

## *Using Prompts to Spark Discussions about Books*

**Summary:** Giving younger students the space to discuss books is a powerful way to build up their reading skills, but only if the discussion is structured through explicit teacher instruction and facilitation (McIntyre, 2007; McIntyre, et al., 2006). In an article for *The Reading Teacher*, two researchers from Literacy Partners International and two teachers from a Virginia elementary school explore using discussion prompts to promote thinking and conversation about books.

### **Practical Applications**

Over several years, the authors developed four main prompts and posted them in quadrants on a colored ‘spinner game wheel’ to make the work more engaging to students. The prompts are:

- “Talk about your favorite parts.”
- “This book reminds me of...”
- “Add something new to the book.”
- “Tell me in your own words what happened in the book.”

There are several key suggestions for introducing and teaching the prompts, including:

- Introduce the prompts one at a time
- Use think-alouds and model using the prompts early and often
- Give students chances to practice with each prompt both in peer groups and on their own
- Only begin using the wheel once each prompt has been introduced and practiced
- Use a big wheel for class discussions and give each student a smaller wheel for individual and/or partner work
- Over time, phase out reliance on the wheels as students become more comfortable responding on their own

### **Conclusion and Citation**

Utilizing the prompts, discussions about reading can be integrated into different content areas. The authors suggest that, “the systematic teaching of the prompts provided a framework for thinking about books, both before and after reading. As a result ... students began to understand that reading related to meaning and was something that they could think and talk about.”

Blum, I., Koskinen, P., Bhartiya, P. & Hluboky, S. “Thinking and Talking About Books: Using Prompts to Stimulate Discussion.” *The Reading Teacher*, 63.6 (2010), pp. 495-499. <http://tinyurl.com/y3cdz3d> (subscription only).