

## A Book Study

*Academic Conversations: Classroom Talk That Fosters Critical Thinking and Content Understandings (2011)*  
by Jeff Zwiers and Marie Crawford

### Book Study Description

Effective professional development should be ongoing and job-embedded. This book study is designed such that you will read and implement new learning and then come back and discuss it with your colleagues.

This is an interactive approximately 6 week book study of ***Academic Conversations: Classroom Talk That Fosters Critical Thinking and Content Understandings (2011)*** by Jeff Zwiers and Marie Crawford. The discussion will focus on the framework and rationale for deepening academic conversations. The focus will be on English learners, but the concept of academic conversations is relevant and meaningful for all students.

### Expected Learning Outcomes

Throughout and upon completion of the book study, participants will be able to design and implement lesson plans that:

1. Train students for academic conversations;
2. Use learning tasks for effective academic conversations;
3. Develop academic grammar and vocabulary through conversation;
4. Utilize academic conversations in various curricular areas and assessments.

### Book Study Commitments

1. Read: *Academic Conversations: Classroom Talk That Fosters Critical Thinking and Content Understandings (2011)* by Jeff Zwiers and Marie Crawford.
2. Implement new ideas as obtained from the reading and as suggested in the Implementation Activities.
3. Participate meaningfully and professionally in online discussions.
4. Develop and share an action plan of how you will continue to develop this framework throughout the year.

### Personalize

*Don't be afraid to personalize this to meet the needs of your team. Suggestions for discussion questions and implementation activities are just that, suggestions. Implementation activities should be meaningful to the teachers and it should fit their current circumstances. The discussion will likely flow with the needs of your group. Allow it to do so, so that things are shared that are meaningful and relevant to your group.*

### Suggested Outline for Book Study Meetings

#### Week 1: Getting Acquainted and Getting Started

#### Introductory Activities:

- Create norms for the book study.
- Determine schedule for the remaining meeting.
- Each group member should introduce themselves, even if you think everyone know everyone.

- Share something you don't think anyone knows about you, and
  - What you hope to accomplish during this book study.
- 

### Reading Prior to Week 2:

- Introduction (pp. 1-6)
- Chapter 1 - Reasons to Converse in School (pp. 7-26)
- Getting Started with Academic Conversations (pp. 27-44)

**Implementation Prior to Week 2:** Implement something new from the reading and come prepared to share and discuss it during the Week 2 meeting. Here are some suggestions:

- Page 26, Reflection #3
  - Page 44, Reflections #5 and #6
  - One of your own choosing or design
- 

## Week 2: Five Core Skills of Academic Conversations

### Discussion:

- Share and discuss implementation activities
  - Possible questions for discussion
    - Describe a successful oral language activity you currently use in your class. What makes it successful.
    - Why is it important to teach the “Five Core Skills of Academic Conversations”
    - How can teaching the “Five Core Skills of Academic Conversations” improve oral language activities in your lessons.
- 

### Reading Prior to Week 3:

- Lesson Activities for Developing Core Conversation Skills (pp. 45-58)
- Designing Effective Classroom Tasks (pp. 59-72)

**Implementation Prior to Week 3:** Implement something new from the reading and come prepared to share and discuss it during the Week 3 meeting. Here are some suggestions:

- Select and implement two key conversation strategies from chapters 3 and 4.
  - Select a topic for a future lesson and come up with the four different prompts that could spark academic conversations about it.
- 

## Week 3: Developing Core Skills and Effective Tasks

### Discussion:

- Share and discuss implementation activities
- Possible questions for discussion:
  - What worked well when implementing new strategies?
  - How can you improve your implementation the next time around?
  - What observations did you make with your students?

- How did their use of academic language increase or decrease?
- 

### Reading Prior to Week 4:

- Training Students for Advanced Conversations (pp. 73–89)
- Developing Academic Grammar and Vocabulary Through Conversation (pp. 91–108)
- Optional Viewing: [Academic Discussions: Analyzing Complex Texts](#) (Grades 6–8)

**Implementation Prior to Week 4:** Implement something new from the reading and come prepared to share and discuss it during the Week 4 meeting. Here are some suggestions:

- Choose one concept or strategy from each chapter, and implement it into a lesson you are teaching this week.
  - Design a lesson to include academic conversations and obtain feedback from a colleague.
- 

## Week 4: Advanced Conversations and Academic Language

### Discussion:

- Share and discuss implementation activities
  - Possible questions for discussion:
    - What worked well when implementing new strategies?
    - What are the most challenging academic conversation skills to train students to use?
      - How would you be training them?
      - What would be your first baby steps?
- 

### Reading Prior to Week 5

- Conversations in Language Arts (pp.109–139)
- Conversation in History (pp.141–164)
- Conversations in Science (pp.165–183)

**Implement Prior to Week 5:** Implement something new from the reading and come prepared to share and discuss it during the Week 4 meeting. Here are some suggestions:

- Choose two concepts or strategies from across the three chapters, and implement them into a lesson you are teaching this week.
- 

## Week 5: Conversations in the Content Areas

### Discussion

- Possible questions for discussion
    - Share and discuss implementation activities
    - Identify to key “ahas” from the reading. Indicate what they are and how you will transform your teaching based on this new learning.
- 

### Reading Prior to Week 6:

- Academic Conversation Assessment (pp. 185-208)
- Reminders (pp. 209-210)
- Appendix (pp. 211-215)
- [Jeff Zwiers Website](#) (This website allows you to ownload many of the tools, graphic organizers, and charts from the the book.)

**Implement Prior to Week 6:** Implement something new from the reading and come prepared to share and discuss it during the Week 4 meeting. Here are some suggestions:

- Design and implement a conversation prompt for a core concept you teach and then create a rubric for it.

## Week 6: Assessment and Planning for Success

### Discussion

- Possible questions for discussion
  - Share and discuss implementation activities
  - How can academic language transform formative assessment in your classroom?
  - What benefits do you see from this form of assessment?
- Celebrate new learning and success!

*The End*