

**Hands Down, Speak Out:  
Exploring the Crossover between Math and Literacy Talk**

*NCTM 100 Days of Professional Learning Webinar, July 2020*

#NCTM100

[www.handsdownspeakout.wordpress.com](http://www.handsdownspeakout.wordpress.com)

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Traditional Classroom Discourse	Hands-Down Conversation Communities
The teacher is positioned as the “primary knower” (Boyd and Galda 2011).	All students are positioned as competent members of the community with important ideas.
The teacher and a handful of students do most of the talking.	Many different students talk and contribute to the conversation in a variety of ways. The teacher’s facilitation supports students in leading the conversation.
Classroom discourse is a space in which knowledge is performed.	Classroom discourse is a space in which knowledge is constructed.
Silent students are viewed as unengaged, resistant, shy, or unable to contribute to the conversation.	Silence is viewed as a complex act. The role of listener is valued equally with that of speaker.
Classroom talk follows a set of norms and procedures that are useful only within the school walls.	Classroom talk mirrors and prepares students for engaging in dialogue beyond the school walls.
Classroom talk values the experience and knowledge of some students, often white, middle- and upper-class students.	Classroom talk values the experience and knowledge of all students.

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**Table 8.1** Some Ways We Can Launch “Disagreement” Hands-Down Conversations

Type of Launch	What Is It?	Examples
<p><b>Offer a Debatable Idea</b></p> <p>Always/ Sometimes/ Never</p>	<p>Offer a debatable idea and ask students to decide if it is always, sometimes, or never true.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wolves are bad.</li> <li>• Fractions are small.</li> </ul>

Type of Launch	What Is It?	Examples
<p><b>Offer a Debatable Idea</b></p> <p>Choose a Side</p>	<p>Ask students to choose a side of a debate. Use descriptors that are subjective or hard to quantify, such as <i>better</i>, <i>bigger</i>, <i>good</i>, or <i>right</i>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let’s talk about this: Jack is good or the giant is good. What do you think?</li> <li>• Odd numbers are better or even numbers are better.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Pose a Debatable Question</b></p>	<p>Ask a question about an idea that is open to multiple answers and interpretations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would you rather ___ or ___?</li> <li>• Which one doesn’t belong?</li> </ul>

Note: See Chapter 2 for more on crafting launches for Hands-Down Conversations.

## What is a Dialogue Micro-Lesson?

- A “pulling back of the curtain” on some ways dialogue works.
- **Micro!** 3-5 minutes.
- **Familiar structure:** what, why, and how.
- Followed by an **opportunity to try it out** (in partnerships, clubs or as a whole class) with coaching from peers and teacher.

#handsdownconvo

If you notice . . .	You might try . . .
<p>Students are using talk moves and demonstrating listening behaviors, and are ready to refine their listening moves. One clue that students are ready for this work is when they repeat the ideas of others in a conversation.</p>	<p><b>Lesson 6.1</b> Paraphrasing: Listening <i>So Closely</i> and Saying an Idea in Your Own Words</p> <p>OR</p> <p><b>Lesson 6.2</b> Cloudy or Clear: Asking Clarifying Questions</p>
<p>Students are most interested in their own ideas and haven't yet discovered the power and excitement that come with listening to understand what others think. Perhaps only a few students in the room are considered “listen-worthy” by their peers.</p>	<p><b>Lesson 6.3</b> Looking Inside Our Brains: Curiosity About Other Ideas</p>
<p>Students are expressing their own isolated (and perhaps somewhat unrelated) ideas in conversations and are ready to learn more about connecting their ideas.</p>	<p><b>Lesson 6.4</b> Same or Different?</p> <p>OR</p> <p><b>Lesson 6.5</b> Adding On, Part 1: Linking Ideas</p> <p>OR</p> <p><b>Lesson 6.6</b> Revising an Idea</p>

## 6.3

## Looking Inside Our Brains

We want our students to listen to each other not out of compliance, but out of genuine curiosity about their classmates' ideas. Our colleague Ellen Rogers thinks a lot about cultivating a stance of curiosity among her students and inspired us to write this lesson. This stance of curiosity about other people's ideas is something we must model for our students all day long, to show them that we believe the ideas of all students (not just a few) hold worth. From there, our students can grow their curiosity and interest in each other's ideas as well. But while the community-building aspect of this skill takes place implicitly all day long, we can also explicitly teach and highlight this skill. It is important to note that this lesson asks students to apply some of the strategies from Lessons 6.1 and 6.2.

### During the Dialogue Micro-lesson

**What and Why?** When you listen to someone, you get to find out some of what that person is thinking in their brain. Isn't that interesting? We can't *really* look inside there, but listening to what someone says is one way to get a glimpse into their head! And every brain in our class is a little different. When you find out what someone else is thinking in their head, it helps you grow the ideas in *your* head too. Today we will think about how we can try to "look inside" each other's brains and be *so* curious about what our classmates are saying.

**How?** Here's one way you can learn about someone else's thinking (*reference or draw parts of the anchor chart as you talk*):

1. Get ready to be the listener. Say to yourself, "I'm curious. I wonder what my partner thinks about this!"
2. Listen closely to your partner so you can really find out what's going on in their head!
3. Take a moment to think about what they just said. Ask yourself: "What did I find out? Do I need to ask a question or paraphrase to 'check in' on my understanding?"
4. Say something about their idea.



