Beyond Learning Language to Language for Learning: Promising Paths to Strengthen Literacy Outcomes

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What is Academically Productive Talk?

- Maybe a second grade example would help:

https://www.academically-productive-talk.org/apt-in-science (2nd clip)

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Why do we care about APT?

- We learn to talk by talking
- We also **learn** by talking: internalizing content, comprehending text, building reasoning skill
- But students get rather little chance to talk in many classrooms
- And of course not ALL talk works optimally to support the skills we value
- Academically Productive Talk is what we want

Evidence re APT

- Student collaborative reasoning about dilemmas generates improvements in critical thinking (Anderson et al., https://education.illinois.edu/docs/default-source/dean%27s-office/collaborative-reasoning-publications-final.pdf?sfvrsn=2
- Discussion is key in developing scientific reasoning and conceptual understanding (Andriessen, 2006; Osborne, 2010)
- Discussion and high academic demand promote literacy skills (Applebee et al., 2003)
- Justifying one's approaches and comparing strategies in math promote achievement (Sims, 2008)
- Team-based learning in history generates higher levels of content knowledge (Wanzek et al., 2014)

How do we provoke APT?

- Engaging topics
- Dilemmas rather than questions
- Teacher skill in guiding discussion
- Norms for student participation
- Peer work on authentic tasks

Word Generation in 4th & 5th grade

https://irp.cdn-website.com/b1b5f143/files/uploaded/rules.pdf

But how do we know if we are succeeding? Can we agree on a definition of APT?

- We need agreement across researchers on what it is

- And we need models that convey its essence effectively to teachers

- This is where CLASSBANK and the APT website come in!

- **ClassBank:** https://class.talkbank.org/
- **APT website:** https://www.academically-productive-talk.org/

- Understanding 'more' and 'less' in kindergarten (K-2 section, clip 1) https://www.academically-productive-talk.org/library

- What do you see?
- How would you have responded to Gabriela?

- Grade 2 Words that end with ING, clip 3

- What do you see?
- Does this activity promote literacy? How?

Gaps in the knowledge base

- Define features and affordances of APT to support convergent research activities
- Trace developmental trajectories for students' APT capacities
- Trace developmental trajectories for teachers' expertise
- Evaluate the effectiveness of programs designed to support APT in classrooms
- Establish the degree of disciplinary specificity of APT and APT-support strategies
- Identify contents and purposes for which APT is most/least valuable

One modest proposal

- Video repository with tagged segments reviewed by multiple researchers

- Using such resources in teacher education and professional development

- Continuing to refine the methods for analyzing APT across grades and disciplines

- Expanding the effort to Spanish and Portuguese, among other languages

A few crucial takeaways

- Some language features are encountered frequently in school (and rarely in other contexts)

- Because they are useful in particular kinds of communication tasks

- Students benefit from knowing about those features

- They don't **need** to use them in their own spoken language

- But participating in classroom discussions is one way to develop familiarity and fluency with them

- These features are best learned by building on students' engagement with content and their own language resources