

Adapted from: O'Hara, S., Pritchard, R., and Pitta, D. (2021). Literacy Classrooms that SOAR: Strategic Observation and Reflection in the Elementary Grades. New York, NY. Teachers College Press.

Instructional Tool: Formative Assessments of Student Talk–DD

This tool can be used to assess discussions in all discipline areas

This tool supports element 2 of the DD Teaching Frame, Provide written and/or oral feedback during lessons to promote disciplinary learning. Checklists can be quick, useful tools for monitoring student-to-student discussions to determine which elements of a discussion students are or are not demonstrating. At times, however, a more thorough analysis is necessary to provide students with the type of in-depth, constructive feedback that will enhance their use of conversation skills, academic language, and metacognitive strategies. The Formative Assessments of Student Talk–Disciplinary Discussions, or FAST-DD (see below), is a tool that teachers can use to monitor disciplinary discussions in traditional, hybrid or online classrooms, analyze student participation, and provide constructive feedback.

Why Use This Tool: FAST-DD contains three dimensions, each of which can be scored individually using a four-point rubric. The first dimension, Building Up an Idea, focuses on the clarity of the discussion, the extent to which it addresses the prompt or task, and whether or not it leads to co-construction of new ideas. The second dimension, Using Academic Language, focuses on which academic language features are used in a discussion, and whether or not the discourse feature is used appropriately to convey ideas. The third dimension, Applying Metacognitive Strategies, focuses on whether or not students are monitoring their own discussions and, when needed, applying strategies appropriately and independently to keep the discussion on topic and moving forward.

When to Use This Tool: As noted above, FAST-DD is a tool that you can use when you want to monitor disciplinary discussions, analyze student participation, and provide constructive feedback or prompts to help move the discussion forward. You can use it effectively to assess all three dimensions or to focus on one dimension at a time, depending on the grade level, your specific learning targets, and your students' needs.

How to Use This Tool: You can use FAST-DD to monitor discussions in one of two ways. During a lesson in which students are engaged in discussion, you can listen to one or two student pairs for evidence of one or more dimensions and use that to provide in-the-moment guidance. You can do this if you are walking around listening to discussions between students in the classroom and students online or joining breakout room discussions on Zoom or Google Meet. You can also use FAST-DD to analyze a written transcript or recording of student discussions after a lesson and provide students with targeted feedback to help strengthen their next discussion. If students are meeting via Zoom, for example, you can record the session and look at it later to assess the discussion. Like other one-on-one assessment tools, the more you use FAST-DD, the better you will be at analyzing student discussions and providing effective feedback to your students.

Appendix D. Formative Assessments of Student Talk—Disciplinary Discussions

Score	Building Up an Idea	Score	Using Academic Language	Score	Applying Metacognitive Strategies
4	The discussion is clear and focused, effectively addresses the prompt or task, and leads to co-construction of new ideas. The discussion includes the following: • Creates a clear initial idea • Builds on others' ideas • Fortifies others' ideas with evidence • Combines and connects ideas to strengthen the discussion		This discussion demonstrates the use of discourse feature language to effectively convey co-constructed ideas. This discussion includes the following: • Uses vocabulary appropriately • Uses syntax appropriately • Uses the language of the discourse feature to strengthen the discussion		In this discussion, metacognition (awareness and action) is appropriately and independently applied. This discussion includes the following: • Clear and well-connected turns demonstrate monitoring • When needed, strategies are applied appropriately and independently
3	The discussion is clear but not consistently focused, addresses the prompt or task, and leads to co-construction of new ideas. The discussion includes the following: • Creates a clear initial idea • Builds on others' ideas • Fortifies others' ideas with evidence • Combines and connects ideas, but they don't consistently strengthen the discussion		This discussion demonstrates the use of discourse feature language to convey co-constructed ideas. This discussion includes the following: • Uses vocabulary appropriately • Uses syntax appropriately • Uses the language of the discourse feature, but not in ways that consistently strengthen the discussion		In this discussion, metacognition (awareness and action) is appropriately applied with support. This discussion includes the following: • Clear and well-connected turns demonstrate monitoring • When needed, strategies are applied appropriately with support

Score	Building Up an Idea	Score	Using Academic Language	Score	Applying Metacognitive Strategies
2	This discussion is somewhat unclear, irrelevant, or incomplete. This discussion includes the following: • Creates a clear initial idea • Demonstrates limited attempts to build on others' ideas • Provides evidence but it is irrelevant or inappropriate		The discussion demonstrates use of vocabulary and syntax, but does not demonstrate use of discourse feature language. This discussion includes the following: • Uses vocabulary appropriately • Uses syntax appropriately		In this discussion, metacognition is partially applied (awareness only). This discussion includes the following: • Clear and well-connected turns demonstrate monitoring • Strategies are not applied when the conversation stalls or gets off track
1	This discussion is unclear and lacks central purpose. The discussion includes the following: • Does not create a clear initial idea • Expresses only simplistic or random ideas		This discussion does not demonstrate appropriate use of academic language. This discussion includes the following: • Uses vocabulary inappropriately • Uses syntax inappropriately		In this discussion, metacognition is not applied. This includes the following: • There are no clear or well-organized turns that demonstrate monitoring • Strategies are not applied