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# CURRICULUM CORNER

*The Official Curriculum Newsletter of Westfield Public Schools*

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During this season of thanks, your Curriculum Team is grateful to be working with you! Thank you for your dedication and commitment to your students! At this point in the school year, you may be seeking ideas for ways to build community in your classroom; to inspire your students' critical thinking skills; and to expand their vocabulary. These goals can be achieved by increasing speaking and listening opportunities. Read on for some exciting strategies to spark meaningful student discourse in your classroom!

## **We Want to Hear from You!**

Are you trying something in your classroom that might help others? We would love to hear about it! Please send us an email about your best practices! We would also love to hear your thoughts about future topics that you would like to see in an upcoming issue of the Curriculum Corner. **[Submit here!](#)**

# Activities to Spark Student Discourse

## What's Going On in This Picture?

Want to use intriguing photographs to help students practice visual thinking and close reading skills? Teachers who have used the New York Times reported higher student engagement and improvement in the way students used academic language during discussions. Ready to try it out?

- Have a direct link to the picture ([NYT-What's Going On in This Picture?](#))
- Silently Observe the picture (2 minutes)
- Discuss (gradual release) an appropriate caption for the picture using the Claim, Evidence, and Reasoning format: (10 min)
  - **Claim** - What is going on in this picture?
  - **Evidence** - What makes you say that?
  - **Reasoning** - How is the evidence connected to your claim?
- Write your caption and submit (3 min)

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## SNAP Mini-lesson

Follow the **SNAP** protocol with your students to explicitly teach academic vocabulary!

**S:** See and say each word

**N:** Name a category and group vocabulary words; notice connections to related words or word families

**A:** Act on the words by engaging in brief tasks or conversations about the words

**P:** Produce an individual, original application of the words

This [example](#) is intended for secondary students.

# Activity to Spark Student Discourse

## Word Talks

Word talks were derived from a strategy called book talks, in which students give a brief (less than five minutes) presentation about a book they recommend to their peers for independent reading. Word talks are similar in that they require students to give a brief presentation on one or several words that they feel are important for their peers to know. This strategy is excellent for general academic words, not highly specialized, domain-specific words. Word talks are great opportunities for some students to showcase their interests and expertise, but most importantly, they make clear that continual word learning is important.

## SEL Tip

### **Remember to use Inner Explorer!!**

Imagine you have three children. You woke up very late, the kids need to get dressed, eat breakfast, and be driven to school so you can get to work on time. As you are heading out the door they start to argue with you. How do you respond when your stress is high? How do you respond if you have an inner sense of calm? How do your kids feel when they get to school?

Inner Explore is a 10-minute audio-guided mindfulness practice that teaches people techniques to regulate emotions through breathing and relaxation exercises. Students and teachers enter the classroom with multiple unseen stressors. Imagine how dedicating this small commitment of class time and applying these relaxation techniques can change both your and the student's school day. You can access Inner Explorer through your Clever account. If you need support with access, please reach out to Donna Mendonca at [donna.mendonca@schoolsofwestfield.org](mailto:donna.mendonca@schoolsofwestfield.org).







“One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers, but with gratitude to those who touched our human feelings.” - Carl Jung

The Curriculum Team is grateful for all your hard work this year!  
Happy Thanksgiving from Us to You!





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# Contact Us



If you have additional ideas, suggestions, or questions, please share them with us!



Lindsey Ayers  
STEM Coach

Kelly O'Sullivan  
Literacy Coach

Lauren Figy Cadigan  
Supervisor of STE

Kate Perez  
Supervisor of Mathematics

Anna Antropova  
Supervisor of English Learners Program

Mary Keane  
Supervisor of English

Brian Dutko  
Coordinator of Instructional Technology

Donna Mendonca  
Supervisor of SEL

Susan Dargie  
Director of Curriculum and Instruction

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