

Facilitator Dialogue Phrases

“What’s another answer?” (Moorman and Weber)

Different right answers encourage critical and creative thinking.

“Thank you for taking a risk.” (Moorman and Weber)

Acknowledging the risks students take can encourage them to speak more.

“Do you want some help or do you want more time?” (Moorman and Weber)

Gives students a choice when they are stuck.

“Act as if.” “Play like you can.” “Pretend you can.” (Moorman and Weber)

At some point in the seminar process, a student may say the dreaded words, “I can’t.” It may be about reading aloud, interpreting the text, speaking in class, or any number of other possibilities. Moorman and Weber (1989) suggest the following:

Many teachers reply, “Sure you can, come on, *try*.” Teachers believe that if students try, they will prove to themselves that they can. It sounds logical but it does not work. Typically, students respond with “I’m trying.” Neither the teacher nor the student realizes that trying does not work. *Doing* works. “Try” is too often used as an excuse for giving up. Anybody busy *trying* is not busy *doing*. (p. 70).

“What in the text supports what you’re saying?”

This phrase keeps the conversation objective and grounded in the text.

“What’s an example of that?”

Examples can be powerful tools for understanding abstract or difficult ideas.

“I’d like to hear from someone who hasn’t spoken yet.”

A simple phrase to invite a shy or indecisive student without pressure.

“Could you rephrase that?”

Attempting to get to a clearer explanation.

“How does that relate to what we’ve been saying?”

For curtailing tangents or connecting unclear ideas.

Moorman, C. & Weber, N. (1989). *Teacher talk: what it really means*.