# Shared Principle: Academic Conversation

Through peer-to-peer dialogue, students' ideas are explored, challenged, and refined. As students engage in academic conversations, they come to see the value in being open to new ideas and modifying their own ideas based on new information. Students grow as they frequently practice this type of respectful dialogue and critique and learn to recognize that all voices, including their own, deserve to be heard.

Pre-AP classroom instructional practices include:

Less of this:

- Academic conversation exists between teachers and individual students, with little to no peer-to-peer conversations.
- Academic conversation consists only of "turn and talk" methods, with limited focus or purpose to guide discussion.
- Academic conversation requires students to simply recall or define rote academic vocabulary.
- Academic conversation is dominated by individuals, discouraging other students from participating.
- Academic conversation is based on information being disseminated to students, without opportunities for students to discuss original thoughts.
- Academic conversation is not enhanced by the use of classroom supports (Word walls, sentence stems, etc.)
- Academic conversation does not occur due to surface level questions requiring little to no discussion.
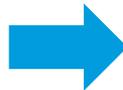
More of this:

- Academic conversation reflects a classroom culture that values talking and thinking between students while teachers are listening and guiding.
- Academic conversation is driven by a lesson structure that includes specific and strategic discussion prompts to guide peer-to-peer conversations.
- Academic conversation requires use of relevant course/discipline specific language.
- Academic conversation allows **all students** to engage in discussion by sharing ideas, reasoning, and questions.
- Academic conversation drives students to make meaning of engaging content (data, texts, problem-sets) through direct interaction with one another.
- Academic conversation is enhanced by the use of authentic classroom supports to integrate academic vocabulary into discussions.
- Academic conversation encourages students to listen, compare, critique, debate, and respond to refine their ideas and build upon one another's.

Areas of Focus for Each Discipline

| Fine Arts	Math	Science	English	History
- Analysis and interpretation - Peer to peer dialogue - Experimentation - Reflective writing	- Connecting among multiple representations - Authenticity of applications and modeling - Engagement in mathematical argumentation	- Emphasis on analytical reading and writing - Strategic use of mathematics - Attention to modeling	- Reading closely - Valuing evidence - Noticing language choices	- Evaluating evidence - Explaining historical and geographic relationships - Incorporating evidence

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Shared Principle: Close Observation and Analysis

Students are provided time to carefully observe one data set, text, image, performance piece, or problem before being asked to explain, analyze, or evaluate. This creates a safe entry point to simply express what they notice and what they wonder. It also encourages students to slow down and capture relevant details with intentionality to support more meaningful analysis, rather than rushing to completion at the expense of understanding.

Pre-AP classroom instructional practices include:

Less of this:

- Source material lacks complexity and does not require close observation of details or trends.
- Tasks or activities require only surface-level interaction with source materials (vocabulary matching, fill-in-the-blank worksheets).
- Source material, tasks, or activities drive students toward one correct answer, trend, or interpretation.
- Tasks or activities begin with the teacher revealing key information about source material before students have an opportunity to engage with it on their own.
- Tasks or activities provide little to no time or structure for students to process source materials before being asked to analyze.
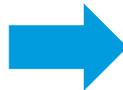
More of this:

- Source material fosters and encourages close observation of details or trends (objects, texts, performance pieces, problems, etc.)
- Tasks or activities require students to return to source materials, prompting multiple interactions.
- Source material, tasks, or activities allow for a variety of interpretations and student responses.
- Tasks or activities involve students reading and interacting with source materials to build, refine, and confirm knowledge **before** being asked to explain, analyze, or evaluate.
- Tasks or activities provide both time and structure for student observations with guiding questions, such as:
  - ✓ What do you see?
  - ✓ What do you notice?
  - ✓ What does this one data point mean?
  - ✓ What questions do you have?

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Shared Principle: Evidence-Based Writing

With strategic support, students frequently engage in writing coherent arguments from relevant and valid sources of evidence. Pre-AP courses embrace a purposeful and scaffolded approach to writing that begins with a focus on precise and effective sentences before progressing to longer forms of writing.

Pre-AP classroom instructional practices include:

Less of this:

- Writing happens rarely.
- Writing tasks are scored as right or wrong, without any feedback or next steps.
- Writing tasks are completely disconnected from course content, or tasks rely solely on personal experience or opinion.
- Writing reflects identical responses from all students attempting to provide one correct answer instead of justification or explanation.
- Writing tasks are always completed individually.
- Writing process does not include any peer input or review.
- Writing includes evidence pre-selected by the teacher or copied directly from the source without any student reasoning.
- Writing tasks are rote exercises that always serve the same purpose.
- Writing tasks are assigned without any supports (such as scaffolds, entry points, or models).
- Writing tasks are overly scaffolded for all students, resulting in formulaic student responses.
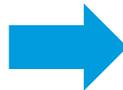
More of this:

- Writing is a regular part of the classroom experience.
- Writing tasks make student thinking visible and leads to authentic feedback.
- Writing tasks are directly related to course content and learning objectives.
- Writing allows student to have agency to select the best evidence to explain or justify their answers in their own words.
- Writing tasks offer opportunities for co-construction of explanations and arguments.
- Writing process allows students to review their writing with peers.
- Writing requires students to select, evaluate, and synthesize evidence to support a claim and develop a line of reasoning.
- Writing tasks serve multiple purposes, such as to facilitate thinking, demonstrate understanding, create explanations, create claims, and develop and critique arguments.
- Writing supports such as sentence stems and frames, graphic organizers, modeling, etc. are provided based on student needs.

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Shared Principle: Higher-Order Questioning

Students engage with questions designed to encourage thinking that is elevated beyond simple memorization and recall. Higher-order questions require students to make predictions, synthesize, evaluate, and compare. As students grapple with these questions, they learn that being inquisitive promotes extended thinking and leads to deeper understanding.

Pre-AP classroom instructional practices include:

Less of this:

- Questions are always based on factual recall.
- Questions are asked in isolation with no progression or connections between them.
- Questions are always asked by the teacher, and only a few students respond.
- Questions are a way to maintain student attention, without considering content or cognitive engagement.
- Questions are used only as checks for understanding.
- Questions are asked without providing student processing time.
- Questions are always asked orally and only allow for individual responses.
- Questions with incorrect answers are quickly corrected and dismissed.
- Questions and answers include imprecise language for important concepts.
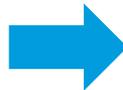
More of this:

- Questions are often open-ended, asking "how" or "why," instead of seeking one right answer.
- Questions lead to further questions and build toward analysis and synthesis.
- Questions and inquiry are part of the classroom culture, with students asking questions of the teacher, one another, and their source material.
- Questions are genuine and promote investigation, so that students are comfortable taking risks when answering.
- Questions drive students deeper into course content, prompting peer-to-peer discussion, questions, and critique.
- Questions include adequate processing time for all students.
- Questions allow equitable opportunities for all students to respond in multiple ways (orally, in writing, or through visuals).
- Questions are asked with an anticipation of student misconceptions, and students are encouraged to explore what led to a wrong answer and what they can learn from it.
- Questions and answers provide an opportunity to model and practice using precise language.

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