

# Intentional Instructional Moves

Strategic Steps to  
Accelerate Student  
Learning

## Companion Guide

Chapter 5: Academic Discussions  
Introduction



## Chapter 5

### Academic Discussions

With a .82 effect size, classroom discussions have a significant impact on student achievement. They allow students to practice many high-level skills simultaneously, including today's career and social-emotional skills such as active learning, conflict resolution, effective communication, self-management, and considering diverse perspectives. Academic discussions can be an integral part of powerful instruction, but we want to ensure these discussions promote high levels of rigor. When students engage in rigorous conversations, they use appropriate academic vocabulary to share what they've learned. Rigorous discussions are primarily student-driven; students engage with and respond to their peers, building on each other's ideas, asking follow-up questions, and ensuring everyone feels included in the discussion. In these robust conversations, students feel comfortable making unsolicited contributions and asking for clarification. When building a foundation for academic discussions in the classroom, it's vital to establish a culture that promotes and respects students' ideas.

To approach academic discussion more equitably, we need to consider students' differing levels of background knowledge. They might not have been exposed to these conversations before, so teachers can provide additional support, such as word lists (more on this below), visual aids, and additional reference materials to create a more equitable learning environment. For additional tips on elevating student discourse, see Chapter 17.