

Engaging Elementary English Learners in Academic Conversations



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Objectives



- ∞ Paraphrase how one school implemented academic conversations as a school wide initiative
- ∞ Elaborate on the importance of developing oral language, especially for ELLs
- ∞ Analyze the speech of students in three video clips
- ∞ Practice active listening skills
- ∞ Brainstorm ideas for facilitating the transfer of oral language skills to writing

Brophy Elementary School

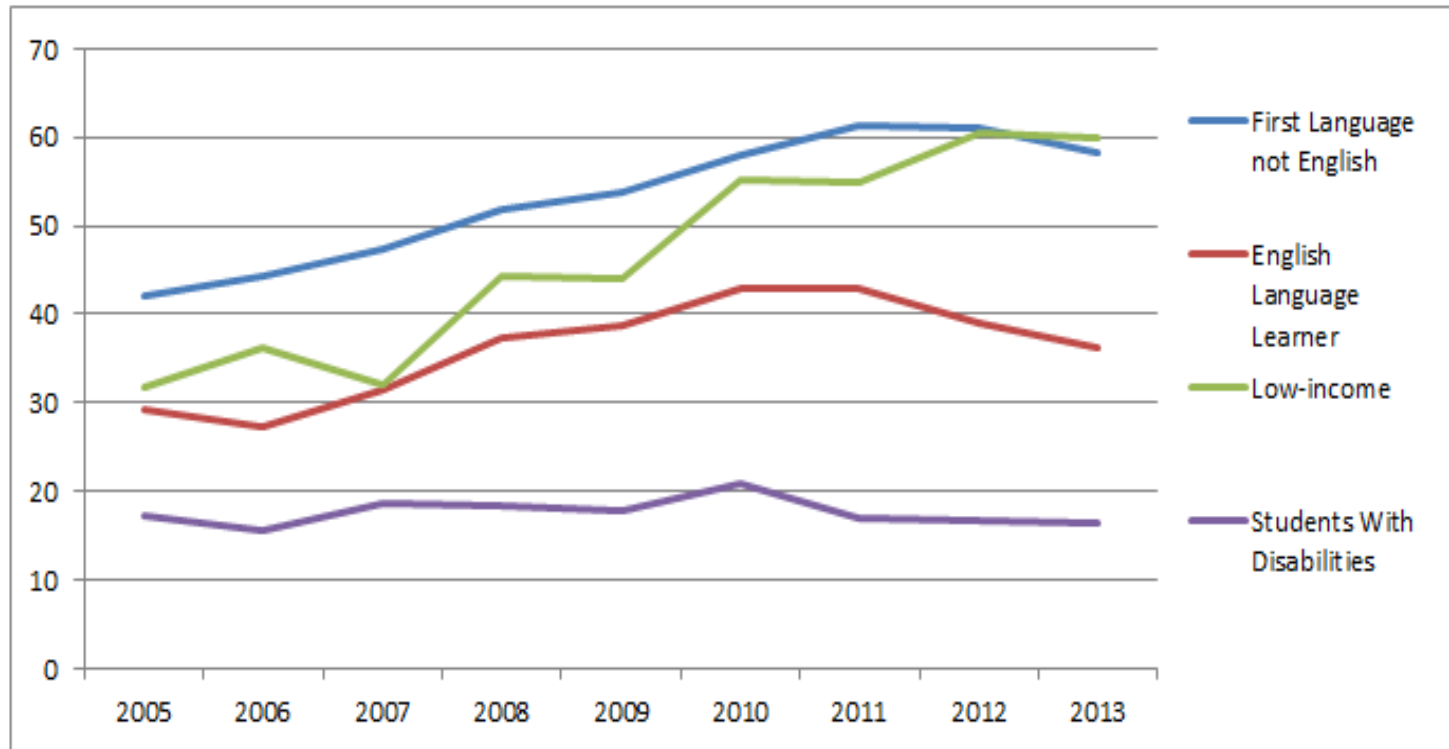
Framingham, MA



- ☞ Since 2007, at Brophy there has been a steady increase in students included in one or more of the following categories: Special education, English language learners, or students who qualify for free and reduced lunch.
- ☞ The last three years have seen significant growth (13%) in the overall number of students attending Brophy School.
- ☞ Our school has the highest “churn rate” in the district.

Demographic Changes

DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS BROPHY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL 2005 - 2013



Our Challenge

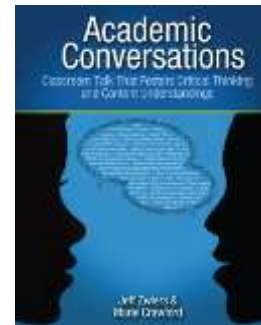


Improve the educational outcomes of the students in our subgroups, while continuing to provide and maintain rich, robust educational experiences for all learners.

Our Focus: Oral Language



- ∞ 22 reasons to converse fall into 5 categories: language and literacy, cognitive, content learning, social and cultural, and psychological (Jeff Zwiers and Marie Crawford- Stenhouse Publishing)
- ∞ Expands vocabulary
- ∞ Builds skills that transfer into literacy and content areas
- ∞ Develops cognition- critical thinking and builds “focusing stamina”



Considerations for Diverse Schools



- ⌘ Allows students to build on their strengths
- ⌘ Makes lessons more culturally relevant (Culturally and linguistically diverse students use different conversations modes at home. AC lessons respect these differences and teach skills.)
- ⌘ Promotes equity, motivates students, fosters change

Five Core Conversation Skills

- ∞ Elaborate and clarify
 - ∞ Support ideas with examples
 - ∞ Build on/or challenge a partner's idea
 - ∞ Paraphrase
 - ∞ Synthesize conversation points
- ∞ When modifying these skills for younger students we changed the order in which the skills were introduced to better align with the students' developmental stages.

Introducing AC to Students



Language Objective: Students will be able to explain what an academic conversation looks like and give reasons it is important.

- ∞ Model conversations
- ∞ Explain why it is important
- ∞ Anchor charts (what it is, what it isn't)
- ∞ List norms

Anchor Chart



What it is

- Being respectful 
- Making eye contact with the other person 
- Taking turns talking and listening 
- Staying on topic 
- Using a quiet voice 

What it isn't

- Being disrespectful
- Looking around the room
- Interrupting
- Talking about whatever you want, not what the topic is
- Yelling or screaming

Active Listening



Learning Objective: Students will be able to demonstrate active listening by using facial expressions and gestures.

- ∞ Turn taking
- ∞ Making eye contact
- ∞ Smiling and nodding
- ∞ Saying, “Uh-huh,” “I understand,” “Oh,” “Really”

Let's Practice!

- ∞ What if you are listening and you don't understand?
 - ∞ Explicitly teaching students metacognitive strategies: I don't understand. Can you repeat that please? I have a question.

How was life different long ago?



Paraphrase/Retell



Language Objective: Students will be able to retell what the speaker has said using his/her own words.

- ☞ To keep track of what we are hearing
- ☞ To organize the speaker's points
- ☞ To describe in our own words
- ☞ To negotiate meaning- the listener synthesizes main points and the speaker clarifies if that was the intended message
- ☞ To help the speaker stay on track
- ☞ To chunk ideas- the listener will improve in listening and reading comprehension

Let's Practice



Inside/ Outside Circle

- ☞ Speaker addresses a prompt for 20 seconds.
- ☞ The first listener (inside circle) practices gestures/facial expressions while listening.
- ☞ The outside circle rotates.
- ☞ The second speaker (outside circle) explains her ideas.
- ☞ The listener uses comments (uh huh, really?, interesting) to indicate listening.
- ☞ The outside circle rotates.
- ☞ The third speaker talks.
- ☞ The listener paraphrases the speaker's ideas beginning with the phrase, "In other words...", or, "So what you're saying is..."

Elaborate



Language Objective: Students will be able to elaborate on their idea during an academic conversation.

Prompts:

☞ “Tell me more.”

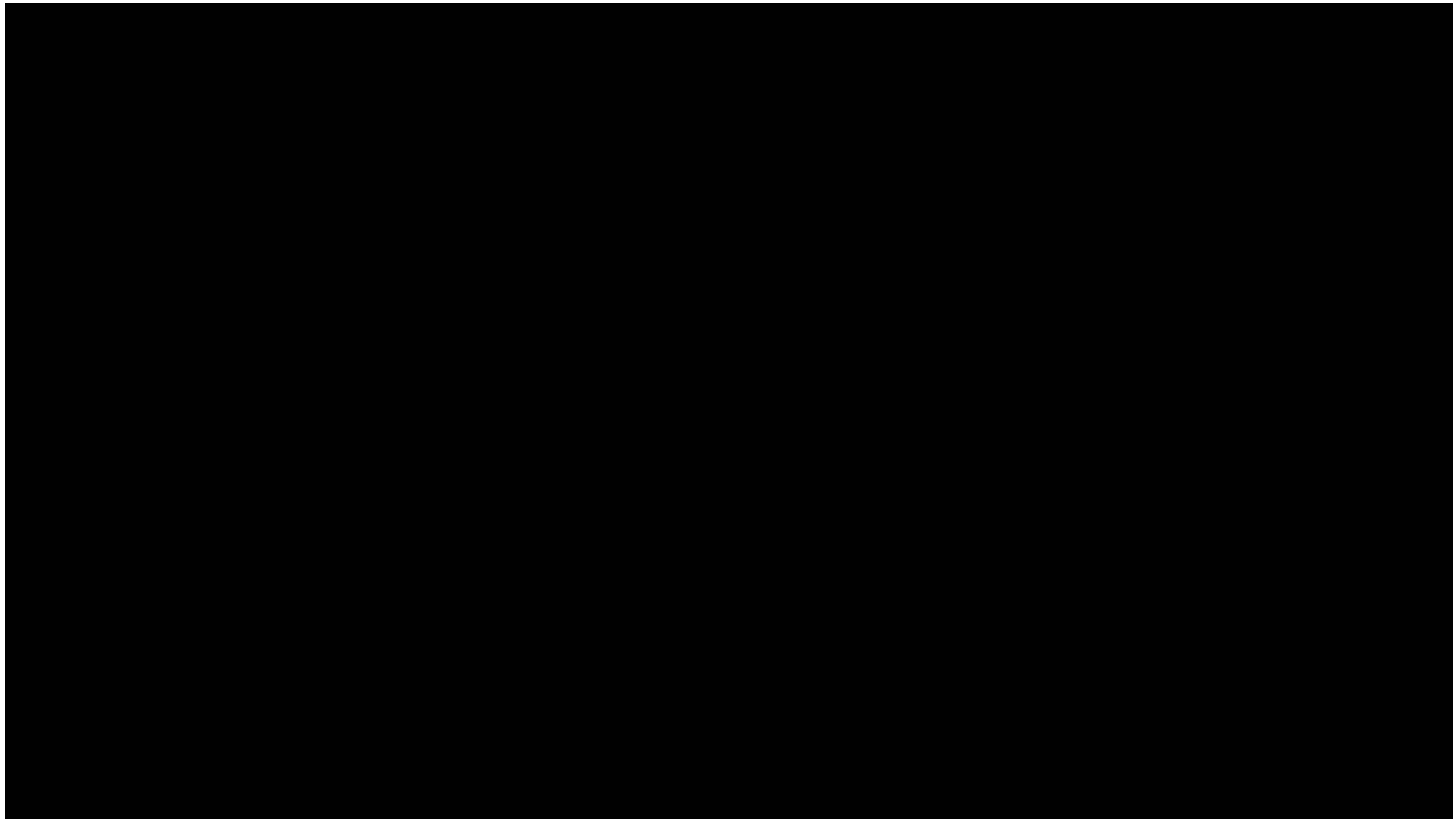
☞ “Can you elaborate on ...”

Sentence Starters:

Let me explain...

Let me tell you more...

How did Tomie dePaola
write in different genres?



Protocol for Listening to Student Work (through a WIDA Lens)



1. Code your discourse sample by highlighting areas where students could benefit from instruction
 - Vocabulary usage (word, phrase level)
 - Language forms and conventions (sentence level)
 - Linguistic complexity (discourse/message level)- can include evidence of AC skills (paraphrasing, elaborating, supporting with examples, building on or challenging ideas, synthesizing)
2. Observations of patterns and trends- What are some patterns observed? “I observed that...”
3. Discuss with your colleagues how you would design the next lesson for this student.

Listening to Student Work



4. What is his/her most pressing need?
5. Do other students in your class have a similar need?
6. Using Zwiers' formula, design a language objective.
Students will be able to (skill or function)
based on (language input)
using (specific language)
in a (type of activity).
7. What activity, modeling, or conferencing would you do with the student/s next?
8. How would you assess progress?

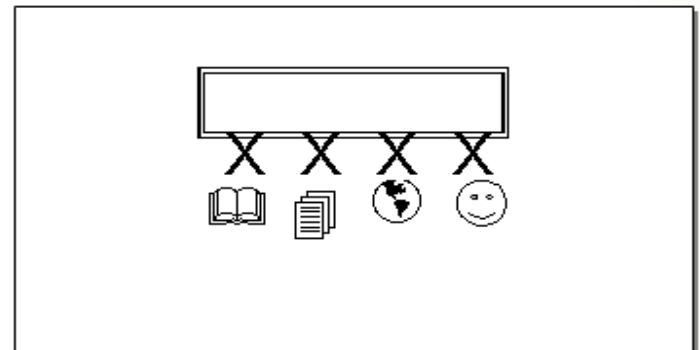
Supporting Ideas With Examples



Language Objective: Students will support their thinking with examples using the sentence frame: “One example that supports my idea is...”

∞ Zwiers encourages students to think of examples in this order:

- ∞ Examples from the text
- ∞ Examples for other texts
- ∞ Examples from the world
- ∞ Examples from one’s own life



Build on/ or Challenge



Language Objective: Students will build on or challenge a partner's idea using a sentence starter.

Prompts:	Response starters:
How can we add to this idea...?	I would add that...
Do you agree or disagree?	I agree (or disagree) with ... because ...

Idea Building Chart



The chart is a hand-drawn graphic organizer on a whiteboard. At the top, the title "Idea Building" is written in red. Below it is a large, empty rounded rectangle. Underneath are several boxes containing sentence starters in different colors: "An example of this would be" (blue), "Some people would think that" (orange), "I disagree because" (green), "This is important because" (black), "I connect your idea with" (red), and "This is like" (black). At the bottom, there is a paragraph of text explaining the objective of the chart.

Idea Building

An example of this would be

Some people would think that

I disagree because

This is important because

I connect your idea with

This is like

Objective: Using the graphic organizer, students will be able to build on or challenge others' ideas, expressing themselves with the help of sentence starters.

Synthesize Conversation Points



Language Objective: Students will agree on a summary of their conversation.

- ❧ What are the most important points?
- ❧ How can they be meaningful and useful in life?
- ❧ The synthesis can be written down as a record of the conversation.
- ❧ We can say that... We can agree that...
- ❧ It boils down to... We conclude...

Talk Moves



- ☞ So what you're saying is....
- ☞ I know that because...
- ☞ An example of this is...
- ☞ Something else that goes along with this is...
- ☞ I want to add on what (student's name) said...
- ☞ I agree/disagree because...

What do you want to be when you grow up?



2012-2013



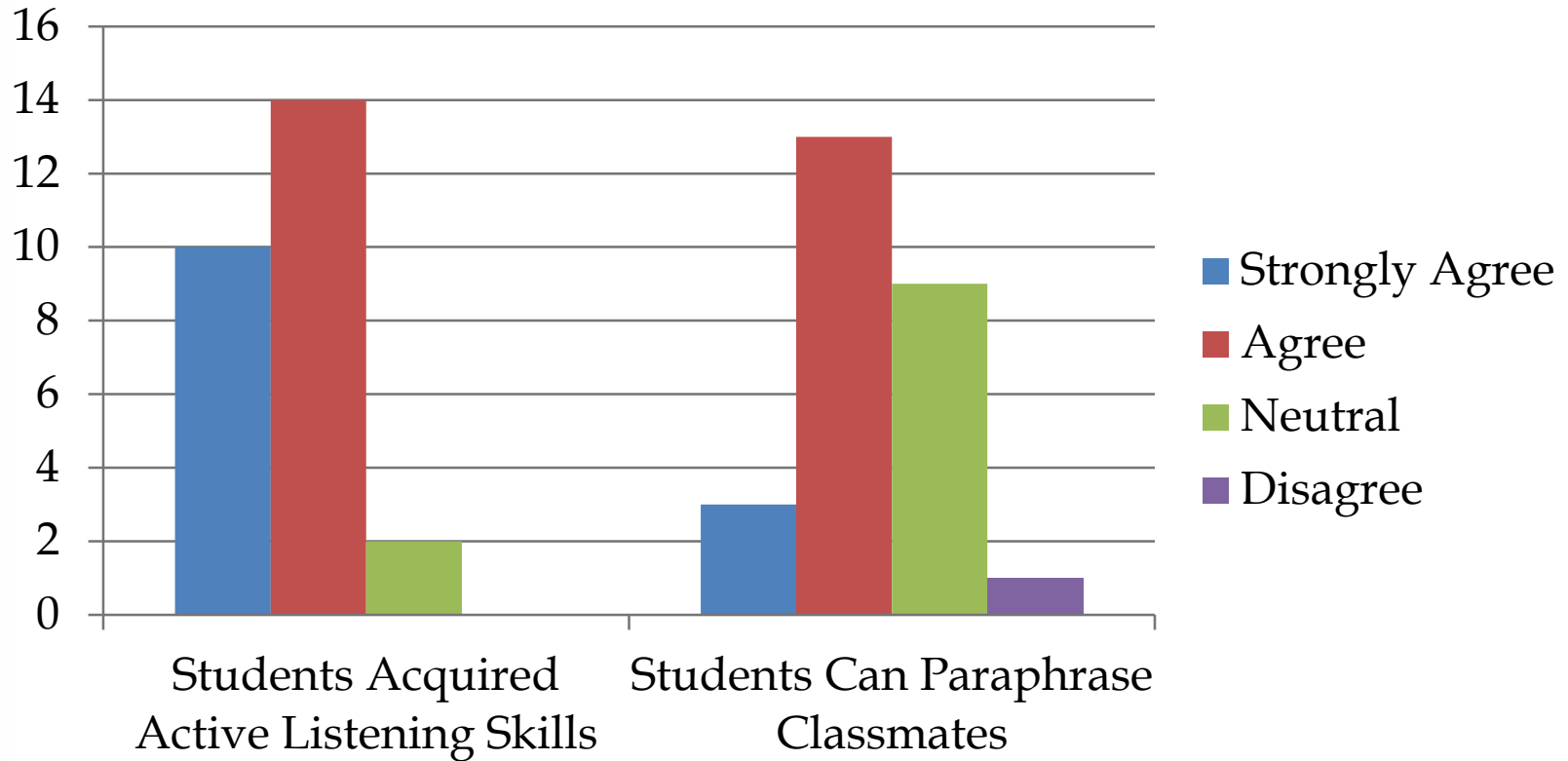
- ❧ Introduced active listening, paraphrasing, and elaborating- November through June
- ❧ Developed overview PowerPoints for each skill
- ❧ Made sample lesson plans
- ❧ Data team members shared during collaboration
- ❧ Developed two credit course (three sections were taught with 60 participants)
- ❧ Presented at MATSOL (Flynn, Hall, and Hamerla)

2013-2014

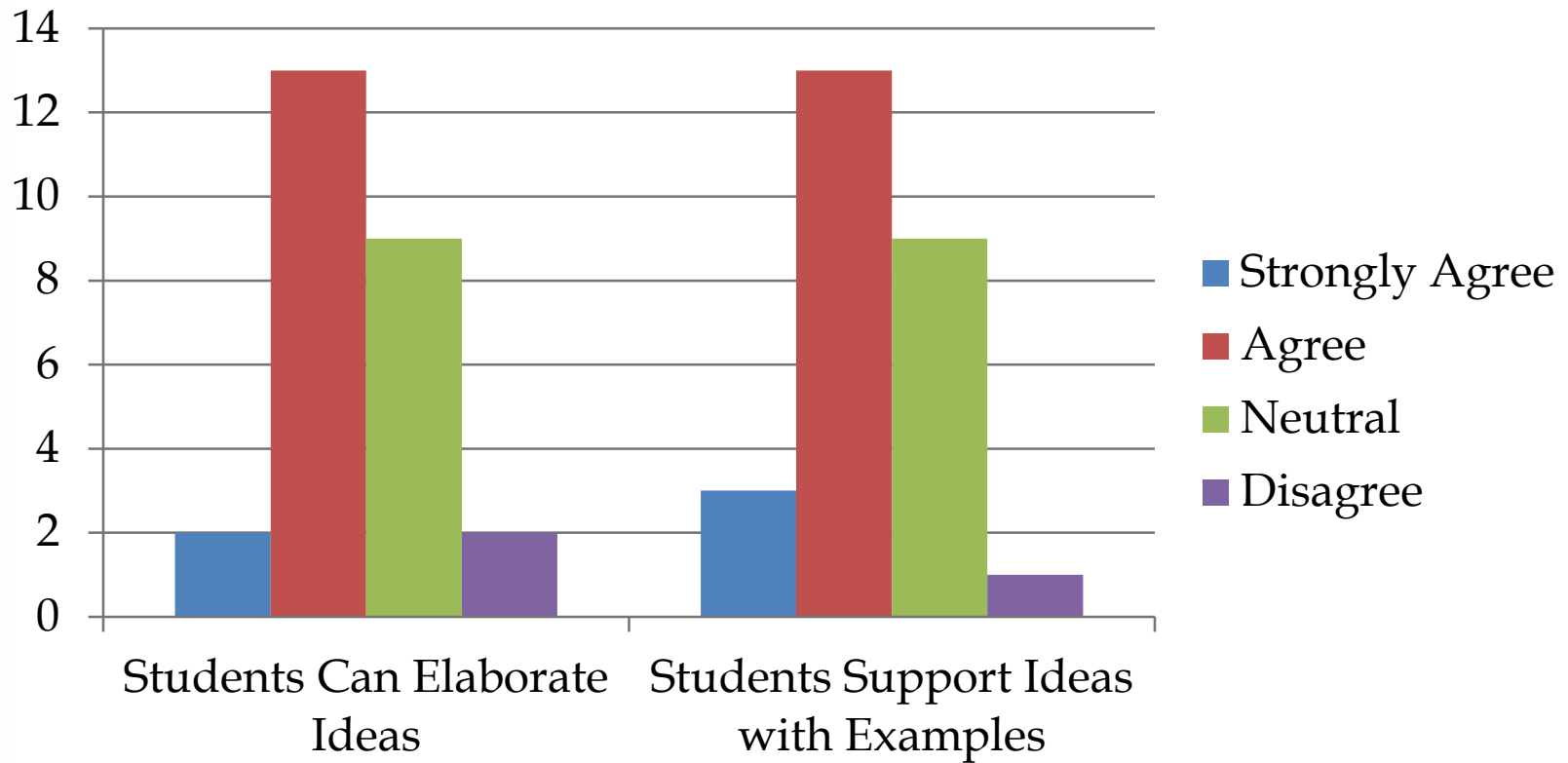


- ❧ Reviewed active listening, paraphrasing and elaborating
- ❧ Introduced supporting ideas with examples, building on/challenge ideas, synthesizing
- ❧ Conducted school wide survey of teachers to measure reported changes in teaching and learning
- ❧ Created sample lesson plans available in a public folder
- ❧ Offered two sections of the graduate credit course
- ❧ Conducted a learning walkthrough Focus of Inquiry : Students articulate their thinking and reasoning using multiple means of expression
- ❧ Presented at IRA (Flynn and Hamerla) and MATSOL (Johnson, Tagliaferro and Hamerla)

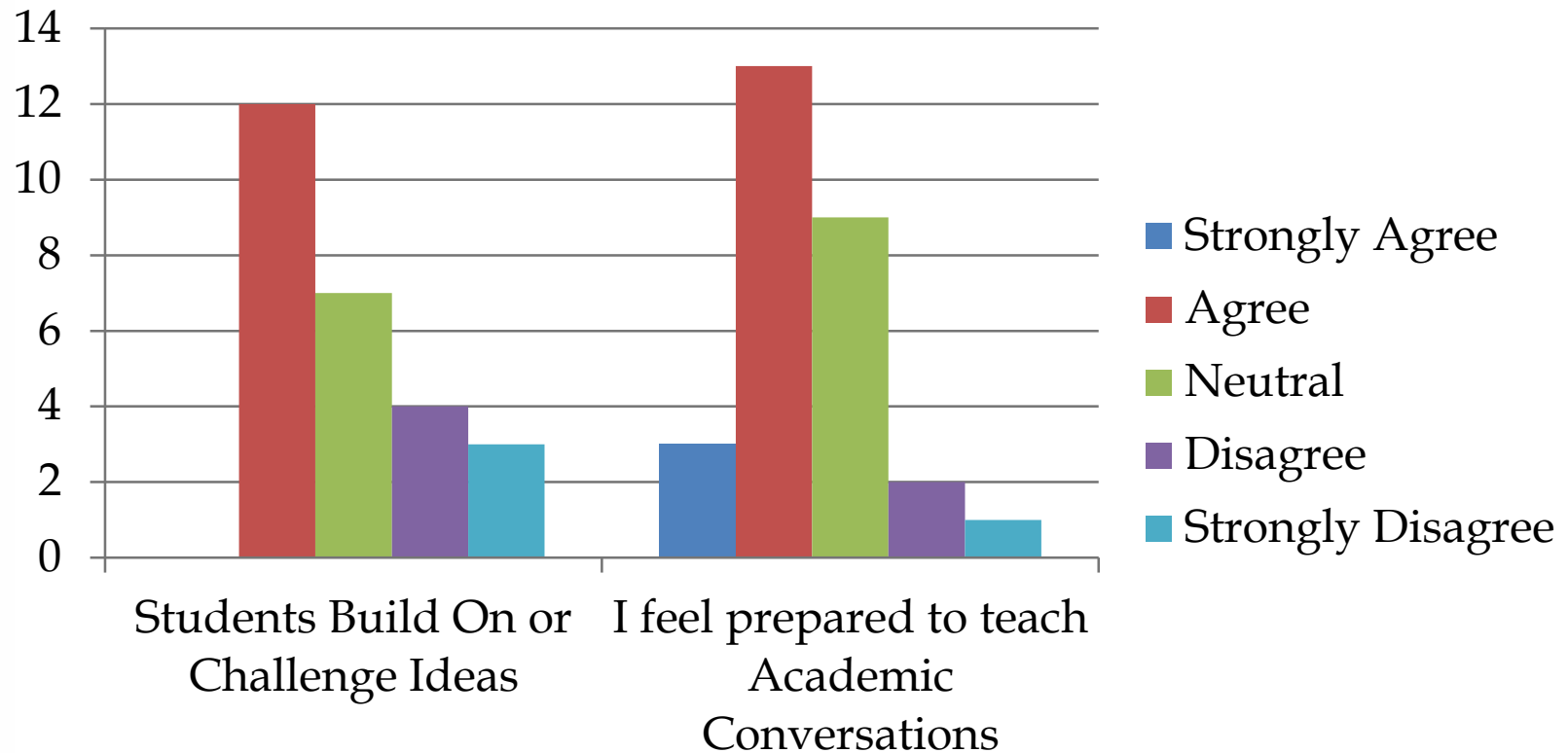
Teacher Survey Results



Survey Results



Survey Results



Survey Results



- ☞ Sample lesson plans and more coaching would be very helpful.
- ☞ We need to continue to infuse the AC skills into each lesson. Sample lesson plans would be fabulous. More coaching would also be helpful. I think we need to continue to practice as teachers and as students.
- ☞ It is still not automatic for me to include AC in my teaching YET. I am working on it.

Survey Results



∞ I am a Kindergarten teacher. My students very much enjoy academic conversations, but still have difficulty with some of the more advanced skills. I don't want you to think that my ratings of 2s or 3s- for supporting ideas, synthesizing, and building upon- are negative, but simply reflect where they are at this point of the year. (Honestly, some of them are still struggling with just social conversations.) So we will get there...just not quite yet. :)
I think skills need to be reviewed regularly, and lesson plans would be great!

2014-2015



- ❧ Fall 2014- one section of course for Framingham State graduate-level credit.
- ❧ February 2015- another section of course- focusing on academic conversations during readers' workshop
- ❧ Review of skills during collaboration time
- ❧ Coffee chat on October 9 before school
- ❧ On-going coaching in all elementary schools (pre-conference lesson planning, co-teaching, debriefing)
- ❧ Proposal for Academic Conversations K-5.

Next Steps



- ❧ How can we transfer academic conversation skills to writing?
- ❧ Can we implement a townwide topic Tuesday?
- ❧ What are future areas of research?
 - ❧ Collect data from teachers as they analyze conversations.

Academic Conversations around the school

