 plain paper cut the long way (phrase)
   c. A 3X5 Card (word)

3. As students read they are to individually identify what they consider to be the most important sentence, phrase and word in the text. (The phrase or the word do not need to come from the sentence, they can come from various portions of the text)

4. Please each sentence, phrase and word on each of the pieces of paper provided.

5. Each table then shares their work with each other and determines what the table determines to be the best sentence, phrase and word

6. Create a gallery walk of the each table’s determinations and have the class view all of the work.

7. Return to seats and discuss what they saw and what the text means.

**30 Second Speech**
*A strategy for summarization*

1. Provide each student with a 3X5 card
2. Tell them they will be giving a 30 second speech on what they have been learning.

3. They are to make a bulleted list of things to put in their speech on the 3X5 card with their name on the back.

4. When completed, use the hand-up, stand-up, pair-up strategy OR the line-up strategy to get students with a partner.

5. They are to determine who will go first.

6. The first person gives their speech (us a timer) while the second person listens. At the conclusion of the 30 seconds, reset the timer for 15 seconds and the second person now paraphrases what they heard.

7. The second person now gives his speech while the partner listens and then gives a 15 second paraphrase.

8. (Optional) Collect the 3X5 cards as a way to see what students have learned.
1-3-6 Protocol
Discussion & Information Gathering Protocol

1: Students first think and write independently.
   • Give a prompt/question/statement
   • Allow structured time for completion

3: Gather in groups of 3 to share ideas
   • Each person must share
   • Add to your own paper
   • Acknowledge ideas of others
   • Agree or disagree

6: 2 Groups of 3 gather for final discussion
   • One from each small group shares
   • Negotiation of ideas
   • Spokesperson decided for whole group for class debrief

Debrief whole group.

Passing Notes
A feedback & discussion protocol

• Give students a prompt or idea to consider on a piece of notebook paper.

• Students write a response and sign their name.

• Students fold the paper and pass to someone else (or the teacher collects and quickly redistributes to the notes).

• Students read the note and write a response to the first writer, adding or commenting on their idea and sign their name.

• Repeat one or two more times.

• Return the note to the original writer and debrief ideas whole group.

• Students can either share their idea or any feedback on their paper.
Strategies for Whole Group

Idea Wave  
* A strategy for sharing ideas quickly

Each student lists 3-5 ideas about the topic:
- A volunteer begins the idea wave by sharing one idea
- The student to the right shares one idea
- Each student to the right shares until the wave has gone around the room

Equity (Popsicle) Sticks  
* A strategy to ensure equitable participation

1. Write each student’s name on a popsicle stick and place them in a jar
2. Pull a popsicle stick to call on students for responses
3. Return the stick to the jar, so that students don’t think they are off the hook

Gallery Walk  
* A strategy for sharing many ideas and concepts

1. Select quotes, important concepts, or student assignments/projects on separate pieces of paper on the walls around the room
2. Students walk around the room, reading each piece and taking notes or observations
3. Students return to seats and select one that intrigues them to write about for 2 minutes
4. Students share their writing with a partner or whole group
Text to Assess
A strategy for collecting group ideas quickly

1. Teacher poses a question to the group. Can be any kind of question that has a rather brief response, for example a reflective question (what did you learn today, yesterday, etc..) or a position (Which character poses the most threat?) or to gather evidence (what evidences supports the claim that the main character is the culprit?).

2. Students use their cell phones to text their response

3. Responses display on Smartboard/computer display screens immediately. (One option is www.polleverywhere.com) to set up the feature.

4. Class discusses findings and determines next steps

Traffic Lights
A strategy to assess levels of understanding and provide collaborative support

1. Distribute red, yellow, and green index cards to all students.

2. Pose a question and have students rate their understanding or level of completion holding up one of the color coded cards (Red= didn’t understand, didn’t finish..etc… need help; Yellow = still have some questions; Green=I’m good to go)

3. Depending on responses, either address issues whole group, if many have the same problem or pair students up to give feedback to one another

4. Red cards can be pulled in to work with the teacher if needed, while greens and yellows work together or move on
Structured Discussion Protocols

Philosophical Chairs
A structured discussion protocol

Philosophical Chairs is a structured tool for engaging in classroom discussion. The goal of philosophical chairs is to promote discussion, not engage in debate. Students are asked to keep an open mind as the discussion progresses and consider all sides of the topic.

Procedure:
1. Set up classroom chairs in a “u” shape, with only a few chairs perpendicular to the two longer facing parallel rows. One long row is for the pro side, one for the con side and the smaller row is for undecideds. (Or have students stand in a U-shape, based on their position on the topic.
2. Present a statement to students and have them take a position in the U-either pro, con or neutral.
3. Someone on the pro side begins by offering one reason they agree with the statement.
4. Someone on the con side then presents a reason for disagreeing with the statement.
5. Students in the undecided or neutral camp can ask questions or make statements anytime.
6. The same person cannot speak twice in a row for their side. They must wait until at least one other person in their camp makes a comment.
7. Undecideds or neutrals can move to the pro or con side as the discussion progresses.
8. After the discussion has run its course, have students do a written reflection of the salient points and their ultimate position on the topic.

Tips
• The purpose is discussion not debate. Encourage students to listen to one another and not get defensive. Keep an open mind.

• Students do not raise their hands to speak. They should monitor the ebb and flow of the discussion and step in as appropriate. In first teaching the process, a ball or stuffed animal can be thrown back and forth across sides as students want to speak.
• Students should be able to explain both their own view and the opposing view by the end of the discussion.
• The statement should be written on the board for easy reference.
• Modify or restate the topic if the discussion stagnates
• Be comfortable with silence
• Have students rate themselves on their ability to participate, be open-minded and clarify their position

**Sample written evaluation questions for student reflection:**
What was the most frustrating part of the discussion?
What was the most successful part of this technique?
What was said that caused you to change or rethink your position?
What conclusions can you draw about how you form your beliefs?
What argument was most valid relating to the opposing viewpoint?
What argument was most valid for the supporting viewpoint?
What was your final decision and why?
Socratic Seminar

Socratic seminar is a text-based protocol for deepening the understanding of ideas and values in a text. Students examine issues, principles, stylistic elements, author’s intent, etc… related to the content and articulate varying viewpoints.

Procedure:

Prior to the discussion:
• Students read the text and engage in activities/notes to check initial understanding
• Give students prompts/elements to begin to explore
• Teach the protocol for the discussion, modeling appropriate behaviors

During the discussion:
• Arrange seats in either a square or circle
• Review norms and expectations
• Pose a question to start the discussion or have a student pose one
• Questions/responses are addressed to the group, not the teacher
• Teacher or identified student tracks main points
• Teacher redirects if conversation gets off track

After the discussion:
• Debrief the process- how did we do with norms, keeping on track, citing evidence...
• Debrief the content- what major understandings emerged?

Sample Questions for Facilitation

For Text Analysis
What is the main idea or underlying value in the text?
What is the author’s intent?
What does this phrase mean?
What is the most important word/sentence/paragraph
Do you agree with the author on….?

To move the discussion along
Who has a different perspective?
Who has not had a chance to respond?
Where does it refer to that in the text?
Can you clarify what you mean by that?
How does that relate to what he/she just said?
Has anyone changed their mind?

To bring the discussion back at the end
How do these ideas relate to our own lives?
Why is this important?
What can we take away from today’s discussion?

Variation: Fishbowl

Fishbowl is run similarly to a Socratic seminar with the following adjustments:

- Divide the class in half. Half sit in an inner circle, the other half sit directly behind in an outer circle.

- The inner circle carries on the discussion, the outer circle takes detailed notes of what is said and how the protocol is going

- Each person in the inner ring is assigned a partner in the outer ring who is monitoring their participation and key ideas and evidence

- After a specified time, the inner and outer circles switch places and roles are reversed.

- When the discussion is completed, partners debrief and give feedback on performance and ideas
Exit Tickets
_A strategy for summarization/accountability_

1. Tear a sheet of paper in half or use 3x5 notecards or create customized “tickets”

2. Students cannot leave until they have completed one or two sentences relating to the following:
   - Ask a specific question: “Tell me what you learned about…”
   - Ask students to write down a question they still have about the content.
   - Ask students to write down one thing they learned.
   - Ask students to make a connection between two things they have learned.

3. Start the next class period by sharing a few of the tickets
Socratic Seminar /Fishbowl Partner Evaluation

Name of person you are observing: _____________________________________________
Your name ________________________________________________________________
Discussion topic: __________________________________ Date: _________________

Record a check for each time your partner contributed in a meaningful way:
___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

Rate your partner (scale of 1-5, 5 being highest) on the following skills:

Analysis and Reasoning
1 2 3 4 5

Did your partner: 
___ Give reasons for statements given
___ Cite specific evidence
___ Demonstrate understanding and thoughtful consideration
___ Provide relevant and insightful comments
___ Move the discussion to a deeper level

Discussion Skills
1 2 3 4 5

Did your partner: 
___ Speak loudly and clearly?
___ Stay on topic?
___ Talk directly to students?
___ Invite other ideas/opinions?
___ Share air time?

Civility
1 2 3 4 5

Did your partner: 
___ Listen to others respectfully
___ Avoid hostile exchanges
___ Use appropriate language
___ Address questions, differing opinions in a civil manner

Notes/Comments
**Wingman**

*Wingman is a tool for engaging reluctant, passive, or shy students in a discussion process.*

1. Set up groups of at least 3 or more.

2. Delegate one student in each group as the Wingman.

3. This student will serve as the active listener and note taker.

4. Give the student a handout (see example) with explicit things to note about the discussion, for example:
   
   a. Tally the number of times each student speaks (to check for equal opportunities and prevent one person from dominating)

   b. Tally the number of times each person presents the desired information from the task

   c. Note who is off task or topic

   d. Determine who makes the most compelling argument in the discussion

   e. Keep track of textual support given

5. Wingmen then share findings with the class as the class debriefs each group’s ideas.

*This protocol often allows the Wingman to observe the dynamics of a productive discussion and become more at ease with the process. It requires that the student engage in active listening and refrain from interfering in the discussion. Students usually become more active participants once they have had a chance to serve as the Wingman.*
Wingman

It is your responsibility to record what happens today in your group. As the group discusses the topic, you are going to assess how well each one presents their argument. Don’t worry, they are not getting a grade based on your observation!

Write the names of the students you are observing and put a tally indicating the number of times each one speaks, cites text or is off task:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th># of times they speak</th>
<th># of times they cite information from the text</th>
<th># of times they are off task or topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In your opinion, what were the most compelling pieces of information shared:
Discussion Reflection

What were three ideas that you found interesting or relevant from today’s discussion?

What was the best idea you contributed and how did others respond?

In terms of process, what did the group do well?

What is one thing the group could do better?

How was your learning or understanding enhanced by today’s discussion?
Sources / Resources


https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/strategies-for-engaging-students

https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/analyzing-text-as-a-group