Communication: Five Talk Moves that Promote Access for All Learners

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What is Discourse?

The discourse of a classroom—the ways of representing, thinking, talking, agreeing, and disagreeing—is central to what students learn about mathematics.

Discourse is both the way ideas are exchanged and what the ideas entail:

• Who talks? About what? In what ways?
• What do people write, what do they record and why?
• What questions are important?
• How do ideas change?
• Whose ideas and ways of thinking are valued?
• Who determines when to end a discussion?

Discourse is shaped by the tasks that students engage in and the nature of the learning environment.

Adapted from NCTM Professional Standards for Teaching Mathematics
Talk Expectations

• Everyone has the right to be heard

• Everyone has an obligation to listen and try to understand what the speaker is saying

• Everyone is obligated to ask questions when we don’t understand

• The speaker has an obligation to try hard to be clear

• Everyone has a right to participate

Adapted from Classroom Discussions by Chapin, O’Connor, and Anderson, Math Solutions Publications
Dot Pattern—Square Shape
Dot Pattern—Multiple Square Shapes
Talk Moves

➢ Revoicing

➢ Asking students to restate someone else’s reasoning

➢ Asking students to apply their own reasoning to someone else’s reasoning

➢ Prompting students for further participation

➢ Using wait time

Adapted from Classroom Discussions by Chapin, O’Connor, and Anderson, Math Solutions Publications
Principles of Productive Talk

• Establish and maintain a respectful, supportive environment

• Keep the talk focused on the mathematics

• Carefully orchestrate talk to provide for equitable participation by all learners

• Explain expectations for new talk

• Try one new thing at a time

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Our goal is not to increase the amount of talk in our classrooms,

but to increase the amount of high quality talk in our classrooms—the mathematical productive talk.

*Classroom Discussions* by Chapin, O’Connor and Anderson, Math Solutions Publications
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