If you like narrative, sit back, relax with a cup of coffee (or soda, in my case) and enjoy.

If you’re like yeah, yeah, just get to the point... then skip to the pages that say, “Instructional Routines” at the top.
My student from Japan was quiet. I’m pretty sure she understood more than she said but asking her to speak in class in the beginning, was more cruel than kind. We were learning about Ecosystems when she really found her voice.

She began adding her language to our charts. And once she got started, she just couldn’t stop! Every time I put up a new chart, she asked if she could add Japanese. I could see it in her face, she was so proud to see her language on display in the classroom. Her classmates began asking her to teach them phrases in Japanese. And she began to talk. As her classmates began taking risks with Japanese, she was more and more willing to take risks with English. Actually it makes my heart skip a little beat just thinking about her!

Okay, so journey back with me to my first year of teaching...
I’m not going to lie. When I first started teaching, I was quite positive that a quiet classroom meant that I was highly skilled at classroom management. Truth be told, I was worried what my colleagues would think if they walked by my room and it was noisy. So, I worked very hard to have a quiet classroom. I wore those quiet, hardworking students like a badge of honor. Did I say students? I mean 6-7 year olds. Do you know how stressful it is to try and keep 24 six and seven year olds quiet?? That’s not even including the work it takes to teach them! What was I thinking?? I can’t even sit silently for a 60 minute staff meeting and let’s be honest, when I’m talking during those staff meetings, I’m only on task about 75% of the time. What in the world made me think I should ask 6 and 7 year olds to spend a large chunk of their day silently working and then call that learning? INTERVENTION needed! In walks GLAD (Guided Language Acquisition Design) Training) where I learned that students with strong oral language skills in English are more likely to develop strong literacy skills in English.

“Students with strong oral language skills in English, are more likely to develop strong literacy skills in English.”
What do you want for your students?

So back to that whole thing about Serina finding her voice. That’s what I want for my students and my own kids. I want them to have the courage to let their voice be heard. I want them to have the skills to speak confidently.

It’s about oracy. That’s just a fancy word that means to speak fluently with correct grammar. I want my kids to be heard, truly heard. And let’s be honest, the words we speak and how we say them, matter.
“I started letting them talk and then the flood gates opened! Now I can’t get them to stop talking!”

So now you’re convinced, right? Students need to talk to develop oracy to prepare them for a 21st century world.

“I started letting them talk and then the flood gates opened! Now I can’t get them to stop talking!”

Yea…that happens. Ha!

Setting aside for a moment, the fact that even adult brains need to be off task from time to time, there are structures that can be put in place so that when students are talking, it is more likely to be on-topic, productive and in an academic register.
Structures for Student Talk

- 5-2-1
- Pattern of Accountability
- Productive Partners
- Sentence Frames
- Wait Time
When I left the classroom I decided I had the time and energy to teach Sunday school. I had walked past the 3rd-5th grade classroom many times while dropping my daughter off and watched as kids sat and listened to someone talk, looking rather unengaged and I thought, “I need to fix that.” I received my first lesson plan and realized, no wonder these kids are bored...they are basically sitting and listening and responding one at a time to very low-level, text-based questions. Teacher April to the rescue!

I’ve got all these awesome student talk strategies and I know how to ask kick-butt questions. As my 8 year old would say... “Bam, what!!”

You see where this is going...

Every 4 weeks it’s like I’m starting over again...desperately trying to get kids talking about meaningful content, when they aren’t asked to do it at any other time in this classroom. Wah, wah.

So it’s not Teacher April to the rescue... **Instructional Routines to the rescue!!**

- **5 minutes** – Teacher Talks
- **2 minutes** – Students process with a partner or group while teacher listens and confers
- **1 minute** – Teacher calls on non-volunteers to share out and/or uses Active Group Response techniques to “read the room.” (thumbs up if... wave at me if... show me fist to 5...)

5-2-1 is about intentionally balancing student/teacher talk time. It becomes a regular rhythm. That means it’s **routine**. Students expect it. They know they might be called on to share out so there is **accountability**.
Speaking of accountability...ever get tired of the hogs and logs? You know the ones. The hogs never stop talking. They’re first to raise their hands. They’re good at playing school. Then there’s the logs. Maybe they’re really shy or confused or lacking confidence or bored...but they’re more than happy to wait you out, knowing someone else will speak for them. Pattern of accountability is for both these kids.

Pattern of Accountability ties nicely with 5-2-1 and just provides more structure for turn taking. It could be used in a group as well as partners.

• **Time**—Give students predetermined amount of time to interact. Use a timer to build stamina and understanding of time. Ex: “You have 2 minutes to talk about how to solve this math problem.”

• **Turns**—Assign who will speak first and monitor turn-taking to encourage equal participation. Ex: “Partner A is the partner closest to the door. You talk first. Switch after 1 minute.”

• **Assess**—Monitor by walking around and listening. Then call on non-volunteers. Ex: “Juan, what did your partner say was the best way to solve this problem? Knock 3 times on your desk if you solved it like Juan.”
One year I had a big group of boys who would sit as far back at the carpet as possible and always buddy up with each other to talk. And by “talk,” I mean giggle about who knows what. And my too-mature-for-their-age girls, would just roll their eyes. It was a problem. Every. Single. Day. Then I attended a Kate Kinsella workshop and she taught me about Productive Partners. My turn and talk time went from killing me to killing it.

**Productive partners** are a great way to keep from dealing with the constant, “who will be my partner,” issue that happens every time you ask students to turn and talk.

- **Use data to create partnerships** – Ex: Organize your reading scores from low to high. Separate the scores into 4 larger groups – low, low medium, high medium and high. Create partnerships. Ideally, pair a high with a low-medium and a low with a high-medium.
- **Keep partners the same for an entire unit of study** – Let them get used to each other. Keep them together for 3-6 weeks.
- **Teach them the 4 Ls of Productive Partnering** – Look at your partner. Lean toward them. Lower your voice (not to a whisper). Listen attentively.
Okay, so just because they’re turning and talking, doesn’t mean there’s a whole lot of awesome language production taking place. If we want students to develop their academic language then we need to ask better questions and give academic sentence structures to move them from saying things like, “yeah, me too,” to “I agree with ___’s perspective because ___.”

**Fairy Dust** is magical because the simple shift of higher order thinking questions and sentence frames will make an immediate change in students’ output.

### Instructional Routines to the rescue!!

- **Ask more How/Why Questions**—Asking more how/why questions is a quick way to improve the level of questions you are asking.
  - Why do you think ____ is true?
  - How did you solve that?

- **Use sentence frames/starters**—If you want them to discuss cause and effect, what structure do they need? If you are asking them to describe something, what academic language might they need?”
  - In my opinion, ____ because ___.
  - I infer ___ because ___.
  - If ___, then ____.
Close your eyes and imagine yourself sitting in a professional development opportunity. The presenter asks a question and boom, you hear him call your name. “____, what do you think about that?”

If you’re me, you are now in a total state of panic because A) You had no time to think! B) You hate talking in front of groups, especially unprepared. And C) What if you’re wrong??

Never underestimate the power of wait time for English learners AND native English speakers.

**Instructional Routines to the rescue!!**

- **Pause after asking a question**—Before having students talk, have them show you a signal when they have an idea to share. And wait.

- **Let students turn and talk before asking them to share out**—This allows more processing time and allows ALL students to talk, not just the handful that you call on to speak to the whole group.

- **If you do call on a student to speak to the whole class, wait**—If they don’t respond immediately, don’t just call on someone else to help them. Give them a moment.

**Wait time** is a tremendously important way to ensure all students have time to think and opportunity to share. It is essential for our English learners.
“The kids LOVE oracy time, so I don’t want to miss it!”

If you’ve had your fill and you’re ready to embark on a new journey of helping students find and use their voice with academic language, then go forth!! YOU and your new instructional routines to the rescue!

If you want to hear about a real life classroom doing way cool things with oral language development in the form of a speaking and listening workshop, then stick around a little longer.
Students are hearing about the question of the day: Should schools require students to wear uniforms?

A language target and sentence frame guide the discussion.

Students have learned a lot about how to have a discussion prior to this one lesson.

In this classroom, students have recently started to spend about 30 minutes a day specifically focused on speaking and listening skills. They start by discussing their perspective on a topic with a partner. Then they choose a side they want to defend and they separate into groups. They listen to each other share perspectives on both sides. Then they build their background knowledge about the topic by reading a text. They return to the discussion, changing their opinion if they choose. The discussion then pulls in ideas from the text to support their thinking. Finally, all students record their opinion and reasons on Seesaw. Yay for taking risks and trying new things to help students learn!!

See it in action...

- Partner Talk
- Partner Talk
- Whole Class Discussion
- Seesaw
- Seesaw
To earn Clock Hours...

Please submit the following:

• [Google Form](#)

• **Optional**: Share video/photos of you and your students trying something new based on your new learning by emailing:
  • [April.Nissen@evergreenps.org](mailto:April.Nissen@evergreenps.org)

For discussion with others and to share/hear ideas from other colleagues around the district, please connect with us in our Facebook group: [EPS Sheltered Instruction Learn and Go Club](#)