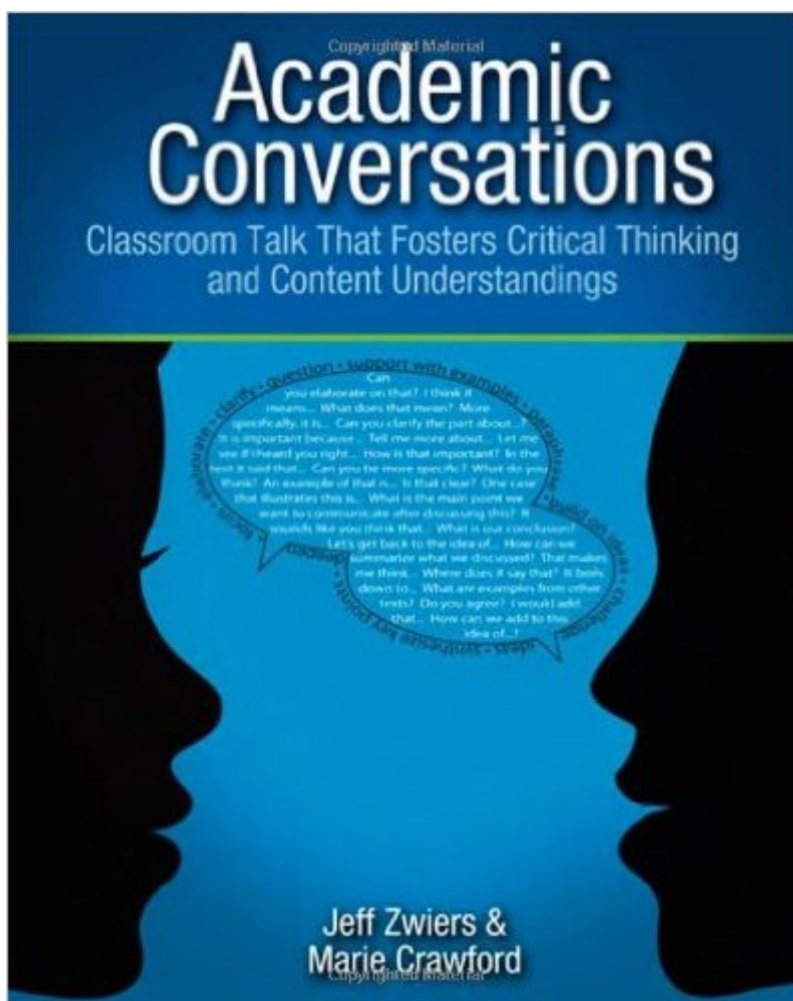


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# Academic Conversations: Classroom Talk That Fosters Critical Thinking And Content Understandings



## **Synopsis**

Where would we be without conversation? Throughout history, conversations have allowed us to see different perspectives, build ideas, and solve problems. Conversations, particularly those referred to in this book as academic conversations, push students to think and learn in lasting ways. Academic conversations are back-and-forth dialogues in which students focus on a topic and explore it by building, challenging, and negotiating relevant ideas. Unfortunately, academic conversations are rare in many classrooms. Talk is often dominated by the teacher and a few students, or it does not advance beyond short responses to the teacher's questions. Even certain teaching approaches and curriculum programs neglect to train students how to maintain a focused, respectful, and thoughtful conversation. To address these challenges, authors Jeff Zwiers and Marie Crawford have identified five core communication skills to help students hold productive academic conversations across content areas. These skills include: elaborating and clarifying, supporting ideas with evidence, building on and/or challenging ideas, paraphrasing, and synthesizing. This book shows teachers how to weave the cultivation of academic conversation skills and conversations into current teaching approaches. More specifically, it describes how to use conversations to build the following: Academic vocabulary and grammar Critical thinking skills such as persuasion, interpretation, consideration of multiple perspectives, evaluation, and application Literacy skills such as questioning, predicting, connecting to prior knowledge, and summarizing Complex and abstract essential understandings in content areas such as adaptation, human nature, bias, conservation of mass, energy, gravity, irony, democracy, greed, and more An academic classroom environment brimming with respect for others' ideas, equity of voice, engagement, and mutual support The ideas in this book stem from many hours of classroom practice, research, and video analysis across grade levels and content areas. Readers will find numerous practical activities for working on each conversation skill, crafting conversation-worthy tasks, and using conversations to teach and assess. *Academic Conversations* offers an in-depth approach to helping students develop into the future parents, teachers, and leaders who will collaborate to build a better world.

## **Book Information**

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: Stenhouse Publishers (November 4, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 157110884X

ISBN-13: 978-1571108845

Product Dimensions: 7.4 x 0.6 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars **See all reviews** (31 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #18,336 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #11 in **Books > Reference >**

**Etiquette > Conversation** #35 in **Books > Education & Teaching > Schools & Teaching >**

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## Customer Reviews

It's a paradox, but English teachers almost completely ignore the teaching of speaking skills because they figure kids converse just fine -- a little TOO well, in fact. Mea culpa, because I'm as guilty as the next guy. Luckily, this book opened my eyes to the possibilities of a skill-based approach to teaching academic conversation. Part of me says I'm too busy for this, what with all the demands of teaching reading, writing, vocabulary, and even public speaking, but Jeff Zwiers and Marie Crawford have convinced me that I cannot ignore this any longer. What's more, they proved that academic conversations will greatly improve student writing. The icing on the cake? Students will actually ENJOY the activities in this book. Think of it this way: students' love for conversing is a like a raging river. And academic conversation activities are like a hydroelectric plant built to convert that untapped energy into enduring light. The book's organization is systematic and logical. The chapter headings give you an idea of the steps: Ch. 1 -- Reasons to Converse in School Ch. 2 -- Getting Started with Academic Conversations Ch. 3 -- Lesson Activities for Developing Core Conversation Skills Ch. 4 -- Designing Effective Conversation Tasks Ch. 5 -- Training Students for Advanced Conversations Ch. 6 -- Developing Academic Grammar and Vocabulary Through Conversation Ch. 7 -- Conversations in Language Arts Ch. 8 -- Conversations in History Ch. 9 -- Conversations in Science Ch. 10 -- Academic Conversation Assessment Ch. 11 -- Reminders Although **ACADEMIC CONVERSATIONS** covers many types of large and small group discussions done in class, it focuses mainly on paired conversation.

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