

Discourse in Social Studies

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Time Frame 60-90 minutes

Essential Question(s)

- Why is discourse important to social studies instruction?
- How do we foster discourse in the social studies classroom?

Summary

While it is important for students to engage in classroom discourse in their social studies classes in order to develop understanding, purposeful and effective opportunities for students to share their thinking and reasoning do not happen on their own. They require deliberate planning and facilitation from teachers. During this interactive session, participants will define discourse, discuss its importance in the classroom, and explore a variety of instructional strategies and technology resources that foster discourse in the social studies classroom.

Learning Goals

- Participants will explore instructional strategies and resources that promote discourse in the social studies classroom.
- Participants will analyze how these instructional strategies and resources encourage discourse in the social studies classroom.

Attachments

- Honeycomb Harvest—Discourse in Social Studies.docx
- Honeycomb Harvest—Discourse in Social Studies.pdf
- Laws and Practices in the US in 1848—Discourse in Social Studies.docx
- Laws and Practices in the US in 1848—Discourse in Social Studies.pdf
- Note Catcher—Discourse in Social Studies.docx
- Note Catcher—Discourse in Social Studies.pdf
- Presentation Slides—Discourse in Social Studies.pptx
- Say Something—Discourse in Social Studies.docx
- Say Something—Discourse in Social Studies.pdf

Materials

- Devices to access the Internet
- Honeycomb Harvest Cards (attached; 1 per participant or small group)
- Laws and Practices Shaping the Lives of Women in 1848 handout (attached; one per participant)
- Note Catcher (attached; one per participant)
- Pens/pencils
- Presentation Slides (attached)
- Sticky Notes
- Say Something handout (attached; 1 per participant)

Snapshot

Engage

Participants offer descriptive words for what *discourse* looks like and participate in a poll about the benefits of discourse.

Explore

Participants explore three strategies that support discourse in the classroom by role playing as students.

Explain/Extend

Participants discuss the benefits of each of the three strategies for incorporating discourse in their classroom.

Extend/Evaluate

In small groups, participants discuss which strategies they could use in their classroom and consider how they would modify them to best serve their students. Participants also reflect and discuss in small groups how these strategies can be effective at promoting discourse.

Engage: What is Discourse?

Presenter's Note

Use Mentimeter to set up a Word Cloud generator to use during the presentation. In Mentimeter, create a new presentation using the Word Cloud option for slide 1 and the following prompt: **What words or phrases would use to describe *discourse* as it relates to the social studies classroom?**

Once participants have created their collaborative Word Cloud, have them share their insights about the words. Offer your own perceptions and interpretations, if time permits.

Display **slide 3**. Quickly review the essential questions:

- Why is discourse important to social studies instruction?
- How do we foster meaningful discourse in the social studies classroom?

Display **slide 4**. Identify the learning goals of the lesson:

- Participants will explore instructional strategies and resources that promote discourse in the social studies classroom.
- Participants will analyze how these instructional strategies and resources encourage discourse in the social studies classroom.

Display **slide 5**. Divide participants into small groups. Ask the groups to explore the definition of discourse in a classroom setting by considering the following question: *What words or phrases best describe discourse as it relates to the social studies classroom?*

Ask participants to use their phones or their devices to go to menti.com and use the custom Mentimeter code to connect them with the presentation. As participants enter their responses, use presentation mode on Mentimeter to display the Word Cloud on the board as it is being created. Once all responses have been submitted, call on participants to share their observations about the ideas that were contributed to the Word Cloud.

Display **slide 6.** As a concluding activity, invite the groups to discuss the notion that classroom discourse encompasses a variety of written and spoken forms of communication, including students' engaging in expressing their ideas, discussing their reasoning, and representing their thinking. Discourse can be talking, listening, writing, reflecting, or representing.

The Value of Discourse

Presenter's Note

Return to the Menti presentation and create a second slide. Use the "ranking" option to create a poll to identify the importance of promoting discourse in the classroom. Rank the following items:

1. Students develop a deeper understanding of the content.
2. Students participate in content-centered discussions.
3. Classroom is student-centered.
4. Students share ideas and respond to the ideas of others.
5. Students use higher-order thinking skills like organizing, synthesizing, and interpreting.
6. Students express their ideas by constructing supported explanations of their thinking, both written and verbal.

Show slide 7: Review the list of items illustrating the importance of classroom discourse.

Direct participants to the Menti site. Ask them to read through the items on the poll screen. Have participants choose the statement they feel best captures why it is important to promote discourse in the classroom.

Before displaying the results of the poll, ask participants to discuss with their small groups which item they believe most important. Ask each person to share what they chose and explain their rationale.

After groups have had a chance to share with each other, display the results of the poll and ask for volunteers to share their thoughts.

Return to **slide 7** and conclude the discussion by noting that each of these items is equally important.

Presenter's Note

Transition to the next activity. Since the participants have discussed what discourse is and why it is important to classroom instruction, ask them to examine several strategies that can be used to integrate and sustain discourse in the classroom.

Exploring Discourse Strategies

Presenter's Note

Explain to participants that they are going to explore three instructional strategies that can be used to support discourse in the classroom. For each strategy introduced, there is also an Explore, Explain, and Extend cycle.

Participants first explore the strategy by role-playing students using a social studies content example. After an introduction to the strategy, they explain in their own words how using this strategy can integrate and sustain discourse in the classroom. After they have explored all of these strategies, they Extend their thinking by considering how to use these strategies in their own classrooms.

Discourse Strategy 1: Analyzing texts with Surprising, Interesting, Troubling

Presenter's Note

The first strategy participants will explore is S-I-T: Surprising, Interesting, Troubling. Explain to participants that the S-I-T strategy teaches students how to analyze texts, videos, or images. Give students a text to read, a video to watch, or an image to observe. Then, ask students to identify one surprising fact or idea, one interesting fact or idea, and one troubling fact or idea. Once students have had a chance to consider their individual responses, have them share their ideas and reasoning with small groups and/or during a whole class discussion.

Explore

Show **slide 8.**

Give each participant a copy of the **Laws and Practices Shaping the Lives of Women in 1848**. Advise the participants they will role-play students using the S-I-T strategy. Identify the document as one they might use if teaching a U.S. history course. The document is a list of laws and social practices that shaped the lives of women in 1848, the year of the Seneca Falls Convention, which was the first public meeting devoted to women's rights.

Show **slide 9**. Have participants read the document closely. Ask them to note an idea or fact that *surprises* them, an idea or fact that *interests* them, and an idea or fact that *troubles* them.

Once participants have had a chance to read the document individually, ask them to discuss their responses with their small groups. Give each three sticky notes and ask that each group work together to write a response for S-I-T, one response on each sticky.

Presenter's Note - Sample Responses

- **S** - We were surprised that in most states it was legal for a man to use violence against his wife because today we believe that is wrong and illegal.
- **I** - We thought it was interesting that all the individuals in the text faced similar challenges, but other aspects of their backgrounds caused them to experience those challenges in different ways.
- **T** - We thought it was troubling that women could not vote, and, therefore, had very little power to change any of the other issues they faced.

When all groups have finished writing their responses, call on each group to share out. Ask a representative from each group to post their stickies on a white board or large poster paper that has been labeled Surprising, Interesting, Troubling.

Presenter's Note - Optional Technology Integration

Instead of sticky notes, you could use Padlet to create a board with three columns (Surprising, Interesting, and Troubling) and ask that participants post their responses to Padlet.

Presenter's Note:

Conclude the discussion by commenting on shared responses as examples of using the S-I-T strategy, which generated conversation about the realities women faced in the 1800s.

Inform the participants that this activity is used in The Seneca Falls Convention and the Declaration of Sentiments lesson on K20's LEARN website.

Explain/Extend

Show **slide 9**. Pass out the Discourse in Social Studies Note Catcher handout (see Attachments). Tell participants that based on their experience with the S-I-T strategy, consider the following question: *How can the S-I-T strategy foster discourse in your classroom?*

Ask participants to discuss this in their small groups. Request that they fill out the S-I-T Strategy section on the Note Catcher handout.

When groups are finished discussing the strategy, reassemble as a whole group. Have groups to share their thoughts with the whole group.

Presenter's Note - Sample Responses

- S-I-T enables students to use specific talking points to stay on topic.
- S-I-T provides a framework for students to analyze the document.
- The prompts are open-ended, which encourage students to react to the text authentically.
- S-I-T gives students the opportunity to list and respond to the ideas of others.

Summarize the discussion, highlighting that S-I-T can promote discourse because it provides students with a structure for content-centered discussions in which students share their thinking with their peers. They must make a claim and then support that claim with evidence and reasoning. This could be done both verbally and in writing.

Discourse Strategy 2: Making Connections with Honeycomb Harvest

Presenter's Note

The Honeycomb Harvest strategy uses hexagonal cards to encourage students to make physical connections to represent their learning. Each hexagon contains a term related to the course content. Have students place cards that are related to one another with their sides touching. Ask students to work individually or in groups to arrange their honeycombs. Once they have completed their honeycombs, have them explain their reasoning.

Explore

Show **slide 10**. Identify the next strategy, Honeycomb Harvest.

Show **slide 11**. Explain to participants that the terms for this activity are related to American government.

Provide sets of the Honeycomb Harvest cards to each participant or small group of participants. Give participants about 5-10 minutes to arrange the honeycombs to best represent their understanding of the relationship among these government concepts.

Consider giving an example to help participants get started. For example, you could say that the *"separation of powers" and "checks and balances" honeycombs could touch because they both involve the three branches of government.*

When the participants have completed the task, have each individual share their reasoning with their small group. If small groups complete their harvests together, ask that they rotate to another group to see another arrangements to compare and contrast.

Bring the group back together and discuss the variety in the arrangements. Emphasize that it is likely that students will also produce a variety of arrangements. As long as students can explain their reasoning, their arrangement should be considered correct.

Presenter's Note - Honeycomb Harvest Sample Response



A participant might explain their reasoning for this arrangement this way: *I started with the U.S. Constitution because all these terms are part of the Constitution itself. I placed the four principles of the constitution—popular sovereignty, limited government, separation of power, and checks and balances—so that each touched the U.S. constitution hexagon. I saw the Bill of Rights and Separation of Powers as concepts that both worked to limit the amount of power the government has, so those hexagons are touching the Limited Government hexagon. Lastly, the Legislative Branch hexagon is connected to both Separation of Powers and Checks and Balances because the powers of the Legislative Branch are foundational to both of those principles. The Legislative Branch is one of the three branches of government, each branch with separate powers, and it also has the power to check both the executive and judicial branches.*

Explain/Extend

Show **slide 11**. Based on their experience with the Honeycomb Harvest, have participants consider the following question: *How can the Honeycomb Harvest strategy foster discourse in your classroom?*

Have participants discuss this with their small groups. Have them fill out the Honeycomb Harvest strategy section on their Note Catcher handout.

After the groups have discussed their perceptions, bring the whole group back together and ask them to share their thoughts with the whole group.

Presenter's Note - Sample Responses

- Students can use the Honeycomb exercise to demonstrate their understanding of terms and events prior to the start of a lesson to show what they already know. After they have completed the lesson, they can identify any changes in their understanding.
- The honeycomb gives students a tool to represent their thinking in a visual way.
- Students can explain their rationale and reasoning with their peers.
- Students can compare and contrast honeycombs while explaining their reasoning.
- Students can analyze how multiple interpretations can all be correct.

Summarize the discussion highlighting that the Honeycomb Harvest enables students to explain their reasoning and negotiate their thinking with their peers to represent their understanding of the content.

Discourse Strategy 3: Academic Conversations with Say Something

Presenter's Note

Introduce Encouraging Academic Conversations With Talk Moves for an explanation of the Say Something strategy. The link to the video is on **slide 12.**

Embedded video
https://youtube.com/watch?v=kSI4imt0dXg

Introduce the sentence starters on **slide 13.** These starters help students learn how to participate in academic conversations effectively with their peers. These sentence starters aid students in expressing their ideas, asking questions, and supporting their claims with evidence.

As participants engage in the discussion of the Langston Hughes poem, "I, Too," they can use the sentence starters to generate conversations.

Explore

Show **slide 12**.

Introduce the final strategy called Say Something. Give each participant a copy of the **Say Something** handout and explain that this handout can be given to students any time there is going to be small group or whole group discussion.

Show **slides 13** and **14.** Consider how participants can use this strategy to examine historical documents. Have participants read the Langston Hughes poem called *I, Too, am an American*, a poem that might be read as part of a high school US history lesson or unit about the Harlem Renaissance. This poem is included on the Say Something handout and on **slide 14**.

Ask participants to read the poem and look over the Say Something handout. Give them five minutes with their small groups to practice using the Say Something sentence starters to engage in an academic conversation about the poem and its historical significance.

Presenter's Note - Sample Responses

- ***In the poem,*** when the speaker says 'tomorrow,' ***it seems to me that*** he is not referencing a literal tomorrow but rather a future when Black Americans have rights and power equal to white Americans or as he says, a seat 'at the table'.
- ***In the poem,*** the speaker says 'Tomorrow, I'll be at the table. "***I think*** the 'table' symbolizes fair treatment and power ***because*** the speaker thinks in the future he'll have the opportunity to engage in US democracy in the same way that white society does."
- **I wonder** if Langston Hughes were alive today would he still write the same poem?
- **I think** it is important to consider America's history while analyzing and interpreting this poem.

Explain/Extend

Show **slide 15.** Ask participants to consider, based on their experience with the Say Something strategy, the following question: *How can the Say Something strategy help foster discourse in your classroom?* Have participants discuss this with their small groups. As they discuss, they can also fill out the Say Something strategy section of their Note Catcher handout.

When groups are finished discussing this strategy, bring the whole group back together and ask for groups to share their thoughts with the whole group.

Presenter's Note - Sample Responses

Say Something enables the following:

- Students learn to practice respectful discussion about texts and content.
- Students who are not comfortable speaking out in class can find a safe starting point.
- Students discover there are many different ways to initiate an academic conversation.
- Students explore strategies for respectfully challenging someone else's ideas.
- Students learn the value of textual evidence to support their thinking.

Summarize the discussion, noting the connections participants made between Say Something and promoting discourse in the classroom. Highlight that Say Something can support discourse because it helps students develop the skills necessary to participate in academic conversation where they must express and share their ideas as well as consider and listen to the ideas and opinions of others.

Extend/Evaluate: Reflecting on Discourse

Conclude the discussion by reviewing **slide 15**. Ask participants to consider their students and reflect on how these strategies would look in their classroom. Discuss the following questions in their small groups:

- *Which of today's strategies do you plan to implement in your classroom? Why?*
- *Are these strategies likely to be effective in promoting discourse? Explain.*
- *How might you modify these strategies to work with your students? Explain.*

Encourage participants to record their responses on the back of the Note Catcher handout, if they wish.

Presenter Note - Sample Responses

- Each of these strategies helps students formulate responses to share with a group.
- Say Something can help students have respectful conversations.
- Honeycomb Harvest is effective because it enables students to connect ideas and justify their connections, which allows them to deepen their knowledge.
- I think the S-I-T strategy would be helpful because students can feel empowered in their learning.
- These strategies all provide students with guidelines to participate in a conversation if they don't know where to start.

After groups have had a chance to discuss, ask participants to record their answers on their Note Catchers and have volunteers share responses to the whole group.

Research Rationale

Authentic learning—exploring meaningful concepts, their relationships, and real-world context—is inherent in disciplined inquiry and complex understanding. Rule (2006) noted that rich problems adhere to principles such as "personal meaningfulness to students; construction, refinement, or extension of a model; self-evaluation; documentation of mathematical thinking; useful prototype for other structurally similar problems; and generalization to a broader range of situations."

Not surprisingly, these traits are similar to the traits of good essential questions. There are a number of academic benefits for students and teachers that can be accomplished by giving time and space in the classroom for students to have conversations. When student conversation is an integrated part of the learning, students get practice working with one another; they get practice being accountable to others, listening, sharing their ideas in ways that others can understand, and working together to make decisions (Gillies, 2016; Resnick, Michaels, & Connor, 2010; Gibbs, 2006).

The learning that results from student conversations increases student motivation, self-esteem, and problem-solving outcomes. For teachers, giving students a space to speak provides insight into how students organize their thoughts and can serve as formative assessments of what students are learning over the course of a lesson.

Resources

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