Annotated Bibliography


Chapter two of *Discussion as a Way of Teaching* outlines multiple benefits of discussion in the classroom if students are dedicated and mindful. Brookfield and Preskill break the benefits down into fifteen categories that range from the direct to the indirect advantages of including discussion in the classroom. This book is aimed towards teachers of high school or college courses, but I think the benefits could translate to the middle school classroom, as well. These benefits will be useful when ultimately looked at in comparison to the benefits I recognized.


This paper outlines a study on the “impact of a teacher’s interpretive authority” and finds that reduced teacher authority actually fosters dialogue in the classroom. Smith and Connolly state that in order to have effective dialogue, discussion must contain a
“juxtaposition of relative perspectives,” therefore, a discussion controlled by a teacher is most often ineffective. Teachers often lead classroom discussions in which they lead students towards the conclusion that they themselves have already made through multiple readings of the book. This essentially turns the “discussion” into a monologue in which there is no room for movement. Smith and Connolly argue that the long-standing tradition on I.R.E. (initiation, response, evaluation) has stifled the students, and rendered the teacher a dictator of discussion. Even when teachers attempt to break this pattern, they find it difficult to do so. One teacher in this study tested the effect of his interpretive authority on the discussion of poetry. In one class he taught a poem that he had written (the highest level of interpretive authority). In another class, he taught a poem that he has read and taught several times (a medium level of interpretive authority). And, in another class he taught a poem that he had never read before (the least interpretive form of authority). It was discovered that the students has the best discussion and felt most free to offer their ideas and opinions when he held the least interpretive authority.