

LESSON 12: EXTENDING CONVERSATION

Why Use It?

As students become more accustomed to working together, we want them to start taking more control over their own conversations. The Neighborhood Map is a great tool when pairs are practicing ways of beginning and extending conversations. Plus, the map is an absolute treasure chest of personal writing prompts.



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Students start by drawing a map of a neighborhood where they have lived, adding symbols that represent their memories. These maps typically evoke lots of thought and creativity. When other students look at them, they have a hard time deciding which memory they want to hear about. As students continue to use their maps for conversation, they automatically add and revise the maps because sharing gives them new ideas and helps them recall memories they did not initially include. Sometimes, sharing memories from one map even spurs students to create new maps, with different neighborhoods and different memories. Go for it!

Another good reason for making a Neighborhood Map is that it creates detailed notes that use few words. For English language learners, graphic note taking is a perfect accommodation. Pictures transcend language. When students draw their maps, they are also mentally rehearsing their stories. While it is sometimes hard for language learners to respond quickly in an impromptu conversation, this mental rehearsal enables them to share their stories with greater confidence.

When to Use It

Extending conversation via the Neighborhood Map is something that can be started anytime. However, students find it fun to begin their maps early in the year. After the initial conversations, the maps can be put away and then retrieved periodically for revision and new conversation, possibly when the class mix changes or students have new partners and new groups. As you'll see, we use the maps again in Lesson 13.

Preparation

- Gather plain paper (legal size is better), skinny colored markers, colored pencils, plain pencils, or pens.
- Decide how students will be forming pairs in Slide 7, when it comes time to exchange and talk about their maps.

The Lesson

Slide 1



TITLE: **Extending Conversation**

Slide 2



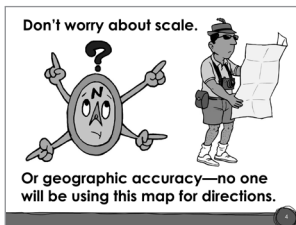
- When introducing this assignment, we really emphasize that kids need to think of a place that holds a lot of memories.
- This could include some of the examples pictured here or someplace else: the elementary school, a sports field, the woods, a place of work (if students are older), etc.

Slide 3



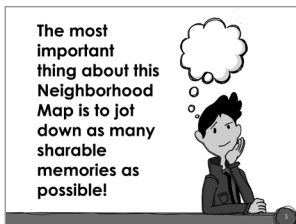
- Overview of map making, with one student example.
- *It might look something like this.*

Slide 4



- *As you think about your map, don't worry about accuracy or directions or scale. This is not a map anyone is going to try to use to find a physical location. This map is the exact opposite of getting directions from Google Maps!*

Slide 5



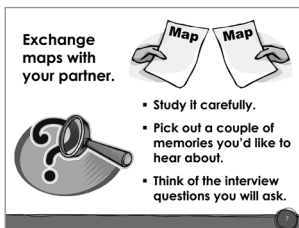
- *What is important about this map is the memories. Also, as you think about your neighborhood and events that happened there, keep in mind that your maps will be shared with others. If there is a memory that's too personal to share, you probably don't want to include it on your map.*
- Yes, we are asking that students censor what they might write down, but the whole point of this activity is to create an inventory of ideas that *can* be shared. Later, when we start to use these maps with partners, we've found it very frustrating for kids when their partners refuse to share anything on their maps because it is "too personal"; hence, the sharable memory rule.
- If you are working with older kids, you will also want to remind them:
 - *As your map begins to take shape in your thinking, remember that we've got to stick to school-appropriate memories.*

Slide 6



- Redisplay the example map and answer any questions.
- You'll want to decide on a minimum number of memories for the map, possibly ten to begin with. Now give students some time to sketch. With plenty of drawing time, it's not uncommon for kids to label twenty-five memories, events, and highlights.
- You might get the kids started by having them think about questions like these:
 - *What did your yard or your street look like? What events happened there?*
 - *Whom did you hang around with in your neighborhood as you were growing up? Where did you like to hang out?*
 - *What games or sports did you play in your neighborhood? Where?*
 - *Ever have an accident or injury? Ever get in trouble?*
 - *Did you have any pets? Which ones stand out? What stories could you tell about them?*
 - *What was your first day of school like when you entered elementary school? Middle school? High school?*
 - *What's in your bedroom that holds memories? What souvenirs, trophies, sports items, or clothing do you keep because of the memory?*
 - *What memories involve your siblings?*
- We like to use ten to fifteen minutes in class to get a start on the maps and then stop to share what they've gotten so far. If you choose, students can continue to work on their maps outside of class—or they can move right on to the next step.
- As students sketch, monitor closely, zooming in on those who finish super-early. For those students, use some quick conferencing to help them think of more memories for the map.
- Be sure to decide ahead of time how “final draft” you want these maps to be. We often just treat them as ongoing rough sketches that, as we mentioned earlier, are added to as the year progresses. However, students often enjoy creating a neat, colorful, and carefully planned final version. This might be something to do toward the end of the year, when all possible memories are recorded on the rough drafts.

Slide 7



- Monitor students once they exchange maps and study them. For those who only give their map a cursory glance, ask them about the memory they've chosen and what questions they plan to ask.
- If you desire, have students jot down the memory that's sparked curiosity; then, underneath, have them list questions they could ask when they interview their partner about that memory.

Slide 8

It's time to interview your partner!

Try to keep your interview focused on just one item from the map.

Listen carefully and ask lots of open-ended follow-up questions.



- Let partners decide who will start.
- Before the interviews begin, review how the best follow-up questions result from careful listening.
- Remind those being interviewed to give plenty of interesting details.

Slide 9

Take turns interviewing each other.



- Allow about two minutes per pairing.

Slide 10

Who had a partner with an interesting memory?



- Hearing a few stories is a great way to introduce the concept of *segue*. Rather than just hearing some memories at random, challenge students to find ways to connect the next story with the previous one.
 - *What do they have in common?*

Slide 11

Thank your partner for sharing his/her memories with you.



- *Never forget saying thank you!*
- It doesn't take much time, and the contribution it makes to a positive environment is truly astounding. If students ever complain that it seems phony, just tell them that they need more practice at thanking others. Eventually, it will be a skill that comes naturally and seems real. Also, being thanked for one's efforts is something people never get tired of!