

*One school's focus on
increasing the use of academic
oral language.*



Academic Conversations



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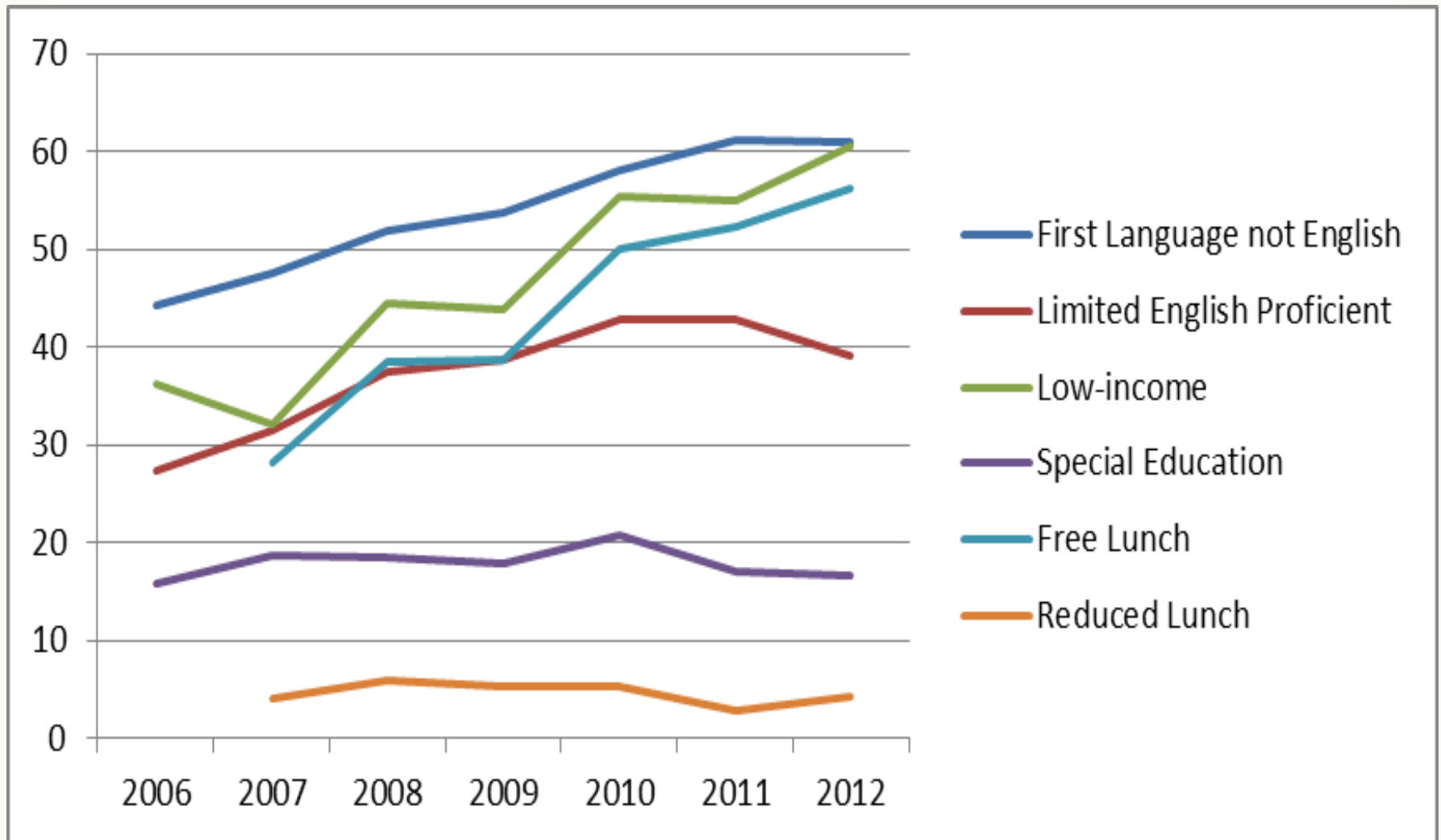
Brophy Elementary School Framingham, MA



Since 2007, there has been a steady increase in the percentage of students attending Brophy School who are considered high risk. These students fall into one or more of the following categories: Special education, English language learners, or students who qualify for free and reduced lunch.

After experiencing several years of declining enrollment, the last two years have seen significant growth (13%) in the overall number of students attending Brophy School.

Demographic Changes



True Learning Issue?



What we find most significant is when our subgroup data is reviewed. Our subgroups perform relatively closely to subgroups in other elementary schools in the district as well as to the state. Alarming however, subgroups in our district and specifically at Brophy School lag behind when compared to students who are not special education students, who are not English language learners, and who are not on free and reduced lunch (referred to in our district as “Nons”).

Our Challenge



Our challenge at Brophy School is to improve the educational experiences of the students in our subgroups, specifically our English language learners and special education students, while continuing to provide and maintain the rich, robust educational experiences that our “Nons” have historically and are presently experiencing.

Our Focus: Oral Language



- ∞ 22 reasons to converse fall into 5 categories: language and literacy, cognitive, content learning, social and cultural, and psychological (Jeff Zwiers and Marie Crawford)
- ∞ Expands vocabulary
- ∞ Builds skills that transfer into literacy and content areas
- ∞ Develops cognition- critical thinking and builds “focusing stamina”

Most Important for Brophy



- ☞ Allows students to build on their strengths
- ☞ Makes lessons more culturally relevant. Culturally and linguistically diverse students use different conversations modes at home. AC lessons respect these differences and teach skills.
- ☞ Promotes equity, motivates students, fosters change
- ☞ Five core skills: elaborate and clarify, support ideas with examples, build on/or challenge a partner's idea, paraphrase, synthesize conversation points

Professional Development



- ❧ Used a staff meeting to Present Data Team's findings which resulted in the adoption of oral language as our school wide focus.
- ❧ Provided academic conversation overview and introduction
- ❧ Small group instruction for each AC lesson: grade level Data Team representatives taught their specific grade team (or specialist team) one lesson
- ❧ Teachers taught that lesson to their classes
- ❧ During weekly grade level collaborations led by Data Team members, progress was discussed and subsequent lessons were taught

Introducing AC to Students







Language Objective: Students will be able to explain what an academic conversation looks like and give reasons why it is important.

- ∞ Model conversations
- ∞ Explain why it is important
- ∞ Anchor charts (what it is, what it isn't)
- ∞ List norms

Anchor Chart



What it is

- Being respectful 
- Making eye contact with the other person 
- Taking turns talking and listening 
- Staying on topic 
- Using a quiet voice 

What it isn't

- Being disrespectful
- Looking around the room
- Interrupting
- Talking about whatever you want, not what the topic is
- Yelling or screaming

Active Listening



Learning Objective: Students will be able to demonstrate active listening by using facial expressions and gestures.

- ∞ Turn taking
- ∞ Making eye contact
- ∞ Smiling and nodding
- ∞ Saying, “Uh-huh,” “I understand,” “Oh,” “Really”

Let's Practice!

- ∞ What if you are listening and you don't understand?
 - ∞ Explicitly teaching students metacognitive strategies: I don't understand. Can you repeat that please? I have a question.

Examples of Partners using Academic Conversations



Another Example



Paraphrase/Retell



Language Objective: Students will be able to retell what the speaker has said using his/her own words.

- ☞ To keep track of what we are hearing
- ☞ To organize the speaker's points
- ☞ To describe in our own words
- ☞ To negotiate meaning- the listener synthesizes main points and the speaker clarifies if that was the intended message
- ☞ To help the speaker stay on track
- ☞ To chunk ideas- the listener will improve in listening and reading comprehension

Let's Practice



Inside/ Outside Circle

- ☞ Speaker addresses a prompt for 20 seconds
- ☞ The first listener (inside circle) practices gestures/facial expressions while listening.
- ☞ The outside circle rotates.
- ☞ The second speaker (outside circle) explains her ideas.
- ☞ The listener uses comments (uh huh, really?, interesting). It indicates listening.
- ☞ The outside circle rotates.
- ☞ The third speaker talks.
- ☞ The listener paraphrases the speaker's ideas beginning with the phrase, "In other words...", or, "So what you're saying is..."

Elaborate



Language Objective: Students will be able to tell more about their initial statement when prompted by a partner.

Prompts:

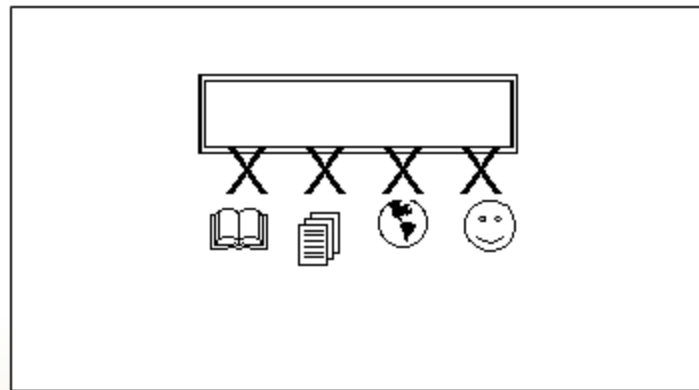
☞ “Tell me more.”

☞ “Can you elaborate on ...”

Supporting Ideas With Examples



- ❧ Zwiers encourages students to think of examples in this order:
- ❧ Examples from the text
- ❧ Examples for other texts
- ❧ Examples from the world
- ❧ Examples from one's own life



Build on/ or Challenge



Prompts:	Response starters:
How can we add to this idea...?	I would add that...
What other examples relate to this idea?	Building on your idea that...I think...
What else could support this idea?	I see it a different way...
Do you agree?	On the other hand...
What are other points of view?	That reminds me of...

Synthesize Conversation Points



- ☞ Synthesizing conversation points: remembering, highlighting, and fitting together key ideas from the conversation into a summary.
- ☞ What are the most important points?
- ☞ How can they be meaningful and useful in life?
- ☞ The synthesis can be written down as a record of the conversation.
- ☞ We can say that... We can agree that...
- ☞ It boils down to... We conclude...

Talk Moves



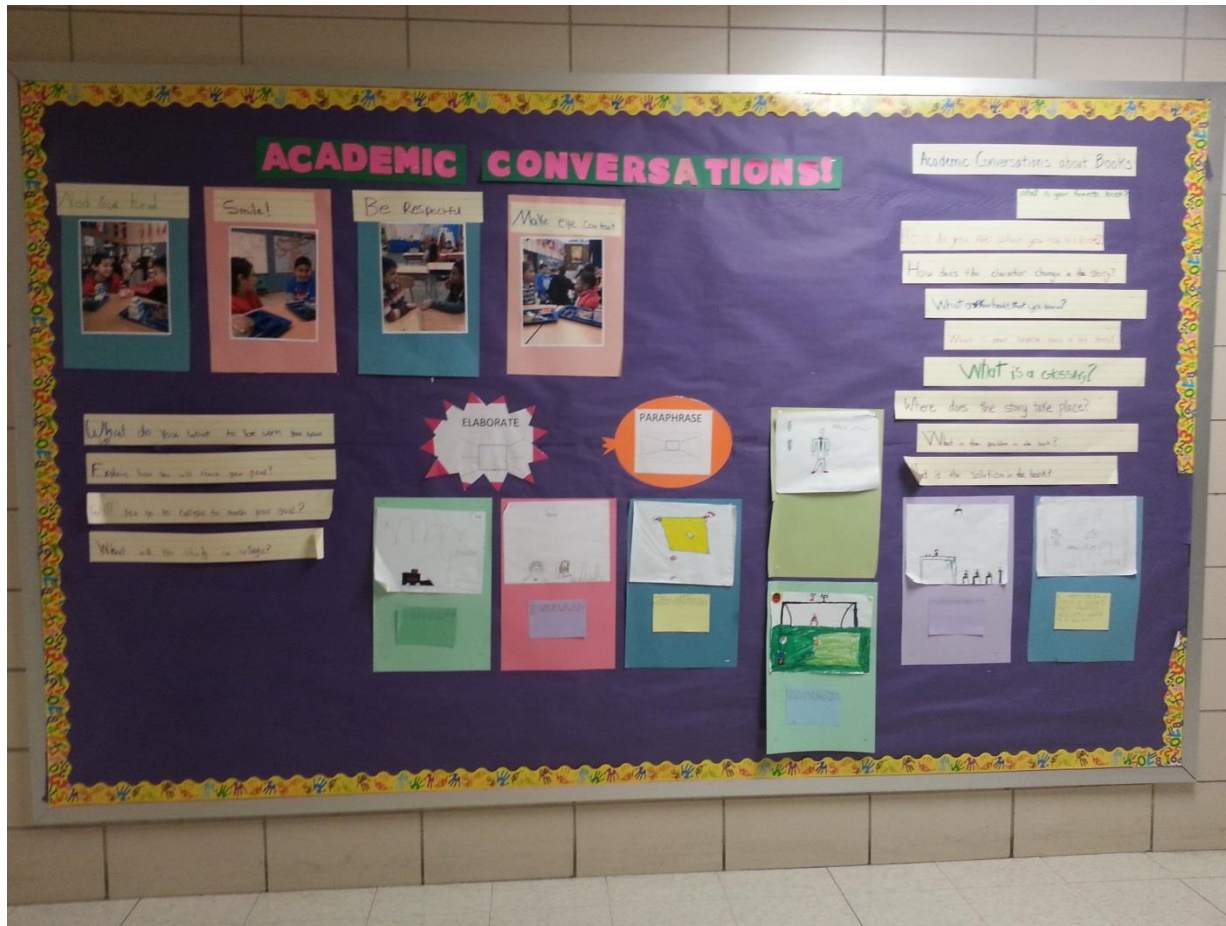
- ☞ So what you're saying is....
- ☞ I know that because...
- ☞ An example of this is...
- ☞ Something else that goes along with this is...
- ☞ I want to add on what (student's name) said...
- ☞ I agree/disagree because...

Next Steps



- ☞ Active listening, paraphrasing, and elaborating were focused on November through April- we went slowly so ensure all students would have a solid foundation in AC
- ☞ Talk moves helped us to start to introduce supporting ideas with examples and build on/or challenge a partner's ideas
- ☞ Next fall we will spend time re-teaching active listening, review paraphrasing and elaborating and then move on to the remaining three conversation skills.

Academic Conversations around the school



More information...



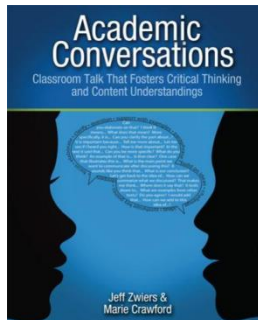
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Thank you!



**Academic Conversations: Classroom Talk that Fosters
Critical Thinking and Content Understandings** by
Jeff Zwiers and Marie Crawford.