

Perfect Secondary English Language Arts Instruction Commentary

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1. Which lessons are shown in the video clips?

Video Clip 1 is whole class instruction from Lesson Plan 4. I provide instruction on discourse patterns and students practice using discourse prompts for adding on to one another's thinking during a discussion. Video Clip 2 is the second half of Lesson Plan 4. Students are participating in small group collaborative discussions and are applying the close reading strategies that they learned in Lessons 1-3. The strategies that guide their collaborative discussion include the discourse prompts for adding on to one another's thinking from Lesson 4 and explaining which characters have power in their text. Students also describe how a character's power adds to the social issue development in the text, justify this character's power using text evidence, and connect the text evidence to their own lives. As students participate in the collaborative discussion, I circulate, monitor progress, and provide additional prompting questions in the small groups. Video Clip 3 is detailed at the beginning of Lesson Plan 3. This clip is evidence of student voice because students are defining the language function in the learning target (LT), they collaborate in partnerships to define the LT, and they explain to their partner why it is important for them to know.

2. How did you show positive classroom management?

In Video Clip 1, students practice building on to one another's thinking by discussing their favorite food in partnerships. I demonstrate responsiveness to students with varied needs by inviting students to engage with new content in ways that are meaningful and interesting to them. After practicing with their partner, I cultivate a positive learning environment by telling students at 7.00 minutes, "What I loved is that people were confirming with their partner like 'yes I see why you like your favorite food...'" By providing positive feedback, I confirm their ability to successfully accomplish the practice task. I demonstrate mutual respect for my students in Video Clip 2 as I nod my head frequently and limit my interjections with small groups so that students have maximum time to discuss the text and to push each other's thinking. I have fostered a positive classroom environment where students show mutual respect to each other. In Video Clip 1 at 6.48, students are practicing discourse patterns and one student asks their partner "Can you say more on the doughnut..." inviting her to share more information in their conversation. In Video Clip 2, at 7.26, students are discussing examples of objects with power in their own lives and one student reflects that books are objects that have power in her life. The student says, "Books!" and another student responds, "Oh yeah! That's a good one! Like old, old books that you read as a kid." Students are showing mutual respect for one another during the conversation by validating each other's comments as interesting and thought provoking. I also promote a challenging learning environment where students are asked to think deeply and fully engage in learning to make meaning from a complex text. To provide additional challenge during collaborative discussions, I pose open-ended questions to encourage deep thinking in the small group conversations. In Video Clip 2 at 3.01, I respond to another student's thinking by stating, "So what I'm hearing you say (student name) is that power is adding to the issue in a good way, can we take it to the next level and think about how it relates to the issue now?" By posing this question, I am asking students

to think about how their text details contribute to the social issue in the book. Students demonstrate that they are participating in a cognitively challenging task as they grapple with their own ideas and the ideas of their peers during the discussion. In Video Clip 2 at 2.14, Student 1 states, "I think Hannah might have power because she is telling Kek what to eat and what not to eat so that's sort of..." This student pauses in her thinking and Student 2 respectfully adds to her idea by stating at 2.28, "In a way she is sort of helping him learn..." Student 1 responds again by stating at 2.32 "I guess it would sort of be like emotional power but not really because maybe by like telling him what to eat she is changing the way he would feel..." This student interaction demonstrates how students rely on each other to cultivate meaning from complex interpretations of their text. In Video Clip 1 at 4.06, I encourage students to have varied perspectives in the presentation of the sentence frame "I agree or I disagree with you because..." Students demonstrate varied perspectives later in Video Clip 1 at 6.28 when a student is practicing building on her partner's thinking. She states, "I agree with you and disagree with you because I like different kinds of dark chocolate." Students also demonstrate varied perspectives during the collaborative discussion in Video Clip 2. At 1.06, one student states, "Well I was sort of thinking that, but on page 77, I was sort of thinking that Hannah was an ally because she has helped him and given him advice..." This student is responding with an alternative interpretation about the role of a character and that character's relationship with the main character.

3a. How did you get students talking about the lesson goals and articulating why they are important?

Video Clip 3 is one example of how I collaborate with students to elicit their expression of the LT. In this clip, students define the language function in the LT, investigate what the LT is asking them to do and know, and explain why it is important for them to know. Prior to the footage in Video Clip 3, I read the LT aloud to students (Instructional Material 3.5). After reading the target, at 5 seconds, I ask students, "What does it mean to justify?" I invite students to provide their own definition for the word justify. After inviting multiple responses, I return students' attention to the definition of justify supplied on their vocabulary chart (Instructional Material 1.1). At 34 seconds, I ask students "What is the learning target asking me to do?" I provide students with wait time to think about my question and then at 49 seconds, I ask students "Why is it important for you to know how to do?" One of my strategies for eliciting student expression of their understanding of the LT is to provide students with appropriate wait time to think about the LT, time to discuss their ideas with their partner, and finally, to invite a group of students to articulate their ideas about the target after partner discussion. At 1.14, one student grapples with the LT by stating, "We should be able to defend our thinking with actual details..." Her partner responds by adding, "I think it is important because..." This partner interaction demonstrates students collaborating to define the LT and why they are important to learn. At 2.14, I invite a group to share their thinking about what the LT is asking them to do and why it is important for them to know. Both students in the partnership are able to speak fluently and with confidence about the LT based on their interaction. At 2.23, Student 1 states, "So we thought that the learning target was asking us to support, using pieces of evidence how power can change how the social issue goes. At 2.40, I state "well said," and at 2.42, Student 2 states, "We thought it was important because even just one character can affect the whole social issue, like maybe without a character there wouldn't be a problem or a social issue." In Video Clip 1, at 56 seconds, I also discuss the LT with students and 3 students grapple with their ideas about the LT based on teacher prompting. Later in the same clip, I return students' attention to the LT at 7.18 by asking them to rate their understanding of the LT by stating "I want you guys to rate yourselves on how confident you feel that you can do the first task. The first task is that you can justify how power adds to the social issue..." This demonstrates my

attention to asking students to reflect on the LT during the mid-point of the lesson. As stated on Lesson Plan 4, students reflect on the LT a third time at the end of the lesson on the exit ticket.

3b. How did you engage students?

In Video Clip 1, I provide instruction to prepare students to construct meaning from, interpret, and respond to a complex text. In this clip, I teach students strategies that they can use for building on one another's thinking during a discussion. I am providing students with language instruction to support their interpretations of the text during the collaborative discussion. At 4.20, I explain to students the rationale for the practice activity by stating "So these are all prompts that we are going to be using to add onto each other's thinking so not only are we using the text and justifying our thinking, but the skill or strategy for doing that is to add on to each other's thinking." Students will use the discourse prompts and their interpretations of the text on their graphic organizer to construct new understandings of the text during the discussion. The practice with language and collaborative discussion helped students deepen and extend their understandings of the text in small groups by providing them with the necessary language scaffolds to discuss the text at deeper levels. In Video Clip 2, students are engaged in collaborative discussions where they are constructing meaning from, interpreting, and responding to their book club texts. Because students prepared their text interpretations in Lesson 3, they begin the discussion by sharing their interpretations of the text in their small groups. At 33 seconds, one student discusses how other characters react to the main character that just immigrated to the United States. She states, "That might affect the social issue of fitting in because they might be kind of scared of him and not really want talk to him or be friends with him." At 44 seconds, another student adds onto her thinking by stating "and at the same time, it seems like Kek doesn't understand them either because him coming from a different place, it's hard for him to fit in at all really...due to language barriers and stuff." At 58 seconds, another student responds by pointing to a place in the text, "Yeah its like it says 'I don't understand how the paper can help my noisy belly.'" The interaction between these two students demonstrates how they are constructing meaning from and interpreting the text together. At 1.48, one student supports another student's ideas by stating, "Adding onto (student's name) thinking..." This student continues by using a detail from the text to add on to the other student's interpretation. This demonstrates how my students validate each other's claims and build on to their deep thinking about the text by adding more evidence. At 3.50, I provide students with a prompting question that leads them to construct new ideas about their text. I ask students "with that, did anyone have a text to world connection of people that have kind of helped them along their journey? Do you guys have any text to self-connections there?" Students discuss how parents are people that help them a lot along their journey in life. A student constructs new ideas about the text by stating at 4.25, "This sort of makes me think that since he doesn't have parents..." Another student adds, "Yeah, that he is sort of missing that part..." From my prompting questions, students connected the text to their own life, which lead them to new realizations about a character's lack of support as he moves to a new country. Finally, students respond to the text at 5.52 when one student states, "We were talking about how Devon's room almost has power on her. It's more than a room..." Another student interjects with "its like a box full of sadness and memories." After the students discuss this new interpretation from the text, I provide additional prompting that leads them to connect this example of power from the text to their own lives. In this process, students begin to connect the idea from the text to their own lives and deepen their understanding of the text.

3c. How did you connect the lessons to students' prior knowledge?

In Video Clip 1 at 36 seconds, I prompt students to activate their prior academic learning by asking students what they remember and know about the word justify. At 1.03, I ask students to share what they are trying to justify based on their understanding of the LT from the prior day. At 2.08, I activate students' prior academic learning by stating, "we practiced doing this work yesterday by..." and I review students' work with graphic organizers from the previous day. At 2.36, I activate students' prior academic knowledge by reviewing what students have learned about the characteristics of a good book club conversation. I say, "We talked about it last week, maybe you already have some ideas about what your group did well and what they didn't do well..." Because students have worked in collaborative discussion groups prior to the learning segment, I prompt students to link their knowledge of effective collaborative discussions to new strategies for discussing their interpretations in their book club groups. At 4.44, in Video Clip 1, I ask partner A to think about their favorite food and at 4.59, I explain that partner B will respond to partner A's thinking by using the prompts for adding onto the conversation. I challenge students to link personal assets to new learning by asking them to talk to their partner about their favorite food, which is something that all students have experience with and can discuss fluently. Linking students' personal knowledge to the new strategy ensures that all levels of language learners can practice the strategies. In Video Clip 2, I lead students to connect the examples of power from their text to their own lives. At 6.52, I state, "So I'm liking that you guys are making this connection that objects can have power...can you guys think of examples of that in your own life? Are there objects in your own life that have power or in your families?" I provide this prompting question to help students think more deeply about the connection between examples of power from their books and how they are related to things they have experienced in their own lives. From there, students begin to discuss objects that have power over them in their own lives, including stuffed animals, TV, and books. At 7.35, I encourage students to link personal knowledge to ideas presented in the text by stating, "So let's think about all these objects that have power, a lot of these things seem to be positive, can you guys think of objects in our lives that have power that maybe aren't so positive?" I provide additional challenge for students to link their prior knowledge to the text by challenging their ideas of objects with power in the world around us.

4a. How did you get students to think about the content?

In Video Clip 1 at 56 seconds, I pose the question, "What are we trying to justify here?" One student responds with correct but incomplete information. I respond by saying, "Good. There is one more element to that idea..." Rather than immediately supplying the correct answer after the first students' response, I elicit more student responses through additional prompting. I continue to call on students until we have arrived at the response that completely answers the question. I elicit student responses to this question because it is critical that students understand what the language function in the LT is asking them to do so that they develop their constructions of meaning from the text. In Video Clip 2, I elicit and build on student responses when I provide additional prompting questions in small groups that promote deep thinking about students' interpretations of the text. The majority of my work in Video Clip 2 is to facilitate student-to-student interactions so that they can evaluate their own ability to construct meaning from the text. At 2.08, I ask, "Can we talk about how all of these examples are contributing to power...how is the issue of power related to these things that we have discussed?" This prompting question helps my students think more deeply about the text because it encourages them to link examples from the text to new ideas about how power contributes to the social issue in their text. Student interactions from 1.00-4.25, detailed

above, demonstrate my role as a facilitator who adds additional prompting only when necessary to redirect or to extend student thinking at punctuated points in the conversation. At 2.52, I build on a student response to encourage them to explain their thinking by stating, "So the power is good...?" Another student responds by stating that the power is good for not just the main characters but for the character's relationship with other characters. I build on this response again by saying, "So what I'm hearing you say (student name) is that the power is adding to the issue in a good way, can we take it to the next level and think about how it relates to the issue now?" By building on his interpretation and response to the text, I encourage him and his group members, to respond in more detail. At 3.50, I elicit deeper thinking from students by asking, "With that, did anyone have a text to world connection of people that have kind of helped them along their journey? Do you guys have any text to self-connections there?" I am encouraging students to access their personal knowledge to think about how the text relates to their own lives. In another small group in Video Clip 2, I build on student responses at 6.52 by saying, "So I'm liking that you guys are making this connection that objects can have power...can you guys think of examples of that in your own life? Are there objects in your own life that have power or in your families?" Not only am I bringing in students' personal/cultural/community assets, I am also prompting them to relate to the text at a deeper level. They respond to the text by creating new ideas about how the text relates to their own life. At 7.35, I ask students, "Let's think about all of these objects that have power. A lot of these things seem to be positive, can you guys think of objects in our lives that have power that maybe aren't so positive?" I am building on students' thinking by pushing them to consider alternative perspective that relate to the text and their own lives. Because of the developmental level of my students, I make it a point to ask questions that not only build on students' interpretations, but I also challenge and present alternative perspectives to encourage socio-cognitive growth.

4b. How did you get students to reference the text to support their conclusions?

Throughout Video Clip 2, there are examples of students going back into the text, with and without my prompting, to support their constructions of meaning from the text. Students use strategically chosen textual references from collected textual references on a graphic organizer from Lesson 3 and use these organizers to guide their collaborative discussion in Video Clip 2. Students not only support their own interpretations of the text with evidence, but they also support their peers' interpretations of the text with additional textual references. At 1.00, Student 1 says, "Like it says here..." and she points to the text to support an interpretation made by one of her peers. At 1.05, another student responds to Student 1 by saying, "I was sort of thinking about that, but on page 77, I was sort of thinking that Hannah was an ally because..." Student 2's response builds on Student 1's interpretation by using additional text examples to demonstrate an alternative interpretation of the character. At 1.53, Student 3 says, "Adding onto (student name)'s thinking, when she said like 'don't eat the brown wet pile on his plate, she was trying to give him advice..." Student 3 supports Student 2's interpretation of the text with additional evidence. At 6.10, students are discussing objects that has power in the text and one student says, "I think it is on one of these pages here..." I respond at 6.12 by saying, "Yeah, let's find it in the text." This prompt encourages students to open their books to search for text evidence that support their interpretation of an object that has power. At 6.35, students find the passage where it discusses their interpretation and I ask students, "What part of the text on 97?" This prompts students to locate a specific text example to support their claims. At 8.43, students finish discussing an interpretation of the text and I state, "Good. Let's bring this all back to the text now. Maybe we are moving onto a new idea, thinking about what else we want to talk about that has power or another type of power..." I provide additional prompting to ensure that responses

to the text are grounded in text evidence and that personal connections with the text are tied to details from the text. By actively using their graphic organizers and their books, students are supporting their interpretations using textual references.

5a. What would you change for the whole class or for some groups of students or for some individuals to improve?

Some changes that I would make to my instruction to support the whole class and individual students are demonstrated in Video Clip 1. The first change is at 58 seconds when I ask students to explain, “What is the learning target asking you to justify?” To improve the quality of response among students, I would have had students turn and talk about the question before I invited students to share out their response with the whole class. Providing students with more opportunities to voice their ideas with a partner will increase the range and quality of student response. This strategy would also provide greater equity for my ELL student and my student with socio-emotional behavioral needs to participate. The second change I would make is at 1.46 when I explain the goal outlined in the LT using hand motions. Something that would support my visual learners, including my ELL student, is to provide a graphic or visual that outlines the LT. I could have projected an image for the class and asked students to explain how the picture shows the goal of the LT. Because the LT includes challenging academic language, providing a visual may help all of my students’ understand the goal outlined in the LT. The third change I would make is in Video Clip 1 at 6.24. After Partner B added onto Partner A’s thinking about their favorite food, I should have had students switch roles so that Partner A could practice adding onto Partner B’s thinking. As it stands in this lesson, only Partner B had practice using the prompts for adding on to one another’s thinking. Switching roles would provide additional support for all levels of language learners to practice using a new set of discourse prompts that all students were required to use during their collaborative discussion. The fourth change is at 7.00 when I provide positive feedback on things that students did well during practice with discourse prompts. At this time, I should have also supplied some suggestions to promote even higher level thinking within their discussions. This suggestion would support my gifted or highly social learners to provide them with additional challenge. The fifth change is located in Video Clip 2 at 7.35. I ask students to think more deeply about objects in our lives that have power and to alternatively consider objects with power that are not positive. After students supply responses to my question, I tell students to bring it back to the text or to move onto a new idea. I believe I missed an opportunity to provide a rationale for why we make text connections and why I asked students to think about negative examples of power. At this time, I could have suggested that students go back to the text and examine whether or not Devon’s room has good or bad power and how this is like examples of objects with power

5b. Why do you think these changes would improve student learning?

In change one, students would have an opportunity to rehearse responses to my question about the LT with a partner. The effectiveness of turn and talks was previously demonstrated in Video Clip 3 at 2.23 when my students discuss the LT with a partner and then are able to fluently articulate the goal in the LT after their discussion. According to Fisher, Frey, and Lapp (2011), “During productive group work, students use academic language and validate and extend their knowledge. It is through these peer interactions that students consolidate their understanding.” By providing students with an opportunity for productive group deliberation, all of my students, and especially my ELL student and struggling readers, would benefit from the opportunity to use academic language. This partner practice would help them consolidate and

rehearse their interpretations of the LT before I asked for student responses. In change two, I would provide visuals that demonstrate the goal of the LT in addition to using hand motions. According to Brown and Doolittle (2008), using visuals, manipulatives, and gesturing when teaching new vocabulary substantially increases comprehension for all students, especially visual learners, ELL students, and struggling readers. Evidence of students' ability to use vocabulary was demonstrated in Lesson 2 when students were provided with a vocabulary chart (Instructional Material 1.1). Students effectively used the visuals to describe the meaning of new vocabulary words. This collaboration with a partner, the visual, and my explanation would secure their acquisition of academic vocabulary for this lesson. For change three, both Partner A and Partner B would have the opportunity to practice using the prompts for adding on to the conversation prior to the collaborative discussion. According to Mercer (2002), students that receive explicit instruction in partner "talk" not only improve their ability to problem solve during discussions, but they also improve their ability to clearly articulate their perspectives. To ensure that all students have the necessary practice in partner talk, I should have provided both sets of students an opportunity to practice in the discourse prompts (Instructional Material 4.1). My students have previously demonstrated their ability to use sentence frames to guide their responses on written post-it annotations and exit ticket responses. This change would extend students' ability to use sentence frames not only in their written work, but also in discourse with other students. In change four, I could have suggested areas for continued improvement in discourse pattern use. Bruner (1978) identifies that language is our primary means of communicating about the world. Because of this, Bruner believes that language acquisition is a necessary component in human development and is only possible with a language acquisition support system. Because language plays an important role in cognitive development in learners, I should have taken the opportunity at 7.00 to push my students to higher levels of language acquisition through additional suggestions for improvement. Some things I could have said to my students in this video include, "Reflect on how your conversation went with your partner. What went well, what did not go so well?" In change five, I should have encouraged students to use the text to connect their text to world examples with examples of power in the text. My students previously demonstrated their ability to reference the text throughout their book club discussions in Video Clip 2. According to reader response theory, students' personal connections with texts are effective methods for make meaning from a text. According to Rosenblatt (2005), an important question that readers ask themselves is, "What in this book, and in me, caused this response." Bringing responses and reflections back to the text encourages deep thinking. With this change, I would promote deep engagement with the text and with concepts that impact their everyday experiences.