

# TEACHING TODAY'S LEARNERS #12



## Deeper, Collaborative Conversations

### Importance of Conversations

Today's learners aren't used to deep conversations. They generally communicate through texting, snapchat, and other immediate response systems. Yet language, our conversations with others, is how we think, process information, and remember. It's our operating system. As such, it seems reasonable that our classrooms be filled with talk, given that we want them filled with deep thinking! Getting learners to challenge each other and dig deeper into important concepts fosters those strong thinking and reasoning skills.

### Importance of Collaboration

We want our students to team up reliably and effectively. Collaboration is an essential 21<sup>st</sup> century skill not only to be successful within our classrooms but also for active and engaged citizenship in our communities. Nevertheless, some days it feels as though teaching these important skills is quite a feat. Maybe we have tried some group activities that have gone less than stellar or we see our kids are failing to be productive and supportive despite our sincere invitation for them to work together. Before we start pulling our hair out, we could take a trip to the cafeteria or outside on the playground where kids are in deep conversations, joining in well-structured and sustained interactions with other classmates – when the topic is who has the newest iPhone app or how a friend is getting to another level on their favorite video game. Our students are growing their repertoire of collaborative skills that they put to use every day. So, our main task is not to introduce them to these certain social skills, but rather to help them bring their existing skills into the classroom, to develop and refine them, or to place them in coordination with our curriculum (not just for peer interaction).

How do we teach students to have thoughtful, engaging discussions, ask intriguing questions, listen to the ideas of others, and bring their own thoughts to a conversation?

### Here are a Few Resources.

- Fishbowl Discussion – technique for enriching discussions
- Written Conversations – another technique for deepening conversations
- Student Actions and Thinking Tips for Strong Collaboration