Academic Language for Secondary English Classrooms

Using Sentence Stems to Support Common Core Learning Standards

Working Definitions

Academic Language is the language of the discipline as well as the language used for all academic purposes.

- Discipline: Simile, symbolism, theme, etc.
- Academic Purposes: convey, compare, evaluate, etc.

Language Function is the content and focus of the learning task represented by the action verb in the learning outcome, such as analyze, explain, evaluate, etc.

Language Demands are what students need to understand and/or use that is associated with the language function that is identified.

Example Sentence Stems for ELA Classrooms

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development.

- The theme of _____ is conveyed by_____.

- The author conveys the theme of _____ through the development of _____.

- This development is evident when the author writes, "_____"

Examples Cont.

Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

- The word(s) _____ is/are intended to reveal _____

- This implies a _____ tone, which allows the reader to _____

- The word _____ connotes _____ because…" or "The author uses the words _____ figuratively in order to….."

Examples Cont.

Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

- The author examines the evidence by noting "_____," which is intended to support his/her claim that, "_____."

- This evidence is irrelevant/credible because…

Closing Points

- Accessibility
- Don't let them become a crutch
- Start with the words in the standards
- Teach the words first
- Speaking and Listening Standards
- Have they mastered the objective?
- Examples in Handbook