

Preface

The basic purpose of school is achieved through communication.

—Courtney Cazden (2001)

If communication is the vehicle for school achievement, how can we change the educational mindset so that every educator sees language as a tool for attaining this goal? That's what we have set out to accomplish in this book: to present a conceptual tool that is centered on overarching purposes for academic language use. It may appear simplistic, but we and our colleagues have spent an extraordinary amount of time trying to distill the complexities of language learning into a manageable set of key uses. So read the passage below on nutritional guidelines, from the FYI section of BrainPOP®'s "Nutrition" topic, and try to identify what they might be.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has been giving out nutritional guidelines since the early 1900s. Its first standardized recommendations came in 1956, when it introduced the Basic Four Food Groups: grains; fruits and vegetables; dairy products; and a catchall protein category.

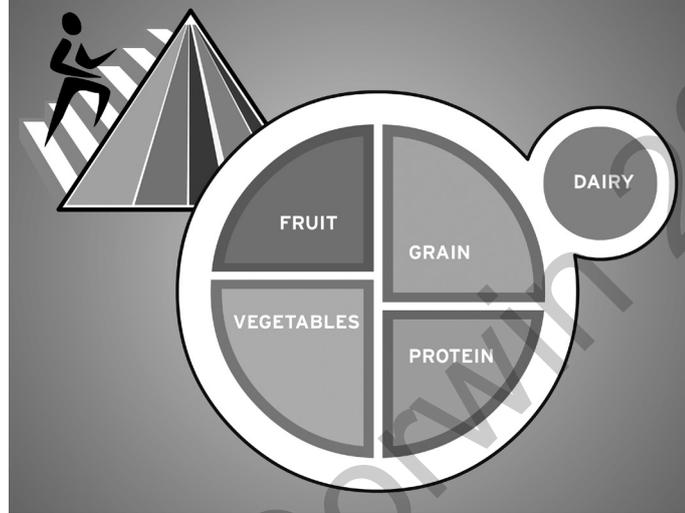
In 1992, the USDA decided to display its nutrition guidelines in the form of a pyramid. The shape of the original pyramid, which had six food groups instead of four, was ideal for showing the proportions of servings needed from each group to create a balanced diet. For instance, grains, which we need most, were at the base, while sweets and fats, which we should only occasionally snack on, were at the top.

Over the years, however, many nutritionists and doctors claimed that the food guide had a number of flaws. Eventually, as part of an overall campaign to get people to make healthier food choices, the USDA decided to revise and update the pyramid—and in 2005, the new and improved "MyPyramid" was unveiled.

The horizontal wedges of the original pyramid were replaced with vertical slices of various colors and thicknesses. Each represented the recommended number of daily servings from six different food groups: grains, vegetables, fruits, milk, meat and beans, and oils. To remind people about the importance of exercise, a staircase was added to the left side of the pyramid, with a stick figure climbing the steps to good health.

But MyPyramid was also criticized for being too abstract—people didn't know what group each colored wedge stood for. So the MyPlate logo was introduced in 2011, and officially unveiled by First Lady Michelle Obama.

“We realized we needed something that made sense not just in classrooms or laboratories, but at dinner tables and school cafeterias. We needed something useful, something simple,” Mrs. Obama said. Many nutritionists agreed, noting that people tend to eat off of plates, not pyramids!



Source: BrainPOP®, <https://www.brainpop.com/health/nutrition/nutrition/fyi/#tab=0>



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We have come to the conclusion that four key uses of academic language give teachers and students tremendous insight into how oral and written text is organized to express specific intents. And so we share them with you, realizing that authentic text is not neatly organized around one key use or another but, in fact, may be perceived as having multiple purposes. Here is an interpretation of that BrainPOP® passage on nutritional guidelines around four key uses of academic language (DARE), the conceptual tool used in this book:

Discuss the pros and cons of the various images that represent nutritional guidelines.

Argue for the nutritional guidelines that you believe are most effective.

Recount the history of nutritional guidelines in the U.S.

Explain how and why nutritional guidelines are helpful.

Take the DARE

One of the themes woven throughout the book is that students' exposure to multimodality, especially ELLs, ELLs with disabilities, and other language learners, helps increase their

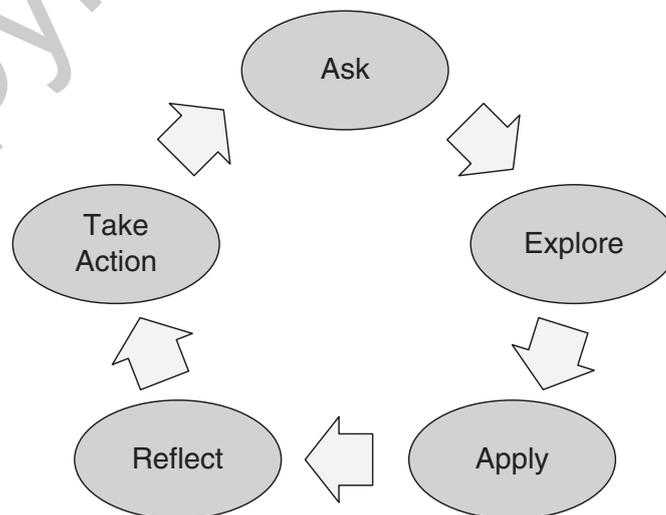
opportunities for meaning making. BrainPOP® included the visual on page 2 with the text on nutritional guidelines. How does it enhance the overall meaning? How might it be beneficial to your students? What can you do to increase students' comprehension through visualization? Why are visuals important for students who might be challenged by text written in English, by print, or both?

Academic language use provides students access to the content learned in school, and it is the vehicle for their meaningful participation during teaching and learning. Language is also the medium through which students share what they know and demonstrate what they have learned. It is not enough for students, however, to just know the language or know about the language. Students need to understand how language is used in academic contexts and the expectations for its use throughout the school day.

THE INQUIRY CYCLE

In this book, we use the inquiry cycle as an organizing scheme to provide a structure for each chapter. We choose this five-phase inquiry cycle, shown in Figure P.1, as we wish teachers to probe deeply into compelling issues that stimulate conversation by (1) *asking* about academic language use, (2) *exploring* it more in depth, (3) *applying* it to their classrooms, (4) *reflecting* on its utility, and (5) *taking action* to ensure that it has meaningful and lasting impact. Additionally, we feel that implementing the inquiry cycle prompts collaboration among teachers who are constantly seeking to improve their practices. The power of collaborative inquiry, especially in a professional learning community, has proven to be transformative, evoking real change in schools and classrooms (Donohoo & Velasco, 2016).

FIGURE P.1 Applying the Inquiry Cycle as the Organizational Frame for the Book



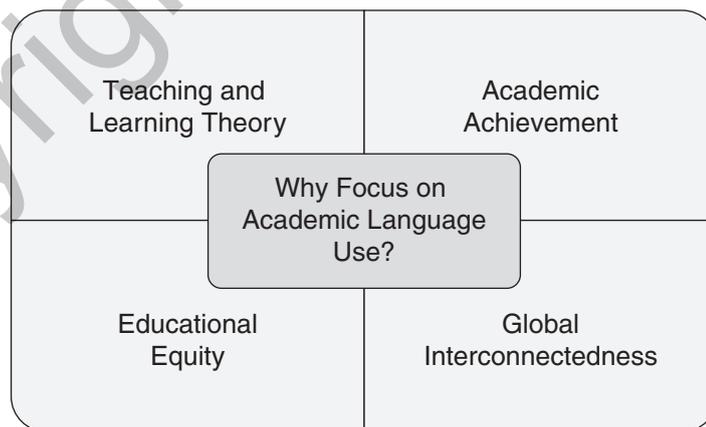
We also would like to highlight the essential role of inquiry in the generation of new knowledge. As we identify questions or learn new concepts, we need time to explore ideas related to them and time to apply that new knowledge. A critical part of the inquiry cycle is to provide space to reflect on those new ideas and on how we might integrate them into our practice. With that in mind, for each new idea presented throughout the book, we provide additional references for those who wish to dive in deeper on any concept presented and examples to see it applied to instruction and assessment. We also offer challenges throughout each chapter to invite you to take action on your new knowledge along with questions for reflection. Finally, we offer myriad resources, which include templates of activities and tools ready for you to use.

The following is a detailed description with an exemplar of how each section of our chapters unfolds within a specific phase of the inquiry cycle based on perspectives of academic language use.

ASK

We begin each chapter by posing a question related to key uses of academic language. As an example, for this prelude, we ask the question, *Why focus on academic language use?* We explore each chapter's question from four perspectives that are presented in a diagram in the "Ask" section, such as the one shown in Figure P.2. Here, we highlight four perspectives in the quadrant—(1) teaching and learning theory, (2) academic achievement, (3) educational equity, and (4) global interconnectedness—to offer a rationale for focusing on academic language use.

FIGURE P.2 A Rationale for Focusing on Academic Language Use



We conclude this section with a list of chapter objectives, as we invite educators to *take the DARE* (*discuss, argue, recount, and explain*) to guide conversations around the central question. For this set of perspectives offered in the quadrant, we DARE teachers, school leaders, and teacher educators to do the following:

Discuss the literature and research bases on the role of language in teaching and learning.

Argue for the importance of mastery of academic language in academic achievement.

Recount the function of academic language as an agent of educational equity.

Explain how academic language can serve as a home–school connector.

EXPLORE

This section addresses the overarching question and each perspective stated in the “Ask” section. It also invites the reader to implement the ideas and concepts discussed. In this prelude, we illustrate how each perspective contributes to the rationale for increased intentional academic language use in elementary school classrooms.

TEACHING AND LEARNING THEORY

For a long time, language has been recognized as a vehicle for learning (Dewey, 1916; Vygotsky, 1934/1962). The ways in which language is used by students, teachers, and families have an impact on how children learn. Some researchers, for example, have attributed how well students do in school to the particular language patterns used by the social groups to which they belong (Bernstein, 1970; Brice-Heath, 1983). These studies highlight the unique ways in which language is used in school and the need to socialize children into those ways so that they can be successful. In spite of the existing research on the critical role that language plays in school, language development has not been fully integrated into the learning taking place in our classrooms.

Many of our current teaching approaches come from sociocultural theory, which sees learning as a social activity. This theory proposes that learning happens through social interaction, with assistance from teachers and peers who are more knowledgeable, and as they engage in culturally meaningful tasks (Vygotsky, 1978). In this social and interactive perspective, language plays a central role; it is a tool for negotiating meaning, for problem solving, and for making sense of the world, individually and with others. Language is not seen as an abstract system of linguistic forms or an individual form of activity, but instead, it is a continuous generative process that is learned through dialogue (Bakhtin, 1986). This dialogue takes place within particular social contexts and cultures that impact the ways in which people use languages (Martin, Christie, & Rothery, 1994).

For example, the ways one uses language when writing an e-mail, when filling out an application, or when producing a book report are very different. Because of the many contexts, thinking about goals or purposes for language use without a framework can become overwhelming. Key uses of academic language afford us the opportunity to focus and organize teaching and learning in a more manageable manner and, at the same time, to better and more purposefully integrate language and content instruction.

In sum, learning theory highlights the important role of language for students to be able to access and achieve content-related ideas and concepts. Further, since learning is social in nature and not an individual endeavor, language provides opportunities for students to engage meaningfully with others in learning activities. A focus on key uses of academic language ensures that all students possess the means to be able to internalize and share what they learn in school.

Take the DARE

Throughout the book, we challenge you to *take the DARE* by posing questions, providing activities, and offering resources for you to reflect on in each section. Whether you are reading this book on your own or with colleagues, each activity is aimed at helping you identify ways to focus on academic language use in your practice.

As an example, in this section, we ask you to engage in deep reflection about language by answering the following questions:

1. How do you define academic language use?
2. What is your teaching and learning philosophy? Does it include academic language use? If so, how? If not, how might you include it?
3. What common beliefs about academic language development do you share with colleagues?
4. What role do you believe academic language use has in teaching and learning?
5. How do you include discussions about language use in your classroom or promote them in your school?

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

In the previous section, we explored what theory has to say about the role of academic language in learning; in this section, we focus on identifying the impact language has on academic achievement. We define academic achievement as students' success in meeting short- or long-term goals in education in relation to their performance outcomes and challenging state academic standards. In this continuing era of assessment and accountability, educators need to be able to show evidence of academic achievement of all of their students.

Recently, research has emerged that connects academic language to academic achievement (Bailey, 2007; Francis, M. Rivera, Lesaux, Kieffer, & H. Rivera, 2006; Heppt, Henschel, & Haag, 2016; Schleppegrell, 2004). This research points to the fact that students who master the use of academic language are more successful in accessing the knowledge and information in textbooks, academic resources, and assessments (Francis et al., 2006). While students may be able to accrue knowledge without the use of academic language, as information becomes more complex, so too

does language. Therefore, students who have not had experiences with using academic language have a more challenging time engaging with content in school than children who have had exposure to its use early on.

The scope of academic language is not limited to discipline-specific vocabulary but also includes grammatical forms and ways of organizing oral and written information in academic-specific ways. These conventions have been established and look differently from one discipline to another. For example, the language of sequencing the steps in solving a mathematical story problem is quite distinct from the language of sequencing the events in a biography. It becomes apparent that students use language in many different ways throughout the day. Most important, however, academic language encompasses disciplinary discourse, and key uses of academic language assist in leveraging how oral and written text is organized and communicated.

While we have known about the critical role of language in learning and in academic achievement, we often presume students already have the language needed to engage in learning or that they will acquire it through their environment or exposure. While this may be true for some language development and some of the students, an intentional focus on language use ensures that all students are included in teaching and learning. More specifically, an intentional focus on language provides more equitable opportunities for students to interact with academic discourse and assures that all students have the tools to participate meaningfully in activities designed to mediate learning.

Remember that for ELLs and ELLs with disabilities, academic language use is not necessarily confined to English but, in fact, should be inclusive of their home language(s) as well. These students have extensive linguistic and cultural repertoires that are resources to tap in expanding their thinking, knowing, and doing. So when we speak of academic language use, we are not language specific; we wish to acknowledge and encourage the potential transferability of thoughts and actions between languages.

Take the DARE

Here are some ideas to begin thinking about academic language use in your classroom:

- Identify the various ways in which language is used in texts.
- Observe how students use language(s) during group work or presentations.
- Record yourself, and reflect on your own use of language in your classroom.
- Review student work with a focus on their use of language.
- Recognize how many opportunities your students have during class to use language with each other in meaningful ways.
- Document student language in your classroom environment (e.g., word, phrase, or concept walls; posters; charts; and bulletin boards).

EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

As we mention throughout this prelude, there are countless ways of using language. The fact that many children come to our schools from minority backgrounds—racial, cultural, social, and linguistic—often means that they may have had different experiences and perspectives (Gutiérrez, 2007; Tate & Rousseau, 2007). With these experiences come different assets and strengths that students bring to school; however, these positive qualities and talents often become invisible when students walk in the door. Taking on the mission for educational equity means finding ways to make students' resources visible, relevant, and connected to teaching and learning in meaningful ways (Rigby & Tredway, 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

In brief, educators' direct access to academic language development is an avenue that contributes to educational equity. Key uses of academic language facilitates educators' and students' recognition, use, and expansion of linguistic resources. We DARE—*discuss, argue, recount, and explain*—teachers and school leaders to focus on the value of language, along with content for each discipline.

Take the DARE

Some resources or activities that take place in schools facilitate students' academic language learning. Identify which of the following occurs in your school, and *discuss* with colleagues:

- Teams of educators identify the presence of academic language in your state's academic content standards.
 - How has it been made known to all teachers?
 - How are these language demands distributed across units of instruction throughout a school year to ensure their coverage?
- Grade-level or instructional teams state language goals, language targets, or objectives for their units of instruction.
 - How are these communicated to students and families?
 - How are students involved in determining specific language objectives?
- Educators design activities that provide opportunities for students to develop their oral and written language during instruction.
 - How are these lesson-based activities related to the larger language goals and/or language targets for units of instruction?
 - How do these activities help determine whether a language goal and/or target has been met?
- Assessments contain language that is grade-level relevant yet accessible to students.
 - How do assessments elicit language from students?
 - How are students expected to use language in assessment?

- Educators monitor students' language development, especially for ELLs and ELLs with disabilities.
 - How are language data recorded or shared among educators?
 - How is language development reported to families?
- Educators analyze the relationship between students' language development and their academic achievement with careful attention to ELLs and ELLs with disabilities.
 - How are language data analyzed and interpreted?
 - How do language data impact content area instruction?

Whether you complete this DARE on your own or as part of a team, identification of language use is only the beginning. An extension activity would include determining plausible next steps, coupled with existing resources.

GLOBAL INTERCONNECTEDNESS

Reexamining the quadrant at the beginning of this prelude, we approach the last perspective for advancing our rationale for academic language use. For it is through global interdependence that we see our students of the 21st century absorbed in a fast-paced, ever-changing world. Being immersed in a global society means we are constantly being bombarded with new information—not only from our immediate surroundings but within a nanosecond of clicking a button on our technology-enabled devices, we are connected with the world. As teachers and school leaders in this international community, it is our responsibility to ensure that its newest members are prepared to participate, contribute, and thrive in our interconnected society.

Globalization of schooling entails focusing our efforts on elucidating and respecting wide-ranging perspectives as the intermingling of different languages, cultures, and religions becomes accepted practice in our diverse classrooms. To do so, we have to expand our dialogue, reflection, and creative engagement in intercultural and multicultural education and rely on its global networks as a vehicle for promoting global interconnectedness (Grant & Brueck, 2011).

Not only do our students access the worldview instantaneously, as meaning makers, they make sense of their world in multisemiotic ways by integrating language and images. So in our book, while we acknowledge the primacy of print in literacy development, we move beyond this traditional way of communicating to embrace media, visual design, and fine arts as integral to a multimodal literacy system.

Additionally, we believe that many of the 21st century skills are requisite to connecting with others around the world. The World Economic Forum has a comprehensive view of 21st century skills, categorically placing them within lifelong learning into three groups: (1) foundational literacies—cultural and civic literacy, financial literacy, scientific literacy, numeracy, and information (digital) literacy; (2) competencies—collaboration,

communication, creativity, and critical thinking; and (3) character qualities—leadership, adaptability, curiosity, social and cultural awareness, perseverance, and initiative (Soffel, 2016). It is their contention and ours that many of the 21st century competencies and qualities are developed through social and emotional learning, which has to be combined with multiliteracy development to best equip students to succeed in the world they live.

APPLY

This section offers guidance in implementing DARE by including examples of tools educators may wish to use. These templates, presented in figures and resources, are neither exhaustive nor rigid. In other words, we suggest that you incorporate them into your existing resources, that you add to them, or that you modify them to make them applicable to your context. In our experience, teachers adopt or adapt tools that are easy to use in planning students' learning experiences or enacting those experiences during assessment and instruction. So our advice is to remember that as you modify these templates, avoid making tools that become too complicated.

As an example, Figure P.3 provides a rationale for encouraging academic conversations among students that has been drawn from five distinct areas of learning (per Zwiers & Crawford, 2011). Many the themes presented here are recurring throughout the book. It is paired with Resource P.1, which, in this case, replicates the figure and asks you to select the statements that best fit what you do in school to promote student learning.

REFLECT

This section summarizes ideas presented on each perspective. We discuss how teachers can *take the DARE* to benefit students, especially those who have been historically underserved, namely English language learners, ELLs with disabilities, and speakers of other varieties of English.

Because academic language affords students opportunities to access college and career readiness standards, content, and practices, it is vital that students who have been historically underserved—ELLs, students with interrupted formal education, students with diverse socioeconomic status, and students with disabilities, among others—experience, develop, and use academic language. Throughout the book, we offer ways to be more inclusive of students in integrating language into the planning and designing of curriculum, assessment, and instruction.

Spotlighting academic language in the classroom can be influential in promoting students' academic achievement; however, it is more powerful as a focus at the school level. Systemic approaches to enhancing academic language for all students provides the most effective impact on their academic achievement. To accomplish this, it is

FIGURE P.3 Reasons for Promoting Academic Conversations in School

ACADEMIC CONVERSATIONS AMONG STUDENTS				
1. REINFORCE LANGUAGE AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT BY ...	2. ENHANCE COGNITIVE ENGAGEMENT BY ...	3. PROMOTE CONTENT AREA ACHIEVEMENT BY ...	4. HAVE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL BENEFITS BY ...	5. TAP PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL EMOTIONAL NEEDS BY ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging academic language use • Increasing vocabulary in authentic contexts • Connecting experiences to literacy skills • Building oral language and communication skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focusing on higher-order thinking • Promoting different perspectives and empathy • Advancing creativity • Fostering skills for negotiating meaning and staying on topic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building conceptual understanding • Cultivating connections among disciplines • Helping students coconstruct understanding • Helping teachers and students assess learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening relationships and trust • Building an academic learning environment • Making activities more culturally sensitive and relevant • Fostering equity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing inner dialogue and self-talk • Fostering engagement and motivation • Boosting confidence • Cultivating choice, ownership, and control over thinking • Raising academic identity • Advancing self-discovery • Enabling student voice and empowerment

Source: Adapted from Gottlieb and Ernst-Slavit (2014, p. 17).

important for every educator in the school or system to have a common definition and understanding of academic language. Learning and working together promotes collaboration among educators and, most important, provides consistency for students across classes and grade levels. It is here that the role of administrators becomes critical in creating structures and opportunities for educators to come together and plan around academic language use.

Take the DARE

Use the questions from the following table to find out about or document the language use of your students who receive support services. Share the data you gather with other educators who work with these students.

STUDENTS IDENTIFIED WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES, INCLUDING ELLS	STUDENTS WHO SPEAK OTHER VARIETIES OF ENGLISH, INCLUDING STANDARD ENGLISH LEARNERS (OTHER LANGUAGE LEARNERS)	STUDENTS IDENTIFIED AS ELLS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the student's preferred mode to communicate? • How does the student express himself or herself? • Does the student experience difficulty with receptive language (e.g., listening and/or reading)? • Does the student experience difficulty with expressive language (e.g., speaking and/or writing)? • Does the student have language goals as part of his or her individualized education program (IEP)? • What are some of his or her strengths in the use of language or in communicating with others? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the student use language at school with peers and adults? • How does the student use language when learning new ideas or concepts? • How does the student use language to describe or share what he or she knows? • What are the strengths of the student's language use? • Does the student know and use a language other than English? If so, which one? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What language(s) does the student speak or understand? • How does the student use his or her languages? With whom? For what purposes? Under what circumstances? • Which language(s) does the student understand orally? In written form? • What language(s) does the student speak? Write? • What was the language(s) used in his or her previous schooling? • Has the student participated in a language support program (i.e., Title I, Title III, or special education)? • What are some of the student's language goals?

TAKE ACTION

This last section puts forward questions and suggests activities that, we hope, move the ideas in each chapter into action. It aims to provide inspiration in the work of teachers and school leaders to *take the DARE* and begin discussions with others at school.

As educators begin to think about academic language use, here are some ideas and questions to ponder or *discuss* with others.

1. Gather demographic data on your students, including school history, academic achievement, and other languages spoken at home. After reviewing the data, exchange information with colleagues in answering the following questions:

- a. What assets and challenges do our students bring with them?
 - b. What linguistic and cultural resources do they possess?
 - c. How can we connect the language required of college and career readiness standards to students' experiences with language?
2. How is academic language use present throughout our school—in hallways, classrooms, and common areas? How can we make it more visible? How can we elicit students to help us?
 3. What is your own experience in learning academic language in English or an additional language? What were some of your challenges, and how did you overcome them? What were some advantages of language learning, and how did you leverage them to make yourself understood by others?
 4. What are some existing structures or resources that can support a focus on academic language use at your school? How can you make academic language learning a whole-school effort? What might you need? How can you get it?

Our goal with this book is to begin conversations in spaces where they may not exist and to move the conversation forward for educators who may already be thinking about academic language use and its impact on academic achievement. With this in mind, we touch on some important themes throughout the book to help you, the reader, make connections to other initiatives in your schools or to identify points of entry for discussions around language. These themes include

- 21st century schools and classrooms
- Linguistic and cultural sustainability
- Increased attention and acknowledgment of students and families as decision makers in education

In order to make academic language use and the themes of our book more tangible and powerful, we have included a range of materials, tools, and resources in each chapter. Each resource within a chapter is partially completed to suggest how you might wish to approach it; there is a corresponding blank template of each resource at the close of each chapter for your personal use. We thank our friends at BrainPOP® (www.brainpop.com) for sharing their wealth of resources to help us bring key uses of academic language to life.

RESOURCE P.1 Reasons for Promoting Academic Conversations in School

Individually or in teacher teams, brainstorm how you might strategically increase the quantity and quality of academic conversations in your classroom. You are welcome to borrow ideas from Figure P.3 and suggest others on your own. Refer to this resource throughout the year to evaluate the extent you are reaching the whole student.

Teacher or Teacher Team: _____ Date: _____

ACADEMIC CONVERSATIONS AMONG STUDENTS				
1. REINFORCE LANGUAGE AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT BY ...	2. ENHANCE COGNITIVE ENGAGEMENT BY ...	3. PROMOTE CONTENT AREA ACHIEVEMENT BY ...	4. HAVE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL BENEFITS BY ...	5. TAP PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL EMOTIONAL NEEDS BY ...

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