



The Art of Substantive Conversation at Turner School

"It is discourse rather than delivery of content that helps shape the manner of learning and the attitude towards it."

Kath Murdoch



Parent Fact Sheet

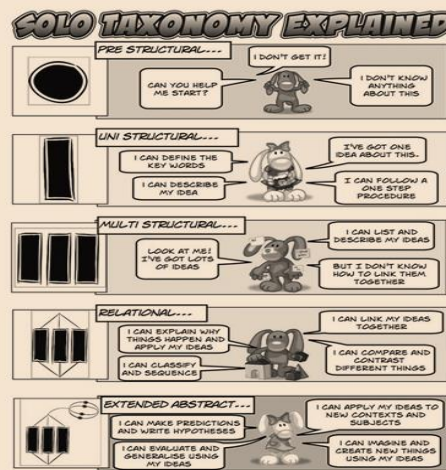
We believe that learning is facilitated by sustained and substantive conversations.

Every day in our school you will see all students engaging in deep conversations about learning; with their peers and with their teachers.

Substantive conversation is based on research and identifies how educators can continuously drive a student's understanding or performance towards a learning goal. It is designed to take each learner to the edge of learning and build their agency, instilling positive mindset and values.

Conversations with learners at Turner are about fostering an inquiry stance that is

centred on 21st Century learning dispositions such as curiosity, creativity, critical thinking, adaptability and problem solving.



The SOLO taxonomy is a framework we use to move students from one idea about a concept to many ideas and connections related to a concept.

Sustained and substantive conversation is designed to strengthen the following things:

- Collaboration- it is about building reciprocal and shared understanding (What are we learning about?)
- The learning process (How am I going? How will I get there?)
- Ability to synthesise understanding so the learner can generalise (what do I understand now that I can take into other learning? How does this strategy work with other strategies I use?)

Teachers are experts in reflecting on how each individual learns and what they need to stretch them to the next level.



Teachers frequently ask themselves in planning- What do I know about this student? What do I know that will help in a learning conversation/conference?

Teachers are asking students- What did you learn about yourself in this (eg writing) experience?

- * ...that you didn't know before?
- * ...that you can use in the days to come?

When engaging in conversations about learning teachers use words that inspire open ended thinking and ongoing exchanges of understanding:

* "I wonder... and What if...'" allows a chance to build and extend connections to think about how a concept, piece of knowledge or strategy could be used in another context.

* "That's like....." draws attention to connections and it makes metaphors. The more connections we make, the more flexibly new knowledge can be accessed.

More examples: "Are there any other ways to think about that?" "Any other opinions?" "Can we build on this?"

Teachers scaffold questions to move from closed questions to open ended questions:

- * Constrained questions involve single levels of understanding and usually start with: who, what, when and where
- * Unconstrained questions involve categorising, connecting and stretching relationships between content or strategies and usually start with: how and why