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Deep Discourse: A Framework for Cultivating Student-Led Discussions

By Sandi Novak and Cara Slattery

Study Guide

This study guide is a companion to the book *Deep Discourse: A Framework for Cultivating Student-Led Discussions* by Sandi Novak and Cara Slattery. *Deep Discourse* equips educators with a discussion framework they can use to help make students actively engaged communicators and collaborators.

This guide is arranged by chapter, enabling readers to either work their way through the entire book or focus on the specific topics addressed in a particular chapter. It can be used by individuals, small groups, or an entire team to identify key points, raise questions for consideration, assess conditions in a particular school or district, and suggest steps that might be taken to promote a healthy school culture.

We thank you for your interest in this book and we hope this guide is a useful tool in your efforts to create a healthy culture in your school or district.

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Chapter 1

Articulating the Need for Student-Led Discussions

1. What definition of *discussion* mirrors the type of classroom discussions that authors Sandi Novak and Cara Slattery promote?
2. How does research support the value of teacher-led discussions and student-led discussions about text?
3. Describe a case in which you engaged students in a conversation about something that greatly interested them. What impact does engaging students in passionate conversations such as this have on the classroom learning environment?
4. Name the four things that teachers should give students opportunities to do if they want students to be engaged in a literature discussion.
5. In the scenario featured in the section Looking at Instructional Choices, what differences do you notice between what teachers and students do in a teacher-led discussion and what actions they take in a student-led discussion?

Chapter 2

Establishing a Discussion Framework for Student Success

1. What are the components of the framework for student-led discussions, and what actions do teachers and students take during each part of this process?
2. What does a *focus lesson* allow students to do? Why should focus lessons not be taught in isolation?
3. In your own words, define *look-fors*. When do teachers use look-fors? Why do look-fors serve as helpful self-assessment tools for students?
4. According to John Hattie and Helen Timperley, what are the four types of feedback? Provide a one-sentence example of each of the four types of feedback. Why do Hattie and Timperley not find the fourth kind of feedback helpful?
5. How do this chapter's grade-specific examples of the student-led discussion framework in action illustrate how using this framework enhances focus lessons?

Chapter 3

Beginning the Journey

1. What are the typical components of a morning meeting, and why can a morning meeting be a productive way to start each school day with students? In relation to morning meetings, what does it mean to *start slow to go fast*?
2. With your students, or on your own, create classroom discussion expectations for before, during, and after discussions. How do they compare to the example expectations provided in figure 3.1?
3. How long should a focus lesson take in a thirty-minute class period or a ninety-minute class period, and what should the remaining minutes be used for?
4. What do successful student-led discussions look and sound like? What three jobs do teachers have as students engage in dialogues?
5. In your own words, describe response notebooks and what students do with them. For what purposes can teachers use response notebooks with students?

Chapter 4

Experimenting With Different Discussion Formats and Strategies

1. Why can written discussions reveal aspects of students and their level of understanding that spoken discussion cannot?
2. In what kinds of situations does the turn-and-talk discussion format work well? Describe a situation in which you used this discussion format in your classroom or you could have effectively used this format with students.
3. List the four questions that teachers should answer to determine whether the small-group discussion format is their best option for helping students understand the content they are covering.
4. Briefly describe the talking chips student activity. What does this activity help students learn? Why is this strategy especially effective for mathematics learning?
5. If you have used blogging with your students, how has this strategy led to student growth? Have you made students' blogs public or not, and why is this the case? If you have not used blogging with students, why have you not tried this tactic?

Chapter 5

Using Discussion in Different Content Areas

1. What do classrooms sound like when they focus on learning through mistakes, collaboration, and persistence?
2. How do classroom A and classroom B offer different instructional approaches to the same mathematics concept? How are the classrooms' approaches similar, and how are they different?
3. Consider the example questions in table 5.2 that teachers pose to stimulate students' thinking. Based on these examples, write a few questions that can stimulate students' thinking for your classroom's purposes.
4. What knowledge can you take away from fifth-grade science teacher Ms. Schilling's instructional decisions and apply to your instruction? What do her instructional practices act as an example of?
5. How does U.S. history teacher Ms. Diego form a unit of study that leads to students mastering concepts and using them authentically?

Chapter 6

Getting to Deep Discourse

1. In what ways are student surface-level discussions different from deep discourse? What principles of deep discourse does your classroom best promote, and how do you accomplish this?
2. Name the four conversation skills that cause students to have difficulty during rich academic discussions.
3. What helpful purposes and benefits can videotaping students' classroom discussions have for both students and teachers?
4. What does it mean to *argue* in an academic context, and how do many learners misinterpret what *argument* means?
5. In your own words, describe what *synthesis* involves and why it is complex.

Chapter 7

Pulling It All Together: Tools and Tips

1. Take a look at the classroom environment you have configured. Does its physical arrangement inspire student collaboration and discussion? What features foster collaboration, and what changes could you introduce to make the physical arrangement more productive?
2. Of the troubleshooting issues that the authors cover in this chapter, which one have you most recently encountered? How would you have strategically responded to this issue if you had read this book before you dealt with it?
3. What adjustments can teachers make to increase students' ability to engage in deep discussions?
4. Describe something that you read that you had trouble putting down and something that your students read for your class that held their attention. What features of these texts stimulated your and your students' interest?
5. Briefly describe the three resources that Novak and Slattery developed to assist teachers in gathering data to change their instructional practices.