

## Elements of Instructional Conversation

### Presenters

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1. **Thematic focus.** The teacher selects a theme or idea to serve as a starting point for focusing the discussion and has a general plan for how the theme will unfold.
2. **Activation and use of background and relevant schemata.** The teacher either “hooks into” or provides students with background knowledge and relevant schemata necessary for understanding a text.
3. **Direct teaching.** When necessary, the teacher provides direct teaching of a skill or concept.
4. **Promotion of complex language and expression.** Much of the discussion centers on questions and answers for which there might be more than one correct answer.
5. **Fewer “known-answer” questions.** The teacher is responsive to students’ statements and the opportunities they provide.
6. **Connected discourse.** The discussion is characterized by multiple, interactive and connected turns. The dialogue is built upon and extended to previous conversations.
7. **A challenging, but nonthreatening environment.** The teacher creates a “zone of proximal development,” where a challenging atmosphere is balanced by a positive climate. The teacher is more collaborator than evaluator and allows students to negotiate and construct the meaning of text.
8. **General participation, including self-selected turns.** The teacher encourages general participation among students. The teacher does not hold an exclusive right to determine who talks and students are encouraged to volunteer.

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