

Learning Skills in Conversation

Why include Learning Skills in your classroom conversations?

Helping students practice skills in your classroom isn't just a matter of the planning and thinking that *you* do. Students need to know that they are practicing and mastering skills through the work they do. That means that skills need to be a part of your classroom conversations every day. (If you have not yet chosen a set of skills or skill framework for your students, check out these [Learning Skills](#).)

When should you include Learning Skills in classroom conversations?

During skill-focused, intentional discussion: check-ins and feedback

During one-on-one conferences or small group discussions, helps students make connections between the work they are doing and the skills they are developing. Reference skills directly and explicitly in your feedback on artifacts and in response to student reflections. Use the skills by name and make direct connections to student's growth, so that students can ask clarifying questions about the skill's meaning and see the importance and relevance of the work they are doing to grow.

As a part of your common language: regular, intentional use of skill language in your everyday vocabulary

Talking about the Learning Skills does not need to be an added, separate task that only happens during times you set aside for just that purpose. Instead, make them a part of your classroom culture by using intentional language in all of your conversations with students - whether addressing the whole class or just a few students in the hallway. With this kind of intentional language, you can transform how you communicate these skills more effectively and frequently.

How can I make this easy?

"It is not what you say, it is how you say it."

Reflect on the words you use every day with your students, in both of the contexts mentioned above. Transform your "teacher-isms," frequent feedback, and academic vocabulary - the phrases you already use - into intentional language that includes Learning Skills. Check out the examples that follow, and, if you would like more practice, take a look at [Talk About It: Learning Skills Conversations](#).

Conversation Transformations - Examples

Before	After
<p>Okay class, check out the bell ringer and get started! You can work with a partner to write your answer.</p>	<p>Okay class, check out your bell ringer. <i>Collaborate</i> with your partner to <i>interpret</i> the quotation projected on the board and <i>compose</i> an explanation of what the quotation means.</p>
<p>In order for you to decide whether Reconstruction was a success, you need to read about the two stages of Reconstruction.</p>	<p>In order for you to <i>take a position</i> as to whether or not Reconstruction was a success, you need to first <i>investigate</i> two stages of Reconstruction.</p>
<p>Darwin noticed that finches on different Galapagos islands had different beak shapes. Research how this happened. How does beak shape affect the finch's fitness?</p>	<p>Darwin observed that finches on different Galapagos islands had different beak shapes. <i>Collaborate</i> with your lab partner to <i>investigate</i> this phenomena. <i>Identify patterns</i> between beak shape and a finch's fitness.</p>
<p>We are going to manipulate variables today, and see if we notice what results we can repeat. But first, think back to other times we have manipulated variables: Why is it important to have only one manipulated variable at a time?</p>	<p>Today when we manipulate variables, we will be able to <i>identify patterns</i>. Before we get started with that, <i>reflect</i> on other patterns we have discovered: Why is it important to have only one manipulated variable at a time?</p>

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