



Scaffolding for Multilingual Learners, Shy Kids, and Those Needing a Boost

Some kids are comfortable talking openly in class; others, for a variety of reasons, have not yet gained a level of comfort in class discussions. While this is normal, there are “scaffolding” strategies we can use to help all students learn to find their voice. Scaffolding civil discourse lessons means that we are providing the needed support for all kids to be able to participate. This toolkit provides suggestions to help your students optimize their learning in civil discourse lessons.

Scaffolds for All Students

ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO TAKE NOTES WHILE OTHERS ARE TALKING.

This will help them to better remember what the speakers have said so that they can use the speaker's words to connect and build on later in the conversation. This is especially helpful for students with memory problems or executive functioning difficulties. It also helps kids who may feel the need to impulsively shout out their answers.

PROVIDE A CLEAR EXAMPLE OF WHAT IS REQUIRED.

With civil discourse lessons, this could involve showing the kids the rubric and grading expectations beforehand. It could also include an example of what the final project is supposed to look like or a visual presentation of how to do each specific step in a project.

PAIR STUDENTS STRATEGICALLY.

All students benefit from strategic pairings. Consider the best partner choices to work together depending on individual student needs. Some may need an academic boost from working with a certain partner. Others may need to be with a laid-back partner to ease anxiety. Figuring out the best combinations before any partner discussion activity would be helpful.

CONNECT NEW LEARNING TO PREVIOUS LEARNING AND BUILD BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE.

Review previous concepts that built up to the topic you are currently studying. If needed, pre-teach (front-load) background information and vocabulary that students may not know before the lesson begins: Provide definitions with pictures to help multilingual students build academic vocabulary and understand the topic on a deeper level.

DIRECTLY TEACH THE SPEAKING AND LISTENING SKILLS THAT YOU EXPECT STUDENTS TO DEMONSTRATE.

This could involve performing skits where you model student expectations or providing step-by-step instructions of how you expect students to complete the assignments.

USE VIDEOS AND IMAGES TO CONVEY COMPLEX IDEAS.

This helps all students, but multilingual students will especially benefit from this strategy. Label and discuss the parts of complex images to build academic vocabulary and deeper understanding of the content.

Support metacognitive opportunities for students to set goals and think about their own performance. Allow for pre-surveys, post-surveys, peer feedback, and teacher feedback to help students understand their oracy strengths and weaknesses. This will help them gain confidence in their progress and accelerate the acquisition of new skills.

HELP FOR MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS AND STUDENTS NEEDING AN EXTRA BOOST

Civil discourse lessons offer multilingual students increased opportunities to use their voice, although many may be reluctant to do so because of self-consciousness about public speaking. Here are some scaffolding strategies that will help multilingual students and shy kids in the practice of speaking in class.

PROVIDE SENTENCE FRAMES.

Posting [sentence frames](#) on the walls provides fill-in-the-blank response options for students who may not be able to use the correct sentence structures independently.

TRANSLATE COURSE MATERIALS.

If needed, translate course materials to help multilingual newcomers begin to understand the lesson.

REPEAT READINGS OF CONTENT MATERIAL.

Use repeated readings of content materials to help multilingual students and struggling students master content in order to be able to discuss it.

Help for Students with Individualized Education Programs and Those on the Spectrum

Some kids may feel overwhelmed during class discussions. Others may have difficulty working with partners or may struggle to control impulsiveness. Writing simple personalized expectation descriptions can help with this problem. These [simple sentences](#) describe the routines and expectations of civil discourse to help students mentally prepare for activities that they may find overstimulating or stressful. Some students may struggle to participate in whole group discussion and may need to take breaks or work one-on-one with a teacher's assistant. It is important to allow students to meet the individualized education program guidelines provided for them.