INSTRUCTOR SUPPORT FOR LEADING MEANING-MAKING DISCUSSIONS

–Stimulating student-to-student discussions about how to interpret, explain and make sense of the natural world can be extremely rewarding learning experiences for students and instructors alike.
–Leading discussions like this takes practice–this resource can help guide your planning and build your facilitation skills. Begin by choosing one or two goals to focus on as you lead a discussion. Always initiate a meaning-making discussion with a relevant, broad question that is of interest to students. The prompts for each of the goals listed below are designed to help students think, listen, and articulate their ideas in different ways. Listen carefully to students and think about how you might respond in order to support them in making sense of the object or the phenomenon.
–Practice using these prompts/moves until, eventually, you feel comfortable making "on-the-fly" instructional decisions and moving appropriately between each of these goals to lead an extended meaning-making discussion.

Goals and Prompts/Moves

GOAL ONE: IGNITE AND FAN THE FLAMES OF DISCUSSION

❒ **1. Stimulate curiosity.**
- → Ask relevant, broad questions that are of interest to students.
- → Judiciously (and only when helpful) introduce content that stimulates further discussion.

GOAL TWO: HELP INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS SHARE, EXPAND, AND CLARIFY THEIR OWN THINKING

❒ **2. Provide time to think.**
- → Partner Talk
- → Journal writing as Think Time
- → Allow wait time before calling on students

❒ **3. Ask students to elaborate.**
- → "Can you say more about that?"
- → "What do you mean by that?"
- → "Can you give an example?"

❒ 4. **Understand students' statements before moving on.**
- → Ask: "So, let me see if I've got what you're saying…?"
- → Make sure to leave space for the original student to agree or disagree and say more.

GOAL THREE: HELP STUDENTS LISTEN TO EACH OTHER AND TRACK WITH THE DISCUSSION

❒ **5. Check for group understanding.**
- → "Who can repeat what Javon just said or put it into their own words?"
- → "Give a thumbs up if you heard what Carla just said."
- → "Can say that last part again to make sure everyone heard you?"
- → "Christina, can you define that word you just used in case someone in the group doesn't know what it means?"

GOAL FOUR: HELP STUDENTS DEEPEN THEIR REASONING

❒ **6. Ask for evidence or reasoning.**
- → "What makes you think that?"
- → "What's your evidence?"
- → "Where did you get that example?"

❒ **7. Ask for rationale behind student thinking, or provide a counterexample.**
- → "Does it always work that way?"
- → "How does that idea square with Sonia's example?"
- → "Do you know if raccoons are active during the daytime?"

GOAL FIVE: HELP STUDENTS THINK WITH OTHERS/DEVELOP ARGUMENTATION SKILLS

❒ **8. Ask students to disagree politely.**
- → "Do you agree/disagree? Why?"
- → "What do people think about what Ian just said?"
- → "Does anyone want to respond to that idea?"

❒ **9. Invite students to add on to the discussion.**
- → "Who can add onto the idea that Jamal is building?"
- → "Can anyone take that suggestion and push it a little further?"

Adapted from Talk Science Primer (2012), TERC