

Supporting Student Learning with Discussion and Dialogue

by

Mariann Leva

Bachelor of Arts, Malaspina University, 2003  
Bachelor of Education, Malaspina University, 2003

A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

in the area of Early Childhood Education  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Project Supervisor:  
Dr. Michelle Tannock

© Mariann Leva 2015

University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This project may not be reproduced in whole or  
in part, by photocopy or other means, without the permission of the author.

**Supervisory Committee**

Dr. Michelle Tannock, Department of Curriculum and Instruction

**Supervisor**

Dr. Chris Filler, Department of Curriculum and Instruction

**Supervisor****Abstract**

Empirical research into classroom discourse over the last forty years, addresses common discursive patterns that occur between its participants. These patterns follow a stimulus-response model; referred to as Teacher-Initiated, Student-Response, Teacher-Follow Up or Evaluation (IRF/IRE). First identified in the 1970's, IRF/IRE patterns remain a persistent feature in the discursive practices of educators. In a four decade review of the literature in classroom talk, Howe and Abedin (2013) report the high visibility of these patterns; asserting that a large proportion of the sample focused on characterizing classroom dialogue as it occurred. Their examination of 225 studies published between 1972 and 2011, underscore findings which show a 2/3s rule in regards to discursive practices. The propensity for teachers to command more than 60% of the groups' verbal communication is part of the larger debate on classroom dialogue unfolding. Discussion and dialogue are two of the five talk types that students experience in their learning, and as Howe and Abedin contend, often give rise to a richness of student contributions. But with classroom dialogue seldom structured for such purpose, students are given few opportunities to participate in this form of exchange. The topic of dialogic teaching has emerged as a means of supporting thinking and learning with students. Despite limited empirical research into dialogic methods and models, its strong links to constructivist pedagogy afford it underlying merit. Particularly in terms of the benefits to critical thinking skills, collaboration, and communication it serves. In the end, taking a dialogic approach can engage students in those activities that support learning.

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	ii
Table of Contents .....	iii
List of Figures .....	vi
Acknowledgements .....	vii
Chapter One: .....	1
Introduction .....	1
Context and Rationale .....	2
Emerging Perspectives .....	4
Piaget's lasting influence .....	3
Framing a New Outlook.....	5
Statement of the Problem .....	5
Purposeful Change .....	7
Research Focus.....	8
Inquiry Process.....	9
Project Preview .....	10
Summary .....	11
Chapter Two: Literature Review .....	13
Defining Discourse.....	14
Contemporary Discourse Design .....	15
Re-conceptualizing classroom talk .....	16
Dissecting classroom talk .....	18
Learning through Interaction.....	19
Bolstering Cognitive Function .....	21

Promoting Collective Reasoning .....	23
Unfolding ideas .....	25
Standard Practices in Classroom Discourse .....	26
Directing the learning.....	28
Addressing Question-Types .....	30
The default mode of questioning .....	31
Broadening the IRF/IRE exchange .....	31
Changing the Scope of Classroom Discourse .....	32
Classroom Talk for 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Competencies .....	34
Developmentally Appropriate Pedagogy .....	38
Developing young children’s spoken language .....	38
The benefits of social dialogue to early learning .....	40
A Model of Reform .....	42
Conclusion.....	43
Chapter Three: Changing Classroom Talk Patterns.....	45
Reconstructing Classroom Discourse .....	45
Implementing small but purposeful change .....	46
Creating Change in my own Practice.....	47
One of many discourse types .....	47
Language and learning goals.....	49
Exploring exploratory talk .....	51
Making reasoning visible .....	54
Reflecting on Dialogic Methods .....	55
Extending and expanding the practice .....	57

Exploring professional perspectives .....	58
Sharing Pedagogy and Practice .....	58
Insights from the literature .....	59
Coordinating dialogue on discursive practice .....	62
Generating common understanding .....	63
Conclusion.....	63
Chapter Four: Final Reflections .....	65
Changing Beliefs and Practices .....	65
Applying this Perspective .....	66
Key Recommendations .....	67
References .....	70
Appendices .....	78
Appendix A: PowerPoint Presentation (Talking for Learning) .....	78
Appendix B: ‘Talk Types’ Sort Activity.....	88
Appendix C: Group Questions .....	89

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figures	Page
1. Talk and Interaction Types.....	48
2. Classroom Discourse Classifications.....	52
3. Interactive Discourse Patterns.....	54

### **Acknowledgements**

My thanks to the many insightful and remarkable individuals whose perspectives and opinions have guided this work. Special thanks to those colleagues whose continuing support during this process was key in the evolution of these ideas; and the larger insights gleaned. Your collaboration and camaraderie is deeply appreciated.

## Chapter One

### Introduction

Classroom dialogue has been an area of interest in educational research for several decades now. Since the 1970's, when researchers first noticed specific and consistent patterns of talk among teachers and their students, special consideration has been given to delineating its unique role in teaching and learning (Edwards-Groves, 2014). While classroom talk has garnered much attention over the last four decades, "more is known about how classroom dialogue is organized, than about whether certain modes of organization are more beneficial than others" (Howe, 2013, pg. 325). As a result, there is relatively little discussion on which models might help educators develop effective dialogue in their practice. Instead, the literature focuses on two points; how talk is almost exclusively used for instructional purposes, and how rarely it supports processes of knowledge construction or co-construction among teacher and student(s) (Mercer, 2008b; Scott, 2009; Edwards-Groves, 2012; Nachowitz, 2014). Dialogic pedagogy has since emerged as a promising answer to the discourse dilemma. Using discussion and dialogue to support learning, teachers can offer students opportunities to extend their learning through talk.

Dialogic pedagogy moves beyond addressing who is doing the talking, and deals more specifically with the nature of such talk itself. It focuses on classroom relationships and how talk is used to shape and develop learning with students (Myhill, 2006a). Giving importance not only to what such talk does for teaching and learning, but how it is mediated through those interactions, helps to redefine the issue. Dialogic teaching is an interactive process, wherein the participants "practice thinking through and expressing concepts" (Scott, 2009, pg. 2). The exchange is a collaborative one, and there is mutual support for the ideas being expressed. This

dynamic approach promotes a more complex understanding of what classroom discourse might involve. It invites new perspective on the importance of talk for learning, and more pointedly, which styles of talk help bolster understanding. So while current research into classroom discourse strongly favours that educators adopt dialogic principles in their practice (Edwards-Groves, 2012), little can be done “to move [teachers] away from dominating classroom talk” (Myhill, 2006b, pg. 1) without expanding these common notions of classroom discourse itself.

### **Context and Rationale**

Despite decades of educational research on the many merits of a *constructivist* approach for learning, (Vygotsky, 1978; Loewenberg-Ball, 1988; Blumenfeld, 1991; Stremmel, 1993; Bolhuis, 2003; French, 2012) much of how children are taught today in fact follows a *watch-listen-repeat* model of instruction (Swan, 2006). Typically teacher-directed, these lessons afford students few opportunities to actively contribute to the learning. Moreover, these activities rarely engage students in higher-level thinking skills; requiring instead that they follow, and imitate the model shown (Tinzmann, 1990). While explicit instruction is valuable to learning, so are occasions for learners to construct personal meaning to the information (Yule, 2004). Talking allows students to engage in ideas, and that helps to create important context for the learner. By creating classroom dialogue, greater connections to the information can be made (Boyd, 2011). Best practice thinking is certainly constructivist-based, (Meyers, 2009), and yet many teaching approaches continue to exercise directive styles of instruction (Long-Crowell, 2015, para. 4). This divergence between pedagogy and practice draws attention to the fact that new conceptualizations of classroom talk are needed that promote, for example, improved student engagement through articulation.

Approaches that move classroom discourse beyond fact recall and recitation, capitalizes on cognitive processes within the child (Mercer, 2008a). By engaging students in discussion and dialogue, learners are able to explore and ascribe personal meaning to the concepts being taught. Dialogic practice, encourages students to reflect on the ideas, in forming this understanding. But because the classroom is often perceived as being a place where knowledge is “owned, controlled, and transferred to others by [the] adults” (Burke, 2005, p. 31) in charge; students are rarely challenged beyond the constructs of the didactic, linear lesson. Formal education being in some respects, synonymous with socialization (Saldana, 2013) has traditionally been structured to transmit information to its students (King, 1993). The transmittal model however, no longer reflects 21<sup>st</sup> Century societal goals in which critical thinking, collaboration, communication and curiosity are required (Saavedra, 2012). A dialogic approach to instruction adopts many of these principles. Encouraging students to reason, inquire and convey their thinking; students learn the skills and habits that are important for living in the world today.

### **Piaget’s lasting influence.**

For Jean Piaget the idea that young children learn as a result of their active engagement with the world around them, meant that understanding sprung from the cognitive constructs created by the child (Piaget, 1963). His assertion of one’s agency in learning had far-reaching effects on both developmental psychology and educational practice in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Hopkins, 2011). Purporting that “knowledge is not a copy of reality” (Piaget, 1963, p.20), but rather that which develops from operating in it; brought special attention to the child’s active role in the learning experience. This opinion led early childhood educators in particular, to consider how understanding is mediated as a result of the child’s interaction with their surroundings. While he

is often criticised for his methodological approach and theoretical reasoning; the basis of his work has retained its influence on education theory and pedagogy over the decades (Beilin, 1992). Namely his constructivist view on development and the significant role awarded talk and interaction in the child's cognitive processes. For Piaget, it appeared as if language helps with thought, and more specifically; that a child's mutterings directed explicit cognitive activity.

### **Emerging Perspectives**

New thinking emerged later in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century; as post-developmental theorists argued for a basic difference in learning and meaning making itself, the rationale for how learners construct knowledge once again shifted (Edwards, 2011). The notion that learning occurs independently from explicit instruction, pointed to processes of becoming in childhood (Brown, 2007). This suggested that learners are frequently processing ideas and information through their relationships with others. The interactive process itself, simply mediates how learners ascribed meaning to the information presented them, and by sharing in discussion learners are able to connect to new thinking in more personal ways (Fisher, 2009). Talk and interaction help students make better sense of their learning. It enables them to personalize concepts and attribute meaning to the ideas discussed. Because their interactions with others can bolster how meaning is forged, dialogue is both a collaborative and purposeful way to aid knowledge acquisition amongst students. But with few models to draw from, optimal practices in dialogic instruction are uncommon features in the literature (Howe, 2013).

### **Framing a New Outlook**

Contrary to prescriptive discourse, dialogic instruction invites participants to engage in reciprocated discussion (Alexander, 2001). The learning is teacher-mediated rather than teacher-directed, and learners are asked to make informed contributions to discussions. By participating in open and meaningful dialogue, students are encouraged to bring their personal experience to the learning situation (Tinzmann, 1990; Sheerer, 1996). This can motivate learners to engage with ideas in new ways; helping them to reflect, reason and express deeper learning objectives (Jenkins, 2001). Dialogic teaching then is a way for teachers to incorporate three essential elements of the learning process; engagement, articulation and perspective-taking. Each of which, help stimulate emotional and intellectual responses to the learning activity (Gillies, 2006; Edwards-Groves, 2012; French, 2012). Directly engaging with the concepts, learners can articulate their thoughts to the group. By exchanging perspectives, students can build on what they know whilst extending this thinking further. Developing dialogue among and with students “treat[s] learning as a social, communicative process” (Mercer, 2008a, pg. 7), and encourages them “to take a more active, vocal role in classroom events” (Mercer, 2008a, pg. 7). It is decisively collaborative, yet genuinely personal, and typically benefits all those engaged in the process (Howe, 2013).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite the benefits to dialogic instruction, a large proportion of classroom discourse remains teacher directed and teacher dominated (Myhill, 2006a; Mercer, 2008b; Fisher, 2009; Edwards-Groves, 2012). This impacts how students engage with learning, but even more so, how

they express this learning in class. Structuring monologic discussion limits the way in which learners participate, and in many instances, regulates their responses to fewer than five second replies (Myhill, 2006a; Scott, 2009). With few opportunities to engage in dialogic expression, the learning becomes more instructive than exploratory. Learners are then more likely to “mirror or recall what the teacher has said” (Myhill, 2006a, pg. 22), instead of forming their own connections to this information. Chances to articulate and explore thinking are missed and student agency in the activity is minimized. But in classrooms where discussion and dialogue are encouraged, students engage with learning itself (Gillies, 2006; Edwards-Groves, 2012). Exploring ideas encourages students to articulate their reasoning, and that can further the meaning they construct to the concepts. No longer about simply acquiring facts, but exploring the relationships that exist therein; these process-oriented frameworks are slowly moving teaching and learning towards more collaborative exchanges in the classroom. Still, balancing the social with the analytical aspects of learning (Kovalainen, 2005) is critical, and requires that teachers show discernment between the two. After all, dialogic teaching is meant to provoke more sophisticated thinking amongst learners.

Generating productive engagement is an essential part of any dialogic framework, and requires that educators elicit purposeful intellectualizing from the group (Engle, 2002). This entails making one’s thinking explicit with others so that common understanding is formed (Mercer, 2008a). Asking students to provide reasons for the answers they give offers meaning and purpose in the learning exchange. It engages students in thoughtful processes wherein they can explore confusions or uncertainties, as well as articulate new revelations. By redefining how content is explored, learning for understanding becomes less about having the ‘right answers’ and more about examining a “collection of possibilities” (Brown, 2007, Discussion, para. 3).

Discussion as a tool for learning, affords students the chance to articulate their own understanding. It also reflects the group's perspectives back to the individual student, which can elicit further associations still. Another incentive to using dialogic practices is that it supports communication and collaborative skills in learners. These are crucial skills for today's learners to possess; and as societies become increasingly more complex, tomorrow's cultures will require sophisticated solutions from individuals. Discussion and dialogue is part of the necessary education that students will need to live and work in these times. It engages students in collaborative discourse, and encourages individuals to see themselves as thinkers and learners.

### **Purposeful Change**

Looking at how teachers can mediate learning using discourse requires the following frame of reference. First, it is crucial that educators treat children as capable and competent learners (OECD, 2004; Hedges, 2005). Understanding that each child brings his or her own insight into the learning exchange, makes developing classroom interactions as important as the content which is covered. Teachers who keep to their prescribed lesson outcomes, might not always connect to the learning that is happening at the time. Consequently, missing critical moments in a child's thinking and reasoning (Myhill, 2006b). In contrast, dialogic teaching helps maintain focus on the learner as well as the learning. It recognizes the innate pool of knowledge that exists in any one classroom and encourages "deep thinking and rich talk [among] children" (Myhill, 2006b, pg. 17). The second principle for consideration is embedded in the first, and addresses the relationship between learning and development itself. By framing as Vygotsky does, that development is first and foremost experienced socially, a child's partnerships in learning become key to this success. Collaboration in this respect is seen not as an outcome, but

a condition for learning in their development (Saavedra, 2012). Because “all higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals,” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57) promoting these collaborative models of instruction can be advantageous to their overall learning.

Finally, it is essential that educators think of this “learning, as extending far beyond educational participation” (Bolhuis, 2003, pg. 329). Promoting student's active involvement is no longer enough. Engagement in lessons, while requisite to their understanding, is not causal to it. Opportunities for students to participate in collective reasoning however, supports cognitive functioning that develops understanding and affords students locus in the learning experience itself (Stremmel, 1993; Mercer, 2008a; Saavedra, 2012). By offering “multiple opportunities for students to express what they know” (Jenkins, 2001, pg. 78), educators help learners engage in thinking about the ideas and concepts that generate understanding. It requires students to take an interest in sharing perspectives, and puts them at the center of the learning exchange. Ultimately, using a dialogic framework for learning supports the skills, dispositions and responsibilities necessary for 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning.

### **Research Focus**

Aimed at giving learning its full measure as a social phenomenon; dialogic practice offers opportunities that are both experiential, meaningful and connected to the process of learning itself (Renzulli, 2004; Mercer, 2010). Yet creating the right kinds of classroom discussion can present its own set of challenges to consider. Most commonly debated in the research on dialogic teaching is the fact that classroom discourse, which unfolds as a series of three part exchanges; teacher-*Initiated* questions, student- *Responses*, teacher- *Follow-Up* and *Evaluation* (IRF/IRE), is neither collaborative nor interactive. Restricting how students respond in the learning, IRF/IRE

patterns create closed discourse amongst members and can constrain how understanding is constructed. Conversely, discourse that is structured to extend the learning exchange through speculation and arguments encourages a more interactive process of developing reasoning with students (Scott, 2009). Certainly dialogic interaction will not support all learning objectives, but it can be particularly useful in helping students become independent and engaged learners in their education (Myhill, 2006a). Determining how dialogic instruction can be used to support student learning requires contextualizing the issue of classroom discourse pedagogy and practice.

Guiding this work are the following three questions:

1. how is dialogic discussion different from other talk types?
2. what are the educational benefits of incorporating more dialogic teaching in early primary programs?
3. how can discussion and dialogue be used in the primary classroom to support student learning?

## **Inquiry Process**

Noting significant gaps in the literature in both what constitutes effective classroom discourse, and how educators can better structure it into their lessons, makes this a compelling topic of inquiry (Myhill, 2006b; Mercer, 2010; Edwards-Groves, 2012; Howe, 2013). Despite the available pedagogical theory, educators have few practical examples of how to structure classroom discourse for learning, which may be why discursive practices remain unchanged over time. The idea that classroom talk and interaction remains a “taken-for-granted” (Edwards-Groves, 2012, pg. 82) practice in education has been addressed in more recent studies and is certainly an intriguing point to consider. Often separate from the learning objectives of the

lesson, classroom talk can be a neglected feature in the activity. But with neither the discursive models nor the professional conversations around discourse from which to guide instruction, changes in these practices are unlikely to occur. Moreover, the difficulties in transitioning away from IRF/IRE models to more collaborative kinds of talk will presumably persist (Howe, 2013).

Recognizing my own glaring ties to IRF/IRE discourse patterns has caused me to question what change I can make in my professional practice. Starting with the premise that students need opportunities to explore thinking, I became interested in how classroom talk could be structured for these purposes. It required insightful analysis and study of the different talk types, their functions, and the learning objections each supports. Examining the issue resulted in a broadened appreciation for the role that discourse plays in curricula instruction, and moreover, afforded a clearer sense of how I can use discussion and dialogue to support student learning. Ultimately it presented a new course from which to explore the topic, as well as the possibility to extend this understanding further still with colleagues.

### **Project Preview**

According to theories in discourse and learning, tasks which assert thinking processes have profound educational merit in bolstering higher-level thinking skills with students. Thinking processes such as: reasoning, explaining and justifying, help to engage learners in the kinds of discussions which promote important learner competencies. By asking students to elaborate on the answers they give, the teacher is able to extend the dialogic exchange to more than just a few words. This affords learners the chance to further articulate their point-of-view, and creates a context from which to form meaning and understanding. As perspectives unfold

students are exposed to deeper and diverse ways of looking at the issues. In addition to its underlying cognitive advantages is the influence that collaborative discussion offers students with interpersonal and communicative skills. As an important facet of their overall success at school, students need to be strong users of language in order to effectively communicate their thinking. Creating opportunities for students to engage in this type of collaborative discourse, was foremost in my mind.

Concentrating on ways of implementing this change, I looked for strategies that would help make thinking explicit with students. Unfortunately I found few practical examples from which to draw perspective, but was ultimately able to use the action research performed by two primary school teachers (Colcott, 2009) to guide my change in practice. Their descriptive symbols and phrases of reflection became part of the teacher narrative I adopted with my own reading group. Using reflective thought patterns helped model and facilitate this sharing, reasoning and perspective-taking, and provided the explicit means from which to structure such interaction. The research into classroom discourse clearly shows that teacher dominated talk is prevalent in education. Yet alternative models are simply lacking from studies found. How to structure such discussion, and when and how to scaffold in new layers of dialogic teaching-and-learning, are queries which find little insight from within the literature. Exploring those avenues became the purpose and function of this work.

## **Summary**

As the individual human experience becomes increasingly global, our interpersonal relationships become ever more complex. Consequently, strong capabilities and competencies

are required in addition to a general knowledge of facts that education provides. Skills for effective communication, collaboration and problem-solving are becoming profoundly more important to possess; and the capacity to apply this knowledge is now vital (Saavedra, 2012). Critical shifts in how individuals relate to others makes it necessary that the learner be able to perform tasks with flexibility and purpose. Although these are not new trends exactly, education reform has yet to adopt principles of more robust, responsive and responsible instruction needed for this century (Mercer, 2008b). Despite support for these practices from within the research community, difficulties seemingly rest with the fact that educators are unsure, uneasy and unclear about how to implement these changes to their professional practice.

Conventional instruction often minimizes the importance of discussion in the learning exchange. Focused on delivering content instead, it provides marginal experiences for the learner to engage with these ideas. This impacts their overall learning experience and regulates how they make connections to the information being taught. Because the ability to problem-solve, collaborate and communicate ideas are three highly prized skills for success in today's complex world; our programs needs to offer greater discursive exploration and examination throughout the learning process. Helping students engage in productive work has always been the core challenge for teachers, and continues even now to move education along these new lines (Engle, 2002). One of the ways of implementing effective change then, is through dialogic discussion. Whether to support critical thinking, cooperation, collaboration, communication, concentration, or connection; dialogue can be used to influence all these critical domains in the child's learning.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

Classroom talk is a vital part of the learning exchange. In using talk the teacher can elaborate on concepts, clarify information and offer explanations. But classroom talk is a broad construct, it can also be used to explore new thinking and develop greater understanding amongst its participants. Examining the realities of classroom discourse shows that talk is primarily structured for the former objective (Gillies, 2006; Myhill, 2006b; Mercer, 2008a; Edwards-Groves, 2012). Classroom talk, its patterns and the type of interaction it encourages are important points to consider when structuring it for learning; and while discourse remains an effective tool in communicating foundational concepts to students, it is recognizably underused as a tool for promoting productive and engaging discussion (Mercer, 2008b; Scott, 2009). Looking at discourse through the learner's lens can help teachers expand the ways that talk is used in their classrooms. By focusing on dialogic pedagogy and practice it is possible to implement changes in how such talk is used for learning purposes. Creating understanding around dialogue and discussion is key. The following literature review sets out to explore specific elements of classroom talk. Helping to make distinctions between talk for teaching purposes and talk for learning, it will disseminate the different functions and formats of classroom talk and interaction. Analysis of traditional discourse models guide the discussion towards more contemporary, 21<sup>st</sup> Century approaches, and promotes a discourse framework in which talking for meaning and articulation is encouraged. Ultimately this review offers both, clarification of the pedagogical issues, as well as some practical points for teachers to consider when using discussion and dialogue to support learning.

## Defining Discourse

In examining classroom talk, it is helpful to elaborate on the term's meaning. Discourse can be described as both the actual face-to-face talk which occurs between individuals (talk as interaction); or in the broader-sense, the social identities, customs and instructions of a particular group (Edwards-Groves, 2014). For the purposes of this review, the former definition will be assumed in which discourse is defined as interactional rather than metaphysical. Addressing discourse as talk and interaction brings attention to the exchanges that unfold between teachers and students. Doing so raises the point that discourse can be defined by how it is used, and discussed according to the conditions it influences (Howe, 2013; Edwards-Groves, 2014). Examining classroom talk in this way gives context to larger issues, as well as the roles and various functions discourse has in educational practice.

Along with a conceptual framing of the issue, various terms associated with classroom talk and interaction become important to define. Depending on the strategies and practices used, classroom talk can be either, didactic or organic; prescriptive or open-ended; instructive or exploratory. Because, each has a particular purpose and function in the learning exchange it is helpful to create some context around these various terms. *Monologic* discourse describes the type of talk where one person, usually the teacher, presents information to a receptive audience (Edwards-Groves, 2014). This predominantly teacher-directed talk is also referred to as didactic and or instructional practice. It is sometimes defined as exposition, recitation and further still, as a transmission approach to teaching and learning. In contrast to this style of talk, *dialogic* discourse is structured to engage participants through discussion (Alexander, 2001). Contrary to teacher-centered approaches, dialogic teaching invites greater interaction among members and is used to facilitate “common understanding through structured, cumulative questioning and

discussion” (Scott, 2009, pg. 7) from within the group. Such discourse is quite often defined as learner-centered or interactive. It elicits perspective-sharing and negotiation, and encourages students to vocalize their learning through discussion. Each instructional approach holds unique merit in the exchange. Yet dialogic instruction is often overshadowed by a propensity for teacher talk to dominate these practices (Gillies, 2006). Classroom talk which is only monologic, or only dialogic, ignores these important aspects and can impede the way learners engage with learning.

Dialogic practice plays a key role in learning. It affords students the opportunity to articulate their thinking, which directly supports the cognitive processes behind learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Using classroom talk this way allows children to construct personal meaning to the concepts and ideas being discussed, and thus, is characterized by the understanding it seeks to construct. At the same time, the collaborative nature of such talk exposes students to different perspectives, reinforcing thoughts not yet formalized into words (Fisher, 2009). By mutually building understanding, discussions support learning through talking (Boyd, 2011) and thinking together (Mercer 2008b). Focussing on how discourse can be used to support student learning, the following review of the literature on classroom discourse seeks to explain ways that teachers can use dialogic principles in their teaching to facilitate student engagement, bolster thinking and reflection, and encourage meaning articulation within lessons.

### **Contemporary Discourse Design**

Empirical interest in classroom talk first emerged in the late sixties (Edwards-Groves, 2014). At that time, educational researchers were concerned with the relationship between language and learning and as a result classroom discourse became part of its broader study

(Edwards-Groves, 2014). Since then, researchers in discourse have reported its contemporary uses and discussed whether changes to classroom practices might be made. The general consensus is two-fold. First, that dialogic discourse is rarely featured in the classroom; and second, that ‘talk’ is primarily the province of the teacher (Edwards-Groves, 2012; Howe, 2013). While dialogue is influential in learning, it is also a fundamental teaching tool which is often used to maintain authoritative control of the classroom (Mercer, 2008b). The tight control kept over discourse allows educators to maximize instruction time and minimize interruptions. It is not however the opinion, to eliminate instructional talk altogether, but to compliment it with purposeful discussion and dialogue. In finding that dialogic discourse is rarely used by classroom teachers, the literature indicates disproportionate levels of classroom exchange. Despite such imbalance, changes can be made and as the literature shows: “in classroom where dialogic teaching was often utilized, children had many opportunities to observe, learn and practice different and often more formal styles of talk” (Scott, 2009, pg. 8). Hence, the point is not to trade one discourse style for another, but to allow for a wider-range of experiences in how dialogue is used with students.

### **Re-conceptualizing classroom talk.**

Proponents of using dialogic principles in education recommend conceptualizing classroom talk with knowledge construction in mind (Edwards-Groves, 2014). Monologic talk, often promotes knowledge delivery and or information recitation, which can be a more passive stance for learners to assume. Often the approach focuses on conveying discrete and sometimes disconnected features of knowledge. When the learner is attentive he or she is able to process this information, but when disengaged, it is difficult for the child to make important connections.

In order for meaningful learning to occur, the child must be actively processing the exchange. Lessons which offer more opportunities for students to connect to their learning through discussion and dialogue, help support this type of knowledge construction (Blumenfeld, 1991; Stremmel, 1993; Konings, 2005; Osberg, 2008; Meyers, 2009; French, 2012). Learning relies heavily on the interactions assumed by the child, and must engage their attention and reflection. Certainly not every lesson will have every child participating in discussion and offering dialogue. It might even be unreasonable to suggest that this is possible in a classroom with, dozens of students, each with their own point-of-view. What dialogic practice promotes is open-dialogue. It shifts the focus from expository to exploratory, and changes the way learning unfolds in the group.

A principal tenet of socio-cultural theory, knowledge construction, refers to the development of understanding that occurs during learning. Vygotsky, whose research it is founded on reasoned; “learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, pg. 83). By restricting dialogic discussions, learners are provided content but little opportunity to make sense of the concepts for themselves. It is especially problematic when teacher’s talk begins overshadowing the learner’s experiences, and students are positioned as passive receivers of information and ideas (Edwards-Groves, 2014). Recent research into teacher talk shows the asymmetrical way in which classroom talk commonly unfolds as exercises in demonstrating, explaining and correcting by the teacher (Mercer, 2008b). Asserting, that “if learners are to make the best use of talk as a tool for learning, then they need some chance to use it” (Mercer, 2008b, pg. 2) in the classroom. As long as discursive practices are used for delivering content, checking understanding, and maintaining

student's attention, the disproportionate nature of these interactions will be difficult to alter (Konings, 2005). A vital first step towards supporting learning through discourse then is to bolster understanding about what it currently looks like in education.

### **Dissecting classroom talk.**

In its normal occurrence classroom discourse is typically structured to convey information, facts and ideas to students (Swan, 2006). As was mentioned in the preceding section, it is largely instructive versus investigative, and embraces authoritative methods such as lecturing, demonstrating and questioning (Gillies, 2006; Edwards-Groves, 2014). Of these three, the kinds of questions asked can either bolster creative and critical engagement between learners, or limit inquiry from occurring (Boyd, 2011). By asking students to reflect on 'why' something is true, the teacher engages the class in distinctively different discourse than during direct instruction (Loewenberg-Ball, 1988). Relevant to how learning is explored, are five broader categories of talk; *telling*, *questioning*, *conversation*, *discussion* and *dialogue* (Fisher, 2009). In classrooms where 'telling' is the primary discourse type utilized, teachers focus on delivering curricula content and explicit knowledge to students (Alexander, 2001). But when given the chance to participate in shared dialogue, students are afforded the opportunity to internalize meaning for themselves (Franke, 2009). The distinction between the different types of talk influence how students construct knowledge, and more importantly, gives insight into the nature of the problem with classroom discourse itself. Because in most cases, classroom talk is very tightly controlled by the teacher, it is neither collaborative nor reflective of the interactive processes involved in learning (Stremmel, 1993; Myhill 2006a). Linking discursive practices to pedagogy is crucial going forward. It acknowledges the variance in discourse strategies and

places importance on using the right kinds of talk for learning purposes (Alexander, 2001; Edwards-Groves, 2014).

### **Learning through Interaction**

Telling, is a monologic practice that typically occasions very little interaction amongst its participants. It is the lack of interaction, and not the talk itself, which causes concern. Without opportunities for students to be active participants in the exchange, the learner can quite easily remain removed from the learning activity. Thus, disengagement is the larger issue as students who have trouble regulating themselves may miss much of what the teacher is trying to convey. Activities that invite student interaction can be extremely effective then with helping students connect to the concepts being discussed (Fisher, 2009). On the other hand, when structured with learners in mind, lecturing can be instrumental to the discussion of critical content matter. Teacher's talk is important after all, as they are often the expert, and have key insight to share with their students. But rather than simply telling students what they need to know, the teacher can communicate ideas that launch students in constructing their own reasoning and understanding instead (Stein, 2008). Giving students context is a critical part of dialogic teaching. It helps frame this constructive inquiry and offers students foundational knowledge from which to extrapolate ideas (Mercer, 2006a). When classroom talk is used this way, to help guide and steer students' thinking, it can be immensely beneficial to creating these pathways to learning (Swan, 2006). As such, dialogic talk is both an important teaching, and learning tool.

Each of the following talk types, 'questioning', 'conversation', 'discussion' and 'dialogue', involve various degrees of interaction but are nevertheless more dialogic than the

first. While a teacher's questioning can be more monologic than dialogic, it generally encourages some form of exchange between teacher and student. Questions that are typically teacher-directed however will reduce interactions within the group, as is the case in closed-questioning where the average response from a student includes three to five word utterances only (Myhill, 2006a; Scott, 2009). Classroom conversations on the other hand hinge on the collaborative exchange amongst group members. While the format underscores receptive participation, it also provides students the chance to extend their opinions within the group. This gives learners the opportunity to contribute with longer responses and more importantly, it affords them an interactive role in the discursive exchange as it unfolds. Although facilitated by the teacher, conversational dialogue is immensely more learner-centered (Alexander, 2001). It is largely social and allows strong interaction among participants. Designed for sharing views and perspectives, learning conversations can promote valuable interchange of ideas (Fisher, 2009).

Discussion and dialogue uses this perspective-sharing as a basis for investigation in taking ideas further (Alexander, 2001; Kovalainen, 2005; Fisher, 2009; Scott, 2009). It is unique in the sense that it is both social and cognitively challenging. In classrooms where discussion and dialogue are more commonly used, students are encouraged to provide reasons or justifications to the points they are sharing. Asking students to think about the answers they give taps into the cognitive processes involved in learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Through discussion "children can actively test their understanding against that of others" (Mercer, 2008a, pg. 3). It helps learners construct, not just acquire this information, and is key to adopting a more constructivist approach to classroom instruction. Both discussion and dialogue invite its participants to share their opinions, reasoning and thinking on the subject, and teachers who use dialogic discussion encourage students to relate to the ideas being expressed in class (Tinzmann, 1990; Konings;

2005; Mercer, 2008b; Fisher, 2009). Dialogic discourse is not simply about sharing what one knows with others, but furthers working together to develop common understanding of the concepts (Mercer, 2008a). This infuses talk with interaction and fosters “extensive opportunities for negotiation and inquiry” (Kovalainen, 2005, pg. 214).

Dialogic discussion, encourages interaction through thinking together (Fisher, 2009). It prompts students to consider what they think in relational to what others have said, and encourages them to make associations in their learning. By asking students to connect to what others have shared, the dialogue becomes more focused and the exchange is given direction. Classroom talk however, can only ever offer perspective. Ultimately, it requires the individual to then process and ascribe it meaning. Dialogue is a way of facilitating this interaction so that students can participate in this work. It places an emphasis on learning itself and engages students in the activities therein. More than merely telling or sharing information, discussion and dialogue can activate the very processes of knowledge creation required for learning (Kovalainen, 2005).

### **Bolstering Cognitive Function**

Dialogic teaching acknowledges that learning unfolds on both a social and cognitive level to produce understanding (Vygotsky, 1978; Bandura, 1986). It structures the learning event as conversation (social) plus inquiry (cognitive) and demands a specific type of talk emerge (Alexander, 2001). The activities themselves are “designed to help the child practice thinking through and expressing concepts” (Scott, 2009, pg. 2). This allows the learner to assert his or her perceptions in context to what others have shared. Moreover, dialogic discussions afford

students the time and space to consider these ideas for themselves. Bolstering those processes that mediate understanding, dialogic practice positions learners to engage with thinking itself. Together, talk and interaction offer strong measures for supporting a child's cognitive functioning, and the learning experience becomes both personal and dynamic when it is explored this way (Vygotsky, 1978; Stremmel, 1993; Hyun, 2003; Bell, 2010). Yet the realities of classroom discourse shows limited opportunities for students to interact in this kind of coordinated exchange (Myhill, 2006a; Mercer, 2008a; Howe, 2013; Nachowitz, 2014). Teachers who design their lessons to include more dialogic discussion can encourage among many things, the processes that generate, extend and connect ideas with students (Boyd, 2011).

In sharing such understanding, learners engage in what socio-cultural theorists call inter-subjectivity. The term itself refers to the cognitive, social and emotional interchange that occurs between members of a learning community (Hedges, 2005). It is the underlying premise for collaborative activity and establishes the notion of partnerships in learning. The inter-subjectivity among learners is what permits participants "to have thoughts they could not have had on their own, yet recognize these thoughts as developments of their own thinking" (Scott, 2009, pg. 4). As a mutual activity in reasoning, learners use the ideas shared to construct new understanding of the principles (Stremmel, 1993). This understanding becomes part of the interpersonal processing that the learner assumes, and ultimately impacts the perspective they construct for themselves. It is a characteristic of teaching and learning which happens in the classroom whether it is planned for or not; but when bolstered with classroom talk and interaction, inter-subjectivity becomes a valuable tool for learning.

Discussions that encourage substantial and significant contributions to the exchange, deepen the inter-subjectivity among its participants (Scott, 2009). As students collectively

engage with ideas, and their talk thus, can influence what others think and say (Bakhtin, 1981). Offering opportunities to express alternate perspectives encourages students to consider their point-of-view in relational to what someone else thinks. This extends the connections they make and deepens the reasoning that emerges as new thoughts and opinions. Through such activity, students are able to construct meaning from the common understanding of the group.

### **Promoting Collective Reasoning**

Along with its various types, talk is used primarily to support student's understanding along three different lines; to know, to connect, and to reason together (Boyd, 2011). The different nature of understanding can determine the type of talk used. Instructive or monologic talk is useful in presenting concepts and information to the group. This particular form of talk provides knowledge of important facts from which students can then make personal meaning. It is a form of talking to 'know' and is typically structured to support content comprehension (Edwards-Groves, 2012). A considerable amount of classroom talk supports these measures towards understanding (Edwards-Grove, 2014). Characteristic of a transmission approach to curriculum and instruction it is commonly referred to as 'chalk and talk' teaching (Mills, 2003). Structured so that the teacher does most of the talking, students are required to listen as they learn. Research into classroom discourse warns educators about employing this style of talk too often throughout their lessons, as it does little to cognitively engage students in "personal and collective sense-making" (Stein, 2008, pg. 315). Adopting dialogic practice can help the teacher connect to different ways of using talk for learning purposes. Not only to inform and instruct learning, but to engage the learners in a process of understanding. This requires that teachers become more aware of how they structure classroom talk (Mercer, 2008b). Evaluating talk from

a learner's perspective allows one to assess the way in which students are engaging with ideas. Students' brief answers to questions for example, show how restricted this learning is much of the time. By inviting students to elaborate on the responses they give, educators can encourage students to examine their understanding. Given the opportunity to express their thinking, talk becomes a tool for learning, and student discourse becomes the means for supporting deeper understanding.

Yet another talk objective is in connecting information to different ideas and perspectives. This discourse can be less didactic than the previous form, but depending on how connections are made, for or with students, its impact on learning will vary. For example, talk that didactically demonstrates connections for learners offers them fewer opportunities to be actively involved in the exchange. Whereas when discussion and dialogue is used to explore concepts either before, during or after the demonstration; students become part of the cooperative exchange and their perspectives are included in the connections being made. This is a powerful feature in dialogic teaching as it gives students a voice in their own learning. Fisher (2009) elaborates on the impact of using classroom discourse to forge connections with students, quoting; "as Paula, aged 10, said about discussion: 'You know it was good when you realize you have said things that you had never thought before'" (Fisher, 2009, pg. 4). The roles that are afforded students in their learning are important ones to consider. When their opinions, perspectives and reasoning are elicited, the connections they make are profound and compelling. Obviously, demonstrations and modelling are necessary features of learning, but it is a disservice to students when they are continually expected to process understanding from a single didactic point-of-view.

**Unfolding ideas.**

Dialogic principles engage participants in generating, extending and connecting ideas (Boyd, 2011). This approach is somewhat unpredictable as dialogue is generally spontaneous and unscripted. Yet it is because of its inventive characteristic that it can direct the learning along new lines of thinking. Taking a dialogic approach encourages students to think about reasons behind the answers they give. This bolsters both their thought processes and the communicative actions taken (Rojas-Drummond, 2006). In using dialogic discussion, participants can engage in social modes of thinking together, enabling them to negotiate and make sense of these various perspectives (Rojas-Drummond, 2006). This open-ended speculation encourages the use of imagination which allows creative thought to unfold (Fisher, 2009). Because classroom discourse is often structured to elicit closed-responses instead, opportunities to develop reflection are not generally explored within the classroom (Myhill, 2006a). Encouraging dialogic exchange then, enables students to participate in activities that further their thinking and learning. While there is strong pedagogical reason to use discussion and dialogue with students, pedagogy alone will not produce the changes required. Citing the need for more practical information and evaluation of dialogic models, Howe and Abedin (2013) address the underlying impact that teachers' own practices have on changing classroom talk patterns. This next section of the literature review will examine discursive practices and offer alternative strategies for teachers to use with their students.

### **Standard Practices in Classroom Discourse**

The language and learning relationship has been a topic of educational research for several decades. Even before Vygotsky wrote about children's experiences within their environment, educational theory maintained how language floats on a sea of talk for learners to study (Edwards-Groves, 2014). As a result, classroom talk continues to garner much interest in the literature. More recent studies in classroom discourse have established a need for such discursive practices to be diverse and interactive (Myhill, 2006b; Mercer, 2008b, Fisher, 2009; Edwards-Groves, 2012). Those who argue in favor of dialogic instruction assert the underlying link between language and learning as reason to adopt its practices (Stremmel, 1993; Fisher, 2001; Brown, 2007; Edwards-Groves, 2014). Taking a 'best-practice' directive, much of the literature reviewed in this chapter purports the inherent value in adopting a dialogic approach to instruction (Gillies, 2006; Myhill 2006a; Edwards-Groves, 2012). This drives the discussion towards pedagogical implications but offers few practical models for engaging in this work (Howe, 2013). Moreover, the issue of teacher anxiety over how to effectively implement such change will need to be addressed if there is to be support for this shift in education. Going forward thus requires practical considerations be made, and a framework in which to use dialogic approaches be further explored.

Much of the discourse dilemma in education stems from mounting concerns over meeting content and performance standards (Myhill, 2006a). With performance reporting now a routine part of districts' Early Success monitoring initiatives (CVSD REPORT, 2013), educators have strong reason to focus on content delivery with their students. In British Columbia for example, many districts ask their teachers to report on student literacy levels throughout the school year. Along with their regular reports this required data in basic phonemic awareness, reading, writing

and comprehension skills, is sent directly to the districts for review. The push for “data-based attention [on] how well, individual students, schools and sets of schools are doing” (Fullan, 2009, pg. 108) is one of four key recommendations made by the Organization for Economic and Cooperation Development (OECD). The organization recognizes it to be a common policy and strategy used in top-performing education systems worldwide (Fullan, 2009), yet it is possible that its practice may be in-directly influencing how teachers structure their classroom talk. Research into educational practices refers to this as High Stakes curricula programming (Nicolopoulou, 2010), in which focus is given to performance versus learning objectives. The problem with taking this position, is that the argument itself is highly speculative and there is little direct evidence to link the two together. Even more problematic is the fact that discourse patterns reflect key similarities from 40 years ago. Therefore, it seems more likely that both the structure and organization given to classroom talk is something that teachers maintain regardless of the demands place on them by the districts.

Another obstacle that impedes dialogic practice is the worry teachers express over losing control of the learning exchange (Tinzmann, 1990; Gillies, 2006, Myhill, 2006a). This particular reasoning carries some weight as it explains why teachers continue to take charge and ownership over classroom talk. To better appreciate what guides discourse it is helpful to examine how talk functions in the classroom. Research into classroom verbal behaviours found that in most instances, talk was designed to direct the learning (Gillies, 2006). This suggests a plausible reason for the control teachers assert over classroom talk, as they aim to maintain control over the group, urge on-task attention, and maximize individual and teacher-directed learning (Gillies, 2006). Using talk to regulate classroom behaviors affords the teacher a degree of influence over the group and because it is structured to direct students in their learning, classroom talk continues

to function as a means of instruction (Edwards-Groves, 2012). By controlling discourse, teachers maintain this influence on the learning and can direct various aspects therein. Changes in discourse patterns may threaten these larger conventional practices in teaching. A shift towards dialogic practice will require teachers to try new approaches that they may not be comfortable using. Recognizing that teachers use discourse patterns that are both familiar and regulated thus seems a more reasonable explanation for the propensity of teacher talk in education (Edwards-Groves, 2012). Discourse is structured this way, not because of any new demands, but because of a long-standing tradition in which teaching and instruction are fixed models in education.

### **Directing the learning.**

Because teaching is synonymous with instruction teacher-student discourse is often bidirectional, with students expected to respond only when directed to do so by the teacher (Gillies, 2006). Even when engaged in class discussions teachers' talk times remains significantly higher than their students' (Howe, 2013). Certainly teachers have important perspective to offer their students, but with few opportunities to engage in multi-directional discussions, learners are less likely to make genuinely independent contributions to the dialogue (Gillies, 2006). In a study addressing effective talk in primary classrooms, Myhill, Jones and Hopper (2006b) describe how difficult it was for the participating teachers "to move away from dominating classroom talk" (Myhill, 2006b, pg. 1). Realizing that they needed to say less during the discursive exchange, this particular group of teachers worked towards creating more interactive talk with their students. In implementing changes to their classroom discourse, they began using fewer closed-questions to generate discussions. The use of open-ended questions is key in forging interactive talk with students. It shifts the conversation from being bidirectional to

multi-directional, giving students the chance to be active participants in the discussion.

Individual teachers also made changes to the way they facilitated this exchange by devoting time in the discussion for their students to think about the answers they were giving (Myhill, 2006b).

Pausing the discussion encouraged students to reflect on an idea or a particular statement given.

It created space for thinking about the issue, which in turn gave students more time to interact and engage with the concepts being discussed (Myhill, 2006b). By changing the questions they asked, as well as the way in which those questions were discussed, these educators successfully created new patterns of discourse in their classrooms.

Although they “found it difficult to make extensive changes to their questioning strategies” (Myhill, 2006b, pg. 1) teachers were able to increase the amount of talk and interaction that occurred in the classroom. Concerned with creating more multi-directional or interactive discourse, the participating teachers worked on giving students more “opportunities to learn through speaking” (Myhill, 2006b, pg. 1). After their second year in the project, teachers had increased the quantity of student exchanges by a sizable margin, as multi-directional discourse went from one minute of the 810 minutes observed, to 34 minutes of 270 minutes (Myhill, 2006b). While there was measurable change to their discourse, the numbers still reflect a propensity for teachers to direct the learning. These patterns of classroom discourse help to emphasize transmission of facts and knowledge objectives, as well as maintain order and discipline among students. They are difficult to change, in that they are part of the teaching structure itself. But as one participant from the study remarked, “encouraging deep thinking and rich talk in children cannot occur without broadening children’s speaking opportunities and giving them rich experiences to reflect upon” (Myhill, 2006b, pg. 17). In order for this to happen, teachers will need to structure classroom talk differently. Questioning is just a one of the

ways teachers shape classroom discourse, and by changing the question type, teachers can subsequently influence how discourse unfolds in the classroom.

### **Addressing Question-Types**

Questioning is one of five distinct types of talk which educators use, but as with the other talk types, there are significant differences between both their structure and function. In the classroom setting questions are often designed to find out what others know or challenge students' thinking (Fisher, 2009). Teachers use questions to find out what students know, when they inquire on prior knowledge, check understanding, elicit re-call, and test or clarify a point in the discussion. This type of questioning will usually invite *factual* or *procedural* responses from students in the form of short and often unconnected utterances (Boyd, 2011). Challenging students' thinking involves a wider range of question-types. By posing *speculative* and *process* questions instead, the student is encouraged to reflect, reason, explore and re-examine the issue. Questions that ask students to explain 'why' or 'why not' and 'what if', push students to think about the answers they give. It engages the learner in reflection and the bolsters higher-order thinking skills. These types of questions are part of a talking for learning mindset, or dialogic approach to instruction which can be adopted by the classroom teacher. They encourage students to elaborate on their thinking, which can support "growth in both individual and group understanding" (Boyd, 2011, pg. 11). But with 60% of all questions inviting pre-determined answers (Myhill, 2006a), students have few opportunities to engage in the kind of reflection that speculative and process questioning promote.

### **The default mode of questioning.**

Much of the literature on classroom discourse focuses on the way in which teachers engage students in questioning (Myhill 2006b; Mercer 2008b; Fisher, 2009). Typically structured as a series of stimulus-response-stimulus-response interactions, dialogic discussion has little chance of unfolding as a result (Fisher, 2009). Instead what happens is that the teacher *initiates* a question; that question generates a student *response*; and this response is followed-up with *feedback* and *evaluation* from the teacher. The Teacher-Initiated/Student-Response/Teacher-Follow-Up and Evaluation (IRF/IRE) discourse pattern was first noticed in the 1970's but has been well-documented since (Mercer, 2008b; Boyd, 2011; Edwards-Groves, 2014). Howe and Abedin's four decade review into classroom dialogue, revealed that at least half of the 225 studies they looked at focused on classroom participation structures, and of those concerned with IRF/IRE structures, all "document its high visibility within [the] classroom" (Howe, 2013, pg. 334). Although IRF/IRE patterns are given much notice in the literature, there is seldom discussion about how to implement the shift recommended. Reflecting on findings from the Myhill et al. study (2006b), answers seem to lie with structuring questions differently. Students will often engage in IRF/IRE participation patterns when the questions require a factual or procedural response. Changing the question type, or adding to the question, can possibly help alter the way in which learners participate in dialogic exchange.

### **Broadening the IRF/IRE exchange.**

Developing classroom dialogue does not require that teachers stop using IRF/IRE patterns of discourse altogether. Certainly more open-ended discussions can be a powerful tool for

learning, but not every lesson will involve prolonged discussion. In cases where IRF/IRE helps structure the learning, it can be used effectively to build on students' responses. When teachers' follow-up accepts, rejects or develops the answer, it reinforces the kind of IRF/IRE talk that closes discussion (Fisher, 2009). By quickly evaluating the response students give, the teacher moves the discussion forward without much time afforded reflection. Usually to another question which elicits the same short reply. This fixed stimulus-response pattern is what makes generating dialogic responses deeply challenging. Conversely, were teachers to follow-up their questions with further questioning, a dialogue might ensue (Fisher, 2009). Prompting students to further explain, give reasons for, or justify their answers, can deepen the discussion. It extends and expands on the ideas already presented, helping to "scaffold new levels of understanding" (Fisher, 2009, pg. 31) in the process. The follow-up move is what will distinguish closed IRF/IRE patterning from more dialogic exchange. By challenging students to think about how they might defend their answer, the teacher encourages reflection and further processing. Consequently, asking a student to elaborate on his or her statement can provide greater context than is typically generated by a string of questions. Changes to the way teachers structure this feedback can alter IRF/IRE discourse into more complex stimulus patterns. Developing responses, can also create additional opportunities for learners to engage in discussion and more importantly, it disrupts the stimulus-response patterning that is responsible for folding learning.

### **Changing the Scope of Classroom Discourse**

The choice to maintain current discourse patterns seems just as likely to do with maintaining authority over the learning as it does to covering content. Dominant IRF/IRE patterns place tight control over the learning, which allows the class to quickly move through

their curricular objectives. More importantly though, it affords teachers authoritative right in the classroom. Changes in discourse patterns seemingly threaten the equilibrium that teachers depend on in their role as “sage on the stage” (King, 1993). How teachers structure classroom discourse has a great deal to do with how they perceive their role in learning. If their intention is to dispense knowledge, they will likely structure classroom talk for performance or reproductive measures (Boyd, 2011), restricting how much and how often students themselves engage in talk. By taking the stance of “guide on the side” (White-Clark, 2008) instead, the teacher can encourage more *exploratory* discourse. This allows educators to still lead the discussion without curtailing students’ participation in shaping such discourse. But as long as classroom talk remains the province of the teacher who orchestrates it (Edwards-Groves, 2012), generating authentic, dynamic and engaging discourse will continue to challenge conventional classroom structures.

Key to changing discourse patterns then is recognizing the interactive quality of teaching-and-learning. The traditional stance taken has been to treat teaching and learning as separate from each other, each with their own specific roles, responses and responsibilities in the exchange. There is no disputing that a teacher’s job is to educate and that the student’s is to formulate understanding. But in taking a closer look at the relational aspects of the two, it is possible to see where there might be some fluidity between teaching-and-learning if given the opportunity to develop. Shifting lenses to see how teaching involves collaboration with learners is an important first step towards adopting dialogic pedagogy, and challenges teachers to re-examine what it means to be a learner. In traditional classrooms information is passed on to students as discrete pieces of a fragmented curriculum (Kirkland, 2005). Their job as students is to absorb, digest and apply this learning as understanding. Conversely, it is the teacher’s

responsibility to instruct, direct and execute learning objectives. These prescriptive roles however can rigorously constrain the way in which learning unfolds, making it difficult for dialogue to occur.

Challenging these traditional conceptions can help educators embrace dialogic principles in their own classrooms. For many teacher “a considerable part of their surrounding world is the teaching context” (Konings, 2005, pg. 649). Having formed opinions about teaching and perceptions about learning, teachers act and react according to the lens they adopt. Therefore as teachers better acquaint themselves with dialogic pedagogy, they can begin to use talk for purposes beyond straight instruction and recall (Kovalainen, 2005), and subsequently grow more comfortable incorporating multi-directional dialogue into their lessons. Creating a collaborative basis for teaching-and-learning encourages teachers to develop context with students instead of for them. It provokes new patterns of interaction and shares in the responsibility for the dialogue that emerges (Myhill, 2006b). Moreover, it purports a less prescriptive, predictable and fixed concept of what it means to teach and to learn. Having carefully disseminated discourse types, patterns and practices, the remaining section of this review examines how discussion and dialogue can be used in support of 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills, and emergent literacy programs.

### **Classroom Talk for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Competencies**

Ultimately dialogic instructional approaches support many of the habits and attitudes that are essential to 21<sup>st</sup> Century societies (Maier, 2012). Focusing on those skills and dispositions that promote active engagement in critical thinking can prepare students for the complexities of living 21<sup>st</sup> Century lives (Dweck, 2009). Competences in problem-solving, collaboration and

effective communication are vital components in their education, and as such require special attention. Certainly the skills themselves are not specific to this time in history, in the sense that critical thought or the ability to effectively problem-solve belong only to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. But as the world becomes more complex, the individuals that make up those societies will need to relate to aspects of contemporary life which likely did not exist in the previous century. Developments in communication technologies alone are rapidly changing how individuals are expected to perform in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Saavedra, 2012).

Affording students the knowledge they need to become successful later in life will no longer suffice. Students need to be taught explicit learning skills that takes the experience further than factual recall. Teaching for 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning requires that students engage in the processes and practices that are involved with deepening understanding (Saavedra, 2012). Probing questions require students to reason or make justifications in their answers. This engages them in the process of applying understanding to a given concept or scenario. It encourages higher-order thinking and produces a type of high-road transfer of knowledge, wherein abstraction and generalizations can be made (Saavedra, 2012). High-road transfers in learning occur when students make personal connections to the ideas being discussed, analyzed and compared. It invites learners to think about why something is or is not true, and challenges them to apply this learning “to other areas of their lives” (Saavedra, 2012, pg. 10).

Having students relate to ideas and information in this way, can support vital habits of a critical mind. The cognitive processes bolstered by critical thinking are clearly of important consequence, but cultivating a ‘thinkers’ point-of-view is also of significance. Dialogic practices encourage the student to formulate a claim (Mairers, 2012). This affords the learner a role that extends beyond recalling discrete facts, and puts them at the center of their learning. In addition

to its benefits to learning, discussion nurtures an expectation of thinking among students and shifts the way learners relate to their learning. Not as someone who is receiving knowledge per se, but as thinkers engaged in constructing their own understanding (Maiers, 2012). In classrooms where teaching remain mostly transmissive it is more likely for students to be passive in their learning. Yet if students are to be critical and collaborative in life outside of school, they will need to acquire dispositions that help them cultivate these practices (Dweck, 2009). Their active participation in the learning process is crucial. More than just being engaged in lessons, students need to be given the impression that learning is about keenly making sense of things. Dialogic practices reinforce this fact and can be used to convey the perception that learning is about what one does, not just what one knows.

Along with their active participation, educators can better prepare students for living complex lives by encouraging them to adopt a ‘growth mindset’ in the classroom (Dweck, 2009). This becomes possible when teachers use dialogic practices to model how learning involves both effort and concentration. Using dialogic discussions involves learners in the process of developing ways of thinking and working in a complex world (Saavedra, 2012). The interactive exchange requires that students remain attentive to the ideas being discussed; and just as important to having the answer, is being able to develop it further. This is the basis of collaborative enterprise and it is essential that students be skilled at these ways of working out their thinking together. Dialogic practice affords students the chance to engage in this type of work. It recognizes the underlining value of collaborative efforts in developing these ideas, and builds on each other’s contributions. Because traditional instruction often involves styles of presentation talk, learners “do not know how to extend, expand, or explicitly support or defend topics and ideas once they are generated” (Nachowitz, 2014, pg. 15). Consequently students

need to be taught how to engage and sustain meaningful dialogue. Developing ideas requires the teacher create the context from which to explore concepts. For these discussion to be productive then, students must be scaffolded through the collaborative process. But because closed responses have been the norm in education, students will need opportunities to practice articulating this understanding with others. Bringing dialogic practices into 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning can help students acclimate to a more complex discourse style.

In addition to effort and concentration, their persistence in the pursuit of knowledge is also key (Dweck, 2009). Students are often given the impression that learning involves intelligence, which they must naturally possess. This is understood as a ‘fixed mindset’ in education, and having this perception can discourage students from showing resiliency in their learning (Dweck, 2009). By engaging in discussion, students can begin to appreciate how learning unfolds, not as intellect alone, but by the processes and practices involved in constructing meaning. These contributions are seen as both necessary and valuable steps in their growth and development (Boyd, 2011). Moreover, it reflects the responsibility they have to themselves to be involved in the learning exchange. Too often students presume that they are not good at learning simply because some part of it was challenging. Dialogic discussion reveals the work that must go into learning and becoming skilled at a task. The open exchange of ideas and reasoning shows how important it is to make these efforts. Along with the skills and dispositions they need to live these complex lives, is the personal fortitude in which achievements are gained.

**Developmentally Appropriate Pedagogy**

Furthermore, using dialogic discourse with young learners is an effective means of bolstering their oral language skills (Wise, 2007). Classroom dialogue allows participants to engage with language and this can be advantageous in the following ways. First, it affords students the opportunity to exercise expressive skills in the moment (Boyd, 2011); and second, it coaches them in how language is structured and used. By engaging the class in discussion and dialogue, learners are given extended speaking turns in which to vocalize their thoughts. This helps them construct meaning, both to the ideas, and to the structure of language. Young learners especially, benefit from this dialogic exchange, as it can develop their communicative competence during these formative years. In terms of long-range academic achievements, oral language skills in particular, emerge as strong predictors of future school success (Kirkland, 2005). The relationship between academic performance and emergent literacy is a principal reason for using dialogic practice with this age group. Students who struggle in later grades typically scored low oral expression and receptive skills in primary classes. Opportunities to participate in social dialogue give students the chance to develop their speaking, listening and thinking skills (Fisher, 2001). As children engage in dialogic talk and interaction, they acquire the language and learning that helps them with long-term performance objectives (Boyd, 2011). Because the development of oral language impacts all aspects of curriculum (Kirkland, 2005), it is crucial that early learning programs provide engaging discourse for the emergent learner.

**Developing young children's spoken language.**

The relationship between oral language skills and reading achievement in particular is one that strongly encourages dialogic practice. Classroom talk activities, engage learners in the

language exchange. It exposes students to the sounds, meanings and structure of language. This enhances their overall understanding of its functionality and purpose. In order for students to develop keen reading and writing skills, they need this foundational understanding of how language works (Kirkland, 2005). Assertions that strong oral language skills help with linguistic comprehension, stipulate the underlying benefit to using discussion and dialogue with young children (Greenfield-Spira, 2005). Classroom discussions allow students to hear how language is being used, which is beneficial to them gaining mastery of it themselves. As children build communicative competency, they become stronger in foundational skills, such as phonemic awareness and vocabulary comprehension. Before children can acquire these capabilities however, they must be pre-literate in both the structure and meaning that written language takes (Greenfield-Spira, 2005). Therefore, educators are encouraged to facilitate young children's language development through classroom dialogue. In their examination of children's language and emergent literacy, Hay, Fielding-Barnsley and Taylor (2010) discuss the importance of enhancing young children's receptive and expressive language skills. Finding that 15% of students begin their formal education not having the receptive and expressive language skills they need "to cope fully in that environment" (Hay, 2010, pg. 40) directed their research inquiry. In the end, they determined that talk is "the most authentic place to begin child and adult dialogue, that is purposeful and designed to build the child's vocabulary, concepts, reasoning and understandings of the topic being discussed" (Hay, 2010. pg. 44).

In their own longitudinal study, Greenfield-Spira, Bracken and Fischel (2005) looked at what if any predictive value, measurements in phonological awareness, oral language skills, letter knowledge, and print concepts, had on subsequent reading performance. Directing their research towards learners who showed reading difficulties after grade one, the authors examined improvement levels at the end of their second, third and fourth years. This research asserted that

those who had made improvements, “had stronger oral language skills, both in kindergarten and in the first grade, than the children who did not improve by fourth grade” (Greenfield-Spira, 2005, pg. 231). Both findings corroborate accepted pedagogical beliefs that social dialogue is instrumental to the child’s growth and development (Vygotsky, 1978). The authors of each study stress the importance of using classroom talk in regular instruction, but it is this latter report which surmised larger instructive implications. Claiming that “programmes [which] target oral language skills in language-delayed children” (Bowyer-Crane, 2008, pg. 422) could ultimately be effectively used as intervention. If roughly one out of seven students come into formal education lacking appropriate oral language skills (Hay, 2010) then discourse may be an effective means of supporting its development in the early stages of their education. More than affording students the opportunity to practice speaking, listening and reasoning, dialogue and discussion is crucial to promoting and boosting foundational literacy skills amongst young children.

### **The benefits of social dialogue to early learning.**

Understanding that “every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and then on the individual level; first between people (inter-psychological) and then inside the child (intra-psychological)” (Vygotsky, 1978, pg. 57) helps to bring attention to the fact that learning is indeed a ‘process’ in education. If children’s learning is mediated by social interactions, then an educator’s role clearly becomes one of promoting discussion and dialogue among early learners. Because traditional early childhood education frameworks treat learning as a linear development over time, educators will typically focus on helping their students acquire knowledge and skills by a particular point in their academic career (Brown, 2007). Accordingly, attention is directed into teaching learning objectives, and as a

result the processes of learning can be over-shadowed. The research in early learning pedagogy however, strongly discredits using subject-based approaches in with young children, claiming that it “is contrary to the ways children think and learn [and] invites inappropriate formal, ‘push-down’ ... approaches” (Hedges, 2005, pg. 67) that can in turn be harmful to their overall development. This is compelling reason to adopt a different framework for early educators to use with their students. Recognizing instead that learning emerges from the experiences children have, educators can nudge their practice towards more dialogic measures. Dialogic discussion affords teachers the option of structuring learning in both purposeful (for learning outcomes) and meaningful (to the child’s development) ways.

In re-examining how learning might be shaped more appropriate for the early years, policy makers in many parts of the world, including here in British Columbia, have adopted a “Rhizomatic” (Brown, 2007) description of development. Instead of the traditional linear lens, a proximal distal approach has been taken (BCELF, 2007) in which growth occurs for the child simultaneously across key domains, “sending roots and shoots” (Brown, 2007, para. 3) out in many different directions. Underpinning this lateral framework is a new approach in which the child’s (1) health and well-being, (2) social and emotional skills, (3) language development and communication abilities, (4) approaches to learning, and (5) cognition and general knowledge; together influence how learning emerges for the individual (Brown, 2007). The fact that learning grows out of each domain, compels educators to rethink and reshape their practices. Developing classroom discourse with young learner is a powerful way of connecting their learning to each domain. It acknowledges that learning is ultimately something that happens on a personal level, and requires that meaningful and developmentally appropriate instruction be designed with this in mind.

Learning that is structured around talk and interaction can incorporate more of these domains in the exchange. At the same time it invites children to connect to the learning at the level they are in their development. Certainly, children need to acquire skills that will get them ready for the next grade, but if they are continually unable to perform at that level, their confidence can be undermined. Recognizing that children ultimately develop at their own rate (Sheerer, 1996; May, 2006; Brown, 2007), can help prevent tension among vulnerable learners. Using discussion and dialogue allows learners at all levels to be successful. It gives those that are less adept or knowledgeable in that skill the chance to learn from those that are more practiced, while still bolstering the competencies of those who contribute this knowledge (Howe, 2013). As students become more able, knowledgeable, confident and interested in the ideas that shape their lives, this growth will be what carries them forward in their learning (Renzulli, 2004). The goal is to keep them sharing, exploring, participating and connecting in class; and dialogic practice is a developmentally appropriate way of doing that.

### **A Model of Reform**

An example of what is possible when teachers approach curriculum and instruction differently, Finland's rise from education's doldrums in the 1990's is a compelling case study of change (Fullan, 2009). In terms of its reform since that time, many systemic changes implemented from 1997-2002 helped increase Finland's worldwide ranking and overall status as educational leader. Basing change on a framework that focused on "a creative, high-skill, high-wage knowledge economy, in which people invent, apply, share and articulate knowledge at a level that surpasses all competitors;" (Fullan, 2009, pg. 107) the Finnish government made specific investments towards achieving these ends. Investing in supportive policies with its teachers, change occurred rather organically in the Finnish school system. As focus on

pedagogies rather than mandates helped rouse success (Fullan, 2009), small changes are credited for impacting its large scale reform in the decades since.

The transformation of Finland's school system grew out of change implemented by its educators and stakeholders. Their choices to try new practices and engage students in different forms of learning brought pedagogical principles to the forefront. For "it is [this] *interaction effect* that accounts for the results" (Fullan, 2009, pg. 108) which were gained in the classroom, the school, the region and country. As a case study in reform Finland's approach to change is a compelling one. First, it reinforces the underlying benefits of using pedagogical perspectives to carry out change. But more than that, it illustrates the power behind even the smallest change in practice. Progress starts by choosing to implement a new approach to instruction. As with dialogic practice, it may be that different kinds of questions are asked, or that more time is spent on developing answers. The point is not to make dialogic teaching the reform needed, but to implement dialogic principles for the change desired.

## **Conclusion**

Classroom discourse continues to be a subject of inquiry and interest in education today. Much of the attention given to classroom talk however has focused on how it is organized, rather than whether certain models are found to be more advantageous to learning than others. Despite this significant gap in the literature, a strong theoretical framework for using discussion and dialogue to support learning can be found. Based in constructivist principles, dialogic discussion serves critical learning processes in understanding. By providing students with opportunities to articulate their thinking they can better internalize the concepts and ideas that form this understanding. In addition to the influence it has on cognitive thinking, dialogue engages

students in collaborative exchange and bolsters vital competencies among learners. This interchange of ideas and perspectives, encourages students to make constructive contributions to the learning. Learners who might otherwise be disconnected from the activity are asked to participate in purposeful and meaningful dialogic exchange. Although a vital part of learning, dialogue is rarely experienced in the majority of classrooms where IRF/IRE patterns dominant instruction. Re-conceptualizing classroom talk to include other discursive forms, is a necessary step in expanding how discourse is used for teaching and learning going forward.

### **Chapter Three: Changing Classroom Talk Patterns**

#### **Restructuring Classroom Discourse**

The research on classroom discourse identifies the following points. First that teachers continue to dominant classroom discussion; in large part because they structure discourse this way (Gillies, 2006; Mercer 2008b; Edwards-Groves, 2012). Secondly, that valuing dialogue for learning requires changes to classroom talk patterns (Fisher 2009; Boyd, 2011). Thirdly, by making even small changes to our dialogic routines, educators can begin to interact differently with their students (Kovalainen, 2005; Myhill, 2006b). And finally, that as teachers become increasingly comfortable eliciting ideas rather than mere facts; it is possible for discussion and dialogue to take new and more collaborative forms in education (Kovalainen, 2005; Boyd, 2011). Despite dominant Teacher-Initiated, Student-Response, Teacher-Follow-Up and Evaluation (IRF/IRE) discourse pattern; students will move through their school years, and still be able to obtain many important skills. Notwithstanding the likelihood of these achievements, dialogic discussions support the learning process, which help with the construction of knowledge (Edwards-Groves, 2014). Opportunities to engage with ideas through discussion, encourages students to reflect, reason and articulate this learning. It promotes critical and creative thinking skills, and bolsters classroom learning objectives (Fisher, 2009). Consequently, dialogic principles can be used to promote learner competencies, underpinning their overall success.

**Implementing small but purposeful change.**

Dialogic principles are closely linked to 21<sup>st</sup> Century competencies (Fisher, 2009; Maiers, 2012). They are advantageous to student learning, and helpful to them later in life. Using dialogic approaches allow students to practice their communicative and collaborative skills, and encourages them to socially construct understandings (Nachowitz, 2014). But as the research has identified, students are rarely given the opportunity to engage in discussion and dialogue. This is an issue that needs redress going forward, one which requires creative and contemporary solutions to these IRF/IRE traditional models.

Finland's offensive approach to educational reform at the start of this century, is a compelling and worthwhile stance to consider. Between 1962 and 1999, Finnish students never ranked above average in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's global assessments (OECD, 2010). Since implementing large scale reforms in 2001 however, Finland has become a world leader in education and economic matters; and were positioned third in their 2010 standings (CBC Report, 2010; OECD, 2010). The country's push for creative, collaborative and competitive approaches in education, is credited for the strong reform which Finland was able to make (Fullan, 2009). Such reform did not come from any government enacted programs; but from a national investment in creative and competitive approaches that inspired small and steady changes to professional perspectives (OECD, 2010). Taking steps to cultivate critical and creative dispositions with students, has helped Finland's education system make significant gains from two decades ago (Fullan, 2009). Although change at all levels (classroom, school, district, region) helped developed these standards of quality instruction, the fact that Finnish classrooms are "typically described by observers as learner-centered" (OECD, 2010, pg. 5) is an important note in this discussion.

### **Creating Change in My Own Practice**

Using dialogic principles supports a move towards interactive teaching approaches in education. Its practices, can push students to go deeper in their thinking, as they explore concepts further. By placing the learner at the center of classroom discourse, educators can broaden how talk is used for learning. Changing the way students engage in classroom talk can influence the connections they form around their learning. It supports cognitive processes and helps learners on their way to greater understanding. From an educator's perspective, it is an approach towards developing more robust teaching practices.

My purpose in researching classroom discourse was to establish changes that I could make in my own talk patterns, to engage students in more cognitively challenging discussion. Despite finding little practical insight from the literature in dialogic practice, this search did however present a talking for learning pedagogy (Edwards-Groves, 2012). Dialogic teaching principles offer ways to support student learning with discussion and dialogue. It sheds light on the larger implications of using transmission methods of instruction, and has given me a new lens from which to look at classroom learning. Its benefits to knowledge construction in the teaching-and-learning exchange is perhaps the most profoundly meaningful reason to use it with students.

#### **One of many discourse types.**

Like most issues in education, classroom discourse is itself a rather complex construct to discuss. It requires distinctions be made, between both the different patterns and the various purposes, for how and why it is used in the classroom. This is especially relevant because the literature does not frame dialogic teaching as being universally beneficial to student learning. The principles of dialogic teaching are rooted in helping students engage with ideas, reason out

thinking, and participate in productive discussion. It is geared towards reflective and communicative outcomes, but using dialogic teaching would not be the right choice for every situation. Educators need to consider when dialogic teaching compliments learning, and when it may in fact complicate it. To help with these decisions, Figure 1 summarizes key elements within the different discursive types. Looking at each, educators can determine which talk type would best suit the learning objectives for that lesson.

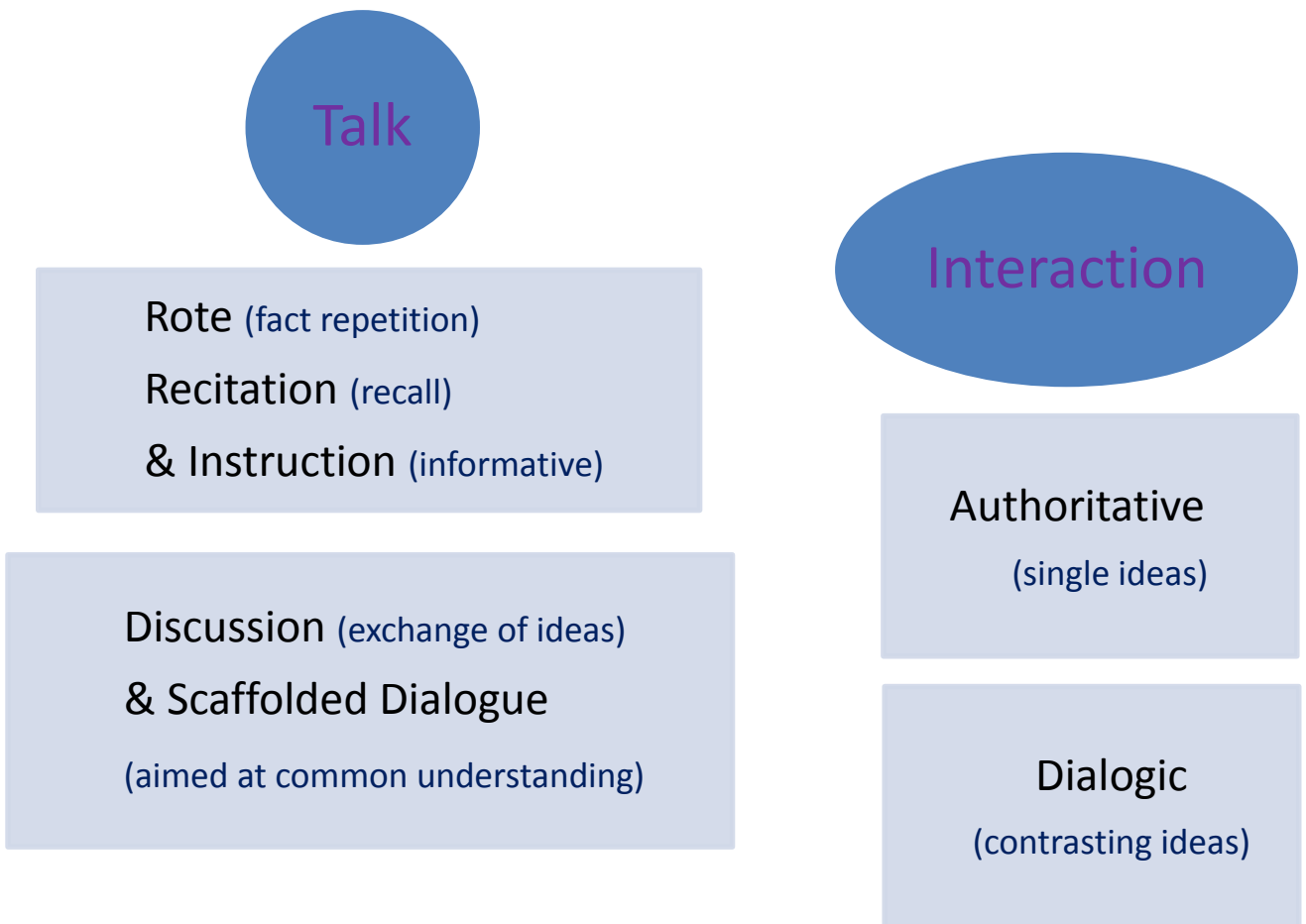


Figure 1. Talk and interaction types. Adapted from “Talking to Learn: Dialogue in the Classroom,” by C. Scott, 2009, *Australian Council of Educational Research*, 2, p. 7.

Each talk type holds special merit in the classroom. Certainly, the learning goal lends itself more easily to one form over another. It seems ineffective practice, to have extended discussion on

how the letter ‘a’ is printed; or in remembering the months of the year. In both those cases, repetition and rote, are a more appropriate measure of instruction. The notion that dialogic teaching should be used for all instruction is not a sound assumption to make. In the excitement to adopt new programming and curricular frameworks, it is crucial that educators see dialogic teaching as one of several effective interactive models. With its own strengths and weaknesses to consider.

### **Language and learning goals.**

In my own practice, I found reason to use dialogic principles with a reading group of seven students in their final term of second grade. These students were all at ‘fully meeting’ or ‘exceeds’ grade level literacy benchmarks, but their comprehension skills were markedly low. By changing aspects of my own dialogue, discussions became much broader. Quickly discovering that whenever I posed open-ended questions to the group, far richer responses began to emerge. This was both constructive and challenging to learning. In one respect, as discussions grew, so did engagement in the lesson. But the difficulty was with how much extra time went into these discussions; time which could have been devoted to other skills. Providing opportunities for students to elaborate on their thinking, does effectively takes time out of the school day. Even with its advantages, dialogic methods pose certain challenges, such as time concerns. Another reason for using dialogic teaching in this specific situation, was the relatively small size of the group. Discussion and dialogue is, by its very nature, somewhat difficult to facilitate in larger groups. This may be why IRF/IRE discourse patterns are a common feature in whole-class discussions. Ultimately this was an opportunity to engage a handful of learners, using scaffolded dialogue, in an optimal educational setting.

From an instructional stance, it presented a manageable entry point from which to try out

new discourse patterns, allowing me to try the strategies with a select group of students. Because there are significantly fewer challenges to teaching fewer students, starting in a small group setting, can make it easier for the teacher to try these new approaches. For myself at least, the smaller group was a chance to incorporate a new teaching strategy without too much disruption. Developing dialogic discussion, can challenge the way most teachers structure classroom learning. Finding ways to support educators in this shift is crucial. No different than anything else that is learned, it involves practice and scaffolding. The smaller group affords both these, and allows experimentation with questioning strategies, under far less demanding conditions. It offers teachers the chance to develop a skill-set for using dialogic principles in their practice; finding out what works, and what adjustments will need to be made. As they develop confidence using the strategies, it is more likely that dialogic tenets become part of their instructional approach in the classroom.

From a learners approach, the small group offered more time, than they might have had to discuss their ideas. As the research from the literature review indicated, students are rarely given the chance to make significant contributions in class (Myhill, 2006a; Howe, 2013). Engaging students in dialogic discussion presented them with the opportunity to speak their mind. In my own practice, a student who never once raised her hand to speak in class, started to contribute to the group's discussions. Hers was the most drastic shift I noticed, but all seven students became more engaged when the questions I used invited more open-ended responses. This was a great lesson for me personally, and I discovered that in using discussion to explore ideas my more reserved students, suddenly had plenty to say. Two factors seem most likely to have played a role in this development. One, that the size of the group made it possible for more to voice their thoughts; and two, that its discussion format motivated students to share thinking as opposed to answers. Without directly asking students what they were experiencing at the time, I won't know

for sure whether either assumption is valid. Nevertheless, it seemed to me, that when given the opportunity to share their perspective; these seven students at least, were quite eager to participate in the exchange.

### **Exploring exploratory talk.**

The issue of classroom talk and interaction, as Figure 1 demonstrates, is both varied and complex. Different types of discourse then, are utilized, to support various forms and functions of the learning exchange. In exploring the dominant discourse patterns used in classrooms, a more common interaction sequence, known as IRF/IRE is revealed. These patterns typically begin with a question, initiated by the teacher. The question then elicits a response from students, which is quickly followed-up with another teacher initiated question or feedback statement. This pattern is how teachers convey important information to students; but it is also why, “they inadvertently [take] half of all the available turns in the conversation” (Myhill, 2006b, pg. 5). Dialogic discussion disrupts this pattern, as it prompts students to explain further. Rather than accepting the answer, and moving on to the next question; teachers use the opportunity to develop the individual response. Asking students how they came up with that answer, can make their connections visible to other students. It also allows the teacher to assess more clearly where immediate understanding lies, before moving forward in the lesson.

The exchange becomes exploratory in nature, when the teacher encourages other group members to respond to the thinking that was just shared. Rather than taking several answers or perspectives in succession, individual statements are explored, and deconstructed together. Their interactions become more collaborative, informative, and expansive this way. By interrupting the IRF/IRE sequence, the teacher can engage students in rich exploratory talk, without needing to change the overall lesson itself. Creating exploratory discussion involves many of the same

forms and functions that IRF/IRE patterns promote. What it does differently however, is offer space in-between questions, to study how and why ideas take shape. It is by exploring these ideas more comprehensively that, “something new, creative, [and] well-reasoned” (Mercer, 2008b, pg. 14) can be learnt. Figure 2, differentiates between prevalent interaction forms and functions that are commonly used during instruction. The idea is not to replace one for another, but to devote classroom time to each approach. By directing students towards “developing reflection [and] building thinking” (Myhill, 2006a, pg. 27), the teacher infuses exploratory methods into learning. Exploratory talk then, creates opportunities for ‘view-sharing’, negotiations’ and ‘evaluation’ (Kovalainen, 2005) of concepts within the lesson. It is as much an extension of one’s practice as it is its own framework.

COMMUNICATIVE FORM	COMMUNICATIVE FUNCTION
• Factual Elicitation	▪ Information & discrete facts recall
• Cued Elicitation	▪ Offering certain clues or details
• Recapping Questions/ Statements	▪ Recall specific to a past lesson or lived experiences
• Practicing Skills	▪ Repeating strategies and rehearsing key concepts
• Reporting Prior Knowledge	▪ Establishing connections; sharing personal experiences
• Building on Content	▪ Gathering information and principal details about the topic
• Developing Vocabulary	▪ Testing comprehension and clarifying meaning
• Checking for Understanding	▪ Verifying to what extent concepts have been understood
• Developing Reflection	▪ Thinking strategies; using meta-cognition to express learning
• Building on Thinking	▪ Making thinking more explicit; connecting ideas to other ideas

Figure 2. Classroom Discourse Classifications. Adapted from “Talk, talk, talk: teaching and learning in whole class discourse,” by D. Myhill, 2006, *Research Papers in Education*, 21(1), p. 27.

Figure 3 shows different ways that exploratory forms are used to promote learner competencies. By phrasing speculative questions to students, the responses are more likely to extend the connections offered. Asking students to give reasons in their answers, reveals some of the thinking behind their understanding; moreover, it allows the speaker to process the thought more deeply. At the group level, these explanations offer participants the chance to adopt new perspectives in their own thinking. This is why dialogic exchange, typically benefits both the individual sharing and the ones who are listening (Howe, 2013). Dialogic discussion however, involves more than view-sharing alone. For it to provoke critical and constructive dialogue, it must build on the views shared (Edwards-Groves, 2012). Supporting this form of progressive discourse, requires that participants focus on putting this knowledge together, “into a big idea of understanding” (Nachawitz, 2014, pg. 16). To be constructive, classroom talk needs to include negotiation and evaluation; otherwise it is conversational, and may not necessarily provide the same results. In my professional practice, I observed more instances where view sharing, was expressed by participants, than either negotiation or evaluation. It seems reasonable that students would engage in this kind of talk, as it is a style of discourse which is familiar to them (Edwards-Groves, 2014). A version of presentation talk, students are practiced in sharing information to the group; but may not, as it appears, be skilled in these more dialogic approach.

KEY FEATURES in Talking for Learning	<i>View Sharing:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ presenting evidence &amp; justifications</li> <li>▶ offering opinions &amp; perspectives</li> <li>▶ echoing interactions &amp; experiences</li> </ul>
	<i>Negotiations:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ providing elaborations</li> <li>▶ seeking clarification</li> <li>▶ refining ideas &amp; opinions</li> </ul>
	<i>Evaluation:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ offering assessment &amp; confirmation</li> <li>▶ expressing disagreement</li> <li>▶ forging new understanding/perspectives</li> </ul>

Figure 3. Interactive Discourse Patterns. Adapted from “The Discursive Practice of Participation in an Elementary Classroom Community,” by M. Kovalainen and K. Kumpulainen, 2005, *Instructional Science*, 33, p. 222.

### **Making reasoning visible.**

Using more exploratory formats was somewhat challenging in the beginning. I found myself continually falling on IRF/IRE patterns; responding to the different points, instead of probing students further. What helped with this, were the descriptive symbols (Colcott, 2009) I placed around the room. A thinking bubble, that said ‘tell me why’ inside; another that showed a light bulb, and the words ‘that makes me think of’; and a question mark with, ‘what-if’ underneath. These visual stimuli made it easier for me to take a different stance in our discussions. Using them to prompt further explanation, bolstered new discursive patterns within the group, and gave me a framework from which to guide the group’s thinking. Because IRF/IRE approaches are part of the fixed discourse structure that many teachers are comfortable with, it can help to visualize what this learning will look like. The phrases became part of our discourse, and eventually students were freely incorporating them into their responses. They were so successful that I am planning to develop more visual prompts, as well as smaller

duplicates of these descriptors for each student to have at their desks.

### **Reflecting on Dialogic Methods**

Three points for discussion arose from my classroom research into dialogic practices. First is a finding which confirms the effectiveness of exploratory talk in promoting cognitive reflection and discussion. The group of learners responded very positively to my prompting. Engagement levels increased, and students were actively listening to what others were saying. Very quickly they became interested in what someone else had said on the subject. Finding that rich discussions grew from many of their own questions, I invited students to post these questions up on one of the classroom's three bulletin boards. The group and I referred to it as the 'question wall', and it was organized for them to respond to other questions as well as add ones of their own. This became a positive addition to my classroom, as it was something that students could go to when they finished other work. It also provided a way for me to limit our class time discussions without preventing a student from asking their important question. The 'question wall' is something that I will continue to use in my practice. It might gather even broader discussion points by expanding to the hallway; both informing, and eliciting perspective from the larger learning community.

The next finding falls outside of the literature that I reviewed on exploratory or dialogic discourse; but was a significant development in my own practice. The issue of time management was definitely somewhat problematic. Because much of the literature on classroom discourse purports either the pedagogical or empirical position, its principles are all that structure this approach. This meant that I needed to try out techniques, before I knew whether it would be helpful in a specific instance. It required me to experiment with different approaches, as well as more successful ways of dealing with the issues as they came up. Two issues in particular,

seriously challenged my time management as I struggled to effectively lead these discussions without taking control, or losing control of the lesson, and find ways to move the discussion forward. Restructuring my discursive practices also took some adjustment and, because there are very few models to reference, it took some time to develop an approach that worked for me. Exploring students' thinking is complex and unpredictable. It requires flexibility and creativity on the part of the teacher, as well as a willingness to pursue the unanticipated answers (Myhill, 2006b). The ability to respond to statements in the moment is a key part of dialogic teaching, and yet developing these responsive skills takes time. In many instances I arrived at an important connection after the lesson was over. This often meant revisiting the idea the following day, in order to address what was missed. Responding to students in a way that connects to their thinking was challenging, and yet it inspired a more reflective style of discussion in the end (Myhill, 2006b).

The last finding transpired later in the unit, and addresses specific improvements to the writing process. As the group moved into working on their written pieces, students were able to formulate their ideas very quickly onto the page. In many instances, their writing not only demonstrated more connections to the story, but elaborated on the details and descriptions of these events. It is possible that using a dialogic approach helped students develop and refine the ideas which guided this work. Because of their active participation in our discussions, it seems likely that students processed this information before they sat down to write. Developing understanding through discussion, might have helped construct a point-of-view from which to write. In a typical writing block, uncertainty about what to write can stall the writing process. Having rich discussions then, could have provided the context from which to pull ideas. Conversely, their interest in the story, or the fact that expectations were more clearly understood; could also have contributed to this success. But because I did not talk with them about their

experience, I cannot know for certain what influenced this change. While this missed opportunity makes it difficult to assess the implementation further; our discussions ultimately provided students with opportunities to connect to the narrative. This may have helped shape, at least to some degree, the writing produced. While there are definite challenges to overcome; promising developments such as these, have led me to re-consider how I use dialogic discussion for learning.

### **Extending and expanding the practice.**

Finding positive results in student engagement and concentration levels, corroborates many of the points discussed in the literature review; and gives reason to use these methods in whole class instruction. But because the research did not directly survey the children's learning experiences, it is difficult to assert more than my perceptions and generalizations. Certainly there was visibly more engagement during the learning process, and greater focus given to the activities therein. Students who show greater engagement in their learning, generally perform better at school. So although this research did not address and report specific learning gains, it does show a strong link between interactive teaching strategies and increased learner engagement in a small group setting. Students who were disengaged and or non-vocal in our group sessions beforehand, showed improved engagement when dialogic methods of instruction were used. Examining the issue in a larger group, where the opportunity to articulate ideas is reduced, would be an interesting line of inquiry. Whether dialogic teaching with the whole class, would have a similar impact on student engagement is a question that would benefit from formal research.

**Exploring professional perspectives.**

Just as discussion can be used to support student learning, it can also help develop valuable perspective amongst educators. Professional discussions, allow teachers to explore the groups' collective understanding of issues. By sharing in these experiences, it is possible for educators to glean new insight, in much the same way their students would. Using collaborative discussion can bolster the reflective processes that are involved with personal and professional development. In my own experience, the opinions and perceptions offered by colleagues, often lead me to examine an issue using a different lens. It broadens my thinking, and expands how I perceive larger issues. As a result, I am very interested in what my colleagues think about dialogic teaching. This collaborative venture will likely present additional perspectives into classroom discourse, and possibly develop these points further.

**Sharing Pedagogy and Practice**

My inquiry into dialogic discourse has brought new personal awareness to the pedagogy and practices of classroom talk. Having made connections to both the benefits and challenges of using dialogic discussion, other teachers might find the information helpful in their practice. As with the principles of dialogic discourse, exploring the issue through collaborative discussion might lead to still deeper insights. Moreover, it will give me an opportunity to share what I have learned through this process, and possibly present new understanding on classroom talk to my colleagues. Before productive discussion can take place, particular notions about dialogic practices will need to be explored. This will unfold as three main activities from which to examine the issues. First, with a brief introduction into classroom talk; second, by coordinating dialogue on discursive practice; and finally, in generating common understanding from the points shared. Because classroom discourse is a core practice of teaching and learning, participants will

likely already have broad knowledge on the subject. This should help generate productive discussion amongst participants.

### **Insights from the literature.**

Using talk to develop and transform the nature of classroom practice is an important feature in shaping, transforming and renewing “the particular work of teaching” (Edwards-Groves, 2012, pg. 94). It engages participants in constructing valuable context and enables reflection on the issues. Consequently professional conversations provide opportunities for educators to extend their understanding and educational rationale, which is why I have chosen the workshop format for this project. Focusing on how dialogic practice can be used to support learning, this workshop for teachers in my district is intended to both inform participants of my work and explore the topic further through dialogue.

Beginning with a general overview of the topic, I will structure my presentation (refer to Appendix A) along four points for reflection. The first addresses the context I wish to establish with the participating members, and is meant to convey a purpose for examining dialogic practice. Slides 1 to 5, outline important reasons for using dialogic discussion in the classroom. Starting with the argument that 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning requires 21<sup>st</sup> Century Teaching (Saavedra, 2012), I discuss the connection between talk and interaction as a means for bolstering thinking skills (see Slide 1), and consequently how it supports important critical thought processes (see Slide 2). Having established a key purpose for using dialogic practice, the next slides, present the pedagogical reasons for taking this approach. This begins with Vygotsky’s contributions, which help contextualize the language and learning connection. Discussing his thoughts on how children internalize their experiences, I will show that discussion and dialogue can be used to cultivate effective pathways in students’ learning (see Slide 3). The final background pieces that

I plan to discuss, examines key learning activities that discussion and dialogue support (see Slide 4), as well as positive dispositions for student learning which are encouraged (see Slide 5).

The next portion of the presentation will consider the problem of classroom discourse in its conventional use. Presenting the findings from the literature on discursive practices, slides 6 to 8 contextualize how classroom talk is typically shaped for teacher delivery. Because classroom talk is often a ‘taken-for-granted’ (Edwards-Groves, 2012) feature in education, it is important to show participants, what research reflects as common practice (see Slide 6).

Expanding on Howe and Abedin’s (2013) four decade review on classroom discourse, I discuss their finding that “much more is known about how classroom dialogue is organized than about whether certain modes of organization are more beneficial than others” (Howe, 2013, pg. 325). By including this, I hope to make the point that dialogic practice has not been afforded empirical study; and is only one of many approaches that can support the learning process. Because dialogue and discussion are fundamental to learning, it is concerning then that the research finds it rarely exercised in the classroom (see Slide 7). The last slide in my evaluation of the problem, describes where the issue sits in terms of the standard stimulus-response model that is used by many teachers (Fisher, 2009). Addressing the tendency for classroom talk to be structured along Teacher-Initiated, Student-Response, Teacher-Follow-up and Evaluation (IRF/IRE) terms; I will elaborate on the shifts that can be made to one’s follow-up responses in facilitating further dialogic discussion (see Slide 8).

The next four slides offer details of a ‘talking for learning’ (Myhill, 2006a) approach, and examines dialogic principles more closely. Sharing with participants how I became interested in dialogic practice, slides 9 to 12 help explain the underlying merit in developing classroom dialogue. By first, defining how dialogic teaching methods engage, stimulate and extend thinking amongst students (see Slide 9), I can then, elaborate on the specific teaching principles

themselves.

Two aspects which will guide my presentation on developing a talking for learning approach, are teachers' questioning practices, and the interactive pace of our discourse. In respect to the questions teachers ask, how these questions are posed will be a focal point here. The issue of closed versus open-questioning is an important feature in dialogic discussion which needs clarifying. Using an example from my presentation (see Slide 10), I will distinguish between the types, and show how it is typically used in the IRF/IRE exchange. The final details of a talking for learning approach will center on engaging students in 'exploratory talk' (Mercer, 2008b), and the pedagogical reasons for doing so (see Slide 11). This is an important part in the presentation, as it addresses practical answers to the problem of classroom talk. Despite, as Howe and Abedin (2013) report, there being few models from which to draw conclusions; exploratory talk offers an excellent framework going forward. Making changes to the interactive pace of classroom discourse (see Slide 12), can guide discussions beyond the IRF/IRE model, towards more exploratory styles.

The final focus of my presentation, will compare and examine differences between a conventional approach in discourse, and that of talking for learning (see Slide 13). Slides 13 to 16, offer practical perspective on how one's questioning shapes classroom dialogue. As reported in the literature, factual questions that elicit closed responses, dictate much of the classrooms' discourse (see Slide 14). This suggests a possible reason for the restrictions on dialogue and, more importantly, presents features which one might address. Drawing from a case study, on the discursive practices of one primary school teacher; I discuss how changes to the questions asked, influenced the communicative roles shared by the students (see Slide 15). In using speculative questions, students were given the chance to expand and elaborate on the answers they gave. This encouraged dialogic interaction in a way that is extremely difficult with closed question

types. The Kovalainen and Kumpulainen (2005) study was important in my practice, as it offered me valuable perspective on how to approach dialogic discussions with my students (see Slide 16, 17 & 18). As the authors assert, when a heavy emphasis was placed on social interaction as tools for learning; powerful thinking and learning emerged (Kovalainen, 2005). It was ultimately one of the few examples from the literature, which illustrated the realities of dialogic practice; and became important in guiding my experience. In closing, I offer a quote by Piaget, in which he addresses the principle goals of education (see Slide 19). The quote reflects the ideas of dialogic practice, and purposefully frames the next part of our exchange.

### **Coordinating dialogue on discursive practice.**

Next, the activity changes from presentation to investigation. Using an interactive approach; I engage participating members with a quick sort activity (see Appendix B), to encourage them to think about the different qualities of classroom talk. This will ideally create some additional context from which to explore the issue, but more than that, it offers a tie-in to theories of constructivism. After breaking into small groups or pairs, participants will sort 16 talk interactions strips (ex. demonstrates procedure) into four talk type categories; exploratory, presentation, monologic and dialogic. Having the definitions in front of them should make it easier for the participants to work through the activity. The object is not only to discuss this terminology, but to analyze the interactive process itself. Because dialogic practice is grounded in social discourse, it is important to personally connect, using talk to reason and think through a task with participants. Afterward, I will ask group members what they think the experience might have been like had they been instructed to sort the strips on their own. How this discussion will unfold is difficult to predict; but I include it to generate some perspective as a basis for the cumulating activity.

**Generating common understanding.**

Because collaborative discourse is a powerful tool in how personal meaning is made, I have devised five questions which are aimed at generating productive discussion among participants. Each question is intended to draw on the collective insights from the group; and as individuals share their perspectives, the answers they give might spark new understanding for others. The process is reflective of dialogic principles, which is why I have chosen to engage participants in this particular model of discursive exchange. In answering the guiding questions, participants will ideally formulate common understanding amongst themselves. These questions (see Appendix C), will be printed on cards, which each group of three to four participants will have to reference. I have chosen to keep the small group format, to provide participants more opportunities to share in constructing meaning. After 20 to 30 minutes, participants will regroup to discuss what perspectives arose from their dialogue. This will be difficult to speculate on, but will likely produce some common understanding about what dialogic practice means to these participants. Because their teaching experiences may vary, it is likely that there will be some contrasting views shared as well. Exploring both sides can have constructive results, and could lead to further questions which may guide their future inquiry.

**Conclusion**

In looking at ways to support learning, dialogic practice is emerging as a promising strategy. As noted in the literature, discussion and dialogue can help the learner frame and construct understanding. This provides a pedagogical foundation for use with students, and promotes a ‘talking for learning’ approach in the classroom. Observations of my own discursive practice led me to examine the role of talk and interaction in the classroom, ultimately guiding the changes which were made with students. Reflecting on my change in practice, I noticed high

levels of engagement and concentration during reading group sessions, as those who did not typically voice answers made repeated contributions to this exchange. Another encouraging thought transpired during the students' writing process, when I noted improvements in the written pieces themselves. Both the quality and quantity of this work improved from the previous term, although it might not have been directly impacted by our discussions. Exploring the issues further may provide additional insight on the effectiveness of the strategy. By inviting other professionals to participate in a workshop then, greater context on dialogic principles may be constructed. Ultimately, the opinions and perspectives garnered from other educators might develop an enhanced appreciation for how dialogic practice fits into current curriculum and instruction models of education

## Chapter Four: Final Reflections

### Changing Beliefs and Practices

Prior to my graduate experience I had never truly considered why I held the professional beliefs I did. Instead I concentrated on the practice of teaching students and gave relatively little notice to weighing my beliefs in the matter. Directing my focus and attention to improvements in my practice, I was interested in adopting ‘better’ strategies and ‘ideal’ programs. Consequently, I often tried to replace one framework for another, and would typically use a single lens on which to examine the issues. This fixed and linear mindset, was not something I even knew I used, and yet it guided my practice in many ways. Challenged to explore the issues further than I would have on my own, the M.Ed. program has helped me better appreciate the complex nature of these views. Although it was a considerable shift for me to acknowledge the complexities within ideas, it has been a profound process of personal and professional discovery and growth. Exploring connections to why I think the way I do, has helped create new strategies of reflection. As I examine these perceptions more closely I become aware of different lenses from which to see the issues; and by default, the deeper implications of my own. Now aware of my linear thinking, I am trying to be more critical and probing. Important skills that will not only help me personally, but will allow me to broaden my perceptions about teaching and learning as well.

As part of a set of learner competencies, critical thinking skills are fundamental in curriculum and instruction. Yet explicitly teaching these skills has not always been a priority of mine. While I talk about the importance of recognizing different perspectives, and invite students to express alternative views; it is typically, secondary to the main objectives of the lesson. Philosophical curriculums are one example of how teachers are using dialogue to promote critical

thinking skills with learners. The focus is on building reasoning skills, and engages students in reflective processes on a theme or issue. Using these resources then, may help students practice the skills which probe their thinking further. By engaging with ideas, learners are given the opportunity to delve into their own perceptions. It encourages them to define, articulate and justify this thinking. Moreover, it draws attention to the various stances from which to consider things. This interchange of different perspectives can invariably push one's thinking forward. As with my own experience, *thinking about one's thinking* can be an extremely informative exercise in developing understanding.

### **Applying this Perspective**

In many ways, the understanding I have gained from my graduate experience has made me a more flexible and responsive teacher. Certainly the way in which I engage with my students' learning has changed. I am not as quick to give out answers, when a pointed question might lead students towards the answer instead. I also articulate questions about things I don't have the answers for, and encourage students to offer their perspective on the matter. Before this experience, directing the learning meant directing the student, and quite often telling the student what they needed to know. Essentially the M.Ed. program has nudged me to see that by directing the process, I can direct the learning in a purposeful but personal way. This is the big idea that I brought into my teaching practice over the last two years, and one that I will continue to work at implementing. Ultimately it is the process of generating perspective that moves learning forward. As my own understanding shifts from linear to dynamic forms, I am more open to the experiences that unfold and drawn to what else I might learn. The perspectives I share today, might not be the stance taken tomorrow, yet it is part of the process that got me there.

Appreciating the fluidity of this thinking is something that I now apply to my teaching practice. By discussing more than just the answer, students are given the chance to reflect on the matter more deeply. The quick answers I once offered are becoming less automatic, and instead, their curiosity, wonder and reasoning is being afforded the chance to emerge.

### **Key Recommendations**

Drawn to the research in Constructivism, Complexity Theory, Emergent Curriculums, Process-Oriented Instruction, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning, Personalized Instruction, Powerful Learning Environments, Responsive Teaching, Collaborative & Cooperative Curricula Models, and finally Collective Meaning Making; I became interested in the way discourse is used for teaching and learning. Each area provoked a closer look at the issues, until what emerged was a more complex understanding of the impact our discursive practices have on classroom learning itself. New research questions surfaced around classroom talk and interaction, and I was surprised by how much my own practices aligned with Teacher-Initiated, Student-Response, Teacher-Follow-Up and Evaluation (IRF/IRE) models of instruction. Reflecting on how I might extend the lines of inquiry, I looked for practical approaches to be able to do this with students. The concept of making thinking visible was something that resonated with me, and thus guided my practice forward. One of the approaches I now take in class, is to model my own thinking using a ‘think aloud’ strategy. This demonstrates for students the thoughts that go into constructing perspective. The strategy however, is still very much teacher-directed and more learner-centered approaches are also important to incorporate. An approach that worked extremely well with my students involved visual descriptors of key thinking statements (ex. “*that makes me think of*”).

Having these posters as a reference point in the classroom became an effective means of framing our discussions.

Focused on how I might extend this change of practice, my attention turned towards two key objectives. Because interactive teaching requires a different approach than I was used to, I had to adopt new ways to engage with learners. The first change that was important to make was in how I approached the questions I asked. As found in the literature, factual questions are a common feature in classroom discourse. The problem with using this question type, is that it can restrict how students engage with this learning. Closed questions quite often elicit short response and minimal interaction from students. Extending my questioning to create more talk and interaction was most important. Instead of following up one answer with another question, I prodded for further explanation. This encouraged students to offer reasons for the answers they gave and helped generate strong perspectives in our discussions. The second change to my approach evolved out of implementing the first. Because I was now more focused on extending and exploring this thinking, I became acutely aware of my reactions to their responses. The slow but deliberate pace of dialogic practice requires that the teacher guide, not necessarily instruct the learning. Understanding this encouraged me to take a more responsive approach with students, and changed the way I looked at my role as a classroom teacher. As a result, it enables me to be more flexible in the approaches I take, and receptive to where the learning may be going.

My focus is now on the learner as much as it is on the lesson activity itself. This broadens the way I approach my teaching practice and integrates important student-centered beliefs into my professional perspective. Dialogic practice facilitates an interactive approach to teaching and learning. It offers students both the space and support they need to make personal connections and the scaffolding this requires. By broadening discourse patterns, students are given the

opportunity to direct their learning with the teacher's guidance. This balance between teacher-directed and student-centered practice is key to both engaging and provoking the learner. How I structure questions, or how I respond to their replies, relates back to the larger issue of how I wish to direct this learning. Changing my scope has been incredibly influential in shifting my practice. It brought focus to more collaborative models of classroom interaction, and has inspired me to subsequently, want to inspire my students too.

## References

- Alexander, R.J. (2001). From conversation to dialogue. *Culture and pedagogy: International comparisons in primary education*. Retrieved from: <http://www.robinaalexander.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Lessons-for-the-chattering-classes.pdf>.
- BCELF Government Document. (2007). *British Columbia early learning framework*. British Columbia, Canada: Ministry of Education, (ISBN 978-0-7726-5925-5).
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social Foundations of Thoughts and Action*. New Jersey, NY: Prentice-Hall Inc.
- Bakhtin, M.M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays by M.M. Bakhtin* (M. Holquist, Ed., C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Trans.). Austin, USA: University of Texas Press.
- Beilin, H. (1992). Piaget's enduring contribution to developmental psychology. *Developmental Psychology*, 28(2), 191-204.
- Bell, S. (2010). Project-based learning for the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Skills for the future. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 83(2), 39-43.
- Blumenfeld, P.C., Soloway, E., Marx, R.W., Krajcik, J.S., Guzdial, M., & Palincsar, A. (1991). Motivating project-based learning: Sustaining the doing, supporting the learning. *Educational Psychologist*, 26(3 & 4), 369-398.
- Bolhuis, S. (2003). Towards process-oriented teaching for self-directed lifelong learning: A multidimensional perspective. *Learning and Instruction*, 13, 327-347.
- Bowyer-Crane, C., Snowling, M.J., Duff, F.J., Fieldsend, E., Carroll, J.M, Miles, J., & Hulme, C. (2008). Improving early language & literacy skills: Differential effects of an oral language versus a phonology with reading intervention. *The Journal of Child Psychology &*

- Psychiatry*, 40(4), 422-432.
- Boyd, M.P., & Galda, L. (2011). Real talk in elementary classrooms: Effective oral language practice. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Brown, C.P. (2007). "It's more than content": Expanding the conception of early learning standards. *Early Childhood Research and Practice*, 9(1), Retrieved from: <http://www.ecrp.uiuc.edu/v9n1/brown.html>.
- Burke, C. (2005). "Play in focus": Children researching their own spaces and places for play. *Children, Youth and Environments*, 15(1), 27-53.
- CBC Report. (2010). Canadian education ranked among world's best. Retrieved from: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/canadian-education-ranked-among-world-s-best-1.940247>.
- Colcott, D., Russell, B., & Skouteris, H. (2009). Thinking about thinking: Innovative pedagogy designed to foster thinking skills in junior primary classroom. *Teacher Development: An International Journal of Teachers' Professional Development*, 13(1), 17-27.
- CVSD Report. (2013). Superintendent's report on student achievement 2012/13. Cowichan Valley School District #79, British Columbia: Ministry of Education Document. Retrieved from: <http://www.sd79.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/08>.
- Dweck, C. (2009). Who will the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner be? *Knowledge Quest*, 38(2), 8-9.
- Edwards, S., & Cutter-Mackenzie, A. (2011). Environmentalising early childhood education curriculum through pedagogies of play. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 36(1), 51-59.
- Edwards-Groves, C.J., & Hoare, R.L. (2012). "Talking to learn": Focussing teacher education on dialogue as a core practice for teaching and learning. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 37(8), 82-100.

- Edwards-Groves, C.J., Anstey, M., & Bull, G. (2014). Classroom talk: Understanding dialogue, pedagogy and practice. Newton, AUS: PETAA.
- Engle, R.A., & Conant, F.R. (2002). Guiding principles for fostering productive disciplinary engagement: Explaining an emergent argument in a community of learners classroom. *Cognition & Instruction*, 20(4), 399-483.
- Franke, M.L., Webb, N.M., Chan, A.G., Ing, M., Freund, D., & Battey, D. (2009). Teacher questioning to elicit students' mathematical thinking in elementary school classrooms. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 60(4), 380-392.
- French, G. (2012). The HighScope approach to early learning. In M.M. Mahuna & M. Taylor (Eds.) *Early childhood education and care: An introduction for students in Ireland* (pp 127-134). Dublin, IRL: Gill & McMillan.
- Fisher, R. (2001). Philosophy in primary schools: Fostering thinking skills and literacy. *Reading*, 35(2), 67-73.
- Fisher, R. (2009). Creative dialogue: Talk for thinking in the classroom. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Fullan, M. (2009). Large-scale reform comes of age. *Journal of Educational Change*, 10, 101-113.
- Gillies, M. (2006). Teachers' and students' verbal behaviours during cooperative and small-group learning. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 76, 271-287.
- Greenfield-Spira, E., Storch-Bracken, S., & Fischel, J.E. (2005). Predicting improvements after first grade reading difficulties: The effects of oral language, emergent literacy, and behavior Skills. *Developmental Psychology*, 41(1), 225-234.
- Hay, I., Fielding-Barnsley, R., & Taylor, T. (2010). Facilitating young children's language and vocabulary development using a cognitive framework. *He Kupu: The Word*, (2), 37-46.

- Retrieved from: <http://www.nztertiarycollege.ac.nz/HeKupu/>.
- Hedges, H., & Cullen, J. (2005). Subject knowledge in early childhood curriculum and pedagogy: Beliefs and practices. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 6(1), 66-79.
- Hopkins, J.R. (2011). The enduring influence of Jean Piaget. *Observer: Association for Psychological Science*, 24(10). Retrieved from: <https://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/publications/observer/2011/december-11/jean-piaget.html>.
- Howe, C., & Abedin, M. (2013). Classroom dialogue: A systematic review across four decades of research. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 43(3), 325-356.
- Hyun, E., & Marshall, J.D. (2003). Critical inquiry into emergent-oriented curriculum practice. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 24, 37-50.
- Jenkins, J.M., & Keefe, J.W. (2001). Strategies for personalizing instruction: A typology for improving teaching and learning. *National Association of Secondary Schools Principals*, 85, 72-82.
- King, A. (1993). From sage on the stage, to guide on the side. *College Teaching*, 41(1), 30-35.
- Kirkland, L.D., & Patterson, J. (2005). Developing oral language in primary classrooms. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 32(6), 391-395.
- Konings, K.D., Brand-Gruwel, S., & Van Merriënboer, J.J. (2005). Towards more powerful learning environments through combining the perspectives of designer, teachers and students. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 75(1), 645-660.
- Kovalainen, M., & Kumpulainen, K. (2005). The discursive practice of participation in an elementary classroom community. *Instructional Science*, 33, 213-250.
- Loewenberg-Ball, D. (1988). Unlearning to teach mathematics. *For the Learning of Mathematics*, 8(1), 40-48.

Long-Crowell, E. (2015). Direct instruction and discovery instruction: Definition and differences.

*Educational Psychology*, 8. Retrieved from: <http://study.com/academy/lesson/direct-instruction-discovery-instruction-definition-differences.html>.

Maiers, A. (2012). Classroom habitudes: Teaching habits and attitudes for 21<sup>st</sup> century learning. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.

May, P., Ashford, E., & Bottle, G. (2006). Sound beginnings: Learning and development in the early years. London, UK: David Fulton Publishers.

Mercer, N. (2008a). Developing dialogues. In G. Wells & G. Claxton (Eds.), *Learning for life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. (pp 141-153). Oxford, UK: Blackwell. Retrieved from: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9780470753545.ch11/summary>.

Mercer, N., & Dawes, L. (2008b). The value of exploratory talk. In N. Mercer & S. Hodgkinson (Eds.), *Exploring talk in schools*. (pp. 55-72). London: Sage. Retrieved from: <https://www.esrc.ac.uk/.../2a239d65-89f9-4e38-a027-1f1296f44a5e>.

Mercer, N. (2010). The analysis of classroom talk: Methods and methodologies. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 80, 1-14.

Meyers, N.M., & Nulty, D.D. (2009). How to use (five) curriculum design principles to align authentic learning environments, assessment, students' approaches to thinking and learning outcomes. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, (34)5, 565-577.

Mills, J.E., & Treagust, D.F. (2003). Engineering education: Is problem-based or project-based learning the answer? *Australasian Journal of Engineering Education*, 2-15. Retrieved from: [http://www.aeee.com.au/journal/2003/mills\\_treagust03.pdf](http://www.aeee.com.au/journal/2003/mills_treagust03.pdf).

Miller, E., & Almon, J. (2009). Crisis in kindergarten: Why children need play in schools. *Alliance for Childhood*, Summary & Recommendations. 1-8.

Myhill, D. (2006a). Talk, talk, talk: teaching & learning in whole class discourses. *Research*

*Papers in Education*, 21(1), 19-41.

Myhill, D., Jones, S., & Hopper, R. (2006b). Talking, listening learning: effective talk in the primary classroom. *Research for Teachers*, General Teaching Council for England, Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Nachowitz, M., & Brumer, N. (2014). Teaching the talk, not the text. *Voices from the Middle*, 22(1), 15-21.

Nicolopoulou, A. (2010). The alarming disappearance of play from early childhood education. *Human Development*, 53, 1-4.

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2004). Starting strong: Curricula and pedagogies in early childhood education and care. 4-34. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/23/36/31672150.pdf>.

OECD. (2010). Strong Performers and Successful Reformers in Education: Lessons from PISA for the United States. 117-135. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.oecd.org/pisa/46623978.pdf>.

Osberg, D., & Biesta, G. (2008). The emergent curriculum: Navigating a complex course between unguided learning and planned enculturation. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 40 (3), 313-328.

Piaget, J. (1963). Development and learning. In R.E. Ripple & V.N. Rockcastle (Eds.), *Piaget rediscovered*. (pp 7-20). Reprinted In M. Gauvain & M. Cole (Eds.), *Readings on the development of children*. (pp 21-28). New York, US: W.H Freeman and Company.

Rojas-Drummond, S., Mazon, N., Fernandex, M., & Wegerif, R. (2006). Explicit reasoning, Creativity and co-construction in primary school children's collaborative activities. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 1, 84-94.

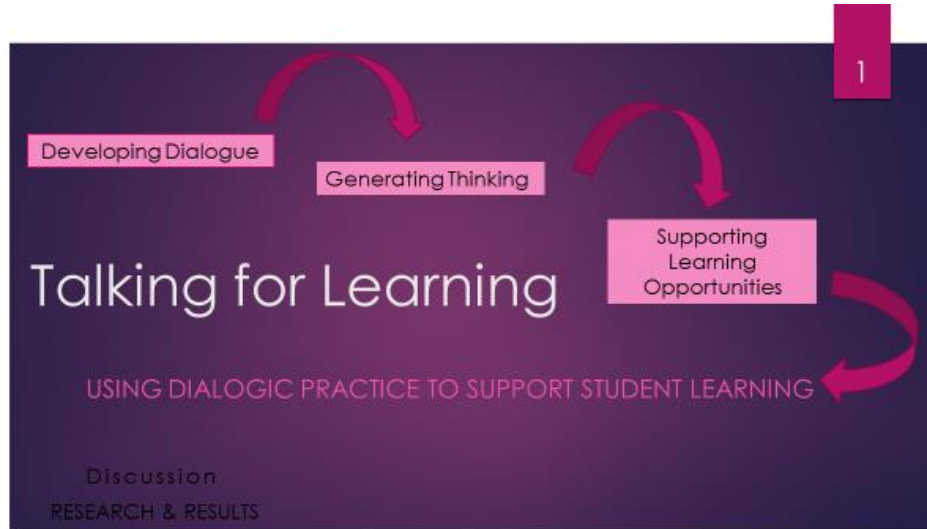
Renzulli, J.S., Gentry, M., & Reis, S.M. (2004). A time and a place for authentic learning.

- Educational Leadership*, ASCD, 73-77. Retrieved at:  
[http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/sem/pdf/Enrichment\\_C](http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/sem/pdf/Enrichment_C).
- Saavedra, A.R., & Opfer, V.D. (2012). Learning 21<sup>st</sup> century skills requires 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 94(2), 8-13.
- Saldana, J. (2013). Power and conformity in today's schools. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3(1), 228-232.
- Scott, C. (2009). Talking to learn: Dialogue in the classroom. *The Digest*, NSWIT, (2).
- Sheerer, M.A., Dettore, E., & Cyphers, J. (1996). Off with a theme: Emergent curriculum in action. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 24(2), 99-102.
- Stein, M.K., Engle, R.A., Smith, M.S., & Hughes, E.K. (2008). Orchestrating productive mathematical discussion: five practices for helping teachers move beyond show & tell. *Mathematical Thinking and Learning*, 10(4), 313-340.
- Stremmel, A.J., & Fu, V.R. (1993). Teaching in the zone of proximal development: Implications for responsive teaching practices. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, 22(5), 337-350.
- Swan, M. (2006). Collaborative learning in mathematics. *NIACE*, (pp 162-176). Retrieved from:  
[http://www.intranet.ebc.edu.mx/.../aprendizaje\\_colaborativo\\_130212.pdf](http://www.intranet.ebc.edu.mx/.../aprendizaje_colaborativo_130212.pdf).
- Tinzmann, M.B., Jones, B.F., Fennimore, T.F., Bakker, J., Fine, C., & Pierce, J. (1990). What is the collaborative classroom? *NCREL*: Oak Brook. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.methodenpool.uni-koeln.de/koopunterricht>.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- White-Clark, R. (2008). "Guide on the side": An instructional approach to meet mathematical standards. *The High School Journal*, 9(4), 40-44.

Wise, J.C., Sevcik, R.A., Morris, R.D., Lovett, M.W., & Wolf, M. (2007). The relationship among receptive & expressive vocabulary, Listening comprehension, Pre-reading skills, Word identification skills, And reading comprehension by children with reading disabilities. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, 50, 1093-1109.

Yu-le, Z. (2004, October 28). *Some thoughts on emergent curriculum*. Paper presented at the Forum for Integrated Education and Educational Reform: sponsored by the Council for Global Integrative Education, Santa Cruz, CA. Retrieved from:

<http://www.chiron.valdosta.edu/whuitt/CGIE/yule.pdf>.

**Appendix A: Power-Point Presentation (Talking for Learning)****Slide 1****Slide 2**

2

## Growing Up in a Complex World

- ▶ **21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning requires 21<sup>st</sup> Century Teaching.**
- ▶ **Conventional Models of *Teacher Talk*** don't necessarily give children the chance to **explore, debate, consider, or THINK** about the information.
- ▶ Developing classroom **dialogue & discussion** can give students the time and space they need to work out their **thinking**.

## Slide 3




3

## With Sociocultural Roots

- ▶ Taking what Vygotsky had to say about learning and development...
  - ▶ "learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers." (Mind in Society, 1978, p. 83)
  - ▶ **Discussion & Dialogue can cultivate effective pathways in their learning.**
- ▶ But how we use discussion & dialogue greatly determines these achievements.
  - ▶ INCORPORATING: Social Interaction + Discourse 

## Slide 4



4

Compare Ideas

Develop Language Skills

Make Authentic Discoveries

Seek out Perspectives

Children will be able to....

Establish Connections

- ALONG WITH A MYRIAD OTHER HIGHER-ORDER FUNCTIONING SKILLS

-SUPPORTS COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT-

## Slide 5

Teaching in the Zones

"The Zone of proximal development defines those functions that have not yet matured, but are in the process of maturation, functions that will mature tomorrow but are currently in an embryonic state." (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 79)

## Discussion & Dialogue

FACILITATES THIS LEARNING

5

- BOOSTS THINKING
- GIVES STUDENTS AGENCY
- ENCOURAGES KNOWLEDGE CONSTRUCTION
- SUPPORTS DEVELOPMENT
- ENHANCES: KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & ABILITIES

## Slide 6

## Using Talk in the Classroom

In their 2013 "systematic review across four decades of research" on classroom dialogue, Howe & Abedin confirm:

**FINDINGS:**

- That teachers use discussion for teaching purposes, as opposed to learning purposes
- Classroom talk is in fact dominated by teachers
- Used mostly to deliver content & elicit facts from the class

6

Described as "The two-thirds Rule"

"which recognizes that classroom activity is dominated by verbal communication but stresses that such communication is primarily **teacher delivery**." (Howe, 2013, p. 325)

## Slide 7

7

## The Nature of Classroom Talk Today

- **IN THE END** they concluded that:
 

True Classroom Dialogue  
For thinking & learning

=

Is in fact **Rare**
- And that, "much more is known about how classroom dialogue is organized than about whether certain modes of organization are more beneficial than others" (Howe, 2013, Abstract)

## Slide 8

8

## Changing how Talk is Structured

- As a medium for teaching, talk is most often structured to:
  - Elicit factual knowledge
  - Check Understanding
  - Encourage Participation
  - Provide Feedback from/on what the teachers hears

(Mercer, 2008, p. 3)
- With these objectives in mind, classroom discussion typically unfolds as **3 part series**:
 

**(IRF)**

  - INITIATION - from teacher "What planet is closest to ours?"
  - RESPONSE - from child "The moon!"
  - FOLLOW-UP - feedback from teacher "What PLANEt is closest to ours?"

## Slide 9

9

THE PROBLEM BEING:

*THAT* this talk doesn't engage students' thinking-

*WHICH* restricts learning developmental processes-

The Solution:

**Dialogic Teaching** - engages, stimulates and extends thinking

SO WHILE EDUCATORS REALIZE, ON A THEORETICAL LEVEL AT LEAST, THAT "TALK SERVES VITAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING FUNCTIONS" (SCOTT, 2009, P. 5) THEY ARE LESS LIKELY TO ENGAGE STUDENTS IN THIS TYPE OF ACTIVITY, MOST OF THE TIME.

## Slide 10

10

## Developing Talking for Learning?

First: Opening up the discussion is key!

Changing dominant IRF patterns can help.

We begin by looking at:  
 how we ask students the question  
 how we develop their thinking

Research shows that on average, students will respond with 4 or few words during these discussions.  
 (Scott, 2009, p. 7) (Myhill, 2006, p. 30)

- TEACHER- "DO WE KNOW WHAT PLANET IS CLOSEST TO OURS?"
- STUDENT RESPONSE - "THE MOON!"
- TEACHER- "TELL ME HOW YOU KNOW THAT?  
 WHAT DO OTHERS THINK?"

## Slide 11

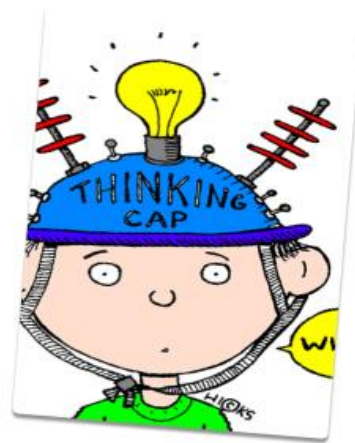
THE BENEFITS BEHIND  
EXPLORATORY TALK

By exploring  
thinking THIS WAY.....

- WE CAN FLUSH OUT IDEAS that OCCASION DEEPER LEARNING.

Using more open-ended dialogue:

- Engages students in thinking critically & constructively with Ideas
- Makes reasoning visible to the group
- Places value with the learning process



11

## Slide 12

Students need to be given more time to reflect and explore concepts during their discussions.

This means that we need to re-think the interactive pace of our discourse.

AS ROBIN ALEXANDER PURPORTS "IS NOT ABOUT URGING CHILDREN TO 'HURRY UP AND FINISH'" (ALEXANDER, 2001, P. 1) THE LEARNING.

MAKING DISCUSSION THE AGENDA ALLOWS... POWERFUL LEARNING TO EMERGE

12

Slide 13

A DIFFERENT approach in the way we ask  
-the **question**-

13

Conventional Methods

Teacher Talk:

QUESTIONS LIKE:

- "WHAT..."
- "HOW..."
- "WHEN..."
- "DOES..."

- OVER 60% OF QUESTIONS ASKED INVITED A PRE-DETERMINED ANSWER FROM STUDENTS (Myhill, 2006, p. 27)

Talking for Learning instead

ASKS:

- ▶ "WHY..."
- ▶ "WHAT IF..."
- ▶ "ON WHAT BASIS..."
- ▶ "IS THERE ANOTHER WAY..."
- ▶ "ARE THERE OTHER THOUGHTS..."

Slide 14

HEAVY EMPHASIS ON CLOSED RESPONSES

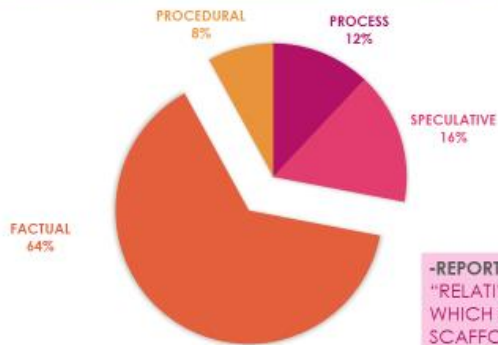
14

FIGURES TAKEN FROM A UK STUDY (MYHILL, 2006, P. 27)

FRAMING THE DISCUSSION



Questions -THROUGH- TRANSMISSION



-REPORTED-  
"RELATIVELY LITTLE INTERACTION WHICH SUPPORTED & SCAFFOLDED CHILDREN IN THEIR LEARNING" (MYHILL, 2006, p. 24)

## Slide 15

### One Study In Particular, Offers Some Promising Results However...

Researchers Kovalainen & Kumpulainen, examining the discursive practices of a Grade 3 Finnish classroom, discovered that when a heavy emphasis was placed on social interaction as tools for learning; powerful thinking and learning emerged

15

"FINDINGS REFLECT THE OPEN NATURE OF COLLECTIVE MEANING-MAKING BOTH IN TERMS OF CONTENT AND INTERACTIONAL STRUCTURES. HERE BOTH THE STUDENTS AND THE TEACHER HAD MORE EQUAL COMMUNICATIVE ROLES IN DEVELOPING THE JOINT DIALOGUE."  
(KOVALAINEN, 2005, P. 241)

## Slide 16

### IT IS RESPONSIVE TEACHING:

- Honors Differentiation
- Inclusive of varying Abilities
- Capitalizes on student's distinct & rich Prior Knowledge

16



## ESTABLISHING INTERSUBJECTIVITY

The basis of SHARED UNDERSTANDING

**Slide 17****SETTING SOME GROUND RULES WITH RESPECT TO ONE'S RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES IS ABSOLUTELY KEY.**

(KOVALAINEN, 2005, P 214)

This kind of talk requires students to be active listeners, in ways they may not be used to. It asks that they think about what they hear, in terms of what that means to them. That they be receptive to ideas that are different from their own. And that above all, they be open to the fact that there is more than one way to think about the issue. Exactly the kind of flexibility they're expected to have for 21<sup>st</sup> century logic and living.

17

**Slide 18**

“ The fundamental questions asked by Alexander, 'Do we provide the right kind of talk; and how can we strengthen its power to help children think and learn even more effectively than they do?' (Alexander, 2004, p. 6) ”  
remain as pertinent now as they have ever been.

(MYHILL, 2006, P. 39)

18

While Dialogic Teaching is an EMPOWERING APPROACH for Learners.

- ▶ It ultimately presents teachers with certain challenges to their regular classroom routines.
- AND with limited research in this respect, there are few MODELS out there that offer practical guidance.
- ▶ TALK Programs could be especially helpful for teachers wanting to try out this style of teaching.

**Slide 19**

## ONE FINAL THOUGHT.....

19

As Piaget suggests:

"the principal goal of education is to create [individuals] who are capable of doing new things, not simply of repeating what other generations have done; men [and women] who are creative, inventive and discoverers, who can be critical and verify, and not accept everything they are offered" (Piaget, 1964, pg. 5).

**Appendix B: 'Talk Types' Sort Activity**

<b>Exploratory Talk</b>	Engages in critical thinking	Offers reasons and justification
	Builds on previous replies	Investigates ideas
<b>Presentation Talk</b>	Shares procedural info	Provides reasoning
	Reveals thinking	Evaluates ideas
<b>Monologic Talk</b>	Presents information	Illustrates ideas
	Demonstrates concepts	Describes procedure
<b>Dialogic Talk</b>	Offers perspectives	Encourages opinions
	Conveys ideas	Generates discussion

**Appendix C: Group Questions**

1. How do you define dialogic practice?
2. When is using discussion and dialogue advantageous to student learning?
3. What are your classroom rules around group discussion?
4. How is a classroom discussion different than children's conversations?
5. What is the teacher's role in classroom dialogue?