Constructive Conversation Skills
PLACEMAT

**Goal:** Students independently build up ideas (knowledge, agreement, solution) using these skills as they interact in meaningful ways.

**Negotiate (Evaluate & Compare)**
(If more than 1 Idea)

**Prompt starters:**
- How can we decide which is the more ___ idea?
- How does evidence for your argument compare to mine?
- What criteria do we use to evaluate the weight of the evidence?
- How do we compare “apples” of… to the “oranges” of…?
- Which has the heaviest/strongest evidence?
- What is your opinion? Why?
- How might we take the best from both ideas?
- How is that evidence stronger than this evidence?

**Response starters:**
- I think we should use the criteria of… because… ___ is very strong evidence because…
- A point of disagreement that I have is Even though it seems that…
- That is a valid point, but…
- I think the negatives of… outweigh the positives of…

**Fortify/Support**

**Prompt starters:**
- Can you give an example from the text?
- Where does it say that?
- What are examples from other texts?
- What is a real world example?
- Are there any cases of that in real life?
- Can you give an example from your life?
- What is the strongest support for…?
- How does it support the idea?

**Response starters:**
- For example, in the text it said that…
- Remember in the other story we read that…
- An example from my life is One case that illustrates this is…
- Strong supporting evidence

**BUILD IDEA(s)**

**Prompt starters:**
- Can you elaborate on the…?
- What does that mean?
- What do you mean by…?
- Can you clarify the part about…?
- Say more about…
- Why… How… What… When…
- How is that important?
- I understand the part about…, but I want to know…
- Can you be more specific?
- I think it means…
- In other words, more specifically, it is…
- An analogy might be…
- It is important because…
- Let me see if I heard you right…
- To paraphrase what you just said, you…

**Response starters:**
- In other words, you are saying that…
- What I understood was…
- It sounds like you think that…
- It all boils down to…
- A different way to say it…

**Clarify**

**Prompt starters:**
- I think we should use the criteria of… because…
- A point of disagreement that I have is Even though it seems that…
- That is a valid point, but…
- I think the negatives of… outweigh the positives of…

**Response starters:**
- For example, in the text it said that…
- Remember in the other story we read that…
- An example from my life is One case that illustrates this is…
- Strong supporting evidence

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Common Core Standards in diverse classrooms: Essential practices for developing academic language and disciplinary literacy.
Stenhouse Publishers | ALDNetwork.org
Math Constructive Conversation Skills Placemat

Clarify Problem and Ideas for Solving It

**Prompt starters:**
- What are we trying to do?
- What is the problem asking?
- How does the problem begin?
- What happens in the problem?
- What do we need to know?
- How can we break this down?
- What type of problem is this?
- What patterns do we notice?
- What’s a possible plan for solving it?
- What is your estimate for the answer?
- Why are you doing that?
- Where did that number come from?

**Response starters:**
- In order to ____, we need to …
- In other words,
- More specifically, it is … because…
- Let’s see, it is similar to the problem about … that we did because…
- It is important to ____ because
- Let’s stay focused on ….
- Let’s get back to the idea of…
- In future problems like this one we need to remember to…

Discuss Representations and Models

**Prompt starters:**
- How else can we show this?
- How can we draw or graph this?
- What symbols can we use?
- How can we explain this to others?
- How can we write what we are thinking/doing?
- How can we use symbols to represent this problem?

**Response starters:**
- Maybe we can use…
- Another way to show this is…
- We can make a data table and…
- We can draw it like this because it says…
- This variable stands for…

Explain & Support Reasoning

**Prompt starters:**
- Can you explain why you…?
- What does that mean?
- What are you doing?
- What math rule are you using?
- Can you give an example?
- How does the sample problem help us?
- What are examples of this problem from real life?
- Can you clarify where you…?
- How did you get this answer?

**Response starters:**
- If we ____, then we need to ___ because…
- A key mathematical principle is making sure that you…
- In real life this is similar to when you want to…
- An example from my life is One case that illustrates this is…
- In math, we always need to…
- Let me show you what I mean. We can’t do that because it…

Use Multiple Methods for Solving

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual</th>
<th>Verbal</th>
<th>Symbols</th>
<th>Objects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Prompt starters:**
- How can we solve it with symbols, …
- What do you think about this strategy for solving it?
- What else could we do?
- We could also move this over there to…
- What are other ways to solve this?
- How can we write this in sentences?
- Let’s try other methods for this problem.
- Let’s back up and try a different way.
- Which method is most useful? Why?

**Response starters:**
- I think these two methods relate because…
- I want to add on to your idea of…
- That method works because…
- I see it a different way.
- That makes me think of…
- We can agree that…
- Let’s try to… and see what happens.