

MODEL TPA COMMENTARY RESPONSES

Notice the specificity and clarity. Also, pay attention to how the writer provides examples and then analyzes those examples in light of the prompt.

d. **Language Supports.** Refer to your lesson plans and instructional materials as needed in your response to the prompt.

- Describe the instructional supports (during and/or prior to the learning task) that help students understand and successfully use the language function and additional language identified in prompts 4a–c.

Students brainstormed their ideas of and attempted to define “prejudice” and “justice” as their opening freewrite on Day 1. Students then paired and shared before discussing our ideas of prejudice and justice as a class. I wrote down students’ ideas and definitions on the board as they shared them, and we then agreed upon a class definition for both words prior to starting the Philosophical Chairs activity.

Expectations for using academic discussion terms/discussion frames were reviewed prior to beginning the activity; I showed and reviewed with students the discussion frames posted on both sides of the Smartboard at the front of the room for them to refer to during our discussions. I modeled discussion frames during my facilitation of our discussions, and reminded students to articulate their ideas using discussion frames when necessary. Discussion terms included: “I would like to build off what you said...,” “My idea is related to that idea...,” “While I agree with...I disagree in that...,” “I understand what you’re saying, but...,” “Along those same lines, I feel that...”

By collectively discussing and defining the major concepts (“prejudice” and “justice”), we developed a shared understanding of the terms and were able to have a more precise and thoughtful discussion. The discussion frames provided students with the language they needed to discuss the text in an academic manner. They also provided a structure for respectful disagreement. Since my students do not typically use this kind of language in their day-to-day conversations, these frames gave them both the tools and the permission to express their ideas honestly, but politely.

2. Promoting a Positive Learning Environment

Identify scenes in the video clip(s) where you provided a positive learning environment.

- How did you demonstrate mutual respect for, rapport with, and responsiveness to students with varied needs and backgrounds, and challenge students to engage in learning?

Establishing and enforcing the “rules of engagement” for the Philosophical Chairs activity helped create and maintain a positive learning environment during our discussion. At one point during the conversation, a few students heckled another student for something he said, at which point it was easy to remind them of the rules of engagement we’d all agreed upon prior to beginning the activity by asking “remember one of our rules of engagement is talking about the ideas but not attacking the person who says them, right?” (2:30). Establishing rules and norms for behavior prior to discussion allows for a safe environment for all students--from all backgrounds-- to voice their opinions and ideas without fear of rejection or being made fun of. The purpose of this discussion-based event is to teach students to hear and acknowledge varying points of view and to be able to respond respectfully and critically, even if they disagree.

Recognizing and validating students’ ideas even when they are off topic is also important in demonstrating respect for and responsiveness to students. For example, while discussing the idea of prejudice, a student brought up the idea of people not liking some music or movies, which while true was not relevant to the idea of prejudice as we were discussing it. Instead of shutting a student down or telling Rhim he is wrong, I was able to acknowledge what the student was saying while refocusing the conversation, saying “I think those ideas are valid, let’s keep it in the realm of prejudice against other people” (:43).