Talk Moves: A repertoire of practices for productive classroom dialogue

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This paper draws largely on the recently published PETAA publication *Classroom talk: Understanding dialogue, pedagogy and practice* (Edwards-Groves, Anstey & Bull, 2014). In this text, 'talk moves' are described as the tools for building a dialogic learning environment that can serve a range of productive interactional (relating), socialising (communicating and participating), and intellectual (knowing) functions across the curriculum (Anderson, Chapin & O'Connor, 2011). These functions are also simultaneously enabled and constrained by the sayings, doings and relatings present in classrooms (or what is described as the cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political dimensions of practices; see Kemmis, et al., 2014). Talk moves prompt particular responses from students; they also signal the function of the turn of talk (eg, to evaluate a response such as: 'Good answer'; to nominate the next speaker, 'Jacob, your turn'; to evoke an extended response, 'Can you explain that further?' or 'Does anyone have something else to add?'). Talk which moves classroom conversations towards offering students more time to talk with a higher degree of intellectual focus form what Edwards-Groves, Anstey and Bull (2014) describe as 'dialogic pedagogies'. It is timely, to identify those particular talk moves which enable teachers to enact dialogic pedagogies that focus on 'interacting with others' within a discourse-intensive classroom (as it is described by Anderson, et al., 2011). This PETAA paper will assist teachers (through practical examples) to recognise the particular talk moves which form a repertoire of classroom talk practices specifically aimed at supporting the development of *language* 'for effective interaction and expression' (ACARA, 2013).

Introduction

Children want to talk. They want to give their opinions, talk about things that matter to them, discuss ideas, persuade others, test out theories, use increasingly 'sophisticated' vocabulary; and simply – talk more. In fact they are quite good at it from an early age. This is clear if you listen to children playing, interacting in the playground, or discussing ideas in pairs or small groups in their classrooms.

As children learn to use language in their early years, they are supported through their interactions with others to move from the relatively brief turns of talk of early users to become independent producers of quite complex messages. They learn the 'rules' of conversation as they participate in interactions in a range of social settings (at home, within the community, and at school) to achieve a range of social purposes serving a range of functions (as the early work of Cazden, 2001, reminds us). Furthermore, in contemporary curriculum, developing interaction skills is firmly on the agenda for the teaching and learning of English across Australia. A focus on 'interacting with others' is identified at each year level as a key component of the *Literacy* strand of the Australian Curriculum to be designed into the pedagogical actions of teachers. Guiding their planning decisions are particular curriculum expectations; for example in Year 1, students are expected to:

- *Engage in conversations and discussion, using active listening, showing interest and contributing ideas, information and question'* (ACELY1656)

- *Use interaction skills turn-taking recognizing of others, speaking clearly and using appropriate volume and pace* (ACELY1788)

Similarly in Year 4, they are required to:

- *Interpret ideas and information in spoken texts and listen for key points in order to carry out tasks and use information to share and extend ideas and information (ACELY1687)*

- *Use interaction skills such as acknowledging another's point of view and linking students' responses (ACELY1688)*

A closer look at classroom talk

Classroom talk is instrumental for teaching and for learning. At its most influential, it has the power to improve both the teachers' ability to teach responsively and the students' ability to use language more flexibly, productively and purposefully in their learning (Edwards-Groves, 2003).

Classroom talk is a tool for communicating, for organising students and resources, for conveying curriculum, and for relating with one another – and critically for assisting student's thinking and learning (Mercer & Littleton, 2007). A closer look at classroom talk shows whether the talk is dialogic, learning-focused, academically productive or not.

> **Nine reasons why a closer look at classroom talk is critical to teaching and learning:**
>
> 1. Talk can reveal understandings and misunderstandings.
> 2. Talk that pushes students to put thoughts into words assists them to clarify their thinking.
> 3. Talk can build confidence.
> 4. Talk engaging students in more substantive classroom discussions lifts intellectual dialogue.
> 5. Talk supports robust learning by boosting memory.
> 6. Talk promotes deeper reasoning and critical literacies.
> 7. Talk scaffolds language development.
> 8. Talk nourishes the development of social skills.
> 9. Talk is the moment where the curriculum meets the students.
>
> **(Adapted from Anderson, et al., 2011; Edwards-Groves, 2003)**

Looking back at decades of research investigating classroom talk, it is evident that to successfully participate in classroom lessons, students need to learn to participate in the recognisable, and often predictable, interactive routines teachers use to conduct their lessons. They have to be able to understand the teacher's cues like 'hands up', 'wait your turn', or 'say more'.

Zooming in for a closer look at the structure of talk

One structure which dominates most classroom talk sequences between teachers and students is the *Initiation-Response-Evaluation/Feedback* structure or IRE (Cazden & Mehan, 1989). Cazden (2001) also described the IRE as the *default* pattern of classroom interaction. It forms a recognisably 'school-type talk' different to everyday conversation: Teachers move to initiate the topic of talk (I); a student or chorus of students respond in one way or another (R); the teacher, in the next move, evaluates the response (E) or provides a particular type of feedback (F). Consider this example (Example 1) from a Kindergarten lesson.

EXAMPLE 1

Initiation–Response–Evaluation/Feedback structure: a Kindergarten example	
Initiation:	T: And what's this next one? Hands up, don't call out. Who can tell me what this one is? (1) Matty?
Response:	S: A boat
Evaluation/ Feedback	T: Good boy. Right, it's a boat.

If we consider what is enabled and what is constrained by this typical pattern of classroom talk, we notice in enacting the IRE as it is typically experienced, as (Cazden, 2001) observes, the teacher controls:

- who gets a turn to talk
- whose turns are privileged, evaluated or ignored
- the development of a particular topic
- what counts as relevant to it.

We also see that the IRE structure creates *two turns for the teacher* and *one for the student*. In part, this accounts for the dominant research finding that teachers talk two-thirds of the time; that is, they get 2 of the 3 turns at talk. Even more interesting is that teacher turns are usually longer (with student turns often consisting of shorter one-word or brief statements and sometimes are simply the students' efforts to 'guess what's inside the teacher's head'). While this approach may be useful for organising learners, it is particularly problematic and even counterproductive if our aim is to develop students' learning processes, language and literacy – where we want students to talk; to articulate knowledge; to extend their thinking; to develop reasoning capacities; to communicate their knowledge of English and other subjects; and, to respond to each other's ideas.

Bringing all students into the conversation by changing the third turn

One way to bring all students into the conversation to produce more dialogic classroom talk is to change the *default* IRE pattern; that is, for teachers **to change what happens in the *third* turn** in the three-part IRE teaching exchange. To do this, deliberate and conscious moves are taken by the teacher to allow students to take up more of the talk time. Changing the third turn through dialogic talk practices opens up the communicative space to achieve academically productive talk (Anderson et al., 2011). Consider what might happen if the third turn, from the Example 1, was changed as shown on page 4:

Initiation – teacher initiates the turn generally through a question	T: And what's this next one? Let's all think about this for a moment (3). Okay, now turn to talk to your elbow partner and share what you have been thinking (students turn to talk for 1 minute). Who can explain what they know about this one? (1) Matty?	Through 'wait time', the teacher provides the students with the opportunity to think about their responses before 'going public'. The teacher 'vacates the floor' by asking the students to turn-to-talk. By handing the talk time over to students to share their thinking in pairs as a 'rehearsal', each student gets a turn to talk before the teacher nominates who is to take the floor.
Response – student/s responds	S: It's a boat.	Matty, after the class were give time to think and talk in a paired situation, responds in the next turn with his answer.
Extension – teacher invites the student to sustain their thinking and make an extended response.	T: Say some more about that Matty; What else do you know about this kind of boat?	The teacher uses the third turn to ask Matty to extend his thinking. By sustaining the line of questioning with Matty, this student is not only pressed to 'say more' but is positioned as a thinker, theoriser, holder of knowledge, and not simply as being correct or incorrect. Students are not trying to 'guess what is in the teacher's head' as their contributions are treated as a resource for going further, for saying more and learning more.

This specific example illustrates a more strategic talk move that signals to students that extended response is not just welcome but expected. It also shows how more dialogic practices facilitate a deeper engagement with the particular content as they 'turn to talk'.

Changing the third turn moves classroom talk towards a more dialogic, participatory classroom context. This opens up a next turn for students to engage in talk with a higher degree of intellectual focus.

It has the power to shape and extend student knowledge through engagement with a range of talk processes as they are *enabled* to deepen and extend their thinking as they clarify, agree or disagree, challenge, debate, explain, rehearse, elaborate, justify, evaluate, revise, self-correct, listen actively, express, hypothesise, explore, critique and synthesise.

These kinds of talk processes facilitate dialogue, active learning and activist participation. It is a different kind of talk that makes it possible for students to have longer, more extended 'turns of talk', which enables more complex ideas to be articulated and explored.

A repertoire of talk practices for building a discourse intensive classroom

Well-structured talk builds the mind (Michaels, 2010).

Dialogic pedagogies form the type of well-structured talk that builds thinking. It makes 'thinking and learning visible' by giving students opportunities to organise their thinking into coherent utterances, hear how their thinking sounds when spoken out loud, listen to how others respond and hear others add to or expand on their thinking. This means, quoting Anderson et al., 2011, teachers need to ensure that every student:

● is listening to what others say

● can hear what others say

● speaks at some point (Anderson et al., 2011, p. 12).

To do this, teachers can deliberately and consciously use dialogic talk practices constituted by talk moves which press for reasoning, revoice, repeat, customise the point, allow wait time, push to extend ideas and critically reflect on their own and other's points (see Figure 1).
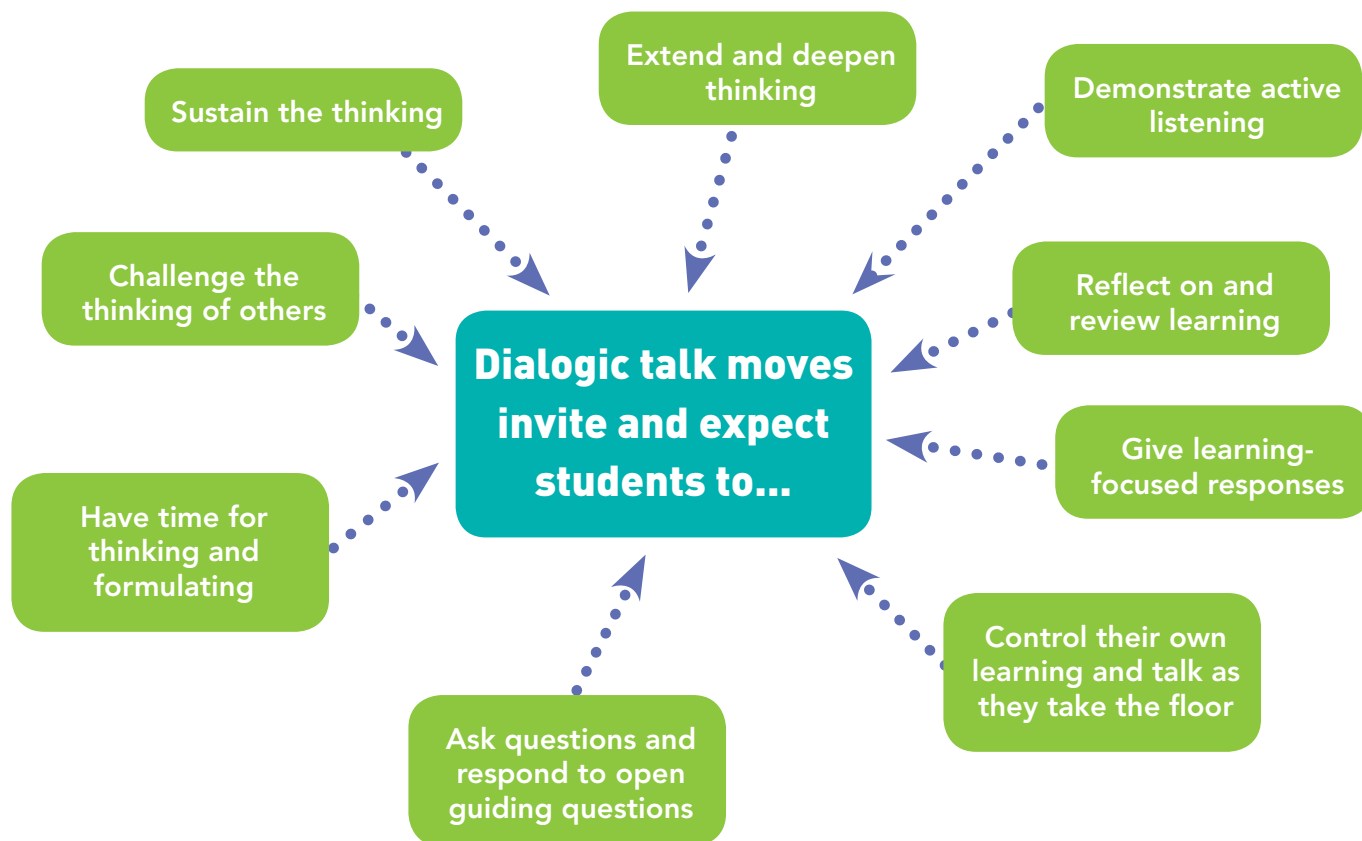
FIGURE 1 ● *Nine dialogic talk practices (adapted from Edwards-Groves, Anstey & Bull, 2014)*

As we know, different types of classroom talk practices do different kinds of pedagogical work; and since not all talk sustains and extends learning, teachers need to consider which academic purposes and instructional goals the talk serves to meet (at the time). The types of talk moves that lead to dialogue work in concert with each other to engage students in productive and substantive learning-focused conversations promote student learning in two ways.

1 Directly – through access to ideas, and relationship between ideas, strategies, procedures, facts, history, and more

2 Indirectly – through the building of a 'supportive' social environment and a culture of learning, talking and listening for learning (Anderson et al., 2011).

Sustaining the thinking

This talk move invites students to 'say more' or to 'give evidence' or to 'state reasons'.

A teacher 'sustaining the line of questioning' offers students a more sustained turn to share, explore and deepen *their own* ideas further and to build onto, elaborate and communicate *their*

own line of thought. It offers individual students an extended time to engage in a more substantive conversation with the teacher before the floor is opened to the rest of the class. Sustaining the question provides valuable time for students to:

● 'say more', 'dig deep' and 'go further'

● deepen thinking

● rehearse ideas

● test out assumptions publicly.

It aims to develop both reasoning and evidentiary talk and the ability to communicate those reasons (O'Connor & Michaels, 1996). It enables students to build on half formed ideas as the teacher presses them to provide reasons to substantiate their points as demonstrated by the questions in italics in Example 2.

EXAMPLE 2

	Sustaining the question in action: a Year 4 example
Teacher:	Ryan, you raised an interesting point there about what makes a sustainable rainforest. *Can you say more about that?*
Ryan:	So like, um it is important for the wildlife that there is not too much logging so that the forests stay healthy for the future; that's what sustainable sort of means.
Teacher:	Why Ryan? *Can you go a bit further with that idea about what sustainable means for us?*
Ryan:	Well it is about helping the earth stay healthy. People can all help; it's the small little things that add up in the end, like protecting the trees in the rainforest environment so that the animals that live there don't go extinct.
Teacher:	Protecting the environment, good point. *Where did you get that idea? Do you have some evidence to back up that idea?*

Extending and deepening thinking

> This talk move invites other students to 'add on' or to 'go further'.

Opening up the floor to other students invites (and expects) them to add on to the ideas and opinions of others and to explore concepts more deeply as a class group. Students are:

- pressed to extend the thinking of others *to add more*
- provide more depth and detail to *tell more about an idea*
- present additional evidence to endorse the knowledge or facts being presented to *add some evidence*
- to substantiate thoughts, claims and opinions
- to clarify the responses of other students.

This move leads students to provide evidentiary talk that builds a stronger foundation for developing and securing knowledge and deepening reasoning when exploring complex ideas or difficult concepts. Notice how the teacher questions do this in Example 3.

EXAMPLE 3

	Extending and deepening thinking in action: a Year 4 example
Teacher:	Okay, okay, Ryan provided some very technical information to support his idea. *Does anyone have something else to add to that?* Yes Joelle.
Joelle:	Well I also think like, the plants, it's not for just the animals there, for shelter, their habitat you know. You need to think green, my dad says that. The plants//
Jeremy:	//Flora
Joelle:	Flora, yes that's right, needs to stay healthy to supply oxygen from trees and food as well as shelter.
Teacher:	Oh right, your dad works for LandCare doesn't he? He is a good source of information. So you also mentioned some other important things there; shelter, oxygen. *Can anyone else have another point? Who can add?*

Challenging thinking

> This talk move invites students to respectfully 'question others' and to 'challenge the point'.

This kind of talk moves learners towards developing skills and capacities for:

- questioning and responding to the ideas of others
- giving a different opinion or counter example
- debating and discussing a point

- respectfully agreeing and disagreeing
- building an argument
- persuading others.

It develops in students capacities to:

- uncover and challenge prejudices and inequalities
- recognise and challenge bias, stereotypes, positioning and power.

It generates the ability for students to identify how some ideas and texts, practices and ideologies within themselves and the world around them are privileged over others. Example 4 demonstrates how the teacher does this.

EXAMPLE 4

Challenging thinking in action: a Year 4 example	
Teacher:	Now does anyone disagree with Kip's points that we should not have to do homework. *Anyone with a different point of view?* Amy, what was your point?
Amy:	Well, I don't agree; disagree. I was going to say that it helps us practice what we do at school.
Teacher:	Say more about that, Amy.
Amy:	It's just that you can get better at your maths and reading, if you have extra work to do at home it gets easier.
Teacher:	There's another opinion, that's a different view, interesting. Anyone else, other opinions?

Demonstrating active listening

This talk move invites students to 'repeat back' or 'say it in their own words'.

Demonstrating active listening is a kind of talk which moves teachers and students towards clarifying the meanings students are making when they take their turns. In this, teachers and/or students *reframe*, *revoice* or *repeat* a student's contribution; this demonstrates students have listened to and considered the ideas, opinions or the facts in evidence of others. Students' turns are treated as resources for learning and further thinking as both teachers and class members listen to and engage with each other's contributions. In one way, active listening creates a formative assessment 'touchstone' for both the teacher and the students as they hear back their articulated points; they can check for:

- clarity *(I heard you saying)*
- meaning *(Is that what you mean?)*
- relevance *(How does that relate …?)*
- accuracy *(Say that again.)*

Example 5 is a transcript from a Year 1 class that illustrates the teacher demonstrating active listening.

EXAMPLE 5

Demonstrating active listening in action: a Year 1 example	
Teacher:	Right, what did Charlie find in his survey? Can someone repeat back what he said in their own words? Over to you Jennifer.
Jennifer:	Well, Charlie said, found more children in our class catch the bus to school than walk-
Trent:	-and his graph had even less kids ride their bikes and go in cars?
Teacher:	Mm-m *let me see if I heard you right*. Between you, you said that the most number of children in our class catch the bus to school, more than the number of children who walk, ride their bikes or come by car. And the least number of students ride their bikes. Right Charlie? Is that what you found? Did we miss anything?

Allowing wait time for thinking and formulating

This talk move allows students time to 'think, share and rehearse'.

Allowing sufficient time ('wait time') gives students enough time to make a response they are comfortable with before they 'go public'. By not putting students on the spot to respond quickly, teachers give enough time for students to:

● focus their thinking (take time to gather their thoughts)

● think through their ideas

● craft, formulate and rehearse responses.

This move also provides opportunities for partner talk or for writing notes *as* thinking time as shown in Example 6.

EXAMPLE 6

Allowing wait time for thinking and formulating in action: a Year 1 example	
Teacher:	Okay, so what's a good way for us to present our survey information everyone? We have used a few different ways before. Now before we answer I want you to *think about this*, try to think back and remember. ((2)). Right over to you.
Hannah:	A graph chart, uh, colour in the squares to match the amount
Teacher:	So what makes a graph a good way, Hannah, to present your findings.
Stacy:	You could use blocks
Teacher:	Let Hannah finish her turn Stacy, then you can have your say. Hannah?
Hannah:	Well you can see how tall it is and then each different answer is a different colour. It can stand out for people to see.

Asking open guiding questions

This talk move invites students to 'investigate', or 'to think more deeply about the possibilities' or to 'dig deep and wide' or to 'take a 360 (degrees) view'.

More open questions from a teacher guide students into higher degrees of intellectual focus and cohesion so that they can participate in more substantive dialogues. The practice is based on the premise 'good questions yield good responses'. Open questioning opens up the line of inquiry which promotes the engagement with the topic through a range of lenses or viewpoints. Asking more open guiding questions (rather than closed or leading questions) guides students to respond flexibly (showing creativity and individuality) and in different ways using a range of investigation methods and presentation modes (appropriate for the task). In one way it is a fundamental query that develops multiple and varied understandings about the same topic (see Example 7).

EXAMPLE 7

Asking open guiding questions in action: a Year 5 example	
Teacher:	Okay, by wandering around listening to what you were discussing in your groups, we've got a couple of things to consider as we were *thinking about our big question//*
Toby:	//What is the biggest issue facing the future of Antarctica?
Teacher:	Right Toby, thanks for reminding us of that, is Antarctica in danger of devastation? What are the issues? Are they going to destroy Antarctica?

Vacating the floor

This talk move invites students to 'turn-to-talk'; handing the floor 'over to you'.

In this talk move, the teacher 'steps out' of the discussion – vacating the floor – to hand students more control of the dialogue. As they turn-to-talk (in pairs or small groups) students have time to find out more, summarise, clarify and to share ideas, points of view or opinions. It is a strategic move, which brings all students into the conversation as they turn-to-talk in

EXAMPLE 8

Vacating the floor in action: a Year 4 example	

Teacher: Right, today we are going to be learning a bit more about how writers make their writing more expressive. So let's do some thinking together before we make a list to guide us as we write. Turn to talk to our elbow partner and come up with three or four key things that you know that writers do to make their writing interesting, expressive. ((*Students turn to face another student, knees facing towards each other, talking in pairs; 2 minutes* [See Figure 2])). Okay turn back this way, quickly. *Aiden, what points did you both discuss?*

Aiden: Use interesting verbs so you can really imagine it better

Tyler: Expressive verbs

Jemma: They try to make a movie in your head

Aiden: So you can see the action in your mind; it's a clear picture, yeah like a movie.

pairs or small groups. It provides space for students to think about, develop, rehearse and/or test ideas before they are made public on a larger forum (the whole class). In this they have opportunities to:

- listen to and respond to each other's ideas

- come to consensus

- synthesise information or ideas.

As the teacher *vacates the floor*, collaboration among students is facilitated and responsibilities for participating and leading are dispersed and shared among students (see Example 8). This can be done within the flow of instruction or as a more extended cooperative group task.

FIGURE 2 ● *The teacher 'vacates the floor' when students are given control of the talk when they discuss in pairs*

Giving learning-focused responses

This talk move invites students to 'hear back' and 'build the dialogue'.

Providing learning-focused feedback is used when the teacher wants to clarify and extend what the student means or to reconstruct how the student came to a particular response. To do this teachers reflect student responses back (through *revoicing* or *repeating*) with the aim of constructing a learning-focused and non-judgemental response. Responses are focused on:

- deepening student thinking about the topic
- building the dialogue
- repairing 'reasoning trouble' (clarifying and teasing out confusions).

Dealing with wrong answers, confusions, misconceptions or half-formed ideas are treated as important opportunities to learn more (see Example 9).

EXAMPLE 9

Giving learning-focused responses in action: an example
Teacher: *So Ryan you're suggesting* logging the rainforest ruins the habitat or the natural environment that is necessary to sustain the existence of particular species. You gave the example of Orangutans in Indonesia; that was a good piece of evidence that supported your point. Absolutely.

Reflecting and reviewing learning

This talk move invites students to 'tune it', 'think back' and 'go public' so the teacher can 'feed forward'.

Talk moves which invite reflection and review lead to learning, as the space is opened up for students to reflect on, and to make public, both the content (what and why) and the processes (how) of their learning. Talk which moves students towards reflection and review can be used at any instructional point throughout a lesson (before, during or after) as a more informal assessment experience.

It is a way for:

- teachers to *tune in* to students thinking and learning through 'designed-in' opportunities for students to go public with their thoughts and knowledge
- students to *tune in* to their own thinking and learning through articulating, reflecting on and reviewing learning.
- directly connecting to active listening and formative assessment (where responses feed forward to shape future lessons).

Reflecting on learning orients to assessment as and of learning and involves initial, ongoing or concluding experiences that enable learners to:

- *bounce back* thoughts and knowledge at any point of the lesson
- *think back* over the key aspects of lesson or unit of work
- *respond to* learning, or
- *critically reflect* (think, think again and act) on their learning, the rationale and processes for learning.

Reviewing learning orients learners to both where they have travelled in their thinking and learning, and then towards possible future directions which may be either:

- *jump start* experiences to prepare students for learning, or

- *wrap up* experiences which draw together, highlight or summarise the key points.

If we don't reflect, we are teaching 'in the dark' without knowing if we are being effective and if we should modify our teaching (Friel, 1997). Therefore, these talk moves orient to learning-centred assessment that:

- informs the learner and the teacher of student progress growth

- directs the instructional path

- reflects the teaching program (Edwards-Groves, 2003).

Example 10 shows a teacher inviting reviewing and reflection in the classroom.

EXAMPLE 10

| Reviewing and reflecting on learning in action: a Year 3 example |
|---|
| Teacher: To wrap this up today, we need to think back over all the key points, the different opinions we heard in the discussion and try to get them down in some way so we use them tomorrow as we develop up our petitions. So for a moment or two, in your learning groups, add on to your 'think sheets' that we began with to build the picture of today's discussion. [The teacher vacates the floor for 2-3 minutes, for students to reflect on and review learning in small groups]. *So, let me see, who can pull all opinions and reasons together that we discovered about the influence of pollution on the landscape?* Who can summarise our discussion? |

Summary

Dialogic talk is talk with substance. It leverages student learning into discourse-intensive interactions which *bring all students* into the learning conversation. It is constituted by moves which pay particular attention to the ways students are positioned in the talk.

It positions students as thinkers, investigators, active contributors, activist participants, co-creators, knowers, learners, students, and/or community members.

Therefore, students in Year 1, for example, can be supported to 'engage in conversations and discussion, using active listening, showing interest and contributing ideas, information and questions' (ACELY1656) if they are invited (and expected) to 'say more', to 'give reasons', to 'add on' or to 'repeat back'. Students in Year 4, for example, can be assisted to 'use interaction skills such as acknowledging another's point of view and linking to other students responses' (ACELY1688) if they are invited (and expected) to 'turn-to-talk', to 'give evidence' to 'think more deeply about the possibilities', to 'question others' or to 'challenge the point'. These are the kinds of interaction skills required to develop the kinds of dispositions students need to display as they participate in discourse-intensive classrooms, whereby intrinsic motivations for talking more, learning more and learning more from each other are unleashed.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
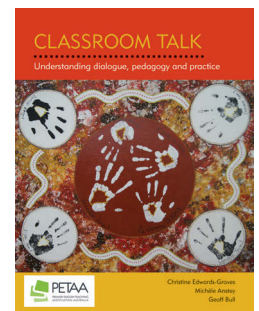
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