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Effective professional development for elementary teachers : creating dialogic classrooms to improve reading comprehension

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Effective professional development for elementary teachers : creating dialogic classrooms to improve reading comprehension

Abstract

Understanding the importance of teacher language, literacy discussions, and teacher questioning on students' literacy development in the classroom is important in order to facilitate deeper understanding by students. This research project first describes what dialogic classrooms are and how teachers can create more dialogic spaces for students. The paper also focuses on research that looks at the importance of literacy discussions and teacher questioning in creating classrooms that are open to student ideas.

A professional development program is then developed that will help teachers learn the importance of teacher language and creating dialogic spaces for students to explore complex ideas. Teachers will be given the opportunity to read, reflect, and practice so they are able to implement changes in their own classrooms with support.

EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR ELEMENTARY TEACHERS:
CREATING DIALOGIC CLASSROOMS TO IMPROVE READING
COMPREHENSION

A Graduate Project

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Division of Literacy Education

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ABSTRACT

Understanding the importance of teacher language, literacy discussions, and teacher questioning on students' literacy development in the classroom is important in order to facilitate deeper understanding by students. This research project first describes what dialogic classrooms are and how teachers can create more dialogic spaces for students. The paper also focuses on research that looks at the importance of literacy discussions and teacher questioning in creating classrooms that are open to student ideas. A professional development program is then developed that will help teachers learn the importance of teacher language and creating dialogic spaces for students to explore complex ideas. Teachers will be given the opportunity to read, reflect, and practice so they are able to implement changes in their own classrooms with support.

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Introduction

As a beginning teacher, I was always observing other teachers as much as possible. I watched their mannerisms, body language, and listened to the words they spoke. I noted what was effective and what was not. At the beginning of my second year of teaching I co-taught with a third grade teacher who was able to get the most reluctant students to speak, discuss, and actively participate in class. Their increase in reading scores reflected the effectiveness of her instruction. When I asked her about how she was able to do so much with her students she looked at me blankly and said that she just taught like everyone else. The more I worked with her that year, the more I realized that she had created a dialogic classroom by pausing after student responses before using those responses in discussion or evaluating them. She held all students accountable for their answers and did not let them off the hook. She listened closely and followed up on student responses. Many times she would connect student responses to other responses days, or even weeks, later.

While the teacher I worked with did not think she was doing anything different, she clearly was. I noticed after teaching with her that I had adopted some of her techniques without even realizing it. I began to wonder what would happen if other teachers adopted her techniques as well. Was there a word for how she was teaching? Was it a model that she was following? After doing some research I realized that she was using a variety of methods, models, and techniques that relied on the teacher listening closely to students, refraining from evaluating their responses immediately and reflecting on the literacy discussions held in her classroom in order to plan future lessons. This research paper will explore these ideas more in-depth to help understand the importance

of teacher language, literacy discussion, and teacher questioning on students' literacy development in the classroom. A professional development program will be created to help teachers understand the importance of this topic and how to implement changes in their classrooms. The professional development will offer teachers a chance to read, reflect, and practice implementing changes in their language and literacy discussions in order to further student understanding and reading comprehension by creating more dialogic classrooms.

Methodology of Literature Analysis

The methodology of this paper focused on two key sections: data collection and data analyses. Data were defined as journal articles, books, and book chapters. Data were first collected in regard to the use of teacher language in the classroom. From there, selection of research included refereed articles and books focusing on dialogic classrooms, discourse patterns, literacy discussions and formats, teacher positioning, and teacher questioning. Data collection then focused on effective professional development practices, including the characteristics of effective professional development, length of time, delivery format, and teacher involvement in professional development programs.

In order to analyze the data I outlined the key points from each article or book that I read. I then looked for common themes and grouped that information together in order to help the paper flow smoothly from one topic to the next.

Literature Review

The review of literature first focused on defining dialogic classrooms and developing a sense of what a dialogic classroom might look like. Search terms used were: dialogic classrooms, literacy discussions, discussion formats, contingent questioning, teacher questioning, teacher feedback, and effective professional development. The literature review then focused on various types of discussion formats and teacher questioning that is most useful in the classroom. Finally, the review of literature looked at the obstacles teacher may face and effective professional development practices.

Dialogic Classrooms

According to Christoph and Nystrand (2001), dialogic classrooms are those that focus on discussion, using authentic questions, uptake (how answers are treated) from students as well as teachers, and a high-level evaluation of responses. They argue that in a dialogic classroom, discussion is authentic and related to the topic at hand. According to Johnston (2012), dialogic classrooms are those in which multiple interpretations and perspectives are valued. Creating a dialogic classroom requires a teacher to listen closely to students and to ask authentic questions related to their responses (Christoph and Nystrand, 2001). Questions are used to draw out student ideas. They are not intended for students to reveal their knowledge about a topic or subject (Christoph & Nystrand, 2001). Nystrand (2006) notes that in dialogic classrooms there are fewer teacher questions and more conversational turns by students. Students are expected to take an active role in participating in dialogic classrooms (Boyd, 2012; Christoph & Nystrand, 2001; Nystrand

2006). Johnston (2012) states that dialogic classrooms are where ideas are challenged by peers and facts are considered in different contexts.

The practice of uptake in a classroom is related to how follow-up questions are addressed (Christoph & Nystrand, 2001). In a dialogic classroom, follow-up questions are used to expand student ideas and clarify information students provide. According to Christoph and Nystrand (2001), high-level evaluation refers to how the teacher evaluates student responses. Rather than offering a verbal or nonverbal evaluation of the response, the teacher validates the response by using it to further the discussion. Nystrand (2006) summarizes dialogic classrooms as a place where there are open-ended discussions along with the exchange of ideas.

Boyd (2012) notes the importance of a teacher's flexibility in dialogic classrooms. Carefully planning a lesson is important, but Boyd argues that teachers must also be willing to let students guide the discussion. Sometimes students can get off-course and will need to be redirected back to the topic, but that it is also important for teachers to take a step back and respond to the students' thoughts, reactions, and opinions during the discussion. Being a responsive teacher is more important than having a perfectly executed lesson, Boyd argues. Johnston (2004) also addresses this point by noting that students have to be convinced that a teacher's words are not empty praises, but rather that they have meaning and are presented in an authentic manner.

Johnston (2012) discusses the importance of using language to position students in the classroom. "Teachers can position children as competitors or collaborators, and themselves as referees, resources, or judges, or in many other arrangements," (Johnston,

2004, p.9). He notes that a teacher's choice of words can have an impact on how students respond to each other and/or to the teacher in the classroom. Adding the word *yet* to the end of a phrase as in, "I'm not good at this *yet*," positions a student as someone who is not stuck in their learning (Johnston, 2012, p.27). The student is not expected to know everything about what they are learning at that point in time; rather they are expected to continue learning even after the lesson is over (Johnston, 2004). Cazden (2001) notes the importance of *revoicing* student ideas by connecting them to the discussion and connecting them to one another. Cazden explains that by focusing on themes and ideas that are being developed in the conversation, teachers are able to build upon the common knowledge in the classroom and build a community that values one another's ideas so that students can focus more energy on the academic aspects in the classroom, such as literacy discussions.

Literacy Discussions

Literacy discussions are an essential element of reading comprehension, especially when the reading is challenging (Nystrand, 2006). According to Chinn, Anderson and Waggoner (2001) there are parameters that characterize high-quality literature discussions, which are, "four key decisions that frame a literature discussion.

- 1.) What is the literacy stance and who decides what it will be?
- 2.) Who has interpretive authority?
- 3.) Who controls turns for speaking?
- 4.) Who controls the topics of discussion?" (p.381)

Literacy stance, according to Chinn et al. (2001) was originally introduced by Louise Rosenblatt in 1978 and included an efferent, an aesthetic, or a critical stance. Efferent stance is when the main goal of reading is to acquire information. The aesthetic stance is the “lived through” experience, involving the “thoughts, feelings, and actions of a story’s characters as experienced vicariously by the reader” (Chinn et al., 2001, p.381). Chinn et al. noted the importance of the critical/analytic stance, which involves using information from the text to provide evidence for how the reader interprets a major dilemma or problem and how courses of action are decided within a text. Each stance offers different benefits for classroom discussion and should be used accordingly.

Once literacy stance has been decided, Chinn et al. (2001), state that it is essential to determine who has interpretive authority over the text being discussed. When teachers are the ones to ask and evaluate all questions in the discussion, Chinn et al. suggest that the teacher is the person with interpretive authority. However, when students are responsible for evaluating one another, the students have the interpretive authority. Chinn et al. found that most often literacy discussions fall along a continuum of teacher versus student interpretive authority.

The third parameter of literacy discussions, according to Chinn et al. (2001) involves who controls the turn-taking. In many traditional American classrooms, teachers have complete control over who is allowed to speak and when by having students raise their hands for a chance to talk (Chinn, et al., 2001; Nystrand, 2006). Chinn et al. argue that rarely are students allowed complete control over turn-taking, but rather control of turn-taking falls along a continuum between students and teachers.

The final parameter in literacy discussions, according to Chinn et al. (2001), is the control of topic. Nystrand (2006) notes that, according to his research, discussions are most effective when the teacher controls the topic, but then allows students to be flexible in their interpretation of the topic and elaborate on their ideas. Boyd (2012) also notes that teachers may need to guide the discussion at times in order to get students back to the topic. Discussion in the classroom can follow a variety of models or formats in order to help students understand the content being taught.

Discussion Formats

One of the most commonly used discussion formats in America is the recitation format (Chinn et al. 2001; Nystrand, 2006). Using a recitation format, teachers control the topic and turn-taking by having students raise hands for an opportunity to speak, teachers then take control of the floor once students are finished speaking and often offer an evaluative response (Chinn et al., 2001). According to Nystrand (2006), this type of discussion format promotes textbook recall. Cazden (2001) argues that teachers are automatically given the right to speak to anyone at anytime in the classroom for any purpose, whereas students are not given that right. Johnston (2004) notes that a recitation format puts the teacher in a position of authority as a judge of the quality of a student's answer because, presumably, the teacher already knows the designated answer and is attempting to determine if the student received and can recall the information from the lesson.

Another type of discussion format is collaborative reasoning. Collaborative reasoning, argues Chinn et al. (2001), is when, "students take positions on a central

question raised by a story, and then they present reasons and evidence for and against these positions” (p.383). Using this format, teachers attempt to reduce their own talk, but also provide scaffolding for the students during the discussion. Rather than have the goal of covering content, teachers participate by getting students to clarify and expand their answers, push them to support their ideas with evidence and allow students to have more control over what they say and when they say it (Chinn et al.) Cazden (2001) notes that it is important to draw students’ attention to their own thinking and knowledge by asking them questions that help them see how they arrived at their thinking. In the collaborative reasoning model, students have most of the interpretive authority, but teachers may present different points of view or arguments that have not been brought up yet in the discussion.

The effects of using collaborative reasoning, according to Chinn et al. (2001) are that there are more interruptions and overall talk. They interpreted this finding as evidence that students found collaborative reasoning more engaging than recitation. They noted that taking a critical or analytic stance promotes disagreement and engages students due to the controversy of the topic (Chinn et al.). Chinn et al. also note that collaborative reasoning could be a way to engage struggling students in higher-order thinking skills. As noted above, teachers using collaborative reasoning focus on the intent of their questions and how students respond to those questions in order to further the discussion.

Questioning

Each day, teachers ask a variety of questions in order to facilitate discussion in the classroom. Smith and Higgins (2006) concluded that the type of question (i.e. factual, open, or closed) did not determine the quality of the discussion. Rather, they note, it was the teacher's follow-up response to the question that determined how the discussion would proceed (Smith & Higgins). Boyd and Rubin (2006) came to the same conclusion and noted the importance of the classroom culture on building on and extending what students contribute. Smith and Higgins suggest that when a student gives an answer to a question that is unpredicted and a teacher aims to get the student back in line with his or her planned lesson, the students in the class perceive that there is a right and wrong answer to every question and while questions appear to be open they actually are not. If this becomes a pattern, Smith and Higgins argue, students in the future will not provide elaborate responses to typically open questions, which does not help a teacher create a receptive environment to facilitate literacy discussions. Boyd (2012) continues this point by noting that students will perform a "treasure hunt" to figure out the one answer the teacher expects (p.31).

Smith and Higgins (2006) also argue that what appear to be closed questions can facilitate discussion in the classroom if the teacher responds in an open manner and does not evaluate the response on the third turn. Boyd (2012) also notes that teachers must sincerely listen to their students' comments and base their questioning on those comments in order to use questions in a manner that facilitates student discussion. Nystrand (2006) states that when teachers prepare questions ahead of time and follow them closely, they are not being responsive to their students. Johnston (2004) also

addresses the importance of teacher responsiveness by noting that teachers are not giving students their full attention and are not being genuine when they start thinking through what they are going to say next while a student is talking.

According to Boyd (2012), “Teachers deftly ignore, squelch, evaluate, or build upon student utterances according to teacher intentions...” (p.26) Boyd argues that teachers need to be flexible in their planning in order to be responsive to their students. Boyd notes that questions should be used to help students elaborate their ideas, assess their thinking, and clarify information. She goes on to say that teachers telling students what they should know and learn is not what guides understanding; rather it is student negotiation and exploratory talk that should direct the classroom discussion.

Teachers can also facilitate classroom discussions by following a model of conceptual press discourse (McElhone, 2012). Conceptual press discourse is “a pattern of teacher-student talk that challenges students to think beyond their initial responses in the analysis of texts and in the use of comprehension strategies,” (McElhone, 2012, p.526). Using conceptual press discourse in the classroom involves the teacher “responding to student contributions by asking for clarification, elaboration, evidence, or examples,” (p.530). This moves students to think beyond their initial responses so they can support their arguments while thinking critically about texts. According to McElhone, conceptual press discourse also increases a student’s intrinsic motivation and their engagement in reading.

On the opposite side of conceptual press discourse, is what McElhone (2012) refers to as reducing press discourse, which involves the teacher narrowing questions that

were initially open-ended, calling on another student, telling the answer and moving on, etc. This takes the burden off of the student and creates weaker reading comprehension. McElhone (2012) found in a research study that, “On average, only 1 out of 20 utterances involved conceptual press discourse,” (p.550). McElhone suggests that teachers can take small steps by refraining from using reducing press talk in order to benefit students.

Not only are teacher questions important for facilitating literacy discussion in the classroom, but according to Mercer, Wegerif, and Dawes (1999) so is the use of exploratory talk by students. They note that rarely do teachers instruct students on how to use talk to further their own understanding of concepts, to convey ideas, or to solve problems. Exploratory talk allows students to work together to critically explore and connect with ideas (Mercer et al.). According to Mercer et al., in an environment where exploratory talk is encouraged, knowledge is made “publicly accountable” and “reasoning is visible in the talk.” (p. 97). Mercer et al. argue that those students who are taught how to talk in order to further their understanding achieve “greater gains in their individual scores on the Raven’s test of reasoning than do children who have not had such teaching” (p.108). According to Cazden (2001), it is important for students to listen to and learn from each other through the use of exploratory talk, but it is not always an easy task for students or teachers. Teachers and students can also struggle with adopting new teaching and learning techniques which can form obstacles to creating dialogic learning environments.

Obstacles

Teachers' attitudes about pedagogical practice have an impact on how teachers conduct lessons in their classroom (Christoph & Nystrand, 2001). Johnston (2012) notes that most teachers were taught in monologic classrooms and were taught to value facts and certainty; creating a fixed view of knowledge. According to Christoph and Nystrand (2001), traditional instruction in American classrooms involves planning lessons and guiding students through the content of the lesson to achieve the teacher's desired results. Christoph and Nystrand note that this is particularly true in a high school setting. They also note that getting teachers to adopt new instructional practices is difficult, especially in light of the public attention focused on standardized test scores.

Boyd (2012) states that at times it seems easier for teachers to dominate the talk in the classroom with teacher fronted explanations. She goes on to say that teacher explanations and just telling the answers are more efficient in the short-term, but they hinder student learning in the long-term. She notes that it is difficult for teachers to give up control and let the lesson go where the teacher did not plan for it to go in order to facilitate deeper understanding from students (Boyd). Cazden (2001) also discusses how it can be difficult for teachers to hear and respond to student ideas in the moment, especially when the curriculum is challenging. Cazden argues that it is important for teachers to help their students develop peer listening as well.

Chinn, Anderson, and Waggoner (2001) discuss the difficulties of teachers giving up control over certain parameters of discussion in their classrooms. They state that teachers prefer to retain control of turn-taking and topic selection so they are better able

to maintain control and flow in the classroom. They suggest that teachers may feel that they can maximize their efficiency in the classroom in regard to covering required material by compelling students to participate in a recitation-type format. They also point out that there are times when teachers are required to pull students back in so that the discussion can stay on-topic (Chinn et al., 2001).

Students may also resist the effort to change the instructional format in the classroom (Boyd, 2012; Christoph & Nystrand, 2001). From a fairly young age students learn that when teachers are using the recitation format, they have a correct answer in mind and they expect students to provide the answer and move on to the next question (Boyd, 2012). It can be uncomfortable for students to use a new format because it involves taking a risk (Cazden, 2001; Christoph & Nystrand, 2001). Johnston (2004) notes that when a student tries and does not succeed, it is important for teachers to turn that event into a positive narrative that can be used in the future. Johnston argues that it is crucial for what is happening in the classroom to be meaningful to students' lives and goals or else "they will easily help us shift back into unproductive language," (p.84). There may be obstacles for teachers and students to overcome, but there can be many positive results from a shift in language and discourse in literacy discussions in the classroom.

Effects of Creating a Dialogic Classroom

When teachers are able to open up their classrooms and create a more collaborative, discussion-based, dialogic environment they are able to see several positive effects on their students. Nystrand (2006) notes that using authentic, open-ended questions and varying the uptake in classroom discussions has been shown to improve the

dialogic “spells” (p.403). He also notes that when teachers devote more time to authentic discussion and they use uptake to extend classroom discussions it is positively associated with better reading comprehension.

“Students recalled their readings better, understood in more depth, and responded more fully to aesthetic elements of literature than did students in more typical, monologically organized classes, where the default mode of instruction is some combination of lecture, recitation, and seatwork,” (Nystrand, 2006, p.400).

Authentic, student-led discussion does not always come easy in a classroom, especially if teachers have not had experience participating in a dialogic classroom or have not had the opportunity to observe and practice dialogic teaching. It is important to provide teachers with the background knowledge, practice, and support necessary to create dialogic spaces before expecting them to transform their teaching.

Professional Development

Schools can use the research presented above to create classrooms where students are challenged to think beyond the surface level of texts and are consistently immersed in discussions which further their knowledge. Providing teachers with the professional development necessary for them to increase their knowledge and skills is critical to the development of responsive teaching, engaging classroom discourse, and dialogic discussions which focus on the process of learning. This section will explore research on effective professional development that will allow teachers to increase their knowledge and skills in order to better meet the needs of their students.

“Teachers learn by doing, reading, and reflecting (just as students do); by collaborating with other teachers; by looking closely at students and their work; and by sharing what they see,” (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009, p.83). For years,

professional development for teachers relied on the workshop format where teachers would attend a workshop for a short period of time and then were expected to return to their classrooms and implement the new strategy or idea that they learned (Vogt & Shearer, 2011). Researchers have found this practice to be ineffective in affecting teacher knowledge and change in the classroom (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009, Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011, Vogt & Shearer, 2011). According to Vogt and Shearer (2011), there are two models of professional development: the transmission model and the constructivist model. The transmission model, described above, involves teachers passively receiving information and being expected to pick up one or two ideas in which to use in their classrooms (Vogt & Shearer). Training teachers, rather than educating them, is the goal of the transmission model (Vogt & Shearer). The constructivist model, on the other hand, involves working with teachers to understand their previous knowledge on the subject at hand and utilizing their personal experiences to create a setting where they are able to learn, collaborate, and reflect with support (Vogt & Shearer; Van den Bergh, Ros & Beijaard, 2014).

Effective professional development is key to engaging teachers and getting results, but professional development researchers and practitioners do not always agree on what constitutes effective professional development (Guskey, 2003). However, there are some common points that are evidence-based which will be used in this research paper including using teachers' existing knowledge, providing concrete tasks, creating multi-layered experiences, embedding in teachers' daily lives, and providing online experiences as well.

Professional development that takes teachers' existing knowledge into account and builds upon that knowledge is an efficient way to reach teachers (Van den Bergh et al., 2014). Researchers also note the importance of professional development being based on a need that teachers and administrators both recognize (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Vogt & Shearer, 2011). According to Van den Bergh et al. (2014), it is also important for the professional development to have clear and specific goals. They state that it does not matter who sets the goals as long as teachers accept them and work toward them during and after the professional development.

Professional development that focuses on concrete tasks, such as teaching, assessment, observation, and reflection is another characteristic of effective professional development (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011, Van den Bergh, Ros, & Beijaard, 2014). It is also important that professional development be collaborative (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Van den Bergh et al., 2014; Burke, 2013; Vogt & Shearer, 2011). Vogt and Shearer (2011) found study groups to be effective due to the fact that teachers have a high degree of choice and ownership in what is studied. They note that the teachers are able to set their own goals and become active learners when they collaborate with others in study groups. According to Guskey (2003), collaboration is a way for teachers to share ideas and strategies, but it can also be used to block change and hinder progress. Guskey notes the importance of collaboration being structured and purposeful for teachers in order to bring about positive change.

Multilayered professional development, according to Vogt and Shearer (2011), provides a variety of activities and events for teachers and does not focus on just one mode of presentation. Opportunities for active learning, along with a sustainable and intensive program increase the effectiveness of the professional development (Van den Bergh et al., 2014). Vogt and Shearer (2011) note that effective professional development does not include any one activity or task, but rather a variety is necessary to keep teachers engaged and to differentiate the instruction necessary for all teachers to learn.

Some researchers agree that professional development needs to be embedded in teachers' daily lives by supporting it with modeling, coaching, and helping teachers solve specific problems (Burke, 2013; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; Van den Bergh et al., 2014; Vogt & Shearer, 2011). In order for teachers to buy-in to the professional development offered, Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (2011) and Vogt and Shearer (2011) argue that teachers need to have choices available that will make it meaningful for them. They need to be solving real-world problems where examples are provided on how to solve those problems (Van den Bergh et al., 2014). Teachers also need opportunities to practice and report back so they can reflect on their experiences and collaborate with one another (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; Guskey 2003; Vogt & Shearer, 2011). Professional development needs to be "well organized, carefully structured, and purposefully directed" (Guskey, 2003, p.749).

Researchers have also studied whether or not online professional development is more or less effective than face-to-face professional development (Fishman, Konstanopoulos, Kubitskey, Vath, Park, Johnson, & Edelson, 2013). Fishman et al. note

that online professional development has some advantages, such as it is more flexible in regard to schedule. Also, teachers can access online professional development when it is convenient for them and they are able to access resources that may not be available locally. Fishman et al. argue that reading online is sometimes preferable to video presentations because materials can be skimmed and reviewed easier if they are written than if they involve multimedia presentations. Another benefit that Fishman et al. suggest is that teachers can access the content they need closer to when they are actually going to present the lessons related to that professional development. Online professional development also allows teachers to review materials for those lessons before they teach them (Fishman et al., 2013).

What Fishman et al. (2013) concluded was that while there are benefits to online professional development, there was not much difference, in regard to student gains, for either the online or the face-to-face professional development. Both forms of professional development resulted in significant gains for students. They caution that the most important part of professional development is how it is put together (that it is carefully thought out, designed and presented to teachers), rather than the *vehicle* in which it is delivered.

The Project

This professional development project was designed for elementary teachers and administrators. It is set to take place over the course of one school year and contains large group and small group sessions to facilitate maximum learning and participation by all faculty members.

The purpose of this project is threefold:

1. To devise an effective professional development plan to help teachers understand how their language use in the classroom can affect student learning
2. To help teachers create an environment in which they are responsive to students and which positions students and teachers in a way that facilitates longer and more in-depth literacy discussions.
3. To support students as they challenge themselves to think critically about the texts they are reading.

In order to accomplish this triad of professional development goals, literature was collected and reviewed. Findings from the research were analyzed in order to create an effective professional development program. Elementary teachers could then use this program to identify areas in need of improvement in regard to language and how to make changes in the discourse of their classrooms in order to facilitate deeper understanding by students. The intent of this professional development model is to help teachers see the benefits of waiting to evaluate a student response, to help them practice using language in a more inviting way so that students feel comfortable participating in class, and to focus on changes that are most likely to be implemented in the classroom.

Professional Development Plan

The professional development plan will consist of three large group sessions spaced throughout the school year. There will also be monthly small group meetings with grade level teams and reading specialists to focus on more specific information that each team will choose as the professional development progresses (see Table 1).

The goals for the large group professional development sessions will be:

1. Teachers will be able to independently use their learning to create dialogic spaces in their classrooms for literacy discussions.
2. Teachers will understand that creating dialogic spaces in the classroom allows students to think critically, analyze text, and use ideas and information from classmates to come to various conclusions.
3. Teachers will continue considering ways in which they can use their language in the classroom to create more dialogical spaces.

Table 1
Professional Development Sessions

Large Group	Small Group
<p>Mid-Late September: Dialogic Classrooms</p> <p>Readings: <i>Choice Words</i> (Johnston, 2004) Chapter 1 - The Language and Influence in Teaching Chapter 2 – Noticing and Naming</p> <p><i>Taking risks, negotiating relationships: One teacher’s transition to a dialogic classroom</i> (Christoph & Nystrand, 2001)</p>	<p>September</p> <p>Introduction session Group determines study topic for the year Group determines long-term and short-term goals related to study topic</p> <p>October</p> <p>Lesson modeled by facilitator in classrooms related to study topic Teachers record one read-aloud and reflect using online journal prompt</p> <p>November</p> <p>Reflect on modeled lesson Discuss assigned readings</p>
<p>December: Collaborative Reasoning and Conceptual Press Discourse</p> <p>Readings: <i>Choice Words</i> (Johnston, 2004) Chapter 3 – Identity Chapter 4 – Agency and Becoming Strategic Chapter 5 – Flexibility and Transfer</p> <p><i>Patterns of discourse in two kinds of literature discussion</i> (Chinn, Anderson, & Waggoner, 2001)</p>	<p>December</p> <p>Facilitator observes in each classroom and reflects individually with teachers</p>

Early March: Literacy Stance

Readings:

Choice Words (Johnston, 2004)

Chapter 6 – Knowing

Chapter 7 – An Evolutionary, Democratic Learning Community

Chapter 8 – Who Do You Think You’re Talking To?

January

Teachers discuss successes and challenges related to chosen topic of study

Facilitator helps determine what is still needed for teachers to meet their long-term and short-term goals

April

Reflect on student and teacher progress

Determine if goals were met

Large Group Session 1

The first large group session will be held in mid to late September so teachers will have time to complete initial reading assessments and students will be acclimated to the classroom and expectations. The first session will be about two hours long and will include all elementary grade level teachers in the building, special education and reading resource teachers (including Reading Recovery), specials teachers (including art, gym, and music) the librarian, guidance counselor(s), and administrators. The participants may not all explicitly use the strategies discussed, but it is important for them to attend so they will understand the change in language used in the classroom and they can then support the teachers who are implementing changes in how literacy discussions are held in their classrooms.

Teachers will be sent an email (Appendix A) informing them of the professional development and flyers (Appendix B) will be placed throughout high traffic areas of the building as well in order to pique interest. Before the session, teachers will be asked to fill out a survey (Appendix C) about their knowledge and attitude regarding dialogic classrooms. The survey will be distributed through email. The information collected from the survey will be used during the discussion portion of the professional development and will also be used to modify the professional development plan when necessary. Participants will each be given the book *Choice Words* (Johnston, 2004) and will be asked to read the first two chapters before attending this session. Participants will

also be asked to read the article *Taking risks, negotiating relationships: One teacher's transition to a dialogic classroom* (Christoph & Nystrand, 2001).

Also, before the session the facilitator will recruit four to five teachers to learn how to play one of two board games so those teachers can be experts on the rules when using the board games in the large group session (Appendix D).

At the beginning of the large group session, teachers will be divided into groups and each group will be given a board game to play for 30-45 minutes. *Freedom: The Underground Railroad* game is a cooperative game in which players pretend to be historical figures and they have to work together to move slaves from Southern states to freedom in Canada (Appendix E). *Lifeboats* is a competitive game in which players do all they can to stay in the lifeboat, including backstabbing friends, mugging people, or changing seats to avoid being thrown overboard (Appendix E). The goal of the game is to do whatever a player needs to in order to save their character from going overboard or getting thirsty.

After the teachers have played the games long enough to get a sufficient feel for how the games are designed, they will be asked to fill out a short survey about how they feel about their teammates (Appendix F). Participants will then be given a short break so the facilitator can read through the survey results in order to use them in the discussion when they reconvene.

After the break, the facilitator will create a dialogic classroom by starting a discussion and allowing participants to further the discussion with their thoughts and

ideas about the games. The facilitator may choose to use one of the following prompts to get the discussion started:

1. I'm wondering if anyone felt uncomfortable playing the games...
2. If you were to play this game again, what might you do differently?
3. It seems like there were some colleagues who took on a leadership role in each group.

Who was the leader in your group? How do you know that? Let's talk about how students determine the leaders when they are put into groups and what that does to the group dynamic.

4. Was your group leader ever challenged? Let's talk about how we can structure our classrooms so students know they can challenge one another safely.

The facilitator will be conscious of the fact that he or she is modeling how to have a dialogic discussion and will be mindful of pointing out best practices. The facilitator will then use a PowerPoint presentation (Appendix G) to review more information about dialogic classrooms. The session will wrap up with some examples of how teachers can use this information in their classrooms right away and how they can plan to use it in the future. Before teachers leave, they will be asked to fill out an Exit Slip (Appendix H) that will be used to plan the next large group session.

Large Group Session 2

The second large group session will take place in December and will be about one and a half hours in length. The participants will be the same as those who participated in the first large group session. Before the session, a survey (Appendix I) will be distributed to all participants through email regarding something they have tried in their classrooms

and it will also include questions about what was effective in the first presentation and what could be left out of the second presentation. That information will be used to plan the details of the second large group session, but a basic outline will be provided below.

Participants will be asked to read Chapters 3, 4, and 5 in their text *Choice Words* (Johnston, 2004). They will also be asked to read the article *Patterns of discourse in two kinds of literature discussion* (Chinn, Anderson, & Waggoner, 2001).

The session will start off with a brief PowerPoint presentation (Appendix J) reviewing collaborative reasoning and conceptual press discourse. After viewing the slides and answering any questions, teachers will be divided into groups of four to five people. One person will take on the role of teacher and the others will act as students. Each group will read a picture book that has at least one, if not more, controversial aspect(s) to it. The facilitator will enlist the librarian's help in finding books that would be appropriate for this task. The selected teacher will then lead the group through a discussion about the text while focusing on the aspects of discussions that were presented earlier in the slides.

After the small group discussions, everyone will come together for a large group discussion. The facilitator will have a few open-ended questions prepared, but will continue to model how to teach in a dialogic classroom and may abandon the questions if the discussion takes a different turn. Some possible prompts for the facilitator include:

1. What's the toughest aspect of this and how did you overcome it, or have you yet? What makes you want to give up?

2. How have your students responded to any changes you have made? Why do you think they've responded that way? How were you hoping they'd respond?

The session will end with a four minute video clip from WatchKnowLearn.org from their Best Practices Weekly Series called Building ELL Language Skills with Collaborative Reasoning (Appendix K). Although the focus of this project is not on English Language Learners, the video contains an overview of collaborative reasoning and reiterates reasons teachers would want to use it in their classrooms. Before participants leave, they will be asked to fill out an Exit Slip (Appendix H) to help facilitate planning the next session.

Large Group Session 3

The final large group session will be held in early March before Spring Break. The session will be about one and a half hours in length and the participants will remain the same as the previous two sessions. Before the session, participants will be asked to read Chapters 6, 7, and 8 in their text *Choice Words* (Johnston, 2004). They will also be asked to answer a pre-session survey that is the same as the survey used before session 2.

The session will start off with a PowerPoint presentation reviewing literacy stance (Appendix L). Participants will then discuss with a partner, or at their tables, the successes they have had in implementing changes in their own classroom. They will then be asked to share as a group in a dialogic setting. The facilitator will ask a representative from each group share their accomplishments and will encourage others to continue the discussion by sharing related successes. The facilitator will listen closely to teacher responses and connect them by listening for common themes. After that, participants will

be asked to turn and talk to their neighbors about the frustrations they have had along the way and any problems they are still struggling with. These will be shared with the large group as well following the manner discussed above.

After the group has had a chance to discuss, the facilitator will show video clips of best practices from the classroom observations that have been completed. The facilitator will have all teachers fill out a permission form (Appendix M) and will video record teachers during their reading lessons. The facilitator will then use an application or computer program to edit the clips so that they focus on teacher language, discussion formats, and examples of dialogic classrooms. The video clips will be available on the school building's intranet site for future reference as well. At the end of the session, participants will be given a post professional development survey (Appendix N) to reflect on how their teaching has changed and also for the facilitator to see how teachers' attitudes changed in regard to creating dialogic classrooms.

Small Group Professional Development

Over the course of the year the facilitator will lead five small group professional development sessions for grade level teams, the special education team, the reading support team, the specials team, and administrators. Each group will make choices on what area they want to study the most in relation to dialogic classrooms, conceptual press discourse, collaborative reasoning, literacy stance, or teacher language. The facilitator will note that most of the topics are interrelated and will naturally flow together, such as teacher language and conceptual press discourse, but will encourage participants to focus on one area in the beginning with the option of expanding later in the year if the group

needs or wants more information about other topics. They will also decide which book or types of readings to use throughout the year related to the topics listed above. The group will make most of the decisions about how the sessions will run, but there will be some parameters for the facilitator to follow which are outlined below.

The facilitator will work with the technology department to set up an online journal that can only be accessed by participants. The journal will be used as a communication device between participants and the facilitator for specific topics each session (Appendix O). Most posts will be private between the facilitator and participants, but there will be the option to make the post public if a participant wishes. The facilitator will encourage participants to make specific posts public when they have information in them which may be valuable to all participants.

In September, the small group professional development will have an introductory session where the facilitator will discuss dialogic classrooms with the group. The facilitator will give a brief overview of the topics: Dialogic classrooms, collaborative reasoning, conceptual press discourse, literacy stance, and teacher language. The group will then determine their long-term and short-term goals and they will also decide on what readings to use throughout the year. Both the long and short-term goals should relate to positive changes in teacher behavior and/or language in the classroom.

The facilitator will show the participants how to use an online journal that can only be seen by the facilitator and each individual participant. The facilitator will also show the group the planning template (Appendix P) that will be filled out at each session so that everyone will know what to expect for the upcoming session.

In October, the group will discuss their assigned readings from the previous session. Each time the group meets they will use the small group planning template (Appendix P) to set assigned readings based on the topic they chose to study. The facilitator will be responsible for finding the readings ahead of time and giving the team a brief overview of what to expect in the readings. The facilitator will open the discussion by asking what teachers found most useful in the readings for the month. Then the facilitator will model dialogic teaching by listening closely to teacher responses and finding ways to connect responses to one another and to the readings. The facilitator will be careful to respond openly and in a non-evaluative manner to teacher insights and questions as they arise.

Each small group will also set up a time to have a lesson modeled in the classroom. The focal point of the lesson will depend on what topic the group is focusing on for their long-term and short-term goals. For example, if the group has decided to study collaborative reasoning, the facilitator will plan an age-appropriate lesson that will teach students how to work in small groups to elaborate their thinking based on the principles of collaborative reasoning. Teachers will be asked to take notes and to highlight any questions, concerns, or confusion they have at any point during the lesson.

The facilitator will recommend having one lesson modeled for each grade level team. The grade level teams will work together to decide which classroom to use and then make arrangements for the students not in the assigned classroom to have a library or guidance session at that time.

Each group will then review the online journal prompt for October (Appendix O) which is an opportunity for the teachers to ask questions and review what a read-aloud would look like in each classroom. They will be encouraged to video record themselves doing a read-aloud and then reflect personally using the online journal prompt.

In November, the group will first reflect on the lesson that was modeled in October. They will use the reflection sheet listed in Appendix Q. The facilitator will work with the teachers to review their sheets and answer any questions or address any concerns they have regarding the modeled lesson.

Teachers will then spend some time discussing the assigned readings using the same format that was used in October. The facilitator will once again model dialogic teaching by revoicing teacher ideas, using responses to further the discussion, and connecting teacher insights to the reading and to other responses.

During the month of December, the facilitator will observe in each teacher's classroom and then reflect individually with the teacher no more than two to three days after the observation. During the November small group session, the facilitator will show the group the observation form (Appendix R) that will be used and will explain that the observation is not punitive in any way. The facilitator will communicate that he or she will be watching for ways to help teachers achieve their long-term and short-term goals.

In January, the small group will discuss successes and challenges they have noticed related to the topic they chose to study in-depth in September. For example, if they are studying teacher language they will note ways they have been able to change their teacher language to facilitate longer discussions or to promote higher order thinking

with their students and then they will discuss ways in which they are still struggling or have slipped back into their old habits. The teachers will then look at the long-term and short-term goals they created as a group in September and discuss how they think they are doing individually and as a group in regard to working toward those goals. The facilitator will help them determine what obstacles are still standing in their way and steps they can use to overcome those obstacles so they are better able to see what is needed to reach their goals.

April will be a time for reflection on what the small groups have learned since the beginning of the year and how each person's teaching has changed. Each teacher will be asked to share a significant change he or she has made and the impact they have seen personally on their students. The facilitator will also ask teachers to think of changes they made, or tried to make, that didn't work well and will encourage them to reflect on why that might have been. The group will then look at their short-term and long-term goals related to teacher behavior in the classroom and decide if they personally have met those goals and if not, what still needs to be done. The facilitator will also ask teachers to note any new understandings or insights they have gained from the readings.

The group will then spend time discussing the last set of assigned readings using the format previously used in October and November. The facilitator will connect discussion points with the goals previously discussed in the session so teachers are able to clearly see how the readings, goals, and teacher behavior are related.

Conclusions and Recommendations

When today's elementary students graduate from high school and college, they are going to be expected to have critical thinking skills. The amount of information that is available at one's fingertips is constantly growing and students will be expected to synthesize that information, challenge it, and determine what is most important. In order to do that, they will need to become adept readers who think beyond the text on the page and are able to fully understand what they are reading and apply it to various situations. Laying the groundwork for that type of thinking starts now, when they are in elementary school, and are learning how to comprehend text.

When teachers use questioning to draw out student ideas, rather than to hunt for the correct answer, students benefit from being able to practice expanding on their ideas, synthesizing information, and thinking critically about what authors are writing. Students are positioned as learners and not as students who are passively receiving information. Students know that being stuck in a fixed mindset is not beneficial, and that they are expected to be continually learning and challenging themselves.

Teachers also need to be continually learning. They need opportunities to observe, practice, and reflect on their teaching in order for them to make integral changes in their teaching. Providing opportunities for teachers to learn in a large group and small group setting allows their professional development to be individualized, yet provides all teachers with the same basic information. By providing professional development that is on-going, teachers are able to be supported while implementing different discussion formats, language changes, and questioning strategies in the classroom.

Throughout the process of researching and writing this paper, I learned that just a few small changes can have a large impact on student learning. Using language and questioning to further student knowledge, rather than cover material is one way to foster student development. Creating an environment where it is safe to explore new ideas is also important for students. It may not be comfortable for me as a teacher to give up control in my classroom, but it is important for my students to experience being in control and expanding on tough concepts. It is also important for me to truly listen to my students, rather than plan what I am going to say, or cover, next. By listening to what my students are saying, or not saying, I am able to be a more responsive teacher which allows me to foster independence in my students. I have seen first-hand the results of creating a dialogic classroom and being a responsive teacher by observing my colleague. I know that putting ideas into practice can be challenging, but in the end it is clearly worth it.

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APPENDIX A

Welcome E-mail to Faculty

Dear Faculty,

This year we have the opportunity to look into dialogic classrooms and how to create a more responsive environment for our students. This is a chance to expand upon what you already know about creating vibrant literacy discussions in your classroom. It will help you learn how to take a step back and really analyze a student's answer, it will help you refrain from judging an answer right away, and it will help your students learn to think critically and support their answers. Please note the attached flyer and if you have any questions, please contact me. I look forward to working with you this upcoming school year!

Sincerely,

The Facilitator

APPENDIX B

Informative Flyer for Professional Development Program

Professional Development

This year we have the opportunity to study a variety of authors who advocate for creating classrooms in which literacy discussions are center stage. We will learn how changes in our language and discussion formats can promote better understanding for our students.

Teachers will also participate in monthly small group sessions to study, practice, and reflect on ways in which they can help their students engage in stronger and more meaningful discussions about the texts they are reading.

"Teachers learn by doing, reading, and reflecting (just as students do); by collaborating with other teachers; by looking closely at students and their work; and by sharing what they see,"
(Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009, p.83).

Session 1

Creating Dialogic
Classrooms

Session 2

Collaborative
Reasoning and
Conceptual Press
Discourse

Session 3

Literacy Stance
and Reflection

APPENDIX C

Pre-session Survey

Large Group Session 1

Pre-session Survey

Session 1

Teacher language and the types of discussions held in the classroom can have a significant impact on how students learn. Creating time and space in your classroom to allow students to explore different types of discussion formats can impact how they learn.

Knowing this information, how comfortable are you currently with the following aspects of teaching...

1 = Not comfortable

2 = Somewhat Comfortable

3 = Fairly Comfortable

4 = Comfortable

N/A = Not applicable at this time

Items	Not Comfortable				Comfortable
	1	2	3	4	
Students taking the lead during a discussion	1	2	3	4	N/A
Asking students direct questions that have a right or wrong answer	1	2	3	4	N/A
Students interrupting each other and even myself during a discussion	1	2	3	4	N/A
Knowing that my objective for the lesson may not be met because the students have taken the discussion down another path	1	2	3	4	N/A
Covering all of the material in a text book by following (most of) the prompts provided	1	2	3	4	N/A
Using open-ended questions to further a discussion	1	2	3	4	N/A
Going over the allotted time for a subject because students got off-topic	1	2	3	4	N/A
Waiting a few turns to give feedback on student answers during a discussion	1	2	3	4	N/A
Holding a question and answer session right before a test	1	2	3	4	N/A
Asking a student to respond to his or her classmate instead of myself	1	2	3	4	N/A
Students arguing with and challenging one another with their ideas (in a respectful manner)	1	2	3	4	N/A

Comments: _____

APPENDIX D

Recruitment E-mail for Faculty

Dear Faculty,

Do you love board games? Are you the one who always checks the rules to make sure you really *do* get \$200 when you pass “GO” in Monopoly? Our first large group professional development session will be upon us shortly and I am currently looking for some help in getting everything ready. I need some game enthusiasts to practice playing one of two board games so that you can be a “rule expert” when we play them as a group.

We will practice either before or after school depending on everyone’s schedule and it will probably take 30-45 minutes to get a good feel of how the games should be played. If you are interested, please reply to this email and I will follow up with you on dates and times that work best.

Thanks for helping make our first session a success!

Sincerely,

The Facilitator

APPENDIX E

Games Used for Large Group Session 1

Games

Lifeboats:

ASIN: B000LQK4EA

Manufacturer: Zman Games

Item model number: ZMG7013

Manufacturer recommended age: 14 years and up

Freedom – The Underground Railroad

ASIN: B00HCHRGNI

Manufacturer: Academy Games

Item model number: AYG 5401

Manufacturer recommended age: 13 - 15 years

APPENDIX F

Post-Game Questionnaire

Large Group Session 1

Professional Development Session 1

Post-Game Questionnaire

1. What is something you learned about your teammates?
2. How do you feel about your performance in the game?
3. Would you want to play this game again?
4. Why do you think this game was part of today's session?

APPENDIX G

Handout of PowerPoint Slides from Large Group Session 1

Dialogic Classrooms

Large Group Professional Development
Session 1

What is a dialogic classroom?

- › Focus on discussion, using authentic questions, uptake (how answers are treated) from students as well as teachers, and a high-level evaluation of responses (Christoph & Nystrand, 2001)
- › Multiple interpretations and perspectives are valued (Johnston, 2012)
- › Ideas are challenged by peers and facts are considered in different contexts (Johnston, 2012)

Questions

- › Used to draw out student ideas, not cover material (Christoph & Nystrand, 2001)
- › Fewer teacher questions and more conversational turns by students (Nystrand, 2006)

Follow-up questions

Used to expand ideas, not evaluate responses
(Christoph & Nystrand, 2001)

Rather than offering a verbal or nonverbal evaluation of the response, the teacher validates the response by using it to further the discussion (Christoph & Nystrand, 2001)

Teacher Characteristics

- › “Teachers deftly ignore, squelch, evaluate, or build upon student utterances according to teacher intentions...” (Boyd, 2012, p.26)
- › Redirect and respond when necessary, but let students have freedom to take the conversation somewhere not dictated by the lesson plan (Boyd, 2012)

Teacher Characteristics

- › Listen closely to student responses to use them to further the discussion
- › Teachers are not giving students their full attention when they start thinking through what they are going to say next while a student is talking. (Johnston, 2004)
- › Examples of this happening to you...

Why dialogic classrooms?

- › More engaging, lots of interruptions because everyone wants a chance to be heard (Chinn, Anderson, & Waggoner, 2001)
- › Nystrand states that,
"Students recalled their readings better, understood in more depth, and responded more fully to aesthetic elements of literature than did students in more typical, monologically organized classes, where the default mode of instruction is some combination of lecture, recitation, and seatwork," (Nystrand, 2006, p.400).

Choice Words Peter H. Johnston 2004

Chapter 1 - The Language of Influence in Teaching

- › "Teachers can position children as competitors or collaborators, and themselves as referees, resources, or judges, or in many other arrangements. A teacher's choice of words, phrases, metaphors, and interaction sequences invokes and assumes these and other ways of being a self and of being together in the classroom." (p.9)

Discuss at your tables what Johnston means by this and give examples from your own classroom or examples you have experienced in your life.

Chapter 2 - Noticing and Naming

- › "When children notice things, instruction can begin with a joint focus of attention because children are already attending." (p. 18)
- › "Did anyone notice...?" (p.13)
- › "I see you know how to spell the beginning of that word." (p.13)

Next Step: Reflect

› **Short-term: What can I try this week in my classroom?**

Record a read aloud and reflect on how you responded to student questions

- Note the following:
 - Where you did a good job of listening to students and building on their answers
 - Where you used language to position a student as an on-going learner
 - Students' body language
 - The number of interruptions you allowed and how you decided what, or who, could interrupt

Next Step: Reflect

› **Mid-term: Find one literacy lesson that can be modified to reflect a more dialogic discussion.**

- What do I hope to achieve with this change?
- What problems do I anticipate? What can I do to prevent them, if anything?
- Why do I want to try this?
- Which students do I think will benefit the most?
- How will this help me as a teacher?

Next Step: Reflect

- Long-term: Why is this important?

Ask yourself why changes like these are important?

Reflect on how some changes in your classroom could affect the way students learn in the future.

- Discuss with your table how this can fit into the standards and benchmarks we are required to meet. How do you view these changes? Positive? Negative? Why?

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APPENDIX H

Exit Slip for all Large Group Professional Development Sessions

Exit Slip

1. Today I learned...

2. How will I use what I learned in my classroom?

3. Next time I hope to learn...

APPENDIX I

Pre-Session Questionnaire for Large Group Session 2 and Large Group Session 3

Pre-session Questionnaire

1. After the last session I decided to try....
2. The areas that went well were...
3. Something I would change for next time is...
4. I still have questions about...

About the professional development:

1. I thought the following aspect(s) of the previous session were helpful:
2. I thought the following aspect(s) of the previous session were *not* helpful:
3. Next time I'd like to see or learn:

APPENDIX J

Handout of PowerPoint Slides for Large Group Session 2

**Collaborative Reasoning and
Conceptual Press Discourse**
Large Group Professional Development
Session 2

Collaborative Reasoning

- › “Students take positions on a central question raised by a story, and then they present reasons and evidence for and against these positions” (Chinn et al., 2001, p.383).
- › Some teachers have students physically move to different sides of the room and create arguments as a group before debating as a class

Collaborative Reasoning

- › Teachers participate by:
 - › getting students to clarify and expand their answers
 - › pushing students to support their ideas with evidence
 - › allowing students to have more control over what they say and when they say it (Chinn et al., 2001)

Conceptual Press Discourse

- › The teacher uses open-ended questions and follows up on student answers by asking for one of the following...

- Clarification

- Elaboration

- Evidence

- Examples

(McElhone, 2012)

Conceptual Press Discourse

- › Requires students to:
 - Support their arguments
 - Think critically about text and discussion
- › Benefits:
 - Increase intrinsic motivation and engagement in reading

(McElhone, 2012)

Reducing Press Discourse

- › Narrowing questions that were originally open-ended
- › Calling on another student
- › Reducing choices until only the "right" one is left
- › Telling the answer
- › Moving on without answering the question

Takes the burden off the student!
(McElhone, 2012)

Choice Words
Peter H. Johnston
2004

Ch. 3 – Identity

- › That's not like you...(p.24)
- › What are you doing as a writer today? (p.25)
- › What have you learned most recently as a reader? (p.26)
- › What other questions could we add here?

Ch. 4 Agency and Becoming Strategic
Ch. 5 Flexibility and Transfer

- › How did you figure that out?
- › What problems did you come across today?
(Normalize conflict)
 - If children are not making errors, they are not putting themselves in learning situations (Johnston, 2004, p.39)
- › How are you planning to go about this?

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- McElhone, D. (2012). Tell us more: Reading comprehension, engagement, and conceptual press discourse. *Reading Psychology, 33*(6), 525-561. doi:10.1080/02702711.2011.561655.

APPENDIX K

Video from WatchKnowLearn.org

WathKnowLearn.org - Best Practices Weekly

Building ELL Language Skills with Collaborative Reasoning

<http://www.watchknowlearn.org/Video.aspx?VideoID=40490>

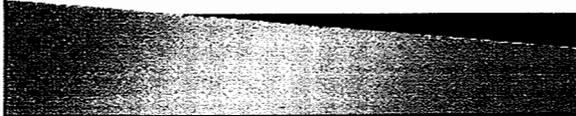
From the website:

In this Best Practices Weekly video, teacher Elliott reviews an article from The Reading Teacher on building ELL language skills with collaborative reasoning. The key components of this include the following: peer led, small group (5-8 students), choose a complex text, design a big question, and prepare an argument outline. The teacher's main role is that of facilitator. This is a great resource to enhance and improve ELL instruction in the classroom. (4:22)

APPENDIX L

Handout of PowerPoint Slides from Large Group Session 3

**Collaborative Reasoning and
Conceptual Press Discourse**
Large Group Professional Development
Session 2



Collaborative Reasoning

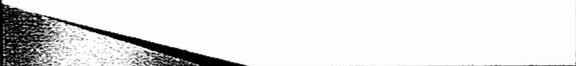
- › “Students take positions on a central question raised by a story, and then they present reasons and evidence for and against these positions” (Chinn et al., 2001, p.383).

Some teachers have students physically move to different sides of the room and create arguments as a group before debating as a class



Collaborative Reasoning

- › Teachers participate by:
 - › getting students to clarify and expand their answers
 - › pushing students to support their ideas with evidence
 - › allowing students to have more control over what they say and when they say it (Chinn et al., 2001)



Conceptual Press Discourse

- › The teacher uses open-ended questions and follows up on student answers by asking for one of the following...

- Clarification
- Elaboration
- Evidence
- Examples

(McElhane, 2012)

Conceptual Press Discourse

- › Requires students to:
 - Support their arguments
 - Think critically about text and discussion
- › Benefits:
 - Increase intrinsic motivation and engagement in reading

(McElhane, 2012)

Reducing Press Discourse

- › Narrowing questions that were originally open-ended
- › Calling on another student
- › Reducing choices until only the "right" one is left
- › Telling the answer
- › Moving on without answering the question

Takes the burden off the student!
(McElhane, 2012)

Choice Words
Peter H. Johnston
2004

Ch. 3 – Identity

- › That's not like you...(p.24)
- › What are you doing as a writer today? (p.25)
- › What have you learned most recently as a reader? (p.26)
- › What other questions could we add here?

Ch. 4 Agency and Becoming Strategic
Ch. 5 Flexibility and Transfer

- › How did you figure that out?
- › What problems did you come across today?
(Normalize conflict)
If children are not making errors, they are not putting themselves in learning situations (Johnston, 2004, p.39)
- › How are you planning to go about this?

References

- Chinn, C. A., Anderson, R. C., & Waggoner, M. A. (2001). Patterns of discourse in two kinds of literature discussion. *Reading Research Quarterly, (4)*, 378.
- Johnston, P. H. (2004). *Choice words: How our language affects children's learning*. Portland, Me.: Stenhouse Publishers, c2004.
- McElhone, D. (2012). Tell us more: Reading comprehension, engagement, and conceptual press discourse. *Reading Psychology, 33(6)*, 525-561. doi:10.1080/02702711.2011.561655.

APPENDIX M

Permission form to Record in Classroom

I _____ give my permission to _____ to record in
(Teacher) (Facilitator)

my classroom for the purposes of discussion and reflection of best literacy practices. I understand that the video may be shown to other colleagues in the building and will be available on the building's intranet site for future reference.

Signed

Date

APPENDIX N

Post Professional Development Program Survey

Post Professional Development Program Survey

After completing all of the professional development sessions, please rate how comfortable you are with the following aspects of teaching.

1 = Not comfortable

2 = Somewhat Comfortable

3 = Fairly Comfortable

4 = Comfortable

N/A = Not applicable at this time

Items	Not Comfortable					Comfortable
	1	2	3	4	N/A	
Students taking the lead during a discussion	1	2	3	4	N/A	
Asking students direct questions that have a right or wrong answer	1	2	3	4	N/A	
Students interrupting each other and even myself during a discussion	1	2	3	4	N/A	
Knowing that my objective for the lesson may not be met because the students have taken the discussion down another path	1	2	3	4	N/A	
Covering all of the material in a text book by following (most of) the prompts provided	1	2	3	4	N/A	
Using open-ended questions to further a discussion	1	2	3	4	N/A	
Going over the allotted time for a subject because students got off-topic	1	2	3	4	N/A	
Waiting a few turns to give feedback on student answers during a discussion	1	2	3	4	N/A	
Holding a question and answer session right before a test	1	2	3	4	N/A	
Asking a student to respond to his or her classmate instead of myself	1	2	3	4	N/A	
Students arguing with and challenging one another with their ideas (in a respectful manner)	1	2	3	4	N/A	

Comments: _____

APPENDIX O

Small Group Monthly Online Journal Prompts

Small Group Online Journal Prompts

September: I hope that learning about language and dialogic classrooms will help me to...

October:

What went well?

Where did I use open-ended questions?

Where did I listen to a student's response and use it to build upon another student's response

When did I allow students to take the lead in the discussion? How long did I allow that to go on?

Do I feel like my students understood the text well?

November: After watching the lesson that was modeled, I plan to include the following in my lessons...

December: If I were to do my observed lesson over again, I would...

January: In order to meet my goals, I still need to...

April: The biggest changes I have seen in my teaching are...

APPENDIX P

Small Group Session Planning Template

Small Group Session Planning Template

Team: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Long-term group goal:

Short-term group goal:

1. Readings completed for today:

2. Discussion topic(s):

Readings	Modeling	Observations
Reflection	Problem solving	Online journal notes
Progress toward goals	Assessment	

3. Materials needed today:

4. **Next Session:** _____

5. **Tasks to complete for next session:**

Readings to complete for next session:

APPENDIX Q

Reflection Sheet for Modeled Lesson

Reflection sheet

Notes and things I want to remember:

What I liked about the lesson:

Questions I still have:

Patterns that I noticed:

What I need to change (or do) in order to use this in my classroom:

APPENDIX R

Observation form for Individual Observations

Observation Form

Area of Focus (Goal):

At a Glance – Things I noticed:

Steps in the right direction:

Obstacles to overcome:

Next steps: