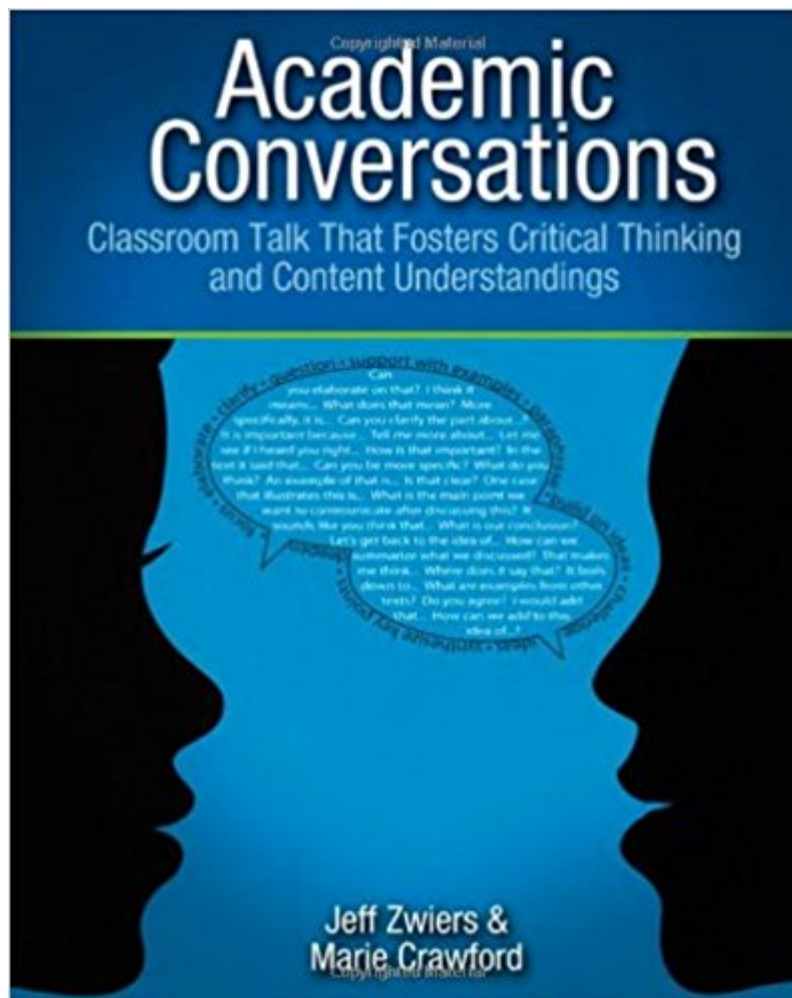


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# Academic Conversations: Classroom Talk That Fosters Critical Thinking And Content Understandings



## Synopsis

Where would we be without conversation? Throughout history, conversations have allowed us to see different perspectives, build ideas, and solve problems. Conversations, particularly those referred to in this book as academic conversations, push students to think and learn in lasting ways. Academic conversations are back-and-forth dialogues in which students focus on a topic and explore it by building, challenging, and negotiating relevant ideas. Unfortunately, academic conversations are rare in many classrooms. Talk is often dominated by the teacher and a few students, or it does not advance beyond short responses to the teacher's questions. Even certain teaching approaches and curriculum programs neglect to train students how to maintain a focused, respectful, and thoughtful conversation. To address these challenges, authors Jeff Zwiers and Marie Crawford have identified five core communication skills to help students hold productive academic conversations across content areas. These skills include: elaborating and clarifying, supporting ideas with evidence, building on and/or challenging ideas, paraphrasing, and synthesizing. This book shows teachers how to weave the cultivation of academic conversation skills and conversations into current teaching approaches. More specifically, it describes how to use conversations to build the following: Academic vocabulary and grammar Critical thinking skills such as persuasion, interpretation, consideration of multiple perspectives, evaluation, and application Literacy skills such as questioning, predicting, connecting to prior knowledge, and summarizing Complex and abstract essential understandings in content areas such as adaptation, human nature, bias, conservation of mass, energy, gravity, irony, democracy, greed, and more An academic classroom environment brimming with respect for others' ideas, equity of voice, engagement, and mutual support The ideas in this book stem from many hours of classroom practice, research, and video analysis across grade levels and content areas. Readers will find numerous practical activities for working on each conversation skill, crafting conversation-worthy tasks, and using conversations to teach and assess. Academic Conversations offers an in-depth approach to helping students develop into the future parents, teachers, and leaders who will collaborate to build a better world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book will dazzle you with its passion and practicality. There are common sense and uncommonly creative ideas for any lesson you're planning for tomorrow's third grade reading group or high school history class. --Yardsticks Blog  
This resource is the single tool you need to help your students create the essential link between thinking, speaking, and writing.- --Professionally Speaking  
From critical thinking and literacy skills to building a respectful professional classroom environment, this is packed with basic ideas perfect for any high school to college-level educator. --Midwest Book Review

Jeff Zwiers teaches in the Stanford Teaching Education Program and works for Stanford's Center to Support Excellence in Teaching. He received his Ed.D. from the University of San Francisco and has taught English, Spanish, science, and history in high school, middle school, and elementary school. Jeff says that he became a teacher to "positively influence the social linguistic, ethical, and cognitive development of students." His areas of specialty are academic language and literacy. Jeff is also a consultant on the Guatemala Education Reform in the Classroom project to develop effective systems of bilingual education and teacher training across the country. He has published articles and books on literacy, cognition, and academic language. Marie Crawford is an assistant principal at Central Middle School in the San Carlos School District. She has been a mentor teacher for urban teachers, a classroom teacher in urban schools, and a museum educator.

I buy lots of books about how to improve instruction in reading and writing, and I am so often disappointed. The books always seem to be written by people who have never spent much time in a real classroom and whose ideas seem more applicable to small children than grown up college students, the audience for which I write. But this book is a wonderful exception and I find much of what they say about framing conversations can be integrated into instruction for reading and writing.

I particularly like the way they define terms many others use in a vague and general way. They don't even let a word like "evidence," often thrown around but seldom defined, go unexplained and they define it as a "Broad term used for any information that logically supports a hypothesis or perspective." They also offer very good and, again, very specific suggestions for in class exercises, like "quotation negotiation," where the instructor posts a theme or opinion and then distributes different quotations to the class. Students then decide which ones support the stated theme or opinion and which ones don't. LOTS of great ideas here, with equally concrete examples for practice. A must have if you are interested in teaching students to read, write, think, and oh yes, converse in a way that will help them in school or, for that matter, at work. Kudos to the authors.

This is a helpful book. I have used several of the ideas already and I just got it yesterday. It is very clear and I need sentence starters for my 6th graders.

This resource from Zwiers is one of his best! The need to structure academic conversations to cultivate thinking and language skills is often overlooked by teacher. Zwiers tackles this need with a balance of theory and strategies. Many strategies are applicable for all content areas to foster disciplinary literacy. This book is congruent with sheltered instruction as well.

This book is amazing. If you are looking for practical suggestions as to how to incorporate discussion in your classroom this is for you! There are practical ideas as well as the background as to why it is important. I will be incorporating MANY of these ideas in my class this year. This book was exactly what I was looking for and hoping it would be!

Very useful for the classroom

This book talks about conversing in the classroom for all subject areas. As this is to be required by the common core and something which students need to learn the art of doing, I think this book addresses this problem in an intelligent manner. Students spend hours talking to their friends with handheld devices when they should be communicating directly, A must for all secondary teachers!

Very readable and the authors provide steps on how to implement. It is also a good reference tool and additional references are provided for additional research if it desired. As a teacher, I like how it can be use immediately in the classroom.

Outstanding book! It is well written, and offers practical activities that you can take to your classroom.

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Positive Thinking: 50 Positive Habits to Transform you Life: Positive Thinking, Positive Thinking Techniques, Positive Energy, Positive Thinking,, Positive ... Positive Thinking Techniques  
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Make a Killing With Content: Turn content into profits with a strategy for blogging and content marketing.  
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Pathways 4: Listening, Speaking, & Critical Thinking (Pathways: Listening, Speaking, & Critical Thinking)  
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