Webcasts for Educators
Student Achievement Division

Viewer’s Guide

Conversations for Learning

Multi-media resource for professional learning
On this DVD you will find a Print and Video Resources folder which contains video files (WMV), organizers for enhancing learning (Word and PDF) and the viewer’s guide (PDF).

To order the multi-media package
Conversations for Learning

Contact ServiceOntario
416-326-5300 or 1-800-668-9938
http://www.publications.serviceontario.ca/ecom

The video segments and related resources are also accessible online at:
http://curriculum.org/content/webcasts

This resource may be copied for not-for-profit educational purposes.

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Ontario Ministry of Education.
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Overview

In this video resource, we follow a classroom inquiry as students investigate a range of global issues that are of interest to them. By using multiple sources of information, they seek to understand diverse perspectives and what actions might be appropriate to tackle problems. They dig deep for meaning, question their sources and try to come to a clear understanding through conversations with their peers. Students come to the dialogue ready to participate in an intellectual exchange, willing to listen with an open mind and possibly create newer, stronger knowledge.

It is not only information that they are analyzing, but also what that information means to them and what they need to do now that they have this new knowledge. Paolo Freire called this type of learning “becoming purposefully literate.” In effective classrooms, students develop communication skills and the disposition to think and act critically with the intention to make the world a better place. That is the outcome we want for our students. We want them to be globally-minded, critical-thinking, action-oriented citizens. To achieve this goal, our students need to navigate vast amounts of information, analyze, synthesize and talk with others to construct meaning and to decide on a course of action.

The students and teacher in this Grade 3 classroom are co-learners engaged in inquiry-based learning that is rooted in an integrated approach to the curriculum. The safe classroom culture is intentionally created to be one of respect, collaboration, challenge and engagement. The students and teacher assume a critical stance, consult multiple sources of information, question and think independently. Each member of the learning community has a voice and each believes that what he or she thinks and does matters.

Deepening comprehension through conversation invites all students into the learning. Small-group conversations allow for students to practise their ideas before sharing in a larger group. They hear how other students are interpreting text and that sparks new thinking for them. All students have voice and gain confidence through support from their peers. Students begin to respect other points of view, draw on multiple sources of information and expand their own points of view. Since students are exploring an issue of
concern to them as well as their role in addressing the issue, they begin to believe that their ideas and actions matter.

The topic of the classroom inquiry explored in this video is the plight of a group of un-contacted people who live in the rainforest of South America. Students discover what “un-contacted people” means and investigate the impact of loggers on them and their environment. During their investigations, students learn about the techniques for effective communication using all types of texts.

From Viewing to Action

When children engage in the process of reading, thinking and talking among multiple sources of information in the pursuit of big ideas, they are learning strategies for taking on the big ideas and issues they will encounter both in and out of school, now and forever.

Nichols, 2009

- What practices showed students assuming an action-oriented, critical stance as they worked with multiple sources?
- What evidence do you see that engaging students in conversation about what and how they are learning is an effective way to differentiate instruction for all?
- How do you think student self-awareness helps improve student achievement?
- What do students need to know to engage in thoughtful conversations?
- What do teachers need to know and be able to do in order to support students in learning through conversation?
- How might you promote “conversations for learning” with your colleagues?
- How does learning to engage in meaningful dialogue connect to 21st century learning?
Assuming a Reflective Stance

The teacher in this classroom is fully present as her students participate in complex conversations. What do you notice about the role she plays during these conversations?

As she observes the students interacting, she is assessing the impact of her instructional choices and deciding on next steps.

- What decisions do you think the teacher is making as she observes a small group conversation?
- What decisions do you think the teacher is making as she facilitates a large group conversation?
- What might you suggest to colleagues who are concerned about assessment and documentation during a learning session?
- What advice would you offer a teacher when assessment reveals that current approaches are not benefiting students?

The Classroom Environment

The classroom environment is often referred to as “the third teacher.” Students learn from their observations of how others behave and speak and also from their physical surroundings. The classroom culture, what is displayed, the texts and topic choices, the instructional strategies and the time allotted for independent inquiry and accountable talk all contribute to student learning.

- As you view this video what do you notice students are learning from “the third teacher”?
You may wish to use this chart to organize your thinking:

**Organizer #1 – The Classroom Environment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I notice?</th>
<th>What students are learning?</th>
<th>Reflections and Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students are held accountable for their independent learning through the sharing and feedback session at the end of the literacy block.</td>
<td>Students are learning to manage their time, stay on task and work efficiently.</td>
<td>How do students keep track of their reflections?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Also available in the print folder of this DVD.

**Curriculum Connections**

The teacher in this resource integrates reading, writing, oral language and media literacy expectations. As you and your colleagues view the video, note what expectations she is focusing on and how she has integrated them.
You may wish to use the following organizer to record and discuss your observations:

**Organizer #2 – Curriculum Connections**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OVERVIEW</th>
<th>OVERALL EXPECTATIONS</th>
<th>EXPECTATIONS TAUGHT AND HOW?</th>
<th>REFLECTING ON MY PRACTICE AND POSSIBLE ACTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **ORAL COMMUNICATION** | Listening to Understand (1.1 to 1.9)  
Speaking to Communicate (2.1 to 2.7)  
Reflecting on Oral Communication Skills and Strategies (3.1 to 3.2) |                              |                                              |
| **READING**     | Reading for Meaning (1.1 to 1.9)  
Understanding Form and Style (2.1 to 2.4)  
Reading With Fluency (3.1 to 3.3)  
Reflecting on Reading Skills and Strategies (4.1 to 4.2) |                              |                                              |
| **WRITING**     | Developing and Organizing Content (1.1 to 1.6)  
Using Knowledge of Form and Style in Writing (2.1 to 2.8)  
Applying Knowledge of Language Conventions and Presenting Written Work Effectively (3.1 to 3.8)  
Reflecting on Writing Skills and Strategies (4.1 to 4.3) |                              |                                              |
| **MEDIA LITERACY** | Understanding Media Texts (1.1 to 1.6)  
Understanding Media Forms, Conventions, and Techniques (2.1 to 2.2)  
Creating Media Texts (3.1 to 3.4)  
Reflecting on Media Literacy Skills and Strategies (4.1 to 4.2) |                              |                                              |

Also available in the print folder of this DVD.
Key Ideas

- As you view this resource, record the key ideas that come to mind
- Which key ideas provoked thinking that might result in changing your practice?

You may wish to use the following organizer to record your thinking:

**Organizer #3 – Key Ideas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Video Clip</th>
<th>Key Ideas</th>
<th>Possible Action</th>
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Also available in the print folder of this DVD.
VIDEO SEGMENTS

Negotiating Meaning

Determining the Big Idea
(6:17)

...big ideas and essential questions can add depth and rigor to a curriculum and increase students’ engagement and interest in the content.

Burke, 2010

Students watch a short video that depicts an un-contacted tribe in South America. They think carefully about the techniques used to convey the main messages. The vocabulary is unfamiliar and they struggle to make meaning of some of the concepts.

• Why do you think the teacher chose this particular video for students to deconstruct?
• How did she encourage the students to be analytical in their viewing?
• How does this experience help students to become critical consumers of media?

Building Background Knowledge
(8:22)

Students consult other resources, such as a newspaper article, to deepen their understanding of the video. Small group conversations between students with opposing views allow them to confirm, challenge, keep or abandon ideas. Students are expected to support their thinking with appropriate evidence.

• What evidence do you see that students are listening intently to each other?
• Students are learning to monitor their understanding and to seek clarification when necessary. Clearly this is an important lifelong skill. How might you go about helping students learn to monitor their own learning?
• What strategies have you found to be effective in helping students understand how various forms of media work to convey information?
• How do you make students aware that reading comprehension strategies can be applied regardless of the format of the text?

Justifying the Big Idea
(6:34)

Opposing views emerge as students talk about the video and its main messages. They share their ideas with evidence both from their prior knowledge and from the text. Listening intently allows students to build on the ideas of others and respectfully challenge thinking they do not agree with. They are learning to be flexible and open-minded as they struggle to understand the text and what it means to them.

• Students struggle to identify the big idea and support their choice with evidence from the video. How do you help students learn how to engage in conversation with an open mind? How do you help students make a convincing argument that is supported with solid evidence?
• This resource demonstrates many accountable talk opportunities. Discuss with your colleagues how you might implement “talk moves” to improve learning.

Students learn best when ‘accountable talk’ (problem-posing, problem-solving talk related to curricular topics) is encouraged, modelled and supported throughout the school day. In a classroom where accountable talk is encouraged, teachers and students discuss ideas, concepts, hypotheses, strategies and responses with each other.

Sharing Ideas
(5:10)

After engaging in small-group conversations with peers who hold opposing views, some students clarified their own thinking and stayed with the same opinion while others altered their thinking based on new ideas. After reflecting on their current thinking, they come together in a sharing circle to articulate their views. As the conversation evolves, a new and exciting idea is put forward by several students, reflective of the group’s new thinking. Students begin to understand the benefits of having meaningful conversations with one another.

Here are some key instructional practices that support conversations for learning:

– introduce topics and concepts that connect learning to issues students perceive as interesting and important (i.e., issues that provide a “window on life”)
– provide daily opportunities, through various forms of classroom talk, for students to share personal reactions and insights and extend their thinking on these topics
– model an open-minded attitude and curiosity, especially in response to student thinking and ideas
– provide students with a variety of relevant and/or current texts – including newspaper articles and presentations from guest speakers – to assist students in making connections between their learning in school and the world outside

• Which of the following practices are already in place in your classroom? Which might you consider implementing in order to spark an interest in inquiry?
• What was significant about the scenario depicted in this clip that allowed the construction of the group’s new thinking?

Knowledge is a constructive process rather than a finding. It is not the content that is stored in memory but the activity of constructing it that gets stored. Humans don’t get ideas, they make ideas.

Jacobs, 2010
Growing Student Voice

Persuasive Texts
(4:24)

The class revisits success criteria they had previously built around what makes a persuasive text effective. After brainstorming what sort of text might be effective, they work in pairs to plan and begin creating the text.

- How does this approach to demonstrating learning reflect a focus on student choice, student voice and differentiation?
- Comment on how this teaching approach is inclusive of all students.

Media Literacy
(7:34)

Students today are inundated with information that comes at them in all forms of media. They need to learn how to interpret information and also convey information effectively and critically.

- What do you notice about the way in which this teacher supports students in developing their media literacy?
- How might you make students aware of the significance of what they are learning and how it applies to their lives now and in the future?
- Giving students time to listen and learn from each other is critical. How do you support peer to peer learning in your classroom?
- What do students need to know and be able to do before they engage in peer-to-peer learning?
- How do you know if peer-to-peer learning is working?
Sharing the Writing Plans
(4:13)

After students plan and talk about their persuasive writing in small groups, they share their plans during a whole group conversation session.

• What is the teacher’s role during this sharing?
• What is the student role as they listen to the sharing?

Students will need varying degrees of support as they create their persuasive piece.

• How will you ensure that students get the guidance/teaching they require in a timely fashion?
• How would you monitor student progress and the impact of your support during the writing process?

To be reflective means to mentally wander through where we have been and to try to make some sense out of it.

Costa & Kallick, 2008

A Call to Action
(10:41)

Students talk about the relevance of what they are learning and what their role might be as responsible global citizens. They make a connection to Hannah, a young activist, who speaks on behalf of homeless people. They reflect on their learning and through the conversations build a new and deeper understanding of the actions they might take.

• What role does the teacher play in making sure that students have a realistic view of what they can safely do?
• What role might technology play as students investigate being global citizens?
• What media skills would you ensure are addressed when teachers and students tap into the advantages of using the internet?
How Conversations Help Us Learn
(3:57)

A growing body of empirical evidence affirms the important role that oral language plays in learning (Genesee et al., 1994). As children practise listening and speaking skills, and acquire knowledge of how language works, they build not only basic literacy but their capacity for critical literacy as well.

Grand Conversations in Junior Classrooms, Capacity Building Series, 2011

Students talk about how conversations help them learn. They comment on how they know they are being successful. Helping students develop their metacognitive awareness is important as they become more independent as learners.

• How do you help students understand themselves as learners?
• How do you help them understand the significance of what they are learning and how it applies beyond school?

School-wide Impact

Creating a Learning Culture
(3:03)

The administrators in this school are working with staff and students to create a culture of learning, respect and collaboration. The skills and dispositions being developed with staff and students are life-long and transferable.

• What strategies have you used successfully to support your learning community?

The skills and dispositions developed by the classroom and the school support students in their learning and personal growth.

• Comment on how you might align classroom and school-wide efforts to support student achievement and well-being.
Family Involvement
(3:03)

Research indicates that when family is able to support learning and a positive attitude toward school, student achievement improves.

- How does this school involve parents in their children’s school lives?
- How do you involve families in your students’ school lives?

Teacher Reflections

Classroom Culture
(3:18)

This teacher creates a culture where all students feel they have something significant to learn from one another.

- What are some of the ways these students are intentionally set up for success?
- Which ideas shared by this teacher might you implement with your students?
- What classroom norms might you establish to support students in their learning?

The ways that we organize classroom life should seek to make children feel significant and cared about – by the teacher and by each other. Unless students feel emotionally and physically safe, they won’t share real thoughts and feelings.

Christensen, 2000

- After reading the above quote, discuss and reflect on strategies that you and your colleagues implement to develop an emotionally and physically safe classroom environment.
Collaboration
(1:49)

To understand what they read and research, kids must interact with the text and the resources, their teacher and most of all, each other.
Harvey & Daniels, 2009

In this classroom there is an emphasis on nurturing curiosity, open-mindedness, collaboration and inquiry.

- What dispositions do you focus on developing in your students?
- What intentional teaching needs to happen in order for students to be successful in working collaboratively with their peers?

An Inclusive Approach
(3:01)

Over time, students have become comfortable working in a variety of groupings. Not all children initially feel comfortable working as part of a group.

- How would you support students who have difficulties with working collaboratively?

Classroom Blog
(3:01)

This group of students finds their classroom blog to be an effective way to keep the learning going. The blog motivates students to think, write and problem-solve beyond the school day.

- What do you see as the benefits of a classroom blog?
- What challenges do you think might complicate having a classroom blog?
Student Voice

(1:52)

This teacher’s goal is to encourage student-to-student conversations that dig deep for meaning.

• What is the teacher’s role while students are talking to each other?
• What might present a challenge to teachers as they encourage student-to-student talk?
• How might you assess the impact on student achievement of time spent on conversations for learning?
• How would you raise the level of conversation to reflect critical thinking?

Big Ideas

(2:47)

It is important for the teacher to know the curriculum and to be able to identify the big ideas embedded in the curriculum.

• What does the teacher need to consider as he/she plans for instruction?

Change in Practice

(2:48)

Releasing responsibility for learning to students is challenging.

• How do you know how much responsibility to release – and when – so that all students are successful?
• How do you gage the level of support to offer students as they continue to become more competent and confident?

Lucy West is recognized internationally for her innovative, effective and cutting-edge ideas and proven practices for transforming schools into multi-generational learning communities that thrive in the 21st century. She has worked at every level of the system from classroom teacher to administrator to curriculum coordinator to district administrator and as consultant to urban, suburban and rural districts.

Student Voice
(3:22)

Lucy West speaks to the importance of assessing where students are in their thinking and then planning how to support their learning. It is important to listen to students to uncover what they know and understand.

• How do you provide ample time for accountable talk in the classroom?
• What do you look for when assessing students through their talk?

Classroom Discourse
(7:13)

Lucy West talks about rich classroom discourse and how it supports improved student learning.

• What is meant by “a culture of discourse”?
• How might you place an increased focus on “listening”?

She speaks about the importance of slowing down and dwelling on an idea until we have reached a deep level of understanding.

• How might you change your practice to include time to slow down to develop deep understanding?
Resources and Related Reading


Ontario Ministry of Education Resources

*Primary Reading Discussion Paper (2012)*

*Capacity Building Series*

  Grand Conversations in Junior Classrooms (2011)
Technical Instructions

How to Access the Print and Video Resources

To access the Print and Video Resources folder in Windows, insert the DVD into the DVD drive of your computer and:

1. Click on the Start menu.
2. Select My Computer.
3. Right-click the mouse on the DVD icon titled CONVERSATIONS FOR LEARNING DVD to open a drop-down options list.
4. From the drop-down list, select and click on the Open option.
5. Double-click on the folder titled Print and Video Resources to access the files. Ignore the folders titled Audio_TS and Video_TS.
6. Select the resources you wish to use directly from this folder, OR Copy onto the Desktop and open files from the Desktop.

Alternatively, when the DVD is inserted and the options box opens:

1. Select the option Open Folder to View Files.
2. Click on the Print and Video Resources folder.
3. Select the files you wish to use directly from this folder, OR Copy the files onto the Desktop and open them from the Desktop.

To access the Print and Video Resources folder in Mac OS X, insert the DVD into the DVD drive of your computer and:

1. Exit from the DVD player (which typically opens automatically when a DVD is inserted in the drive).
2. Double-click on the DVD icon titled CONVERSATIONS FOR LEARNING DVD.
3. Select the files you wish to use directly from this folder, OR Copy the files onto the Desktop and open them from the Desktop.
How to Save the Video Files to Your Computer

The video files can all be copied and saved to your computer using either of the following methods for copying and pasting files.

Method 1
1. Right-click on the file and choose the Copy option.
2. Right-click within any computer folder into which you would like to save the file, and choose the Paste option.

Method 2
1. Left-click the mouse on the file you want to save, so that the file is highlighted.
2. Simultaneously press the Ctrl and C keys (or, for Macintosh users, the Command and C keys) to copy the file.
3. Left-click within any computer folder in which you would like to save the file, and simultaneously press the Ctrl and V keys (or, for Macintosh users, the Command and V keys) to paste the file there.

For Macintosh users, the Command key is the one with the following symbol: ⌘

NOTE: If you want to insert video files into a PowerPoint presentation, you must save these video files in the same folder that contains your PowerPoint file. If you save a PowerPoint presentation to another location (e.g., a memory stick, CD-ROM, etc.), you must also save the video files in the same location in order for the video to play. So, if you transfer the presentation to another computer, you must also transfer the video files with it, or else the video will not link to the PowerPoint presentation.
How to Insert Video Clips (WMV files) into a PowerPoint Presentation

On this DVD, you will find WMV versions of all segments of the webcast. To insert a clip into a PowerPoint presentation, follow the directions below:

1. Open your PowerPoint program.

2. Create a new PowerPoint presentation OR open an existing PowerPoint presentation, and within it, open the slide on which you would like to add the video.

3. Insert the webcast DVD into the DVD drive of your computer.

4. If a new window opens asking how you would like to view the files on the disk, choose the option Open Folder to View Files; OR

   If a new window does not open, open the My Computer window from the Start menu. In the My Computer window, double-click on the icon that is shaped like a disk, which will likely be labelled D: or E:.

5. Save the video segment that you want to insert in a PowerPoint into the same folder that contains your PowerPoint presentation.

   NOTE: Video files that have been saved to your computer can be cropped and edited into smaller segments using Movie Maker (free on PCs) or iMovie (free on Macintosh).

6. Open the PowerPoint slide on which you would like to insert the video, and click on the Insert menu in the PowerPoint menu bar.

7. From the Insert menu, select Movies and Sounds, and click on the Movie from File option.

8. A window opens, prompting you to select the video file that you would like to add. Find and select the video file that you saved in step 5.

9. Once you have chosen the video file you need, another window opens and asks whether you want your movie to play either automatically when you enter the slide, or only when it is clicked. Choose your preference. (You will notice that the starting image of your movie is not displayed on the slide.)
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