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Let's Talk About Text: Facilitating Student-Led Discussion Groups

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The background of the slide features several sets of thin, curved lines in light gray, some solid and some dashed, creating a sense of motion or flow. A large red speech bubble is positioned on the left side, containing the word 'Goals'.

Goals

- **Learn to facilitate student-led discussion groups.**
- **Explore tools to enhance text-based discussions.**

CCSS and Discussion (a few examples)

- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.1.A](#)
Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.1.B](#)
Build on others' talk in conversations by responding to the comments of others through multiple exchanges.
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.1.C](#)
Ask questions to clear up any confusion about the topics and texts under discussion.
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.2](#)
Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.3](#)
Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to gather additional information or clarify something that is not understood.

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Why should students have small group text-based discussions?

In whole class discussions:

- There are fewer response opportunities.
- Students who think quickly share the most.
- Discussions are often dominated by a few students.
- Students who are confused don't often speak up to let you know (it's hard to tell who is *with* you).
- Students tend to talk to the teacher, not to one another (this happens even in teacher-facilitated small groups).

In student-led discussion groups:

- Students have more opportunities to use language to learn language.
- Student-led discussions can be an authentic, low-stakes, AND fun way for students to talk to one another about academic concepts.
- Students develop academic self-competence (I got this!).



Student-Led Reading Groups

- **Select groups thoughtfully.**
- **Task is clear and feels important.**
- **Teach discussion skills.**
- **Practice A LOT with feedback.**
- **Students have supports.**
- **Teacher facilitates collaboration.**

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Setting the Stage for Student-Led Discussion Groups



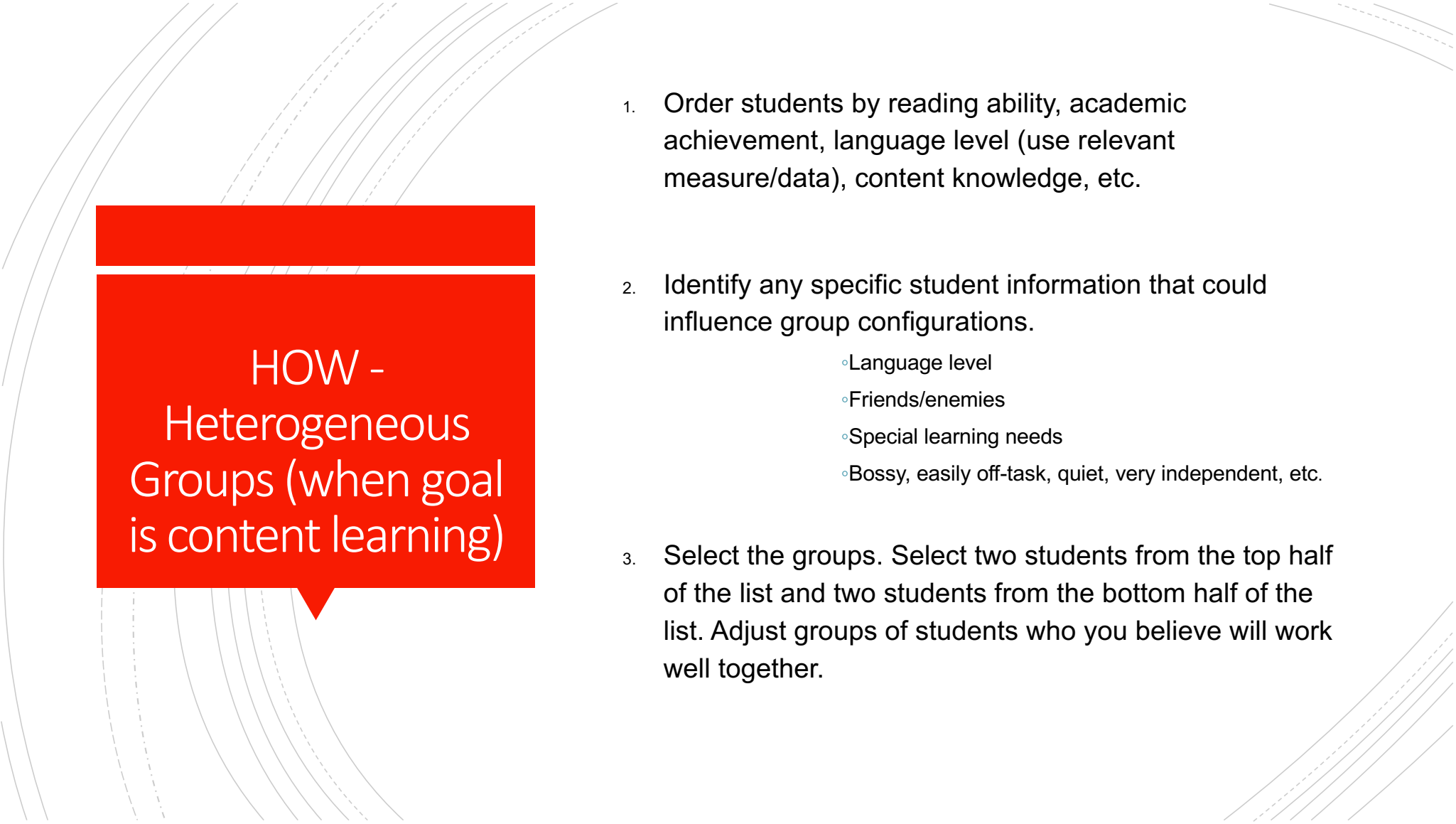
Grouping Matters



Typical Grouping Structures

GROUPING should be part of
your INSTRUCTIONAL
PLAN





HOW - Heterogeneous Groups (when goal is content learning)

1. Order students by reading ability, academic achievement, language level (use relevant measure/data), content knowledge, etc.
2. Identify any specific student information that could influence group configurations.
 - Language level
 - Friends/enemies
 - Special learning needs
 - Bossy, easily off-task, quiet, very independent, etc.
3. Select the groups. Select two students from the top half of the list and two students from the bottom half of the list. Adjust groups of students who you believe will work well together.

HOW - Heterogenous Groups

1. Julia
2. *Jack
3. Janice GT/ADHD
4. *Jamie EL
5. Jordan EL
6. Jillian LD
7. *Jane LD/EL
8. Jorge
9. Jim
10. Jany LD/ADHD

*leader

Task is Clear and Important: Use Cooperative Learning

Cooperative Learning

- Students are strategically placed in groups.
- Each member has an assigned role.
- Group task is very specific.
- Each individual is responsible for his/her own learning and group learning.
- Students utilize more higher-order thinking skills than they could have accessed by themselves.

Group Work

- Students work on their own assignments while sitting at the same table.
- Students placed randomly in groups.
- Group roles and tasks undefined.
- Only individual or only group accountability.
- Each student does less work than they would have done on their own.

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Try This!

Set Norms

1. Watch a video of a small group discussion.
2. Lead a discussion about what students were **doing** and **not doing** OR what successful discussion **looks like, sounds like, and feels like.**
3. Create norms for small group discussions (no more than 4 or 5)

Example Initial Norm List

What will successful
discussion groups do?

Source: Daniels & Steineke (2004)

SAY

- Take turns
- Use names
- Share airtime
- Pull quiet people in
- Piggyback on other peoples ideas
- Don't attack
- Talk only to your group
- Support ideas from the book

DO

- Listen actively
- Make eye contact
- Lean forward
- Bring and use materials
- Nod agreement

FINAL LIST

1. Talk only to your group members.
2. Take turns.
3. Everyone shares ideas.
4. Be respectful.



Roles

✓ Use a similar process for creating roles. Ask students:

- What kinds of roles do we need in our discussion groups?

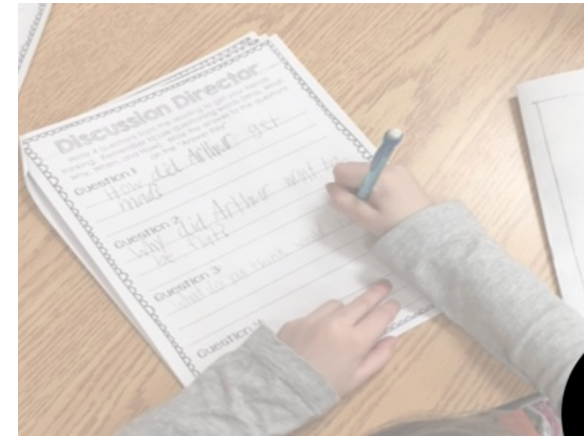
Roles

Roles can be determined by class or teacher.

Examples:

- Time Keeper (Keeps time)
- Discussion Director (Guides discussion process)
- Word Watcher (Facilitates figuring out unknown words)
- Encourager (Ensures that everyone participates)

Roles can also be determined by reading strategies:
In CSR,
Leader, Clunk Expert, Gist Expert, Question Expert



Teach Discussion Skills

Now teach kids to enact the
norms you set and more...

- Listen to other speakers
- Take turns
- Share your ideas
- Ask questions
- Disagree respectfully
- Add on to others' ideas
- Support opinions with evidence
- Encourage others to participate
- Come to consensus
- Solve a problem together

Try This!

Use Discussion Frames

AGREE

- I agree with _____ because.
- I would like to add on to what _____ said. I think _____.

DISAGREE

- I see your point. On the other hand _____.
- I disagree with what _____ said because _____.
- Another way to think about it is _____.

INCLUDING EVERYONE

- _____ what do you think about the question?
- _____ do you agree or disagree? Why?
- _____, I would like to know what you think about _____.

To learn more about Accountable Talk: http://ifl.pitt.edu/index.php/educator_resources/accountable_talk

CSR Gist Expert Card (back side)

In CSR, use
Cue Cards
(or create
your own)



DURING READING



Discussion *[share your gists]*

1. Let's compare and contrast our gists. How are the similarities and differences important?
2. *(Name)*, use the text to justify your gist.
3. Whose gist helps us best understand the most important information in this section? Where is the evidence to support that in the text?
4. How do our gists connect to today's purpose?



Feedback

- One thing you did really well ____.
- Your gist might be more effective if ____.
- I see your point, but what about ____?
- How can we each revise our gists so that they reflect a better understanding of this section?



Try This!

**Practice
Listening and
Taking Turns**

- **Use a thought provoking image, short video, poem, or other prompt that it is likely to draw students in.**



**I see....
That makes me
think...**

Practice small
group discussions
with just two
rules.

- Use names
(connection)
- No one can talk
twice before
everyone has
spoken
(participation)



<https://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2016/08/16/learning/images-from-four-years-of-whats-going-on-in-this-picture/s/VTS09-29-14LN.html> (NY Times: What's Going On in this Picture)

Assign a timer.

2 min. to write 2 questions about this picture.

3 minutes to discuss.

- One person asks a question.
- Groups talk about the question.
- If you run out of things to talk about, ask another question.

RULES

- Use names (connection)
- Try to repeat what the person before you said (listening).

2 Minute Discussion



Band members have a special bond. A great band is more than just some people working together. It's like a highly specialized army unit, or a winning sports team. A unique combination of elements that becomes stronger together than apart.

--Steven Van Zandt (Musician)

(Inspired by Ms. Hale, Denver,
2013)

- I think this quote means...
- In my own life, I think...
- Alison might be showing us this quote because...
- I'm wondering...
- I imagine Alison chose this picture to illustrate this quote because...

RESPONDING TO OTHERS

- To add on to what ____ said, ____.
- I agree with ____ because ____.
- I respectfully disagree with ____ because ____.

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Text-Based Discussions in Action

What happens

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Set Discussion Tasks

- What will students be focusing on in their discussion groups?
- Select a strategy or literary element that you have taught and practiced.
 - Making inferences
 - Summarizing
 - Paraphrasing
 - Making connections
 - Asking questions
 - Figuring out unknown words or ideas
 - Describing characters
- Select a norm to focus on.
 - Taking turns
 - Disagreeing respectfully
 - Adding on
- Provide group instructions based on one or more strategy or learning goal.

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Example: Talking
about the main
idea

Students use the “Get the Gist” Strategy in groups.

- 1. Read a short section of text.
- 2. Identify with your group the most important *who* or *what* that the section is about.
- 4. Students discuss the most important ideas and provide textual evidence.
- 5. Everybody writes their own gist/main idea statements.
- 6. Share gist statements with the group and discuss.

Get the Gist

The most important who or what is _____.

Important ideas from this section

-
-
-

My gist: _____
who/what

_____.

Std 1 Leader: Gist expert please help us.

Roles

Std 2 Gist Expert: What is the most important thing?

Std. 3: Sleep

Std 4: I think, the 'what' is why you need sleep and the 'who' is the students. 'Who' is talking about students.

Std 3: Why students need sleep.

Std 2: Why do **we**-

Std 4: Why do we need sleep.

Std 1: Uh huh.

Individual
accountability

[Students pause to write down most who/what.]

Std 2 Gist Expert: Now let's share our ideas.

Std 4: Okay, so I think it's important that we know how much sleep we need to get.

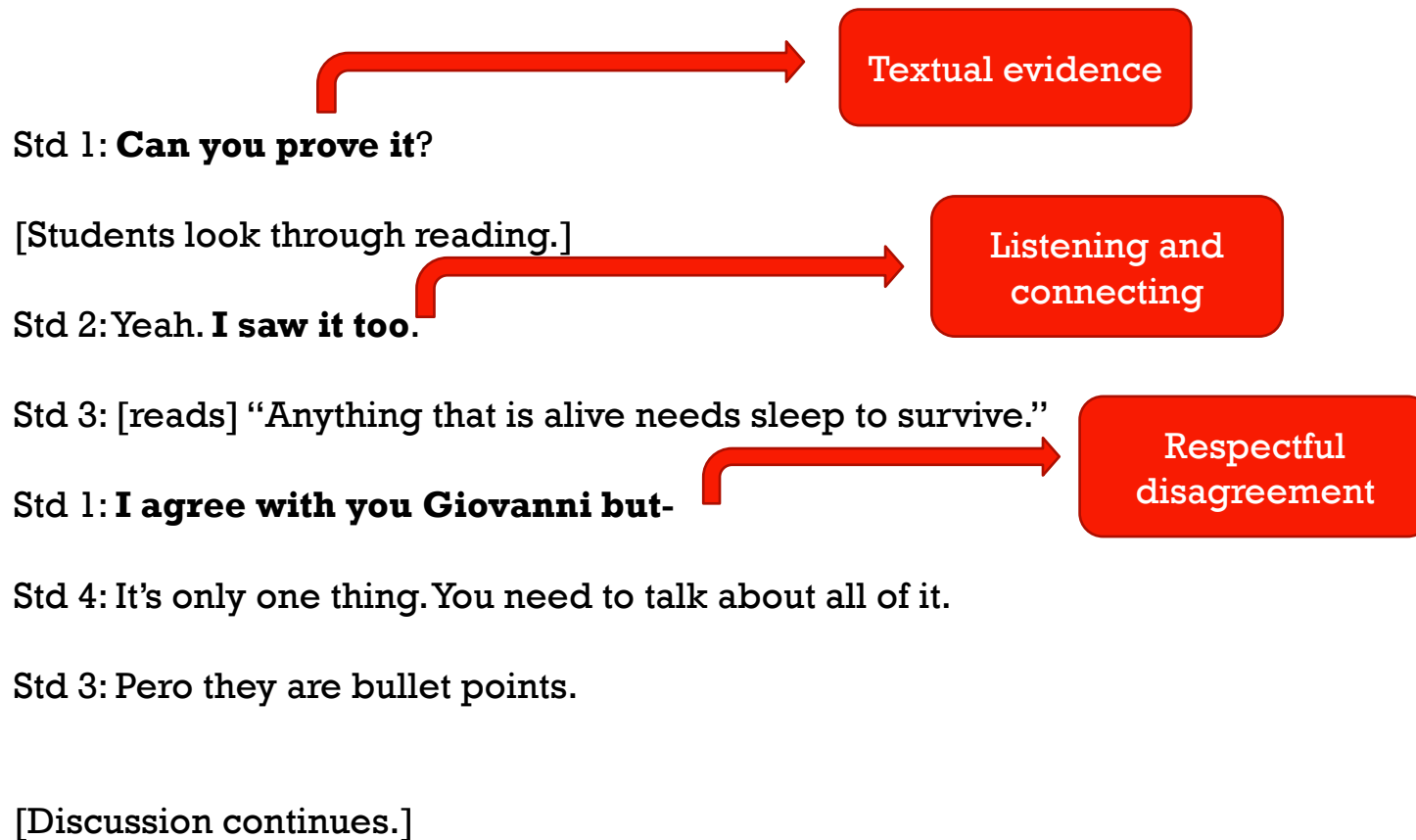
Std: 1: Yeah. [Other students snap in agreement.]

Accountable talk
agree; adding on

Std: 3: **I agree with you and I would also like to add** that we need sleep to survive.

Std 1: **Where did you found that?** Like it doesn't really say that in the text.

Textual evidence



The background features a series of concentric, hand-drawn circles in a light gray color, centered around the middle of the slide. Overlaid on these circles is a large, solid red speech bubble. The speech bubble has a rectangular body and a small triangular tail pointing downwards. Inside the red body, the text "Promote Collaboration: What can Teachers Do?" is written in a white, sans-serif font, centered horizontally and vertically.

Promote Collaboration: What can
Teachers Do?

What we know about teacher talk

- **Listen first, before entering in a student discussion.**
 - Students will mirror teacher behavior (Gillies & Kahn, 2009).
 - When teachers interrupt small groups, students will interrupt each other.
 - When teachers affirm use of textual evidence, students use more textual evidence.
- **Try to step back and participate rather than lead.**
 - When teachers pose questions, students tend to give short responses, but when students pose questions to one another, the students respond with more elaboration (Mishler, 1978).
 - If a teacher dominates the group, students will look to the teacher and not to each other for “answers.”
- **Encourage collaboration rather than answering all questions.**
 - Student: “Teacher does ‘previous’ mean before?”
 - Teacher: What do others in the group think?

OR

 - Teacher: Who is your word watcher? Kayla, what strategies did your group try?

Group Expectations

Everyone participates.

Use respectful voices.

Take turns speaking.

Talk only to people in your group.

--Set class goals/expectations.

--Monitor progress towards expectations.

- Use dry erase markers to mark progress.
- Use different colors as you check in throughout class.

--Have students reflect.

- Group can rate themselves.
- Set goals for next time.

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Final Thoughts

- Young students CAN learn to lead their own discussion groups.
- Students need to be taught skills and routines with many opportunities to practice and receive feedback.
- Ease in slowly, starting with tasks that are very explicit so students will be successful.
- Reinforce and highlight successes.
- Incorporate individual and group accountability.
- Revisit your goals and refine discussion groups to meet those goals.



What questions do you have???

Thank you!
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