Title: Student-Led Discussions (Socratic seminar, Fishbowl)

The Basics

What? A discussion strategy in which students lead a discussion about complex text(s)

When? While students are working to understand a single text and/or comparing and contrasting ideas across multiple texts

Why? Allows students to refine their thinking about text(s) and formulate new ideas about text(s) based on the ideas of others in preparation for writing about text(s)

Student Outcomes

This strategy helps students refine their understanding of complex texts to meet reading expectations, engage in a variety of group conversations, and prepare for writing about texts.

How to Implement

1. Identify a concept or theme related to the unit focus and determine the text(s) that address the concept or theme.
2. Decide when best to conduct the discussion (at what point in reading the text(s))
3. Create a question or series of questions about the concept or theme and how it applies to the text(s).
4. Present the question(s) to students and have them complete an evidence chart to locate evidence for the discussion.
5. Group the students into the best discussion format. Samples of discussion formats are included in "Resources for Additional Information."
6. Work with students to establish ground rules for the discussion, including the use of accountable talk and the roles of each circle in the discussion.
7. Begin the discussion by asking the initial question.
8. Monitor and evaluate the content of the discussion and student contribution.
9. Provide different rounds of discussion in which students switch roles between speaker and listener.
10. Prompt students to offer feedback in between rounds of discussion.

Resources for Additional Information

- Rationale and procedure from FacingHistory.org.
- Video explaining this process (using the "wingman" formation)
- Brief outline from ReadWriteThink.org of implementation steps for teachers
- Video of a pinwheel discussion format
- Video of "Text Talk Time"
- Examples of how to use in lessons: Grades 3-5, Grades 6-8, Grades 9-12