

TIPS FOR DESIGNING CONVERSATION PROMPTS ACROSS DISCIPLINES

Many teachers say how important it is to have a good prompt that sparks and drives a conversation. A good prompt is a bit like having good tinder and kindling to start a fire. It doesn't get going nor continue without it. Too many teachers think that a prompt is just a good open question, such as an essential question or question from the text. Yet the best prompts are more than just typical content questions. See what you notice about the following prompts.

Social Studies: With your partner, talk about why Rosa Parks is a hero and how we can be like her. Use ideas from the story that we read and the video that we saw. Make sure to clarify your ideas as much as possible. Use language such as “One heroic thing that she did was . . .”

Science: In pairs, have a conversation about why you think the moon appears to change shape from one night to the next. What could be happening? Make sure your explanations are clear and use scientific language such as “We believe that the moon appears to change shape because . . .”

Math: Work with your partner to create a word problem that requires the solver to add or subtract. Both of you take turns to share ideas for the problem and then you both decide which would make for the most interesting problem for your classmates to solve. Make sure the problem is very clear to others. You can include a drawing, too.

ELA Expository: Talk with your partner to decide if it is better to spend time watching television or reading books. Collaborate to build up both sides of the issue. For example, first talk about all the reasons and examples for watching TV. How is it helpful or good? Then do the same for reading books. Then decide which weighs more or has more or better evidence to support it. Use language such as “For example, evidence, this weighs more than that because . . .”

ELA Literature: Collaborate to come up with a lesson for the story. What do you think the author was trying to teach us readers with this story? Start by brainstorming several possible lessons and then decide on one. Find parts in the story that support that lesson and explain them. Use support language such as *support*, *evidence*, *because* . . . Also remember to use effective nonverbal communication.