

TABLE 18.2

## Components of Instructional Conversations

INSTRUCTIONAL ELEMENTS	HOW TO IMPLEMENT
1. Thematic focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select a theme or idea as a starting point for focusing the discussion.</li> <li>• Make a general plan for how the theme will unfold.</li> </ul>
2. Activation and use of background knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide students with necessary background knowledge for understanding the text by weaving the knowledge into the discussions.</li> </ul>
3. Direct teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When necessary, teach a skill or concept directly.</li> </ul>
4. Promotion of more complex language and expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elicit more complex language by asking students to expand on their thoughts, questioning them, and restating their contributions using more complex grammar and vocabulary.</li> </ul>
5. Promotion of bases for statements or positions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage students to use text, pictures, and reasoning to support an argument or a position.</li> <li>• Probe for the bases of students' statements (e.g., ask "How do you know?").</li> </ul>
6. Fewer "known-answer" questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on questions for which there might be more than one correct answer.</li> </ul>
7. Responsiveness to student contributions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be responsive to students' statements and the opportunities they provide for further discussion, while maintaining the focus and coherence of the discussion and the initial plan for the discussion.</li> </ul>
8. Connected discourse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be sure the discussion involves interaction and turn taking so that succeeding contributions build on and extend previous ones.</li> </ul>
9. A challenging but nonthreatening atmosphere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an open, supportive environment that challenges students to negotiate and construct the meaning of the text.</li> </ul>
10. General participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage students to volunteer to speak or to influence the selection of speaking turns rather than directly determining who speaks.</li> </ul>

SOURCE: Adapted from Goldenberg, 1992/1993.