

Grouping Strategies in an ICT Classroom

Denise Kalogeras: So today we are really focusing on the speaking and listening standards and I know that we have been talking about our main goal, which is to have the students distinguish between higher level questions and lower level questions and then basically having them recognize a relationship between how a quality discussion is really connected to those HOT questions or those higher order thinking questions. So I mean one of the things we know is that they are working in different levels in terms of their speaking and listening abilities. And based on our data collection it is really evident that, I think it would be in our best interest to break up the kids into two different groups.

Rachael Janowitz: I agree with you, and I think the group that is, that we have noticed, based on our assessments using the checklists and also our observations and conferencing during our lessons where we have discussions, I think based on that they should be developing a rubric that will help them self assess and also recognize what a quality discussion sounds like. So I think this will really raise the level of their participations in discussions.

Denise Kalogeras: Yeah, I agree with you and I think that in the group that I take, since they are already pretty much hitting all of those indicators of what a good discussion looks like, they are definitely ready to move on into that higher level of thinking where they are going to be able to distinguish or, I am sorry not distinguish, just notice, the relationship between those higher level questions and that quality discussion, which would eventually move them into our main goal, which is to have them develop those higher level questioning, questions. Then we can do that by showing them the types of questions or just having them focus on those higher level questions and noticing the criteria or what that higher level question looks like.

Rachael Janowitz: We use the student data to inform all of our grouping decisions in any of our lessons. So whenever we have an assessment, we use it to group students into partnerships or triads or small groups and whenever we are doing lessons, we use that data to think about how the students or who the students will be working with.

Denise Kalogeras: We have been using a lot of entrance and exit tickets and a lot of times those entrance tickets are going to be showing whether the students have the knowledge that it takes to be able to master the learning outcome. If we feel like something is missing on the entrance ticket, we will take that smaller group to the side and do a lot of that pre-requisite or that background knowledge that they would need to have in order to master that lesson or learning outcome that we are about to teach.

Denise Kalogeras: So based on the data that we collected with their station discussions and the studies weekly magazine for week four and based on this discussion protocol check list and based on the discussion ground rules that the new students came up with, I don't feel like she is really meeting the standards in terms of sixth grade speaking and listening. And I know that is

why you pulled that small group because you really wanted to target those speaking and listening standards. Whereas my group is already kind of like meeting those standards and is going a little over above and beyond and they are definitely ready to start facilitating their own discussions instead of us giving them those guiding questions.

Student 1: Okay. So, let me ask the second question?

Student 2: From the information given develop a set of instructions about building pyramids. Would you like to start us off?

Student 3: Sure, I wrote the steps that they use to build a pyramid. First the workers haul the stones up dirt ramps...

Denise Kalogeras: I want to complement you on your discussion, because one of the things that I am noticing is that you guys are definitely following a lot of these elements from our discussion checklist and I really love how you guys are not just taking turns, okay. I saw Desiree and Sara. Because I know you guys did that too and you were inviting others to speak, so like, "What do you have to say about this?" and making sure that there is equity of voice in the classroom. So continue doing that.

Denise Kalogeras: I think the work that we were doing today with the discussion checklist really kind of identifies and reinforces the idea that in order to have a good discussion and in order to be engaged there are certain criteria that need to be evident from an outsider's perspective.

These students, when I asked them what they thought about in terms of being able to assess themselves based on a checklist and they were really, really specific and they said, "Okay, so it is a good idea to have a checklist, when we are having a conversation because we know what is expected of us, but we don't really know how we are able to assess ourselves just using a checklist." And I told them like, "Okay, I am glad that you are noticing this need in our classroom, because we also noticed that we want you to be doing more of that self and peer assessment, but when you have that checklist, you can't really assess yourself, in terms of where I am, in terms of a level four, three, two, or one. And if I am a level two, how do I move to a level three?"

Rachael Janowitz: Yes, that is what I wanted to bring up too because one of the students noticed that. I think they were saying that, "if I got all of these grades on this checklist, fine I know where I am now, but I don't know what I need to do to get here really". And I think they were also recognizing the need for a rubric.

Denise Kalogeras: And I am glad that even though they are working on two different levels of speaking and listening, how the lower level group is going to be able to support the other students in the classroom.

Rachael Janowitz: Yes, and the fact that it is very helpful.

Denise Kalogeras: They are creating this rubric. It is going to hold them accountable for these expectations.

Rachael Janowitz: Right. I was going to divide them up in either partnerships or triads and they will get a piece of chart paper with each section. That is their task, to create what a level four, three, two, one is in that part of the rubric.

Denise Kalogeras: And I can already see kids who would definitely benefit from creating this participation section of this rubric.

Rachael Janowitz: So do you think I should group them based on what they need?

Denise Kalogeras: I think you should group them based on what they need in terms of this checklist.

Rachael Janowitz: Okay. So that is a good idea. I like that.

Rachael Janowitz: When they talk about something, like here, Mayron, it says all information included is relevant and accurate to topic. And when they go here it says, most information included is relevant. You know how this part is the same, but this word has changed, and then look when they go to two, some, then they go to one, little or no. So they are keeping the same ideas, and that might be like this, but how you do it is changing for each level.

Student 4: If you are not like even trying to discuss.

Rachael Janowitz: Oh nice, that would be what a level one sounds like. I like how you are paraphrasing it in your own words. So what would a two look like, Mayron?

Denise Kalogeras: One of the ways that we encourage students to demonstrate their thinking in their work is kind of like think out loud and go through that thinking process. So instead of students just giving the answer, we have them do a lot of that metacognitive awareness, where they have to go back and think about why they were thinking that way, and do a lot of that reflection and that comes out in their discussion work, but also in their writing where they need to justify their reasoning and explain why you had this idea, or where this idea came from.

Student 5: I think criteria means “what is in the HOT questions?”, “What makes it the HOT question?” and you can see the word crit, like for critic, I think critics are like who judge and evaluate something.

Student 6: Yeah I think when a critic goes to a restaurant they are trying to see how good it is and they are giving it a rating.

Denise Kalogeras: Oh, nice I like the way you guys are using some inside the word strategies.



Rachael Janowitz: In anticipating the different entry points the students might need to be successful, I think it is really important how we all always, at the end of a lesson, we will come together and reflect on how the lesson went and what we noticed the students did well and didn't do well. I might pick up on something or Denise might pick up on something that one of us had missed, and it really helps us go forward and see if we do have to re-teach something because the kids weren't able to grasp it the way we thought they would or if they did such a great job and this was a strategy that we need to continue in other lessons, because I feel like once we hit upon something that works really well, we should continue using that practice throughout any other lesson we are doing.