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PREPARING 9th GRADE ENGLISH LEARNERS FOR CRITICAL THINKING AND
ADVANCED DISCUSSION SKILLS:

CURRICULUM FOR PAIDEIA SEMINAR

by
Sonia Rosa Núñez-Gibbs

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education in English as a Second Language

Hamline University
St. Paul, MN

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Facilitator: Melissa Erickson
Content Advisor: Anne Kaufman
Peer Reviewer: Elisha Tamura

ABSTRACT

Núñez-Gibbs, S. R. (2018). *Preparing 9th grade English Learners for critical thinking and advanced discussion skills: Curriculum for Paideia seminar.*

Participation in academic conversation and disagreement with peers is a key vehicle in development of critical thinking and academic language. Ninth-grade English Learners and mainstream students often have difficulty building on each others' thoughts during discussions, rather than sharing their ideas developed in isolation. Students need multiple experiences of direct instruction of content-embedded language and content coaching to develop these advanced discussion interactions.

In order to answer the question *How to prepare mid-level ELs to demonstrate critical thinking and advanced discussion skills?* this project designs curriculum for a structured debate Paideia seminar questioning the role of borders. This two-week long curriculum plan will both introduce key concepts for a migration unit as well as instruct in text comprehension, academic language and discourse skills using transfer between modalities. The curriculum follows the Paideia discussion process of formative pre-seminar activities for content and language, the examining viewpoints seminar based on Robert Frost's *Mending Wall,* and concludes with a post-seminar extension activity and class reflection. The goal is to support all students to independently engage in higher-level academic dialogue. (176 words)

Topics researched:
- Student talk
- Paideia seminar
- Critical thinking
- Discussion
- English Language Learners
- Academic language
- Academic discourse skills

"Sometimes it feels like I'm thinking against the wind."

— Mortimer J. Adler

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happening in the world. My 3rd grade teacher, Mr. Wetterholt, who enthralled us with his stories

of spying on his neighbor's eating peas off a knife. My high school APUSH instructor, Ms. Page,

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separate from life. Dr. Anne Kaufman at Augsburg University for believing in me as a Paideia

instructor, her modeling that the wise teacher watches, listens and encourages, and her support

and advise in the completion of this project.

And last but not least,

Para los caminos de la vida, que no son como yo pensaba, como los imaginaba, ni son como yo

creía... Pero son muy bellas.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Overview

After teaching a new subject every year in an urban middle school, I recognized the need

for a constant that I could deepen in implementation, since for seven years my class content

merely responded to the programmatic and administrative winds blowing through the hallways

each summer. I realized that the manner to do this was to seek a teaching methodology that I

could really support and execute well. This way, although the content might vary, I could see

that my practice was deepening and moving the students forward no matter what. I found this

methodology in Paideia seminar. Paideia (pie-day-a) is a discussion methodology where the

teacher facilitates a student discussion of open-ended questions about big philosophical ideas

based on students' shared reading or analysis of a text. This text can be in many forms, such as;

written, an image, play, song or poetry, but it must be timeless, important, interesting and offer

various viewpoints on a universal concept such as truth, justice or belonging. Paideia aligned

with my personal and professional values: authenticity, rigor, honesty and collaboration.

Seminars also easily linked together my licensure areas: social sciences and language (ESL &

Bilingual Education). Best of all, Paideia seminars were *enjoyable* for the students and they

consistently reported seminars helped them learn a lot about the content. Now, six years later as a

teacher trainer in the Paideia methodology, I continue to look for ways to improve my instruction

in a co-taught 9th grade social studies setting through the technique. The current question I am

working through is: *"How can we prepare 9th grade English Learners to demonstrate critical thinking and advanced discussion skills?"*

In this chapter I will look at how the Paideia method addresses educational equity, critical thinking and differentiates for student success; it will also look at the specific classroom context: the classroom history and rationale for focusing on explicit advanced discussion skills, as well as growth of the migration unit for which curriculum will be developed in this project.

Paideia as Equity

I did not think that discussion would be a novel pedagogical tool. I myself participated in many text-based discussions during college; 'academic discussion', 'student talk', and the mystical 'engagement' were the buzz words repeated in my middle-school teacher professional development for years. However, whenever I implemented student discussion in circle format, whether Paideia or not, most teacher and administrators' response was trepidation. I have observed that really getting kids to develop and share their own ideas, rather than mimic those of the teacher, is not common practice and almost discouraged. When we begin with seminars I tell the kids they have to have good thoughtful contributions, but it doesn't have to match with mine or their classmates; I receive wonderfully amusing looks of disbelief from the students. Even more unfortunate, is that having students discuss academic texts is almost universally a technique reserved for advanced tracked classes, in my experience. Students in Special Education, English Language programming and other historically disenfranchised youth are essentially blocked from access to these important learning methods. The philosophy of Paideia also matched with mine, the first three of the 1987 *Paideia Principles* are:

1. That all children can learn;

2. That, therefore, they all deserve the same quality of schooling, not just the same quantity;

3. That the quality of schooling to which they are entitled is what the wisest parents would wish for their own children, the best education for the best being the best education for all; (Weiss & Kaplan, p. 2).

Working primarily with students with reading skills multiple grade-levels behind, as well as English Learners, has taught me to not lean too heavily on written text in my classes. However, engaging in sustained, analytical discussion of text is one of the main routes to substantial improvements in text comprehension and oral and written academic language development (Commeyras, 1993; Murphy, et al., 2009; Reninger, 2007, 2009; Zwiers, 2008). Best of all, discussion offers non-traditional options for demonstration of understanding. Although some students will be apprehensive of full-group discussion, other students, who struggle with written assessment, will shine. If we offer a variety of assessment formats throughout our courses, each student will have the ability to feel comfortable as well as challenged at some point in time. My focus in implementing Paideia has been to adjust instruction in order to increase benefits for the wide range of students in my current classes.

Student feedback on Paideia has shown me that the method naturally differentiates for participants. Overwhelmingly students report that seminars help them understand new ideas; some are participating to *comprehend* the text more clearly, while others are focusing more on *evaluation* and *synthesis* of the conceptual idea. Although the seminar is obviously the exciting part of the instruction cycle, through my own classroom observations and reflections, I have learned the importance of pre-seminar formative activities both for content and discussion skills.

I have adjusted instruction so students get to work with text comprehension *before* the seminar, reducing the anxiety of students who are apprehensive about sharing in large group or for EL students whose listening comprehension or oral production may take more time than for others who can follow every idea shared in seminar (Rivers, 1994; Johnston, 2004). It is an equity concern both that all students get access to *and* scaffolding for quality educational methodology.

Rationale

Since beginning this journey, I have sequentially and consciously addressed various instructional questions to improve student participation in discussion. I did this with my prior Special Education collaboratives and current English Learner collaboratives, as well as "regular" non- collaborative sections. Experience in the classroom has shown me never to assume what will benefit my students, but rather to watch, listen and adjust during and after instruction. I spent one year focusing on text selection and watching how this affected participation levels for 9th and 11th grade students. The results of this implementation, observation and adjustment was that students were willing to struggle more with a text for which they were able to clearly see how its "big idea" connected to content, a shorter *perceived* text length and the ability to refer back to the text during the seminar (difficult for video texts). I then spent a year focusing on questioning techniques both prior to and during seminar to increase critical thinking. This experimentation helped me realize that there is nothing wrong with doing coached activities and small group discussions about text comprehension before the seminar as this helps students engage at a higher level of critical thinking during the seminar. After three years of implementation of many Paideia seminars in my curriculum, as well as working on expanding access to seminars in my class-alike team, I hit a plateau. Most of my students did a reasonably

good job preparing for, participating in, and citing evidence from text during the seminars; but yet the seminars were often missing the dynamic shared group think that I often feel when engaged in a great seminar. This is also called *dialogic talk*, stemming from the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, writing at the time of the Soviet Revolution. The *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* distinguishes dialogue from monologue due to its interactive, responsive nature (Baldick, 2008). Bakhtin argues that a word, discourse, language or culture undergoes "dialogization" when it becomes relativized, de-privileged, aware of competing definitions for the same thing. Undialogized language is authoritative or absolute (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 427). I wanted students to experience this, developing and clarifying their own perspectives through real understanding of those of their peers.

At that point, I realized that there was a common-core standard our school had left out of our reporting standards, or required objectives, for the course. According to the Common Core speaking and listening standard 9.9.1.1.3, "Students will propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions" (MN Department of Education, 2010). This discovery made me realize that the reason student discussion skills were not moving to the next level was because we were not explicitly teaching and expecting it. Students were meeting our expectation of preparing for seminar and using evidence, but most were not engaging at deeper levels. Looking at student progression in discussion skills over the entire two Trimester courses, I began to see that Trimester one should continue to focus on the reporting standard of preparing and using evidence in discussion (MN Department of Education, 2010, 9.9.1.1.1). We needed to explicitly focus in

Trimester two on the second advanced discussion skills standard. Although my co-teacher was agreeable to the idea, I knew my grade-level team was still focused on learning to implement seminars in their classes, each to varying degrees of quantity and fidelity. I decided that I would do some experimenting in my classroom first. We defined and gave examples for the standard's objectives of *clarify*, *challenge*, and *verify*, and had students do some individual and small group practice with these types of comments. In seminar, it fell flat. Although decent discussions, they had the same depth as those of the previous Trimester with most students sharing insightful thoughts about specific parts of the text and its correlated big conceptual idea, but not moving to more interactive building of ideas. Only the absolute best *discussioners* (I use this term in class to identify discussion participants) made these propelling contributions to the discussion; had I adhered to my rubric, only 3-5 students in each class would have achieved a proficient grade. The rest of the kids continued to demonstrate their mastery of the first Tri standard of using text-based evidence, but they had not moved beyond this. The next Tri, repeating the class, I tried again with a little more guidance and practice and had almost the same results. During the seminar, I realized that the majority of the students that *could* clarify in seminar were doing so about text content, asking specific wonderings about the text they mostly had prepared beforehand; only a few advanced *discussioners* were able to come up with these clarifying wonderings about their classmate's comments at the moment *during* the discussion. This led us to adjust the rubric and sentences starters differentiating between propelling comments based on text (proficient) and those based on classmate's ideas (beyond proficient) (See Appendix A). Making this distinction less subjective and more clear was helpful in supporting EL students and others who struggled with academic discussion to reach this propelling discussion objective.

They could now feel comfortable preparing these comments prior to discussion whereas the more advanced comments had to spring forth during the discussion itself.

Not one to give up, this year I brought the question of how to get students to make these propelling comments during seminar to my team; we spent a lot of time on creating a rubric for assessment of the skills, but not enough on formative practice. Since I had already observed the importance of pre-seminar coaching activities in scaffolding text comprehension, I thought we could also do the same for reaching independent demonstration of discussion skills. This collaboration however was useful for me as our team was able to define specific discussion moves that could be considered *propelling discussion skills* that allowed a range of comments to achieve the goal. My colleague helped me realize that rephrasing or paraphrasing what a student said previously in conversation was the entry-level to the propelling discussion skill of clarifying, the place we could make sure that all students were able to achieve this goal. Working with my coach and co-teacher, we began to come up with one-on-one discussion routines that incorporated movement in addition to our normal table talk and sharing out routine. Students got used to practicing specific discussion skills they would be expected to demonstrate during the summative seminars, in addition to helping each other understand the text at the lower levels of understanding. We incorporated many other formative activities and assessments that gave students practice in the discussion skill and stepped these up to larger and larger groupings over the course of the Trimester. After attempts over three classes, we successfully got most students to use the propelling conversation skill objectives of clarifying, verifying, and challenging during the large-group discussion; in most classes' final seminar discussion, all students who had completed their seminar preparation were able to get at least a proficient score for this skill!

This experience of implementation, observation and adjustment over the course of many years, in building students' ability to independently engage with text, discuss at higher levels of critical thinking as well as utilize more advanced discussion skills during a Paideia seminar brought me to the current project's question of *How can we prepare 9th grade English Learners to demonstrate critical thinking and advanced discussion skills?* I wanted these students to experience the beauty of moment-to-moment engagement with their peers' ideas, language and share in discoveries about big, relevant concepts. Figuring out how to move them from *preparing* all their comments before-hand to developing these *during* the seminar, based off listening to their peers, would hopefully help them experience this as well as contribute their own ideas to the group's synthesized thought. In order to achieve this, we educators would have to scaffold with research-based, planful pre-seminar language and discourse preparatory coaching.

Migration Unit in Context

We began the Human Geography course four years ago in my district, creating the curriculum from scratch. I really struggled with the migration unit, probably because it holds so much personal meaning for me. Due to my personal connections to the migrant experience, I am highly sensitive to the layers of questions regarding privacy, safety, access to family stories and identity on the part of students. I have repeatedly noticed occurrences of teachers demonstrating voyeurism and exotification of their EL students' experiences when studying migration in an academic setting, often asking students to write their "migration story" and explain their identity to the teacher. Additionally, a common activity chosen as part of social studies migration units is to debate the politics of immigration law in the United States, but I refuse to have undocumented students' personal or familial presence within their community debated around them. I struggled

to find a way in which students could discuss the concepts of migration in an environment that respected their experience, rights and intellectual capacities.

My co-teacher and I so far had developed for the unit an individual research project linking the history of national and international migration to my school's local region -grounded in indigenous people's primacy- based on historical and creative research of a group that has migrated to (or the native nation who originated from) our region. Students enjoy and do very well at the project, producing all types of creative and thoughtful research products. However, we knew that something was missing in the unit. It was missing the idea of grappling with conceptual ideas that my school's International Baccalaureate Middle Years program (IB MYP) unit format demands and Paideia provides (See Appendix B for Adler's *Great Ideas* & Appendix C for IB's key and related concepts chart). Since this unit comes directly before the final unit of the year, it only made sense to use a seminar in this unit not only to enhance the content understanding but to build discussion skills to be demonstrated in their final.

Spurring me on to challenge my uncomfortability with the unit is that as I write this, our government is enacting policies that actually elicit this same discussion of great ideas from its population: the debate about the ethical role of borders and international division as it relates to migration. I recognize my responsibility to have students discuss these important concepts if they are to truly consider the questions related to international migration around them. We are now seeing repeated in the United States the history of familial separation that has previously been imposed upon Native Americans through boarding schools, Africans and African Americans under chattel slavery, and the forcible confinement of Japanese Americans during WWII internment camps. We would be doing a disservice to our students of Human Geography and

21st Century citizens if we do not create the opportunity to develop their thinking on this pressing issue for their families, our communities and our nation. Student discussion should mirror or even lead the discourse our nation is actually engaging in if we expect they will be able to do so as citizens[1]. If we actually expect to get anywhere on the topic together, our policy makers, families and engaged inhabitants of the United States should be discussing the core questions at the foundation of our identity as a nation; and whether one actually has these discourse skills will contribute to whether his or her voice and perspective can be a part of this discussion.

Conclusion

This chapter has covered an overview of my journey to the current research question: *How can we prepare 9th grade English Learners to demonstrate critical thinking and advanced discussion skills?* The exploration began with implementing and refining instruction of the Paideia methodology (Adler, et al, 1982, 1983, 1984; Holden and Bunte, 1995; Mangrum, 2010; Weiss, 2001). It also described the progression of the students discussion skills within my classroom and where the opportunity for student growth exists. Lastly, it describes the development of the current migration unit in the Human Geography course, and shows the rationale for development of a curricular addition of a Paideia seminar of the foundational concepts and questions involved in international migration.

The following chapter will cover the past and contemporary literature about student talk, Paideia seminar discussion and its process, critical thinking, questioning research as well as the work looking at how English Learners can best be supported in text-based discussions. Chapter

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[1] I use this term in the general sense of the term, as participants and stakeholders in civil society, not in the legal sense of the word citizen.

Three will outline both the school setting and classroom demographics as well as the conceptual framework and description of the curriculum project. The final chapter will reflect on both the Capstone journey and the major learnings and implications of the literature review and project. As with all cycles of curriculum design and instruction, it will offer suggestions for further study or refinements of the process addressing the goal identified with similar populations.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

Introduction

Socratic questioning has a long educational tradition in Western society, although the Paideia seminar has transformed greatly since the height of the Ancient Greek civilizations (Hirsch et al., 1988; Fleener, 1994). While critical thought should be the goal of all education (Anderson & Krothwell, 2001; Costa, 2000; Ennis, 1985; Rud, 1987), unless we teach language and skills that allow student to actually engage in this higher level thinking, using methods like discussion will not ensure alone that students actually *do* so (Scarcella, 2003; Fisher, Frey & Rothenberg, 2008; Macedo, 1994). While I have seen extremely mature and sophisticated academic discussions during many Paideia seminars in my classroom, I have also observed most students will not demonstrate on their own the advanced discourse skills of making ideas explicit through the advanced discussion skills of clarifying, verifying and challenging. This project looks to address this question: H*ow can we prepare 9th grade English Learners to demonstrate critical thinking and advanced discussion skills?* Without these advanced discussion moves, the conversation stays at a more superficial level where each person may *give* their idea, but does not build upon those of others. Students may utilize beginning discussion skills, such as the use of textual evidence to help them reach analysis and evaluation, but without advanced discussion skills, the shared experience of learning cannot move to the construction of synthesized ideas or "knowledge-building discourse" (Hmelo-Silver & Barrows, 2008, pp. 89-90).

This chapter will look at the past and current research on the different fields of study involved in the research question. It will review the literature on student talk and Paideia seminars, using questions to encourage critical thinking, discussion techniques with English Learners (ELs), and academic language development and instruction. This will help establish the conceptual framework and practical strategies used in the curriculum project. There is an abundance of research done in some of these areas, but the research areas of EL language development and higher level discourse are quite separate. The next section will address the research on student speech and conversation formats in the classroom.

Student talk

The amount of research on discussion as an instructional methodology is tremendous, and beyond the scope of this work. However, as this project aims to develop curriculum to support student engagement in discussion, we need to know whether this is a worthy endeavor. We do know that the American classroom has an exceedingly unbalanced ratio spent in teacher to student talk. Several decades ago, Flanders (1971) reported that teachers of high-achieving students spent about 66% of the class time talking, compared with 75% for teachers of low-achieving students (pp.178-179). Lingard, Hayes, and Mills (2003) noted that in classrooms with higher numbers of students living in poverty, teachers talk more and students talk less. "Substantive conversation" between students was one of the factors these researchers looked for in determining the presence of "productive pedagogies" (p. 410). Research also tells us that even when well-meaning teachers hold discussions in class, they often fail to actually give students the opportunity to express their own ideas and build new conceptions (Dillon, 1983). Discussion often follows discourse patterns that are teacher-dominated and essentially look like

t-s-t-s-t-s-t-s-t [where *t* is the teacher comment and *s* is a student comment], with the teacher

mediating between each student utterance and both making very brief, artificial, comments

(Chinn, Anderson, & Waggoner, 2001, p. 383). This *recitation pattern* prioritizing teacher voice

can also be described as the IRF pattern or Initiate, Response, Follow-up pattern (Sinclair &

Coulthard, 1975) or IRE Initiate-Respond and Evaluate (Cazden, 1988). We also know that

when teachers commonly ask questions during a discussion, they often actually stifle student talk

(Dillon, 1983) rather than increasing the quantity and quality of student conversation. These

discourse patterns not only limit the student voice in the classroom, they increase passivity on the

part of the student and ignore the social-cognitive nature of learning and need for social

interactional work in order to overcome communication difficulties (Firth & Wagner, 2007,

"Language learning" section). Vygotsky first showed us the phases required for thinking to

develop into words, moving from a motive to a thought, then shaping that thought in inner

speech, into words, and *finally* into external speech (1934/1988, p. 253). Tracing this idea

backward then, talk is the representation of thinking (Fisher, Rothenberg & Frey, 2008, p. 5).

Real student discussion, which looks more like t-s-s-s-s-s-t-s-s-s-t-s-s, also allows students to

have ownership both over their own thoughts and their space in the classroom community.

Bakhtin (1981) wrote that "The world in language is half someone else's. It becomes 'one's own'

only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates

the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention" (pp. 293–294). Students

need to see the value in their own ideas, not just the teacher's. This section reviewed the key

research describing what most classroom discourse looks like in practice, the next section will

address a methodology that disrupts this pattern.

Paideia seminar

Socrates, the ancient Greek philosopher, used the term *maieutic*, meaning *midwifery*, because he saw the teacher's role as assisting in his students' labor of giving birth to new ideas; he also never taught by lecture, saying that he did not know enough to do so (Adler, 1982, p. 29). This is why Western history has asserted Socrates' wisdom, because he knew how little he knew. His questioning mode of instruction is what gave form to the "Socratic" seminar (Hirsch et al., 1988, p. 108). Although the format of a seminar discussion does not use the same line of questioning Socrates himself utilized, the seminar may also be referred to as Paideia seminar or merely seminar. Paideia seminar, where "Paideia" means "the upbringing of a child" (Fleener, p. 12) refers to the specific methodology that I will use in my curriculum design that builds on the maieutic tradition of Socrates. I will be using the terms *Paideia* and *Paideia seminar* referring to the lineage beginning with Mortimer Adler's original Paideia Group established in 1982.

History of Paideia. Paideia seminars come from the work of philosopher and educator Mortimer Adler, who published a trilogy of three books in the early eighties (Adler, 1982, 1983, 1984). Writing on behalf of the self-named *Paideia Group* or the *Group* this collaborative of twenty-one scholars and educators came together to discuss educational reform (See Appendix D) and later the *Paideia Associates* formed extended programs such as Dennis Gray's *Socratic Seminars International* and the *National Paideia Center* and *Paideia Group Inc. (PGI)* both founded by Mortimer Adler and Dr. Patricia Weiss. (Adler & Van Doren, 1988, p. 309). As seen in the *Declaration of Paideia Principles* (Levine-Brown, 1994, p. 2), these scholars saw the purpose of education as developing in *all* students the necessary skills for living in a democratic society, earning a decent living and making a good life for oneself (Adler, 1983). The curricular

framework the Group developed for the acquisition of knowledge had three pillars, each with different goals and methods, which has been updated by educators to reflect revision in the methodology (See Appendix E). The first instructional method is the use of the didactic— often using lecture, textbooks or other aids for the purpose of acquiring knowledge. The second practice is coaching, using exercises and practice to develop skills. The third, and principal contribution of Adler and the Paideia Group, is the seminar conceptual discussion (Adler, 1982, 1987). The seminar method addressed the wide research on discussion and cognition, and continues to evolve in its format in response to new learning (Billings & Fitzgerald, 2003; Clark, 2016; Gibson & Grant, 2012; Paideia Institute, 2018; Storck, 2011). The Paideia seminar format "breathed new life into the traditional Socratic questioning practices" (Woodruff, 2004). Recently, the methodology has been implemented at a variety of schools across the country, such as in Minnesota, Ohio, Illinois, Atlanta, North Carolina and Tennessee (National Paideia Center, n.d., "Results" section; Fleener, 1994, pp. 4-5). It has also been updated to include multiple perspectives and multicultural literature. As Gibson and Grant (2012) state "A multicultural democratic education takes an explicit stand for students who are usually subjected to an *anti*democratic education. We propose proactively bringing students from marginalized backgrounds into the very fabric of a pluralistic democracy" ('Why multicultural democratic education' section).

The Paideia Process. The basic curricular format of the Paideia process has been updated and outlined in a variety of research and publications (National Paideia Center, 2018,; Mangrum, 2010; Billings & Roberts, 2006; Weiss & Kaplan, 2001) building on the original Paideia group's work (Adler, 1982, 1983, 1984). The current planning and instruction process is

visually summarized in Mark Storck's 2011 flowchart (See Appendix F). The Paideia seminar

process centers around a discussion of a text that elicits conceptual debate. It is also important to

note that seminar may be used as instruction or assessment, and may fall anywhere within a unit

sequence, beginning, middle or end (Billings & Roberts, 2006, p. 5). As with all instruction, the

following format may change slightly due to classroom needs, but in general what follows is the

Paideia planning and instruction procedure.

The seminar text is selected considering whether it addresses a curricular *purpose*; the

text *quality* should transcend time and space, be a primary source, truly intriguing on rereads,

and address the needs of *participants*, such as time available for seminar, length and skill level,

ect. (Weiss & Kaplan, 2001, p. 12). Adler used the term 'primary source' not in the traditional

social studies sense of the term, such as a primary document, but rather that it should be the first

rendering or original— it should not be a movie about a book or a linguistically adapted version

of a complex poem (Mangrum, 2010, p. 42). It is also important to note that the format of the

text is not discipline specific; for example a children's story can be used for a math seminar and

a painting can be used for a English seminar; what is important that the text's conceptual idea

matches with the course content. Once a text is chosen, the central work of identifying the

conceptual basis for the discussion is begun: finding a great idea, issue statement and core

question. 'Great ideas' generally come from Adler's list of *102 Great Ideas* (see Appendix B),

originally printed as basis for the *Syntopicon* in the 1952 Encyclopedia Britannica, but any

universal concept may be used. Selinger's review of the Syntopicon explains that Adler arrived

at these "great ideas" by tracking the topics discussed in the major works of the classic Western

canon; these 102 concepts emerged as the most reducible elements of the conversations that ran

through both the texts and time. Although the great ideas were chosen to maintain "dialectic objectivity" or address all sides of the issue (Sellenger, 1976, pp. 442-443); one could critique the positivist assumption that objectivity can actually be achieved. However, there is never an expectation for students to arrive at a "correct" or truthful answer or objective stance through seminar (Weiss & Kaplan, 2001). International Bachelorette's concept-based unit planning procedure parallels this process, see the section on curriculum and conceptual understanding at ibo.org for more information on IB's core and related concepts.

After the *great idea* has been chosen, the *issue statement* is then developed; this is a controversial statement that can be argued for or against using information solely from the text (Clark, 2015). It is important to note that the issue statement is *not* one's statement of truth, rather it should provoke thinking and help guide the facilitator through the question writing process (Augsburg Paideia Institute, 2018). Then the 2-3 questions to be asked in seminar are prepared from the issue statement in this order: the core, opening and extension questions (Weiss & Kaplan, 2001, p. 20). The specific characteristics of these three seminar questions will follow in the next section.

Finally, an instructional sequence is developed. This flows from pre-seminar didactic and coaching activities, to the seminar itself, and concludes with post-seminar extension activities, assessment, and opportunities for reflection by both participants and facilitators (Fleener, 1994; Mangrum, 2010; Storck, 2011; Weiss & Kaplan, 2001). Two pretty standard pre-seminar activities include completion of a reading guide and annotation of the text during two readings; students are asked to read the text twice: first for comprehension and second for analysis (Adler, 1972). Teachers may also have students read for a specific purpose during the second analytical

reading, for example, identify positive outcomes with a plus sign (+) and negative outcomes with a minus sign (-). For an example of Annotation Marks created by the author and co-teacher (Project document #11). I have found it helpful for students to use two different color pens, or specific symbols or codes to distinguish their annotations for different purposes (Adler, 1972). Students often must present a completed teacher-created reading guide along with the annotated text in order to participate the day of seminar (See Project document #9).

Developing seminar questions. As stated in the preceding section, Paideia seminar protocol (Mangrum, 2010, p. 4; Weiss & Kaplan, 2001, pp. 25-31; Weiss, 2006a) calls for thoughtful preparation of three types of questions to be delivered by the teacher during seminar: the opening question, core question and extension question. The most important and first developed is the core question. The core question addresses the great idea, or any other conceptual theme, that the teacher has already determined is addressed by the text. This will be the main question of the discussion and often is crafted by reforming the issue statement. It is an interesting, open-ended conceptual question; not a yes or no question nor leading to any specific answer or opinion. The core question must be able to be answered in many ways with evidence from the text, but it is not text-specific; it addresses more philosophical questions of universal condition, like truth, love, justice, equality, etc. and allows students to make connections from text to larger life questions. This allows participants to find relevance in the text both for their own experiences and understand the text at a deep level.

The facilitator then develops an opening question (which will be asked first of the three questions during seminar). The opening question helps participants address misunderstandings about the text, build trust with the group and in general elicits more concrete questions or

opinions about the text. As an introductory question, it may ask for basic understanding or reaction to a specific aspect of the text, and responses are not always followed up with as much depth, although some participants may decide to do so. Often times the opening question is posed as a round-robin, a mic-check opportunity and introduction for all participants to be included in the circle right away.

Lastly, possible extension questions are developed, although advanced facilitators become more comfortable with adapting or creating the extension question to the specific discussion on the fly (Kaufman & Rombalski, 2015; Project document #3). The extension question is more of a personal question and connects the text to participant's lived experiences. It allows the student to give more immediate and personal viewpoints on the topics brought up in the text and during discussion. Ideally, it comes directly from the students' discussion themselves; the teacher may prepare one or two possible questions in advance, but should change these if the participants take the discussion in another direction.

Teacher role during seminar. The teacher role during seminar is that of a facilitator and not participant, doing the nuanced, minute adjustments that lightly prod the conversation deeper without dominating the content or direction. Students have responsibility to maintain the conversation, take turns, clarify ideas, question relevancy and reflect on the discussion individually and as a group (Adler, 1983). Hmelo-Silver and Barrows remind us how student sharing in the responsibilities are an integral part of a constructivist classroom in which collaborative learning takes place (2008, p. 54). While each facilitator will have their own approach and strengths on which to focus during seminar, educator roles during seminar fall into the following categories: safety, checking for preparation, tracking data for formative or

summative assessment, individual student support and conversation guidance (Adler, 1983; Weiss, 2006; Weiss & Kaplan, 2001). The baseline facilitator responsibility is that of safety and ensuring participants follow the previously agreed upon seminar rules (See Project document #15).

Educators should check for quality student completion of the assigned preparation before the seminar starts, whether the day prior or at the beginning of class. Students who have not completed their pre-seminar thinking may continue to prepare either seated in the circle or in the hallway. They join the conversation upon completion; some teachers have name cards ready in the circle for all students prepared or not, others have them join later. It is not advised, however, to let students who have not done the adequate preparation to participate, as the level of discussion will be more shallow. Of course, students with language or special education needs should have their accommodations or adaptations communicated before, when they received the text. In a standard full-group seminar, once students have completed late preparations, instructors check for quality and completion and then have students join the conversation immediately. This may differ for different seminar formats due to complexity of their procedures.

Tracking of responses or other data during the conversation is a key role for the facilitator(s). Usually the data recorded reflects the formative or summative goals, and a code is developed to quickly note demonstration of the objective on a visual map of the circle noted with each participant's name. Co-teachers or select students can track additional data, and the tracking sheet (Project document #16) may be shared with the students mid- or post-discussion, without clues to grades of course, to help inform them to change or continue specific behavior.

For individual student support, the teacher may also individually and discreetly converse with specific students while seminar is occurring as an accommodation to help students identify comments they can share or encourage participation. Having the student quietly say outloud what they want to say and transcribing it for them to read outloud is a helpful strategy for students needing language scaffolding. Writing a sentence starter and having students complete it may also work. Student placement in the seminar circle is also helpful for individual differentiation, although some teachers have students self-select seating to increase ownership of the discussion.

Facilitation is a continuously honed skill. Good facilitation happens without being seen as having a great effect on the depth of the discussion. Zwiers (2008) says of these slight interventions:

Classroom discussions are unpredictable and sensitive to the slightest nudges. A nudge might be a back-channel (wow, OK, uh-huh), a question, a period of silence, a smile, a facial expression … These nudges can send discussions in many different directions. Some have dead ends, some just wind along on the surface. One little question at the right time can send a discussion down a powerfully deep road in which students make many connections and reach understandings. The lack of a nudge at the right time, however, can cause the class to miss the chance to go deeper (p.102).

Examples of these nudges are modeling attentive listening behavior and tracking of the conversation in the text, asking students to speak louder or repeat, bringing conversation back to important student points passed over, modeling clarifying text reference locations and obviously looking for these in the text, having students turn to their elbow partner to speak more in-depth about an idea brought up, addressing dominating students, or correcting completely erroneous

information. Each of these interventions will greatly affect the direction and depth of the discussion and should be done consciously and thoughtfully on the part of the facilitators. Since imitation is one of the most powerful forms of learning (Costa & Kallick, 2015), students will begin to model facilitator's physical and verbal behavior both from regular instruction time and by observing their interactions during seminar.

Critical response to Paideia. Critiques have been raised (Fullam, 2015) about how this traditional Socratic questioning actually imposes the intellect of the teacher over that of the student, known as "stultification". This also reflects the concerns regarding whether seminar perpetuates the teacher-centered discourse formats of recitation or IRE/IRF mentioned previously. Traditional Socratic questioning involves a long line of questions and answers alternating between the teacher and student. Elder & Paul (1998) give an example of a traditional line of Socratic questioning in high school:

TEACHER: This is a course in biology. What kind of a subject is that? What do you know about biology already? Kathleen, what do you know about it?

KATHLEEN: It's a science.

TEACHER: And what's a science?

KATHLEEN: Me? A science is very exact. They do experiments and measure things and test things.

TEACHER: Right, and what other sciences are there besides biology? Marisa, could you name some?

MARISA: Sure, there's chemistry and physics.

TEACHER: What else?

BLAKE: There's botany and math?

TEACHER: Math . . . math is a little different from the others, isn't it? How is math

different from biology, chemistry, physics, and botany? Blake, what would you say? (p.

6).

It is important to note that Paideia seminars renovated the Socratic tradition, and do not

implement the IRE questioning format [t-s-t-s-t-s] above. As outlined in the previous sections,

current Paideia practice limits the amount of questions (ideally to three) presented by the teacher

during a seminar. This follows the research that limiting questions by the teacher results in more

elaborated student responses and student talk-time during discussion (Dillon, 1983). Various

other works that outline the Paideia seminar highlight its student-driven character (Adler, 1992,

1988; Copeland, 2005; Tredway, 1995). Weiss and Kaplan specify that the teacher strategies for

the third pillar of instruction, the mautic seminar, should be to listen, wait, facilitate and

empower (2001, p. 5). The *Paideia Proposal* set forth their value of student collaboration in the

construction of knowledge, free inquiry and the cultivation of common values (Adler, 1982; Van

Doren, Adler, Van Doren, 1988). In this section on the Paideia Process, I have outlined the

research of the history, structure and role of the teacher in Paideia seminars, as well responses of

its critics. The next section will build on this section's discussion of facilitation by looking at the

research on how instructors' approach to questioning can enhance or curtail student discourse.

Questioning

The work in the area of questioning shows the tremendous impact of minute adjustments

in delivery, just as with discussion facilitation. The most recent questioning research does reflect

Paideia's questioning practices of centering questions around universal truths to both "capture the imaginations as well as philosophic inclinations of students" (Costa & Kallick, 2015, p. 69).

There also is some debate as to when questions are appropriate to ask. Dillon (1984) shows that asking questions actually hinders quality and quantity of student talk. Wong (1991) challenges this assertion and claims there are differences in questions posed to initiate and maintain conversation. He also maintains that responsibility for initiating and sustaining conversation is "largely the responsibility of the teacher" (p. 159), although Hmelo-Silver and Barrows would respond that this puts the students back into the place of passivity (2008, p. 54). There is not much research on questioning as specifically relating to English Learners. This section reviewed the differences in opinion regarding how and when teachers should question, the next section traces the pivotal research on critical thinking.

Critical Thinking

The discussion regarding critical thinking has taken two types of approaches: one that seeks to categorize and specify the types of critical thinking in hopes to directly teach each component (Ennis, 1985), and the other that advocates for a more holistic approach (Rud, 1987). Most of the work responds in some way to Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom, 1956) and the subsequent work building on Bloom's (Feuerstein, Falik & Feuerstein, 2015; Krathwohl, 2002; Marzano, 2001; Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2004). Bloom and his colleagues proposed six hierarchical and progressive levels of thinking: beginning with knowledge, and moving through comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and culminating with evaluation. Bloom's taxonomy has been revised as such: thinking progresses from remembering to understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and ultimately to creating (Anderson & Krathwohl, et al, 2001). Costa's (2000)

leveled questions are a somewhat more simplified version of Bloom's, but specifically addresses

questions, as opposed to a general cognition taxonomy. His taxonomy begins with gathering,

then progresses to processing and culminate in applying. Since it has only three levels as

opposed to six, this model is better suited for the current research which asks students to apply

the thinking levels themselves, in which level three questions would be considered *critical*

thinking.

Another important consideration that is absent from most of the work around these

taxonomies is *how* one arrives at these levels of thinking. The discussion about thinking is

usually an independent one, but one can also reach higher levels of critical thinking collectively,

not only as individual endeavour. Hmelo-Silver and Barrows write "...there must be

knowledge-building discourse, which is more than knowledge sharing. In this kind of discourse,

participants engage in constructing, refining, and transforming knowledge" (2008, p. 49).

Obviously, collective knowledge is not solely produced *orally*, but an important consideration

for scholars and practitioners to keep in mind.

Ennis (1985) exemplifies the wave of research that sought to classify all of the aspects

involved in critical thinking, creating a bulleted list of all the dispositions and abilities that make

up critical thinking. On the other hand, others (Adler, 1986; Rud, 1987) advocated for a more

holistic view of critical thinking, and argued that the specific processes involved cannot be

taught directly and discretely, but rather as an overall goal of all instruction. This holistic

philosophy is why the research does not seek to do backward curriculum design for instruction

and assessment of critical thinking, and identifying specific levels of thinking is for teacher

analysis and data extraction only. This section reviewed the historical trajectory of taxonomies of

critical thinking, as well as the differing pedagogical views on how it should be approached. Although there was not much research on English Learners and critical thinking, there is quite a lot on their involvement in discussion, the topic of the next section of research review.

Discussion and English Learners

In 2015, 9.5% of students in the United States (4.8 million) were English Learners, and this number is a million increase from 8% (3.8 million) in 2000 (US Dept. of Ed., 2015). All teachers need to know how to support English Learners in accessing the same critical thinking and cognitive development as their English speaking peers. Here the role of the teacher unanimously viewed as central, as ELs must learn *content* content along with *language* content simultaneously, or they will fall behind in their core content areas. They do not have the luxury of waiting to undertake their core content classes until they have achieved academic or even social language proficiency.

Although there is quite a bit of work focusing on the importance of speaking and discussion instruction in general and development of Paideia discussion seminar methodology, there is none looking at English Learners participation specifically in the Paideia seminar. There are some studies that look at the impacts of different varieties of text-based discussions on low-skilled readers (Commeyras, 1993; Reninger, 2007, 2009), but no Paideia studies have looked at participation of English Learners. Research clearly demonstrates the role of oral production in language learning as well as the development of academic English. Aside from learning at higher cognitive levels as we process and analyze ours and others' thoughts, we learn vital social and academic communicative strategies, such as conversational rules (how to change topic or open a conversation) or strategies (such as paraphrasing or clarifying). Students who

may not participate in academic, formal family conversations will be exposed to a different register of oral communication than they normally engage in. A register, as defined by the *The Oxford Companion to the English Language*, is a configuration of semantic, grammatical, lexical features that are activated by the context of situation. In short, we speak differently in different places for different purposes. It also notes that "different speakers have different "registerial repertoires" due to their social and occupational life experiences" (McArthur & McArthur, 2018). We also know that the written word and the oral word are mutually informing, especially for beginning writers (Collins, 1980, p. 10) and ELs especially need oral practice in the classroom due to this symbiotic relationship between all four language domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, as they will not have this practice at home. Engaging English learners in repeated discussion mimics the natural progression of young children learning their first language(s), although the process is different in the classroom because they do not have these years to learn speaking before they need to write. Fisher, Frey and Rothenberg (2008) explain that speaking practice must be a balance between misguided practices of the past:

> Historically, teachers did not introduce English language learners to print until they had developed their speaking skills—a misguided approach that does not take into account the fact that, in developing their primary language, English language learners have already learned much about language, including the role that it plays in interacting with others. At the other end of the spectrum of instructional practice, many teachers did not provide any oral language instruction because they believed that their students needed to develop reading proficiency (and make adequate yearly progress) as soon as possible (p. 9).

So although it is clear that oral production is vital for English learner success, why are there still such low expectations for classroom speech for this group of students? There has been a lot of research that categorize questions into closed (display) and open (display) questions; in which closed questions are essentially easier and for which answers require less verbal elaboration. Wu's research found that ESL students in Hong Kong are asked more closed questions than open-questions and that culture affects the amount of productive speech that students will willingly demonstrate in the classroom when answering questions (1993, pp. 52-66). Guan challenges this practice of question categorization and raises doubts about whether display questions really have no pedagogical value (2005, pp. 300-309). However, the way one groups questions cannot negate Brock's pivotal research reviewing various studies, including that of Long and Sato, that showed that ELs are asked lower-level questions at much higher rates. Her work also found that these lower-level questions resulted in much lower amount of verbal output in responding students (1986, pp. 48-49). It is not acceptable that educators avoid discussion and debate due to concerns that English Learners will be made uncomfortable, their own lack of professional development in language development instruction or the difficulties with assessment of organic processes such as discussion. If we place the person as the priority, we can see the importance of having English Learners participate in instructional methods such as Paideia seminars that will give them these vital opportunities for verbal academic discourse. The places where English Learners are given the time and support to converse openly, which often only occurs in the pull-out ESL classroom, foster the development of Canagarajah's application of Pratt's term *safe houses* to the ESL classroom. She cites Pratt's original 1991 definition of safe houses as "spaces… places where groups can constitute themselves as ...

communities with high degrees of trust, shared understandings and temporary protection from legacies of oppression" (2004, p. 120-121). Quality student-focused discussion can support all traditionally marginalized students in developing and maintaining these *safe houses* in the push-in classroom setting as well. This section reviewed the literature on English Learners in discussion and found that there is not much research on how to adapt Paideia seminars for English Learners; we will now look at the key pieces that will need to be considered in order to support ELs' participation in discussion, the instruction of academic language and skills needed to engage in academic discourse.

Academic Language

The concept of differentiating academic language from other forms of oral and written communication began with bilingual researcher Jim Cummings' seminal work on Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) and Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS); these are generally labeled social and academic language (Cummins, 1979). Cummins later found that skills, ideas and concepts can be transferred from one language to another, creating a common underlying proficiency (1980). More current research tells us that advanced language proficiency (above 6th grade) will result in a higher percentage of comprehension and transfer between languages (Pham, Donovan, Dam & Contant, 2017). We also know that that social language can be learned in one to two years, while academic language can take five to seven years to fully develop (Thomas and Collier, 1989, pp. 27-28). Most recent work on academic language focuses not just on description, but on the thinking processes and outcomes that are connected with academic language. Dutro and Moran (2003) define academic language proficiency as the abilities to construct meaning from oral and written language, determine

precise meaning of complex ideas and information form text, recognize features of different genres, and select the appropriate linguistic strategies to communicate for multiple purposes (pp. 230-231). Díaz-Rico and Weed see academic language more as thought processes to systematically categorize, compare, analyze and accommodate new experiences. They say that this "toolbox" of proficiencies is mostly developed in school through the vehicles of communication, conceptualization, critical thinking, context and culture (2010, pp. 56-57). Academic language is not only for ELs, it is important to remember that *all* students must be taught the structures and features of academic language, although some may get more practice in this at home, some monolingual speakers can go their entire life speaking only in BICS.

Depending on students' background experiences, literacy levels in other languages and English proficiency, some students will be more versed in using academic language than others. Aside from students' CALP fluency, there are other factors that will affect whether students will use this register in class. Krashen's Affective Filter hypothesis (2009) reminds us that the whole-group discussion is a daunting task for an EL, low-reader or merely an introverted student. His hypothesis identifies the ways in which the attitudinal factors of motivation, self-confidence and anxiety can impact learning (p. 31). While some students will be enthusiastic to participate in the discussions, other students may need multiple attempts of practice in lower-risk situations.

Academic language instruction. Making sure that students have the necessary language tools to engage in conceptual discussions avoids what David Macedo calls the "pedagogy of entrapment" to refer to instances in which educators require students to perform discourse and content that they do not teach (1994, p. 34). So not only do instructors need to name the linguistic formats and discourse strategies we want students to engage in *during* a discussion, we

also need to give them instruction and practice in using the skills and practicing with content through them *before* we assess them. We may think that just because a student can naturally pick up social language, that this should be the same for academic language. Not so, EL or monolingual students without academic language in their first language or those far below grade-level will not automatically absorb or mimic academic language as they did for social language (Scarcella, 2003, pp. 222-223). We can teach academic language from the standpoint of any of language: phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, or pragmatics, although Zwiers (2008) focuses mostly on the syntactic and semantic levels. He identifies seven features of academic language: using figurative expressions, being explicit, remaining detached from the message, supporting points with evidence, conveying nuance of meaning with modals, softening the message with qualifiers, and using prosody for emphasis (pp. 27-34). We will come back to these in the curriculum design.

Academic discourse skills. The focus of the question *how can we prepare 9th grade English Learners to demonstrate critical thinking and advanced discussion skills* assumes that students are already proficient in basic academic discussion. Academic discussion demands that students are explicit with their thoughts, as well as the converse: that they explicitly understand the thoughts of others. The goal of their academic discourse is not to reach a predetermined truth or correct line of dialogue, but rather together synthesize ideas to reach understandings that couldn't be reached alone (Bakhtin, 1981; Hmelo-Silver & Barrows, 2008). While language *production* in seminar may be related to their initial participation, they cannot demonstrate the advanced skills without honing their receptive process of listening *comprehension*. Brain research shows us that the same areas in the brain are involved with both listening and speech

modalities with regards to the semantic, lexical and syntactic production and comprehension (Menenti, Gierhan, Segaert, & Hagoort, 2011, Discussion section). The instructional implications of this research are that strategies that work for language production may also work for listening comprehension. Zwiers says that listeners do not merely hear the words, rather they "focus on meaning, which is recoded in the brain in a simpler syntactic form than the original message. Such recoding can later be expanded by the listener in the form of output, but will likely not be in the same form as the original input" (2009, pp. 42-43). Rivers calls this simplified understanding stored in the short-term memory as the "gist" that is derived from semantic clues, not syntactical ones (1986, pp. 3-4). This means that during a discussion, EL students' brains are busy with both the *hearing* of the conversation, as well as the *summarizing* of the meaning of the sentences. The same process repeats itself in the receptive process of reading, so students working through comprehension of the seminar text can focus more on meaning rather than exact translation of every word. This research is directive in that reading instruction can focus on understanding conceptual chunks of text, but it does present a problem for the transfer of receptive comprehension to the productive speaking of ideas during a fast-paced discussion. Rivers' later research addresses how the converse of recoding the "gist" requires the syntactic and grammatical *expansion* of the mentally summarized meaning in speech (1994, pp. 74-77). When looking at current teacher practices of listening comprehension, Siegal found that although there exists an over reliance on comprehension questions, teachers are using other worthwhile techniques such as teacher modeling, grammatical strategies, predictions, metacognitive strategies and encouraging transfer to other listening situations. He concludes that the imbalance

shows that we are doing more *evaluation* of listening, rather than *instruction* (Siegel, 2014, Samples and Implications sections).

Research rationale

Reviewing this literature on critical thinking, students talk, Paideia seminar and academic language, we can draw some conclusions as to how to approach answering the question *How can we prepare 9th grade English Learners to demonstrate critical thinking and advanced discussion skills?* We can see that the methodology of Paideia seminars addresses the research on critical thinking and questioning, by coaching on text comprehension at lower levels and then giving students few and quality prompts to share and critically examine their individual and collective thoughts about ideas elaborated from the texts. It limits the role of the instructors to facilitator and does not stifle student speech by posing too many questions or engaging in IRE or IRF discourse patterns. However, the general Paideia planning and implementation process does not provide all the necessary elements that English Learners need in order to fully engage in the seminar, as research indicates the necessity for specific instruction in discourse skills and academic language grammar and structures. This means that in order to answer the question *How can we prepare 9th grade English Learners to demonstrate critical thinking and advanced discussion skills?* we need to develop pre-seminar activities that will coach students to contend with the language and skills necessary to participate in academic discourse at more advanced levels.

Conclusion

While the research clearly supports a curriculum formed around well-planned student discussion and explicit instruction of linguistic and discussion skills, the goal of the curriculum

project at hand will be how to develop students' academic language and discussion skill abilities before seminar. This need is present for all students, not just ELs, as *all* students are learning academic language as applied in each of their classes' disciplines. Additionally, ELs have just as high a need for critical thinking but an even higher need for productive and receptive oral language practice than their non EL counterparts. The research reviewed in this chapter on the areas of student talk, Paideia seminar, critical thinking, discussion for English Learners and academic language points the path to take in order to answer the research question *How can we prepare 9th grade English Learners to demonstrate critical thinking and advanced discussion skills?* The following chapter will outline the format and rationale for the curriculum designed for 9th grade Human Geography students that seeks to address this question.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Introduction

In chapter two, I reviewed the literature on discussion, Paideia, critical thinking and

English Learner (EL) needs for participation in academic discourse. During my learning from

researchers and experienced practitioners over the past few years, I have developed a greater

appreciation for the importance of minute adjustments in order to move from teacher- to

student-centered thinking. I also have specific tools to identify and verbalize what a real

discussion should look like and what true facilitation should sound like; although I began my

teaching many years ago instinctively developing circle discussion in my classroom, I now have

specific reasons for what we do and do not do in my classroom. I refined this practice over many

years in the classroom until I arrived at my current question: *How to prepare mid-level ELs to*

demonstrate critical thinking and advanced discussion skills?

In this chapter, I will discuss the setting, participants, conceptual framework and project

outline of this capstone. I seek to address my research question through the project to: *Design an*

instructional cycle of curriculum for a Paideia seminar examining the role of borders. The

purpose of the project is to offer scaffolded formative and summative practice in the advanced

discussion skills of clarifying, verifying and challenging as well as support EL students'

academic language needs to express their critical thinking about the key concepts of the text at

hand. The intended audience for the project is both for teachers who may teach similar content in

their course, or for any ESL or content middle- or high-school teacher who may look to replicate the curriculum albeit with a different text addressing their unit content.

Setting

The curriculum may be utilized in a variety of settings, preferably a high school social studies course. It should be noted that *all* students in the collaborative classroom will participate in the language and discussion formative practice, with the exception of one grammatical piece. This is because this formative practice helps not only the 30% ELs in each push-in class, but also reaches the more reticent discussion participants, pushes for deeper cognitive engagement from more impulsive verbal contributors and develops academic language for all.

The geography of the school and the demographics of the student body are taken into consideration with the content and instructional goals of the curriculum. The school is a public high school that draws from first-, second-, and third-ring suburbs in a midwestern state. Students mainly come to the highschool from two feeder schools and some students are open enrolled mostly from the bordering urban district. The school's suburban communities, however, are the most diverse cities in the entire state, even surpassing the state's urban areas. The socio-economic mix is from homeless highly mobile (HHM) and lower-working class to upper-middle class. The class is a regular level ninth-grade Human Geography class, with English Learner push-in instruction. A separate Advanced Placement course is offered, which funnels many of the white and higher-performing students out of the regular tracked course. This was the second year of the course's implementation in the district, and thus the curriculum and seminar texts were still largely being developed by teachers. It also may be important to note that both content and specialist EL teachers were mid-career biracial and bicultural female

instructors, both with professional licensures in English as a Second Language and the classroom also serves as a training classroom for nonverbal classroom management practices for educators and administrators. Both teachers also have personal history with migration, one migrating to the United States as a child, and the other who has extended family members and close friends who have or are currently living undocumented in this country. In this project, the project description will refer to both *teacher* and *teachers* in order to include both co-taught and content teacher settings.

The school is also an International Baccalaureate site and all 9-10th grade courses are considered Middle Years Programme (MYP) programming, expected to be taught from a conceptual perspective based on district-wide reporting standards. Interested teachers who are not in an MYP school may choose to adapt the curriculum to their site's unit planning procedures. The district assessment policy also utilizes a standardized rubric of 1-4, with most teachers using summative grading at 80% and formative grading at 20%. This policy also allows for retakes of summative work. Teachers grading on a point scale or other criteria will need to adapt my assessment rubric to their needs.

The school's schedule also impacts the pacing. The school operates on a 7-period day for Monday and Friday, and 5-block classes on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Short days are forty-seven minutes while block days are sixty-two.

In this section I addressed the pertinent classroom, school and community setting, focusing on information which may affect the curriculum implementation. In the following section, I will more specifically look at the demographic information that is taken into consideration when designing the capstone project.

Participants

The school is an extremely ethnically diverse as well as wide range of socio-economic classes found in a Midwestern second-ring suburb of a mid-size urban area. The school's ethnic breakdown is: 36% black (includes both African American and African), 32% Asian, 15% white, 12% Latino, 5% 2+ mixed race and 1% Native American/Pacific Islander (MN Department of Education, 2017). Of the school's students 13.5% qualify for EL services while 51% report a language other than English spoken at home (Nicholson & Munkholm, 2017). They also report that there are 94 home languages within the students' homes across the district with major home languages of Liberian English, Hmong, Vietnamese, Spanish, and Somali. Of the student population 67% receives free and reduced lunch.

The curriculum will be used in both regular Human Geography classes and the co-taught Human Geography classes, although there may be slight deviations for the pacing or exact delivery of non-EL sections. "Regular" sections have one content instructor with some level 4 and 5 WIDA ELs and a few Special Education students and around 33 total students. Co-taught English Learner collaborative sections are the same size, with content and specialist instructors, and students are composed of 30% students with WIDA levels 3 and 4 and 70 % non-identified students; there also may be a few dual-identified students as part of the 30%. Most level 3 and 4 ELs in collaborative sections also have a concurrent academic language writing course taught by a EL instructor, usually the same collaborative specialist instructor in the Human Geography classroom. In this section, I addressed the students for whom the curriculum was designed; however, educators may see that the curriculum is adaptable to other demographic groups as

well. In the following section, I will explain the conceptual framework for the selection of instructional activities.

Project Description and Conceptual Framework

My capstone topic research question is: *How to prepare mid-level ELs to demonstrate critical thinking and advanced discussion skills?* I am seeking to answer this question by creating a curriculum for a Paideia seminar discussion of a text questioning the role of walls/borders as an introduction to the migration unit. The project directly addresses the research in the areas of critical thinking, academic language development and discourse skill instruction.

Project Overview. The goal of the curriculum was identified both through observation of student performance in seminar, students were ready to move the discourse level beyond preparing for and sharing their evidence-based thoughts to building on each others' ideas. The MN common core standards also guided the language objective of the curriculum "Students will propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions" (MN Department of Education, 2010). Robert Frost's poem "Mending Wall" was chosen as the seminar text because it authentically provokes thought regarding the purpose of walls, as well as the lexicon and syntax being accessible for ninth graders of many reading levels (See Project document #7). The seminar format will not be a whole-group circle seminar, rather it will be a structured debate, called an examining viewpoints seminar, looking at both sides of the core question *Do good fences make good neighbors?* The curriculum structure is composed of pre-seminar activities, an examining viewpoints Paideia seminar and post-seminar reflection.

Responding to both Bloom (1956) and Anderson and Krothwell's (2001) work on critical thinking, the pre-activities will move student engagement with text from the lowest level of remembering to the seminar's work of analyzing and evaluating the key concept of borders with their classmates. Also taking into consideration Krashen's Affective Filter hypothesis (2009), the project's formative practice will take place with different grouping combinations and a variety of movement, easier content, and other techniques to lower students affective filters. Overall, the curriculum objectives address two of the academic language features Zwiers (2008) delineates in his research: while in Trimester I students are asked to *support their claims with evidence* from the text, in Trimester 2 they are challenged to *be explicit* and explicitly understanding their peers. The Trimester 2 goal is the objective for the current project. Students will practice these language and discussion skills through content considering Zwiers' research conclusions: "academic language is intricately linked to higher-order thinking processes, (2) developed by extensive modeling and scaffolding of classroom talk, and (3) accelerated by weaving direct teaching of its features while teaching classroom concepts" (2009, p. xv). The instruction cycle will begin by combining language and content instruction to develop of the academic language register and build text comprehension.

Scope and sequence. This curriculum section is the first of two parts in the Migration unit and should take about 1 and a half weeks. Although short, it establishes the key concepts of borders, division, relationships and ethics key for the last section of the unit: a research project on historical and current migration to the local area. It also will develop the basis of listening, paraphrasing and revoicing during academic discussion for the following unit on Cultural Geography when students hold their final whole class seminar discussion on a graphic novel.

Since the school setting has both block and short classes, the instructional sequence will ideally proceed in the following time frame: block 1, block 2, short, short, block 1 and block 2. Teachers should adjust pacing to their schedules, with the understanding the seminar will need at least one hour, which could be broken up into segments.

       Class one: Anticipatory Set. The anticipatory set and discussion skill practice is composed of two different activities with different groupings. Materials need for the first activity are a projector or other way to visually project prompts and directions and students will need their notebooks. The introduction is the warm-up prompt: *Why do people build walls? List at least 10 different types of walls or borders that people build.* This question gets them thinking about the physical manifestation of borders as walls and some may begin to think abstractly about the concept of walls as division. Instructors will offer both a concrete and an abstract example so that students see they are able to think broadly before students silently and individually brainstorm their answers in their class notebooks. Allowing individual thinking and writing time gives students who need to process their language or thoughts more time as well as encouraging more impulsive students to think through their ideas. Johnston explains how silence offers respect for the student and conveys the message that we believe the child can think and accomplish the task, whereas failure to wait communicates the opposite (2004, p. 56). Once students have had about four minutes to independently write their answers, we will call on a student at each table to share and then go over the directions for the one-on-one discussion practice, along with the visual directions and drawings on the board (Project document #4). This activity was selected to give students the opportunity to verbally recode their thoughts, as described by Rivers (1994) as well as to begin the discussion with entry-level *content* using

social language or BICS (Cummins, 1979; Thomas & Collier, 1995). However, the *language*

structure of the interchange moves the student to academic language. We know from Scarcella's

research that students will not use these formats on their own, they must have specific instruction

and modeling to do so (2003). The two teachers will model what this will look like, in classes

with one teacher, a student volunteer will be used to model the conversation format. Students

will be released to line up in east/west lines with a partner in front of them. They will have 1.5

minutes for both to share two of their answers. The conversations will allow for practice of the

rephrasing and clarification we will be working on during the unit and will proceed as such: the

east-side partner will share two ideas they wrote down on their list. The west-side listener will

rephrase back what they thought they heard for confirmation or clarification, accessing the

sentence starter on the board if needed. They then can discuss their thoughts about the two

answers and switch. Teachers during this time should discreetly walk behind the students to

listen for both content and whether the rephrasing is actually happening. When the singing bowl

(timer) is rung, instructors can give feedback as to what to continue and improve for the next

partners. Then they will give directions for the first two students on the east-side to move to the

back of the line and all students in that line will shift two partners to their left. Teachers should

make sure that all students are lined up and close enough to a partner to speak before initiating

the time for the next conversation, again following Johnston's research on expectations for task

completion. They will then repeat the process four more times, the last two times the west-side

line will move to their right two partners.

 Class one: formative discussion skill practice. The second activity will enable students

to use metacognitive thinking about the types of oral comments they make in a discussion. The

research shows us that metacognitive activities are useful for teaching both academic language and enhancing complex thinking (Zwiers, 2010) and listening comprehension (Siegel, 2014). The objective is to introduce the skills of rephrasing and asking a question to clarify. While this activity still has students talking about the content of different types of walls, it also introduces these two new ways they can contribute to the seminar, in addition to using discourse moves they are already familiar with, such as citing evidence and adding on. The activity will provide a low risk, small group environment and stepped-up content from the previous activity to practice both the grammatical structures and the discursive interaction of rephrasing and asking questions for clarification. This low-risk environment takes Krashen's research on the affective filter (1983) into account, as well moving the content complexity up to require academic language (CALP) (Cummins, 1979; Thomas & Collier, 1995; Vygotsky, 1962). Materials needed for this activity are discussion cards with sentence stems for each student (Project document #5), envelopes with five-seven numbered pictures that show different types of walls (Project document #6) and student notebooks. Students will be placed or choose their own small groups, ideally around four or five students. Depending on the class, groups could be composed of mixed oral production ability or more homogenous in order to bring out leadership in middle and lower level students. In a less talkative class, the later is preferable.

On the table will be an envelop of numbered pictures that show different types of walls. Again, a few minutes of quiet independent time will be given for students to write a few sentences about the type of wall they think each picture shows and any thoughts they have about this. These pictures will again show both concrete examples of walls, like actual borders or freeways, and abstract examples, like one girl among a crowd in a hijab, a depressed and isolated

person or students of different ethnicities seated at different cafeteria tables. After students have had a quiet time to jot down their thoughts about each picture, they will each be given the four cards with the discussion moves on the front and sentence stems on the back: Ask a question, Revoice, Cite evidence & Add On. These small group conversations will be less structured, so students can go in depth about ideas that are more interesting to them, the goal of the 'game' being that each student put each of the four cards down in front of them when they contribute a comment of that type to their group's conversation. It does not mean that students will only speak four times, but that they should be aware of when they are asking these types of comments and practice using them. In this activity, students will be doing the work of comparing and analyzing that falls within Díaz and Weed's (2010) definition of academic language.

At the end of class, teachers should have a brief review of what the class learned and ask for each group to share out something that stood out to them about walls and borders during the day's activities.

Class two: Text comprehension instruction. The second day of class is vital for seminar preparation, as students will be receiving the text and receiving didactic and coaching for text comprehension. Materials needed are copies of the text and reading guide (See Project documents #7-#9) and the vocabulary powerpoint (See Project document #10); students will need a pen, pencil, possibly with different colors or highlighters as they prefer for annotation. Teachers may choose to adjust the order of the activities depending on how much students can do as homework without support. This curriculum plans for all text comprehension activities to be completed in-class, and most of the reading guide as well; the reading guide and text could be

given the prior day to read at home with directions to complete the pre-and during-reading activity as homework for day two.

Warm up (review from previous day). Visual warm-up directions will instruct students to review their discussions from the prior day to complete the first question on the reading guide[2]: "Why do people build walls? List or make a web for as many ideas of types as you can."

Read and annotate for understanding. Next students will be told that the text for this seminar will address the questions of walls, and whether good fences (or walls) make good neighbors. The students will probably get excited when they hear they are doing a special form of seminar where they will debate one side of the question (and no, they can't choose). The teacher will do didactic instruction of the key Tier II vocabulary (Beck, McKeown, & Lucan, 2013). This vocabulary needed for text comprehension are indicated in blue highlight on the teacher copy as well as on the slideshow. During the didactic slideshow, students should write notes of the words they do not know on their text. Moving into the second pillar of instruction-coaching (Adler, 1982; Van Duran, et al.,1988), students will be directed to read the text and annotate, as they have already done in previous seminars in the class. This will be done in two phases, the first reading for understanding and the second for analysis, as Adler suggests (Adler, 1972). The exit directions will refer students to the classroom anchor poster of annotation marks (Project document #11) if they need a reminder. At this point students will only do the first annotation. Depending on class needs or preferences, the teacher may choose to read the text to students or have a screencast where students can listen with headphones during their reading and annotation.

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[2] The first two questions on the reading guide are adapted from Ali Alowonle (2017). Her original seminar was designed as a whole-class seminar for gifted & talented elementary students using two different texts on the concept of walls.

Paraphrase text. After time has been given to complete annotations for the first reading for understanding, the text will be divided among the tables in chunks, with the first section set aside for modeling. For example, in a classroom with nine tables, table one will be assigned lines five through nine, and table two will be assigned lines nine through fourteen, and so on (line five content connects both to the preceding and following sections). This activity will have students reading independently, paraphrasing meaning as a group, and then verbally presenting their paraphrased summary. They also will be listening to their peers' summaries and writing down these notes next to each section. Based on Dutro and Moran's (2003) work, students will be constructing meaning from both oral and written language and relating and listening for complex ideas and information. It also parallels Nina Parrish's reading strategy initially developed for special education students that also helps all students process reading through talking (Parrish, 2018). Teachers will model discussion with a think-aloud of how to paraphrase the section and write the summary in the margin next to the section. Visual exit directions will indicate that students are to do the same for their assigned section, present their summary to the class and in turn take notes from their classmates' presentations. It may be helpful for students to write the paraphrase notes in a different color than the first annotation, to keep the notes for different purposes visually separate. This activity allows students to comprehend meaning through multiple modalities: reading, speaking, writing and listening. Transfering meaning back and forth between the language modalities of reading to writing to speaking and listening to writing also addresses the research on coding and recoding or expansion and summarization of meaning (Carroll, Tanenhaus, & Bever, 1978; Rivers, 1986, 1994; Zwiers, 2009).

Second reading for analysis. The last piece of the reading guide is absolutely critical that students for preparation for the examining viewpoints seminar, as it will have students reread analytically with the purpose of looking for evidence for different viewpoints within the text. This part should be modeled and started in class and students can complete as homework, they will have the weekend to do so and two class periods before the seminar in case students are absent this day. This coaching activity approaches the written academic text more as Díaz-Rico and Weed (2002) have suggested— as a set of thinking skills for analyzing concepts. The reading guide instructs students to "reread the text and mark + at places in the text that support the argument "good fences make good neighbors" and – at places that go against the statement. Find at least 5 for each side" (p. 2). Again students may want to use a different color ink to complete this last annotation. The teacher should model an example on each side, including both a concrete and abstract example (See Project document #8 for possible evidence that students could use on each side). For example, the teacher may want to point out Frost's lines 1-2: "Something there is that doesn't love a wall, that send the frozen-ground-swell under it" is an abstract argument why the fences are not useful because the ground itself pushes it out or on lines 5-6 "the work of hunters is another thing, I have come after them and made repair" as a concrete reason they need to fix the wall in the poem because it has been broken. Students should continue their work independently, with teacher support as needed, as they will need to be able to engage with these arguments on their own during the seminar.

Class three and four: Academic language practice. The last two activities can be completed in two short class periods and will coach students individually through the direct instruction of discourse strategies that Scarcella's research suggests (2003). It will also

give them introductory content instruction for the migration unit.The first activity will give

individual practice in written paraphrasing and subordination of ideas. The second offers small

group didactic and coaching on the grammar of conditional statements, needed for discussing

real, possible or hypothetical situations which is a feature of academic debate for the seminar.

The first language activity will be for all students' practice, and the second grammar activity will

be targeted for EL students only. These class periods also may be used to check in and answer

questions on student progress with their final annotation assignment and progress on the reading

guide. Materials needed are access to the short didactic video texts explaining a variety of

international border issues (See Project document #12) and students will need their notebooks.

For the first activity, the teachers will explain to the students they will be watching and

paraphrasing sections of a variety of video clips on international border issues. This activity

gives students the repeated academic language practice they need to develop their academic

language proficiency according to Fisher, Frey and Rothenberg's research (2008), but this time

without the support of a group. At the beginning of each video, the teachers may want to give

didactic on key terms (ie: sex trafficking, settlements, etc.) as well as geographic information on

a map. Instructors will do an example of paraphrasing, stopping after the first section of the

video and writing the most important ideas in a brief summary of the information shown during

that video section. More advanced students can be differentiated for by focusing on

subordination, essentially creating an outline of the main and supporting ideas in each video

section, maybe using numbers or bullets. The scaffold will be reduced for all students by doing

one more model as a group, and then students will complete paraphrasing individually for

following sections. After the video, or section of the video that will be shown in class, students

will confer in their group to fill in any gaps before round robin reading their summaries to the group.

The last piece of grammar coaching is only necessary for EL students in the class, in their *safe house* (Canagarajah, 2004). This may be accomplished in a variety of formats that work for the class setting and student needs: pull-out small group, during a sheltered EL course if collaboration exists or independent seat work while other students are competing the paraphrase activity. In this coaching activity, students will be coached on the grammatical structure of conditional statements. Zwiers (2008) says, "Conditional statements 'If...would, If ...then' allow a student to consider situations beyond personal experience through the use of predictions, cause-and-effect inferences, and hypotheses. Such hypothesis give students the ability to visualize and generate logical, but unproven, connections between ideas" (p. 31). In order to understand these conditional statements, students need to understand the subtleties of meaning of the modals such as *would, could or might* as well as follow the relationship between multi-clause sentences, usually conjoined with a modal and *if*. Coelho highlights that comprehension of conditionals in English is difficult because the verb tense does not always match the meaning (2004, p. 85). This will be harder for students already fluent in languages whose subjunctive mood differs from the grammatical structures in English. To give practice and support textual understanding, the *if…* and *modal* sentence frame could be taught and then students could look for cause-and-effect relationships already in the text (See Project document #13). They could also write these cause-and effect hypothetical statements based on the videos of international border issues if ready to apply to content.

Class Five: Examining viewpoints seminar. The examining viewpoints seminar is a specific type of Paideia seminar that gives students practice in disagreeing, challenging and rephrasing others' statements. Rather than a circle discussion, students prepare to defend either side supporting a controversial statement about a text (Augsburg Paideia Institute, 2018). They are randomly assigned to either the pro- or con- side, or the jury the day of seminar; and all participants will have to speak and give evidence for their own reasoning. The room is set-up according to the diagram (See project document #14). Once groups are decided (usually about 7-10 students in each group in a full class), the pro and con sides are sent to confer about what different points in the text they think best support their stance and each member chooses a point to present and explain. The jury members will be divided into various pairs depending on the numbers of students, and each pair will decide upon one assessment indicator to objectively count or track for their group. Examples of these indicators could be using names, rephrasing the previous person's comments, citing evidence, a strong, persuasive argument or positive body language. Teachers may ask students to document their data by merely tallying, writing down evidence or filling out a prepared table with names (See project document #16). A slideshow (project document #17) has been prepared to help with directions and guide the class the day of seminar.

The first phase of the seminar is for one person on each side to make the opening statement, this is a brief introduction that covers the basic gist of the group's arguments. Then the opener and all others each have 1 minute to state their assigned reason, textual evidence and why they think it's a strong argument. The conversation will zig zag back and forth (Project document #14) between the two sides. Before each person shares their point in this phase, they

will acknowledge the person that spoke before them by name, as well as summarize their argument. This would sound something like "...(Name)... I heard you say……, but I strongly disagree. Evidence for my argument for/against …… is found on lines #..... that shows…." These sentence starters are in the slideshow on the board to assist students. The teacher's role during this day is solely that of facilitator, and possibly notetaker for personal or assessment purposes. The complete interaction between students gives the students ownership over their space and serves to empower students (Bakhtin, 1981; Weiss & Kaplan, 2001). Although the language and even the conversation at this point is a little inauthentic, because students are sharing pre-planned points, they are entirely speaking and rephrasing with each other, breaking out of the IRF/IRE pattern (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975; Cazden, 1988). At this stage, each side's points probably will not relate to the previous point, but they're still doing listening comprehension and paraphrasing on top of the text analysis.

In the second stage of the structured debate, students may respond directly to any statement made by the opposing team in 1 minute, still using evidence from the text to back up their assertions. Response will still alternate by side, but there is no order or required turn-taking. Cognitively, this is the time of the highest load during the seminar; and is the least structured part of the seminar, because the ideas being shared are not planned out ahead of time. However, linguistically, the level of academic language has also gone up, because participants are still expected to name the person to whom they are responding and paraphrase that person's original statement or point, and *additionally* they are explaining with evidence their evaluation of the previous person's point. Having students directly challenge each others' points with evidence addresses another of Zwier's 2008 features of academic language: being explicit and supporting

claims with evidence (Díaz-Rico & Weed, 2010; Dutro & Moran, 2003). When time is called signaling the end of the second phase, each side returns to a private area to discuss their closing argument and select their presenter, who must be a different person than the opener. During this time as well, the jury will share their data collection with each other and come to a prospective decision based on their combined data; as they will not base their decision on a subjective basis. When indicated, the two sides of the debate will return[3] and they will each present their closing arguments before the jury briefly leaves for final deliberation, where they will take into consideration the arguments and data. The jury will then discuss if the closing arguments changed their original decision. They will also each prepare themselves to present a summary of what they were looking for during the seminar and the totals they came to during the seminar. They cannot share information about specific people, however; no one wants to feel like they lost it for the team. Upon return to the "court" the jury members will individually present their individual observations, evidence and data and then the final group decision will be announced. Get ready for fired up students once the results come in!

Class Six: Post-seminar extension activity & reflections. In order to give students the opportunity to highlight and crystalize the thoughts and learnings that were brought up during the trial, it is important to debrief both content and process (Storck, 2011). These two metacognitive activities will take about thirty minutes and materials needed will be half sheets of paper for students to write on. When students enter the room, the warm-up prompt will be to answer the following three questions:

1.   What went well about seminar?

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[3] It's always fun to get a little dramatic here! You can have bailiffs announce the jury and open the door, call court to order once the jury has been seated, ect.

2. What could have gone better?

3. Did you reach your individual goal?

Teachers may share the responses in their preferred manner, it is suggested however that this be public and anonymously so that students can create a goal for the next seminar based on their feedback. Data is presented as well at this time by the teachers on the group goal and then new goals are brainstormed and then selected by the students for the next seminar. Students may also be motivated from a competition of which class had the highest results for their group goal; we post a poster with a pie graph and percentages of each class' group goal data after each seminar, there is some sort of award for the class that made the most progress toward their class goal and of course we review these and the new goals immediately prior to the next seminar.

The last piece of the curriculum is an extension activity that gets the students up and moving. They are prompted to stand on the side of the room which represents what they originally thought before the seminar about the question: *Do good fences make good neighbors?* They should discuss with an elbow partner their previous thinking. Then they are asked to move to the side of the room that they NOW agree with. This gives students who changed their position based on the discussion the opportunity to share their reasoning with the class. It also is a great time to point out that since this is not a debate with the goal of being right, but the goal is to consider the opposing view point's perspective and be open enough to letting it change your mind.

Flow to next curriculum cycle.

Students will continue their learning about international migration in the second half of the unit, in which they will do an independent research paper and creative project on a group that

has migrated to the local community. In a paragraph of the research paper, they will identify and explain the physical or abstract borders that members of their researched group had to contend with before, during or after their migration. This functions as a post-seminar extension of the conceptual analysis students gained during seminar.

Students will also build onto the academic language and discourse skills that they learned during the curriculum cycle in the following unit. Now that students have had this more structured practice of listening comprehension and paraphrasing meaning, doing so in a whole-group standard format seminar will be a much more attainable goal. Reaching the objectives of clarifying, verifying and challenging others' should allow them to really experience the dialogic interaction of a great seminar.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I described my school setting and participants in the Human Geography 9 classrooms. I also outlined the curriculum and identified from where I draw the methods for the plan. The curriculum is founded on classic work on learning by Vygotsky and Krashen and reading comprehension by Adler. It also considers more recent research on academic language development (Scarcella, Zwiers, Díaz-Rico & Weed, among others) and research on discourse skills (including Firth and Wagner, Hmelo-Silver and Burrows, Fisher, Frey and Rothenberg). It also greatly draws on the methods and philosophy of Paideia scholars and educators. My main learnings from this chapter were how much I enjoy writing quality, research-based curriculum as well as surprised myself at how concise curriculum cycles can be when specific objectives and outcomes are thoroughly planned. Focusing on how students will demonstrate content narrows the scope of content instruction. I also noticed how much I have internalized research on

best-practices and this makes me want to continue to keep myself updated in pertinent, on-going research. I am excited to teach this curriculum cycle and unit again; I remember laughing with my co-teacher that the hardest units for me to write are those that are most personal and familiar to me. However, when I finally do write the unit, they end up being the best, possibly because they are a distilled fusion of personal experience, research, and planful outcomes. The next chapter will look back at the Capstone process, including the literature review and project, and share reflections on and implications of the project.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusions

Introduction

My research project sought to answer the question *How to prepare mid-level ELs to demonstrate critical thinking and advanced discussion skills?* In order to answer this question, I researched the areas of critical thinking, Paideia seminar, discussion, and English Learners' development of academic language. In turn I developed curriculum for the introduction to a migration unit in a 9th grade Human Geography class that matched the language and cognitive needs for students to reach the goal of my inquiry. This project is of interest to any practitioners or scholars interested in academic language development, Paideia or other discussion methods and advanced or mid-level EL instruction. In the last Chapter, I outlined the project's conceptual framework and its design for classroom implementation. In Chapter four, I will summarize and reflect on what I have learned from the capstone process overall as well as the literature review and capstone project, and the possible limitations and implications of the curriculum design.

Reflections on the Capstone Journey

This Capstone project is actually the final step in three years of reflection, research and classroom application. My instructional approach as a high implementer of professional development is based in the philosophy that teachers' practice should constantly develop and deepen in response to student needs and new learning. This journey has been an example of one area where I have specifically focused on my development as a scholar, practitioner and leader. When I began this project, I initially focused on researching questioning techniques and wanted

to do statistical research comparing the impact of different pre-seminar strategies on the cognitive levels of thinking demonstrated in ELs' comments in seminar. I did not continue with the written research project on this because of my own needs as a learner; I now know the importance for myself to have clear objectives and structure in order to successfully complete written projects and assignments. This personal need clarifies why I aim to be so explicit in my own instruction. I also really appreciated the value of an exemplar Capstone assignment, which reminded me how I need to make these available to my students as much as possible. Although I did not do the formal in-class research, I did end up carrying out and refining the pre-seminar activities to build text comprehension over multiple classes and trimesters. Once I worked through that question, I began to address the next sticking point I saw in my classrooms, which was the level of academic discourse during seminar discussions. It became clear that my students needed much more academic language and discourse skill instruction than they were receiving. That was when my research shifted focus and I took on the current question and curriculum project. The entire experience made me realize that educators are constantly doing research in our classrooms, and this action research *is* our scholarship. Deciding to do a project instead of a paper highlighted the importance of praxis and application of learning that has been woven through my entire education. When I think of my own education at every level, there always has been a real life component that has supported the development and application of abstract learning.

Revisiting the Literature Review

In my literature review, I examined patterns of student talk, Paideia seminars, critical thinking, academic language, and discourse for English Learners. The main take-away from the

research on student speech was the continued lack of time dedicated for students' verbal elaboration in the classroom, and even less for organic, sustained dialogue. Both Flanders (1971) and Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) did the initial work identifying the problem many decades ago, however recent research suggests that artificial, teacher-dominated exchanges have persisted into the current decade, especially in classrooms with higher numbers of low-income students (Lingard, Hayes, and Mills, 2003; Chinn, Anderson, & Waggoner, 2001). Why does student dialogue continue to be so limited in our classrooms? Possibly a complete shift toward student talk and engagement in the classroom will not occur until a majority of teachers' own educational experience has been steeped in student discourse. Researching teacher's classroom behavior and personal backgrounds might offer insight on this. Or it could signal social cultural traits. Research comparing international classrooms might be an avenue for further study on this. For other educators interested in the research on the topic of speech in the classroom, I suggest Fisher, Rothenberg, and Frey's *Content-area conversations: How to plan discussion-based lessons for diverse language learners* (2008). Also *The Miniature Guide to the Art of Asking Essential Questions* by Elder et al, 2002, was a wonderful suggestion from my content advisor, and would be a great text for a small group PD as it taught me so much about questioning in a brief format.

The research lineage of Paideia discussion protocol demonstrates that it has undergone some revision since its inception with Mortimer Adler and the Paideia Group in the 1980s through its contemporary implementation (Adler, Copeland, Tredway, Weiss, Kaufman). It has become more inclusive of non-canonical classic western texts and established a question formulating strategy that can be utilized with texts of multiple formats, including artwork. The

Paideia seminar methodology creates an opportunity for authentic student-led conversations. Tracing the research on Paideia was challenging for me, as I have been so immersed in the method, it was hard for me to go back and identify exactly what research had led to each piece and what had just been processed and retained in my own brain. I did enjoy learning more from the history of scholarship on this methodology, especially because one of the original members of the Paideia Associates, John Clark, passed away during the writing of this Capstone. It is exciting to feel that I am contributing to this scholarly and instructional lineage in a small way.

Student-centered academic discourse is one avenue to rigorous, critical thinking. Stepping back to look at the debates within the research on critical thinking, I came down more on the side that critical thinking must be approached holistically in the tradition of Adler and Rud, but that coaching the language skills to express this thinking is necessary. Although educators still greatly understand critical thinking through the updated versions of Bloom's 1956 taxonomy, the pertinent question is how we create space, support and access in our classrooms for all students to equitably and routinely engage in these higher levels of thinking. This also raises questions about the environments and conditions in which students and educators learn and labor. Future research could be done on how institutions and stakeholders can create places that encourage higher level thinking for all students and educators, and retain and build on the learnings of those who have done so before them.

When looking through the research on academic language, a wide field of study, it was hard to narrow down to the key research relating only to academic language development and instruction. To help sift and sort through the field, I decided to start with trade texts that had selected the key research in the area. Although reading original research articles allows one to

understand it more deeply, the reality of our profession does not allow for this type of time. The only way that I could see that practicing full-time educators can keep abreast of new research and see connections between the past and present conversations is to read subject specific texts with condensed research and its implicated practice. Previous to the Capstone, I did not understand the difference between original research publications and texts that compile this information, and this process of research helps me evaluate how these types of filtered and condensed texts fit within the spectrum of educational knowledge and can help practitioners keep our grounding in scholarship. For educators looking to get a background in the research of academic language instruction in an individual or group professional development setting, I highly recommend the work by Zwiers, *Building Academic Language: Essential Practices for Content Classrooms (2008).*

Through my bilingual and ESL licensure and MA learning about the research on language development, I am continually amazed by the fundamentally simple, yet socially complex, process to acquire language. By this, I see the same main message coming from all the research on language acquisition: we learn language by using it authentically and transferring meaning between different modalities. Teachers must offer direct linguistic instruction focused for the intended usage, but no one will learn language without an authentic need. I find it amazing that the language research continues to tell us that this is what ELs (and all students) need, yet I still see teachers downgrade the objectives of their lessons and take away organic linguistic interaction somehow to meet the "needs" of their EL classes. It does seem that pull-out EL classes are moving quicker in this direction, but in general regular education classrooms have not, although this is where ELs and other students struggling with academic standard English

spend most of their time. Reviewing the literature regarding academic discourse also reminded me of the wisdom of specific educational methods used more widely in other countries that coach the use of the listening modality: for example, dictation or outlining in notes the hierarchy of ideas being presented. During my own education in México, these were the most commonly used didactic practices, in addition to learning by direct experiences with the classroom group. Considering the importance that listening has in other cultures, and that most of us educators in the United States know so little about how to approach teaching it in our classrooms, we have a lot we can learn from cross-cultural methods.

Summary. Although completing the literature review was challenging due to the large amount of material in some areas and the small amount in others, it was exciting to put myself back into the place of research and scholar. It also helped me realize how and where I have allowed research to guide me in my instructional techniques, and also realize where the gaps in my own understandings lie. Since the teaching profession places such high time demands upon us educators, my conclusion is that we need to take time in professional development to read and discuss texts that filter and condense research. We could then cooperatively in small professional learning communities implement suggested ideas. Often professional development lies in someone merely telling us what strategies to execute and not allowing us to use our own brains to consider and discuss the impacts of research with the students in front of us every day. One of the researchers actually looked at Paideia seminars for school administration and staff (Mangrum, J., 2010). Taking it a little further, including students and families with school personnel in school-wide seminars on relevant topics, as suggested in Adler's *Wednesday revolution* (1982), could use dialogue to guide growth for all.

The Capstone Project

My capstone project consists of an examining viewpoints Paideia seminar, which is like a structured debate, of both sides of the question *Do good fences make good neighbors?* This allows students to begin their migration unit pondering the big ideas of borders, division and ethics that undergird the contemporary political issues of international and intranational migration. Deciding on this seminar format was a breakthrough for me, having students explore the textual evidence and consider the opposite viewpoint, not only elevates the conversation but also builds their ethical reasoning on which they will base future opinions.

The capstone curriculum also includes multiple pre-seminar activities that support text comprehension, academic language development and discourse skills. The curriculum ends with a brief post-seminar activity and reflection. In our classroom, this curriculum cycle will be followed by a written research project on a group that has migrated to the student's local area, with one section of the paper directly tying to the question of borders in the curriculum's seminar.

Implications. The implications of the project highlight best practices in academic language instruction, but also address an area that is of difficulty for me. Left to my own instincts, I teach in depth, can get lost in my own train of thinking, and keeping units brief is hard for me. However, the Capstone project amazed me at how much I could address in a short amount of time, when I am planfully teaching skills through content and working toward very specific outcomes that fit within an overall sequence of objectives. When looking at the entire class plan, it becomes easier to teach small pieces at a time, rather than everything at once. I appreciate having colleagues who will snap me out of my rabbithole when needed.

Limitations. Some limitations of the project are that it is content specific and does not include the post-seminar writing activity. The curriculum could be adapted by educators who are interested in building the advanced discussion skills with a different text for another unit. It also can be adapted for higher or lower grade levels, as the text is flexible and not syntactically demanding. In my own classroom, the post-seminar extension research project, which was not included as part of the curriculum, is based in our locality. However, teachers could replicate this by having students do research on one of the groups that have migrated to (or originated in) the area their school is located. The important consideration would be that a piece of the project allows students to reflect on and apply their learnings from the seminar to their research.

Beyond the Capstone Project

I will be using my capstone project the second trimester of this school year and will share my learnings with my team for their third trimester classes. As an eternal refiner, I know the curriculum will change in its specific delivery over time, but the basic components are solid. Now that I have completed my capstone project, I have more appreciation for the day-to-day work that we educators engage in: not many careers require that its professionals constantly respond to research, implement new approaches and then adjust based on observation and data. No wonder we are always thinking about the classroom and our content! Immersing myself in research and curriculum development helps me hold in high regard those educators around me that constantly update their practice to reflect current practice and reconsider their own assumptions or approaches when data suggests otherwise. It is hard for all of us to consider opposing viewpoints. It seems that we need all parts of this cycle of research, implementation and reflection in order to effectively adapt instruction for student success. This points again to

the role of teacher as researcher and scholar of our own practice. The implications of this

however question the structure of teacher time, which would be an area of further study.

I am also excited to see if my grade level team can select a research-based text to read

and discuss together. This renewed interest in grounding instruction in recent research could aid

us in questioning our professional fossilizations and foster open dialogue about equitable

implementation. I feel lucky to have had the opportunity to collaborate at many levels in my

district: in my classroom with a co-teacher, in my grade level-team and at the district level in

curriculum writing and some professional development. I learn so much from those around me,

including my students.

Conclusion

I value my capstone journey and have learned much about myself as a learner as well as

my instructional approach. Through the literature review, I not only learned about the trajectory

of the different areas of research, but also about the difficult process of direct research in

academia on educational topics. I do not see scholarship as accessible now as I did in my

undergraduate, possibly merely because I now have more on my plate, but also that in education

we are not only looking at content, but at application. My colleagues and other teachers can use

my project to replicate the curriculum completely or to focus on one component of the

pre-seminar activities. Some educators may be interested in implementing the examining

viewpoints seminar in their content area with a different text and others may become interested

in learning more about the Paideia method through participating in the annual Institute at

Augsburg University. There are some limitations to the curriculum in that the text may not fit for

all educators' content or that the curriculum's post-seminar extension activity is not extensive. I

am excited to do the examining viewpoints seminar with my ninth graders, I have only used the format with eleventh graders and I have never used it to teach listening and language skills. Although students generally report enjoying seminar, I think including this format will really engage students who like a more argumentative style. I also am looking forward to the seminar following this seminar, to see how students will use their experience with paraphrasing, clarifying and challenging when in an open dialogue format. It is exciting to be part of a profession where our learnings are translated to real outcomes for young people, and hopefully their dialogue about migration can move our country into a place of listening, empathy and creative problem solving. We need that greatly right now and probably more in the future!

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APPENDICES
Appendix A
Propelling conversation sentence starters

Propelling discussion (3 level)

<u>Clarifying ideas in text</u>

What does the part _____ mean?
How does _____ relate to _____ in the text?
Can someone explain _____?

<u>Verifying ideas in text</u>

Is _____ what _____ part of the text means?
Would this be an example _____ of…?
If _____ is true, does that also mean that _____ is true?

<u>Challenging text</u>

I disagree with _____ in the text, because _____.
When the text says _____, it seems to imply _____.
The text seems to be missing _____ perspective.

Propelling discussion (4 level)

<u>Clarifying others' ideas</u>

_____ could you repeat that please I couldn't understand you.
_____I'm not understanding your idea, please say it differently.
What are your reasons for saying that?

<u>Verifying others' ideas</u>

_____, are you saying that ……….?
What I'm hearing you say is that ……..
I'm not sure if _____ means …… or ……

<u>Challenging others' ideas</u>

I disagree with _____, because… according to the article
page 2 paragraph 3…
I disagree with _____, because in my experience…
When you say _____, it seems to imply _____.
Who is in a position to know if that is so?

-Sonia Nunez-Gibbs (1/16/18)
Adapted from Grand Conversation's 'sentence stems' & 'Avid Socratic Seminar Questioning'

Appendix B

Adler's Great Ideas

ANTHROPOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY		
Animal	Desire	Emotion
Experience	Habit	Immortality
Judgment	Knowledge	Life and Death
Love	Man	Memory and Imagination
Mind	Opinion	Pleasure And Pain
Prophecy	Sense	Sign and Symbol
Soul	Will	

PHYSICS		
Astronomy and Cosmology	Cause	Chance
Element	Infinity	Mathematics
Matter	Mechanics	Nature
Quality	Quantity	Relation
Space	Time	World

SUBJECTS		
Art	Education	Evolution
History	Language	Law
Logic	Mathematics	Mechanics
Medicine	Metaphysics	Philosophy
Physics	Poetry	Religion
Rhetoric	Science	Theology

A Syntopical Approach to The Great Books

By Category

TRANSCENDENTAL		
Beauty	Being	Good and Evil
Same and Other	Truth	

ETHICS		
Beauty	Being	Courage
Desire	Duty	Equality
Good and Evil	Happiness	Honor
Justice	Prudence	Same and Other
Sin	Temperance	Truth
Virtue and Vice	Wealth	Wisdom

POLITICS		
Aristocracy	Citizen	Constitution
Custom and Convention	Democracy	Equality
Family	Government	Justice
Labor	Liberty	Monarchy
Oligarchy	Progress	Punishment
Revolution	Slavery	State
Tyranny And Despotism	War and Peace	

LIBERAL ARTS		
Definition	Dialectic	Hypothesis
Idea	Induction	Language
Logic	Mathematics	Reasoning
Rhetoric		

| METAPHYSICS		
Angel	Being	Cause
Chance	Change	Equality
Eternity	Fate	Form
God	Infinity	Matter
Metaphysics	Nature	Necessity and Contingency
One And Many	Opposition	Principle
Quality	Quantity	Relation
Same and Other	Space	Time
Universal and Particular	World	

Center for the Study of Great Ideas (n.d.). *103 Great Ideas: A syntopicon approach to the great books.*

Retrieved from https://www.thegreatideas.org/103ideascat.html

Appendix C

International Baccalaureate Key and Related Concepts

Middle Years Programme Key Concepts
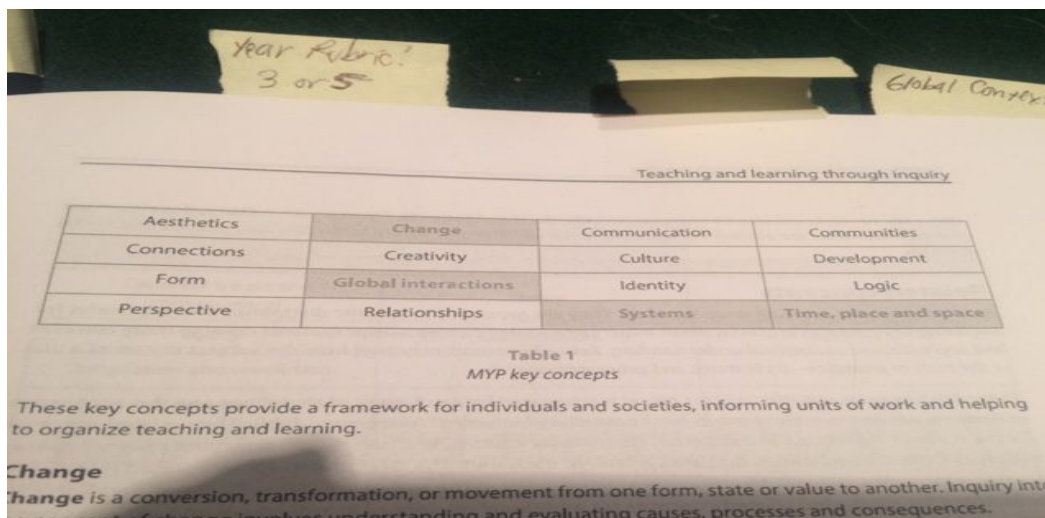
Middle Years' Programme Related Concepts for Individuals in Societies

International Baccalaureate. (2017). *Middle Years Programme: Individuals and societies guide*.

3rd ed. Cardiff, United Kingdom: Peterson House. pp. 17-20.

Appendix D

Original Paideia Group members

Members of the Paideia Group

MORTIMER J. ADLER, *Chairman*
Director, Institute for Philosophical Research;
Chairman, Board of Editors, Encyclopaedia Britannica

JACQUES BARZUN, former Provost, Columbia University; Literary Adviser, Charles Scribner's Sons

OTTO BIRD, former head, General Program of Liberal Studies, University of Notre Dame

LEON BOTSTEIN, President, Bard College; President, Simon's Rock of Bard College

ERNEST L. BOYER, President, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Washington, D.C.

NICHOLAS L. CAPUTI, Principal, Skyline High School, Oakland, California

DOUGLASS CATER, Senior Fellow, Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies

DONALD COWAN, former President, University of Dallas; Fellow, Dallas Institute of Humanities and Cultures

ALONZO A. CRIM, Superintendent, Atlanta Public Schools, Atlanta, Georgia

CLIFTON FADIMAN, Author and critic

DENNIS GRAY, Deputy Director, Council for Basic Education, Washington, D.C.

RICHARD HUNT, Senior Lecturer and Director of the Andrew W. Mellon Faculty Fellowships Program, Harvard University

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Members of the Paideia Group

RUTH B. LOVE, General Superintendent of Schools, Chicago Board of Education

JAMES NELSON, Director, Wye Institute, Inc., Queenstown, Maryland

JAMES O'TOOLE, Professor of Management, Graduate School of Business Administration, University of Southern California

THEODORE T. PUCK, President and Director, Eleanor Roosevelt Institute for Cancer Research, Inc., Denver; Professor of Biochemistry, Biophysics, and Genetics, University of Colorado

ADOLPH W. SCHMIDT, former Chairman, Board of Visitors and Governors of St. John's College, Annapolis and Santa Fe

ADELE SIMMONS, President, Hampshire College

THEODORE R. SIZER, Chairman, A Study of High Schools; former Headmaster, Phillips Academy—Andover

CHARLES VAN DOREN, Associate Director, Institute for Philosophical Research; Vice President/Editorial, Encyclopaedia Britannica

GERALDINE VAN DOREN, Senior Fellow, Institute for Philosophical Research; Secretary, Paideia Project

JOHN VAN DOREN, Senior Fellow, Institute for Philosophical Research; Executive Editor, *Great Ideas Today*

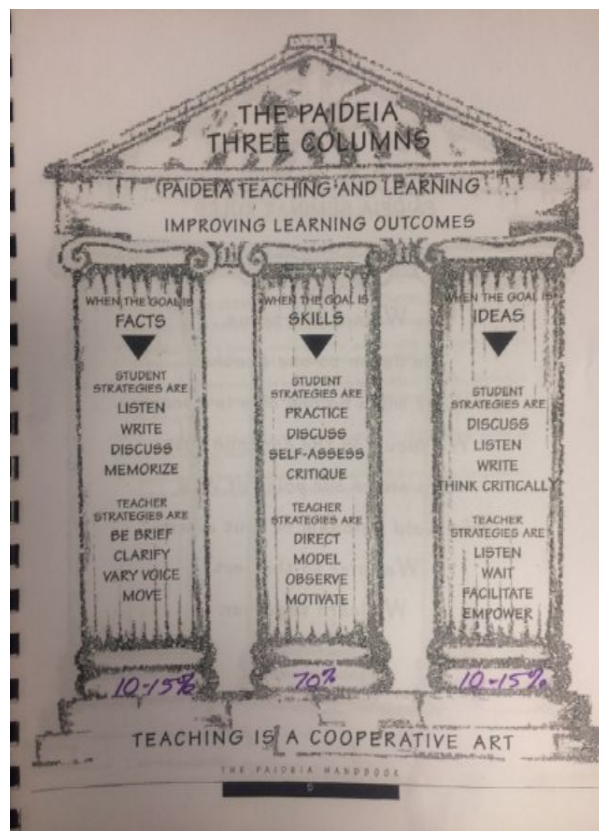Adler, M. (1982). *The Paideia proposal: An educational manifesto*. New York, NY: MacMillan. p. vii-viii.

Appendix E

Three Pillars of Instruction

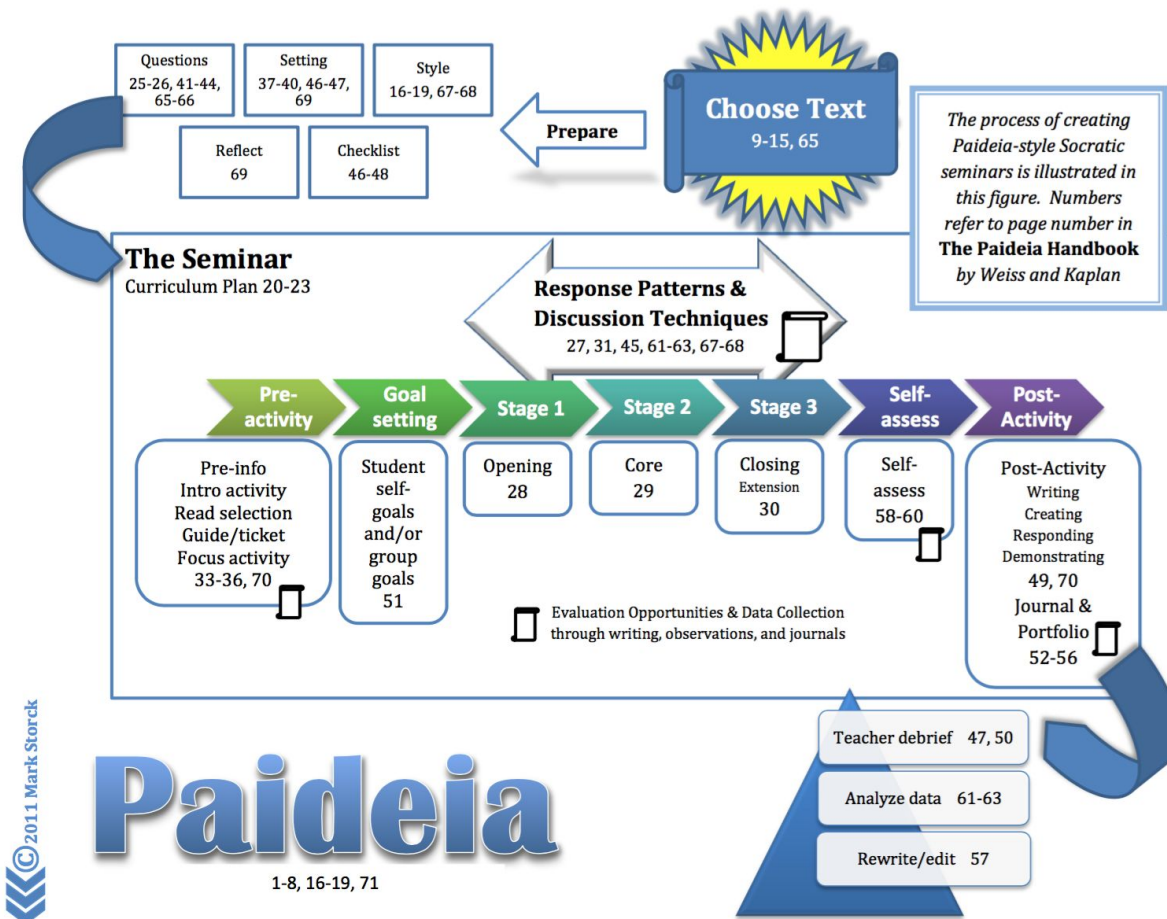| Original Three Pillars of Instruction | Three Pillars with teaching and learning outcomes and ideal % of instruction time |

Adler, M. (1982). *Paideia problems and possibilities*. New York, NY: MacMillan. p. 23

Weiss, P. F. & Kaplan, R. G. (1995/2001). *The Paideia Handbook*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg
University. p. 5.

Appendix F

Paideia process visual flowchart

Storck, M. (2011). *Paideia visual flowchart*. Paideia Institute trainer. Minneapolis, MN.