

How Can I Contribute to Classroom Dialogue?

Strategy	Working Definition	Discussion phrase(s)
Elaborating	Extending a previous comment or question by adding further detail.	"I want to add to the comment about..." "I have more evidence for..."
Clarifying	Increasing clarity by making distinctions	"That is true in two different senses..."
Reinforcing/ Supporting	Making visible a convergence in thinking or agreement with another's thoughts	"I agree with..." "I found that comment interesting because..."
Challenging	Using a question or statement to suggest an alternative view or position	"I disagree with..." "What about...?" "An alternative hypothesis would be..."
Conjecturing	Suggesting tentative explanations or possible outcomes; Trying out a line of reasoning.	"How about a different reading of that passage..." "Maybe..."
Requesting Clarification	Seeking clarity about another's statement or question.	"Are you suggesting that..."

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Admitting Difficulty	Acknowledging one's own lack of understanding to the rest of the group.	"I'm still trying to figure out..." "I'm struggling to understand..."
Initiating	Instituting a new direction in the learning conversation.	"If I may move the conversation in a slightly different direction..."
Paraphrasing	Expressing another's thought in slightly different language with the intention of clarifying.	"What I hear you saying is..."
Summarizing	Listing main points, general ideas by way of review.	"Listening to what everyone has been saying, I hear some big themes..."
Defining	Offering definitions of words used by others or supplying terms to fit definitions or descriptions used by others.	"So with the term ____, I assume you mean..."
Noting Relationship Among Tasks & Texts	Making explicit connections between previous conversations, texts and/or learning activities and the ideas of the present conversation.	"I want to connect that comment to our earlier discussion of..."
Activating Background Knowledge	Making explicit connections with prior knowledge and/or experiences outside of the classroom.	"This scene/character reminds me of a time when..." "Your writing makes me remember..."

We have collaboratively developed this document with colleagues in the MA program in Curriculum and Teaching in the Department of Teacher Education at Michigan State University. Among the colleagues who have contributed to its development are Janine Certo and Nell Duke.