

## **Research-Based Practice: Instructional Conversations and Literature Logs**

### **Reference:**

Saunders, W. M., & Goldenberg, C. (1999). Effects of instructional conversations and literature logs on limited- and fluent-English-proficient students' story comprehension and thematic understanding. *Elementary School Journal*, 99(4), 277–301.

Tharp, R. G., & Gallimore, R. (1988). *Rousing minds to life*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

### **Description:**

*Instructional conversations* are small group discussions between teachers and students in which prior knowledge and experiences are integrated with new information to foster comprehension. In these conversations, students and teachers build shared meaning of what they are reading/learning through dialogue. The elements of instructional conversations are as follows:

- The teacher selects a theme or idea as a starting point for the conversation
- The teacher accesses and/or builds student background knowledge. This background knowledge is then woven into the conversations.
- When necessary, the teacher provides direct instruction of a skill or concept.
- The teacher promotes more complex language and expression by eliciting more detailed responses from students and asking them to explain, expand, or elaborate on their ideas.
- The teacher guides students in supporting their arguments with text evidence.
- The teacher poses questions that typically can have more than one answer.
- The teacher is responsive to all student contributions.
- The content of conversation is connected throughout the discussion as opposed to having questions and answers in isolation of one another.
- The teacher is more of a collaborator than an evaluator.
- The students are encouraged to volunteer to talk and influence the selection of speaking turns instead of the teacher deciding who talks throughout the conversation.

*Literature logs* involve having students write in a log in response to writing prompts or questions related to sections of stories. These responses are then shared in small groups or with a partner.