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Text Based Discussion Project – Overview

The purpose of the text based discussion project is to support you in investigating and improving your use of group text-based discussions. Discussion can be a powerful context for supporting students to learn from text. The kinds of questions you ask and the way you respond to students in a discussion shape the opportunities students have to interact with the ideas in the text and to interact with you and one another. Therefore, this project is designed to focus your attention on:

- How to prepare for a text-based discussion
- The kinds of questions you ask during a discussion
- The kinds of responses you make to student answers/comments

The project is also designed to help you plan for a discussion by:

- Reading and analyzing text for important ideas, as well as possible confusions or misunderstandings,
- Using text analysis to decide where to segment, or break up, text into meaningful sections or chunks that have enough information to talk about, and
- Developing questions and follow-ups related to each segment.

Another goal of the project is to provide you with tools to help you engage students in talking to one another during a discussion, to build on one another’s ideas or to challenge those ideas.

We will complete this project in two phases. In Phase 1 (due sometime before Feb 4), I am admittedly giving you little support. I just want you to teach from a text, using the skills and intuitions you currently have. Over the next couple of months, you will develop your skills in conducting a productive discussion. Then, in Phase 2 (which will occur in March) you will conduct a second text based lesson using your improved knowledge and skills. You will ultimately reflect on changes between your lessons in Phase 1 and Phase 2 to gauge your own learning, and to set new goals for yourself.

A proposed timeline for the project follows. For the time being, all you need to attend to Phase 1. The transcript of your first discussion is due March 3rd.

Date	Assignment due
2/04/08	Phase 1: Conduct and audio-record a text-based discussion in your classroom
3/03/08	Phase 1: Have your text-based discussion transcribed. You will learn how to analyze the transcript in class on March 3rd.
3/03/08	Phase 2: In class on March 3 rd , we will also begin to prepare for our second text-based discussion, which will be held the week of March 17 th . As a class, we will analyze the text from which we will teach, and will begin to plan for the discussion.
3/17-20/08	Phase 2: Conduct and reflection on second text-based discussion

Phase 1
1st Text Based Lesson – Conduct and Transcript
Transcript Due March 3rd, 2008

Here's what to do to get started with Phase I.

1. Select a text or article that your students are reading in language arts, social studies, or science. **Please be sure that it is an expository, or informational, text.** Select a portion of the text that has ideas worth talking and thinking about. You are encouraged to use social studies text, if at all possible, so that this activity reinforces what you are learning in your social studies methods course.
2. Talk with your CT about a time that will work to have this discussion. You are encouraged to work with no more than 8 students and to have 30 minutes dedicated to the discussion. Your CTs have received notice from me about this assignment.
3. On the day of the discussion, be sure you have a tape recorder to audio record this discussion. Test out the tape recorder to be sure that it is working.
4. Ask the students to read and talk about the text **AS THEY READ IT.** That is, as you read aloud or have the students read the text, stop at places that you think are appropriate and lead the students in a discussion of the ideas in that portion of the text.
5. Transcribe the discussion. That is, type out everything that you and the children say. You should not name each child; just use S1, S2, S3 (for student 1, 2, 3) or pseudonyms and T (for teacher).
6. Write an introduction to your transcript that describes the number of participants, the text you chose, and what your goals for the discussion were.
7. Bring 2 copies of the transcript, as well as 2 copies of the text segment you taught from, to class on March 3rd. You will hand one copy in to me and you will use the other copy to work from in class.
8. The transcript you bring to class will not be graded. However, it is worth 10 points because we will begin to analyze our transcripts together in class on March 3rd. If you do not bring the transcript to class on March 3rd, you will not receive the 10 points.
9. Complete the analysis of your first discussion and turn it in by March 10th. This will be graded and worth 15 additional points.

I look forward to our learning together about this important, high-leverage teaching practice.