



PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY



Integrating SEL with Content: Building Discussion Leadership Skills



TEACHER NOTES

This strategy is very “portable.” It is an effective structure that lets students practice the SEL skills you’re focusing on in your academic content lesson. Several discussion prompts based on Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are provided as examples.

Once the students are familiar with this strategy and the discussion agreements, they will only need a brief focusing reminder before moving into their work.

Everyone benefits when we cultivate a learning environment in which students are intentionally developing their personal leadership skills, as well as the teamwork skills it takes to support others when they lead.

Most of the leadership coaching we do with students occurs behind the scenes, in personal conversations. It’s also important to be overt with the group about what you value related to peer leadership. This makes it more likely that students will be motivated and able to demonstrate leadership qualities (and behaviors) during their group work.

TEACHER TIP

- Select simple questions and very accessible readings until students master the strategy.
- If appropriate to your group, you may wish to duplicate the graphic organizers on cardstock and laminate them for reuse. A container full of old socks, each containing a dry erase marker, makes this system easy. Students slip their hand inside the sock to rub the board clean, then put the marker back inside.



DURATION:

- 30 minutes (Discussion Agreements and Leadership Strategy)
- Varies (Practice: depends on your academic content)

GOALS: [Teacher and Student](#)

MATERIALS:

- [Discussion Leader Graphic Organizer](#) for each student
- [Discussion Agreements Poster](#)
- [Discussion Leader Feedback Form](#) for each student
- Your literacy, science, or social studies text



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MAIN POINTS: Setting expectations for practicing leadership skills (10 minutes)

- Using the Discussion Agreements Poster describe the teamwork and leadership qualities you will be watching for during their group work today:
- Use welcoming language
- Guide the discussion
- Help everyone stay on topic
- Share ideas in a friendly, respectful way
- Listen attentively
- Remind students that the best way to help others do well is to be a model of these qualities. Introduce a strategy to use if a partner needs a reminder beyond the good example.
- Remind students that the best way to help others do well is to be a model of these qualities. Introduce a strategy to use if a group member needs a reminder beyond the good example.



GUIDING LANGUAGE

All through our lives, we get to go back and forth between helping others by being a leader, and supporting others when they are being leaders. I see you do this already, when you work together and cooperate and take turns and when you are flexible and able to both speak up and listen to others. These are qualities of strong leaders and of excellent team members.

Today during our lesson time, we're going to practice taking turns leading a discussion in a small group. When you're the leader, your job will be to use welcoming language, guide the discussion, and help everyone stay on topic. When you're not the leader, you'll do your very best to make the leader's job easy by following all of our agreements.

First, let's think about welcoming language. What kind of encouraging words could you use that would help others know you care about them and about their ideas? Pause. Turn to a neighbor and tell each other some of your examples of welcoming language. Pause. Let's share a few of our ideas with the whole class.

Solicit ideas. Record on the poster if you wish. Add your own suggestions if needed, so that students have a clear idea of your vision of welcoming language. Students may say such things as, "I'm glad we're in the same group," "That's an interesting idea," or "Please tell me more."

Our next agreement is that we'll all work to stay on topic. Remember, that means to talk about our work now and save other conversations for a different time. If someone in our group gets distracted and starts to talk about recess or after school, or anything that's not our work, what are some things we can say to help get our discussion back on track? Pause. Turn to a neighbor and tell each other something that might help you get back on topic, if you start to get distracted during the your discussion. Pause. Let's share a few of our ideas with the whole class.



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Solicit ideas. Record on the poster if you wish. Students may say such things as, “Let’s talk about that later,” “Please help me finish our work,” or “Remember our agreements.”

And everyone will work to speak respectfully and listen carefully. Think for a moment, and then raise your hand when you have an idea of what we can do to show the speaker in our group that we are really listening to them.

Solicit ideas from the group, adding your own ideas as needed.



MAIN POINTS: Introduce the graphic organizer and text (3 minutes)

- Introduce your content text
- Introduce the graphic organizer



GUIDING LANGUAGE

Example: *Today we’re going to read about our solar system. Or Today we’re reading a piece of fiction.*

...and we’re going to use this Graphic Organizer to write down ideas you’ll use in your discussions. We’ll take about (X) minutes of quiet time, so everyone can do their reading and recording.

Example: *Today your group will be thinking about the characters in this story, and also noticing where we are building new vocabulary. Or: Today your group will be thinking about main ideas from the text, and also about how two ideas relate to one another—perhaps they are sequential (steps in order or over time), or they describe similar or different outcomes.*

Allow sufficient time for your students to read the material, assisting as needed. When the quiet reading time is almost over, let the students know that if they haven’t written any ideas yet, now is the time, even if they’re not quite finished with all of the reading.



MAIN POINTS: Practice discussing using graphic organizer and text (10 minutes)

- Briefly review the discussion agreements.
- Remind students of a few examples of how the leader might begin.
- Instruct students as to how to form their groups
- Let students know that when the each group member has finished leading, the next should begin. (Use a structured time keeping system, if appropriate for your group.)



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GUIDING LANGUAGE

Look at your graphic organizer and put a check mark next to the box that you're hoping to be the leader for. Maybe that will happen; maybe it won't. Think to yourself for a moment about something you can tell yourself if you don't end up getting to be the leader for your first choice. Something like, "Oh well, maybe I'll get my first choice tomorrow." Or, "That's okay, I still get to be leader for another section."

As you get started, you may want to look back at our Discussion Agreements Poster. Remember that as the leader, you'll be using welcoming language and also helping to keep your conversation on topic. Everyone pay special attention to sharing your ideas in a respectful and friendly way, and to listen carefully so that you can learn from each other.

When it's your turn to lead, you might share your own idea first and then ask your group members about their ideas. Or you might start by asking them to share, and add your own idea last. Both of these are good strategies.

In a minute, you will play "rock, scissors, paper" to see who'll lead first. The winner will start the discussion of the box they put a check mark next to. When you're done sharing all the ideas you each have, the next group member will lead the discussion about the question in another section. We'll have about (10 minutes, or whatever time is appropriate to your group), so be sure everyone has time to lead. Let students know if you will be keeping time and telling them when to switch to the next discussion leader.

DISCUSS YOUR CONTENT LESSON AS APPROPRIATE. CONSIDER:

- VERBAL: Solicit input from the group
- VISUAL AND VERBAL: Record their input on a public T-chart
- CAPTURED CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING: Have students turn in their papers



MAIN POINTS: Reflection and closure (5 minutes)

- Ask students to notice what it felt like when they were taking their turn as discussion leader and how it felt when another group member was leading.
- Have each student give two specific appreciations to every group member: one about when they were the leader and one from their perspective as a participant.
- Gauge the comfort level and skill of your group, and consider having them write their feedback. (If you choose this strategy, providing a prepared feedback slip (Strand1_PR_Universal_I_M_Discussion Leader Feedback Form) can be beneficial.)
- If this is the first time for your students to use this feedback strategy, consider brainstorming some general responses from the group, not tied to individual names.



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GUIDING LANGUAGE

Let's reflect now on how this worked, and how it felt to be a part of your group. Think quietly to yourself: How well were you able to think together about ideas from our reading? Pause. How did it feel when you were leading? What do you think went really well? Why do you think that was? Pause. How did it feel when another group member was the leader? What do you think went really well and why? Pause.

Based on what came up for you while you were reflecting just now, you're each going to have time now to say two appreciations to each member of your group. First, tell them something specific that you think made them an effective leader when it was their turn. Then thank them for something specific they did that helped you be successful when it was your turn to lead. The person who was leader last, please begin.

Allow time for students to give feedback in their groups.

Great work, everyone! I'm very impressed with the leadership skills you showed during our discussion today. Well done!



Extensions

- Create classroom posters from the student discussion agreements brainstorm for continued reference.
- Once this strategy becomes familiar and participants are comfortable in the various roles, it can be used widely by varying the content and the discussion prompts.



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Teacher: Personal Responsibility goals

Personal Responsibility: A child's tendency to be careful and reliable in her/his actions and in contributing to group efforts.

My students are aware of:

- The value of showing leadership by demonstrating personal responsibility
- A variety of ways to show leadership with their peer group
- The beneficial effects of encouraging positive behavior in others

I am aware of my individual students' abilities to:

- Show leadership capacities in varied and evolving ways
- The environment I create supports my students' growth related to:
- Naming ways in which they can show leadership by modeling personal responsibility
- Developing an evolving sense of ownership of their own responsible actions

Student: Personal Responsibility goals and demonstrated behaviors

Students will:

- Reflect on their own strategies for demonstrating personal responsibility
Example: "I can describe things I do well that contribute to our classroom running smoothly."
- Demonstrate positive leadership skills
Example: "I can act as respectful leader when it is my turn."
- Show leadership by supporting others in developing these skills
Example: "I can respectfully support others when they are leading a discussion."

DESSA SELF-MANAGEMENT INDICATORS (Highlighted indicators are directly addressed in this lesson.)

I can:

Remember important information
Handle my belongings with care
Serve an important role at home or school
Encourage positive behavior in others
Prepare for school, activities, or upcoming events
Do routine tasks or chores without being reminded
Act as a leader in a peer group
Get things done in a timely fashion
Show care when doing a project or school work
Follow rules

Discussion Leader Graphic Organizer

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.6, RL.8.2

Choose one character and describe how the author develops them. (What does their appearance, speech, and/or behavior add to our understanding of them?)

Contrast the point of view of two characters about an event in the reading. (How do they see the same situation in different ways? Why?)

Describe a theme or main idea of the text. (How do the characters, setting, or actions connect to the theme or idea you described?)

Record words or phrases whose meaning you weren't sure of on your first read:

Our Discussion Agreements

Strong leaders:

- Use welcoming language
- Guide the discussion
- Help everyone stay on topic

Great team members:

- Share ideas in a friendly, respectful way
- Listen carefully

Discussion Leader Feedback

To: _____ From: _____

When you were leading, it helped me when you:

When I was leading, I appreciated that you:

Discussion Leader Feedback

To: _____ From: _____

When you were leading, it helped me when you:

When I was leading, I appreciated that you: