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HARVEY "SMOKEY" DANIELS • NANCY STEINEKE

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TEACHING  
THE **SOCIAL**  
**SKILLS**  
OF **ACADEMIC**  
**INTERACTION**

Step-by-Step Lessons for  
**Respect, Responsibility, and Results**



**Grades 4–12**

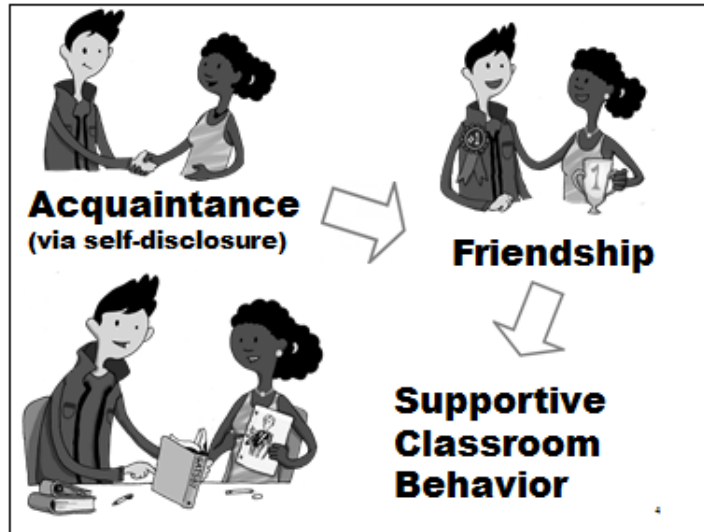
With Illustrations by  
**SATYA MOSES**



## Ice Breaking: The Key to Engaged Students Nancy Steineke

### TIP:

Better to devote 5 minutes of most class days to team building rather than a whole week of “community building” in the beginning of the year.



### Try to practice...

- Helping each other
- Following the directions
- Talking *only* to each other
- Using quiet voices
- Making eye contact
- Smiling
- Sharing the work equally



## LESSON 2: INTERVIEWING YOUR PARTNER

### Why Use It?

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Students who have good working relationships are far more likely to also be invested in the collaborative academic tasks.

Partner interviewing is one of the most important structures in our skill-building toolkit. When students interview each other, they are enacting the virtuous cycle: *acquaintance leads to friendliness, which leads to supportive behavior*. The more you know about someone, the harder it is to be a bad partner, since you are becoming more personally invested in the relationship. And, students who have good working relationships are far more likely to also be invested in the collaborative academic tasks with which they are presented. Besides the social maintenance benefits of interviewing, this activity offers a nonthreatening platform in which to practice important discussion skills: careful listening, asking follow-up questions, and negotiating topics for discussion.

### When to Use It

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We made this the second lesson in the book for a reason: the sooner kids begin interviewing each other, the faster your classroom community will grow. We like to use this lesson the first time any pairs work together, and we'll roll kids through several different partners in the following days. As you'll see, the core of this lesson is *teacher modeling*, using a student volunteer as a partner. We carefully show kids *how* to interview a partner before we release them to do it on their own. Later, we also use interviewing as a warm-up every time small groups meet, with lessons like the Membership Grid (page 213 in the Resources and [www.corwin.com/teachingsocialskills](http://www.corwin.com/teachingsocialskills)). Long experience has shown us that even when a group has been working together for a while, members still need brief opportunities to touch base personally, warming up to discussion by getting to know each other just a little bit better each time.

### Preparation

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- Beforehand, decide how pairs will be formed.
- Decide how students will record their interview notes: on paper you hand out, loose-leaf retrieved from binders, or composition books.
- We like to have students take notes for their first five or six interviews and then use those notes for charting their progress as interviewers. Once students demonstrate skillful listening and questioning, you may choose to eliminate the note taking.

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# The Lesson

## Slide 1



TITLE: Interviewing Your Partner

## Slide 2



The key to a good interview is listening and asking good questions.

→ Project and read aloud.

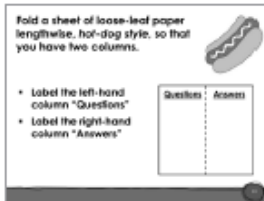
## Slide 3



First, we'll do an interview together, and then you'll try one on your own.

→ Project and read aloud.

## Slide 4



Fold a sheet of loose-leaf paper lengthwise, hot-dog style, so that you have two columns.

- Label the left-hand column "Questions"
- Label the right-hand column "Answers"



- Have kids sitting with their partners.
- With this slide, you're just setting up the note taking. Where we come from, folding a piece of paper vertically is called "hot-dog style," and horizontally is "hamburger" style. Just saying.

## Slide 5



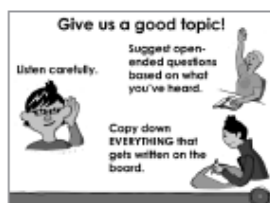
**TWO volunteers, please!**  
One to take notes & One to be interviewed

- Ask for one volunteer to be interviewed and a Student Scribe to take notes at the board (you will be the interviewer).
- If students are reluctant to volunteer, remind them that this class should be a safe place to learn and take risks.
- When you do get those volunteers, thank them profusely and have the class give each of them a big round of applause.

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- If these volunteers come from two different pairs, match up their now deserted partners as a new working pair. If they were a pair to begin with, no adjustment is needed.
- Pull two chairs up to the front of the room for the demonstration.
- Put the chairs in a good partner seating position, as in Lesson 1.
- Have your interview partner sit down while you set the Student Scribe up at the board or on the computer, using the same two-column format that the students are using.
- The Scribe's job is to jot down the questions you ask and the information gathered as you conduct your interview.
- Remind the class:
  - *The job of Student Scribe is very hard because it requires one to think and write so quickly. Therefore, do not worry about how the Scribe spells some words. You'll know what the Scribe means, so there's no need to point out any errors.*

### Slide 6



- Have partners brainstorm some school-appropriate interview topics.
- When they are finished brainstorming, ask pairs to volunteer topic ideas.
- Let your student partner pick the topic to be interviewed on.
- Before you begin the interview, remind the observing students:
  - *Listen very carefully so that you can offer good follow-up questions that will keep the interview going. I will pause and ask you for ideas as I go. Also, this is an example of the note taking you will need to complete when you conduct your own interviews. So that you will have a good model, be sure to copy down everything that the note taker writes on the board.*

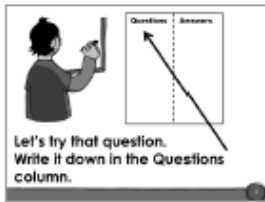
### Slide 7



- Start the interview by asking your student partner to talk a little bit about the chosen topic.
- Then stop and ask the class: *What information do we have so far?* Give partners thirty seconds to confer.
- Continue:
  - *I want to get more details from my partner. What opened-ended questions could I ask that are based on the details already mentioned? An opened-ended question is one that cannot be answered in a couple of words; your interviewee will really have to do some explaining to answer it.*
- Turn back to your partner and brainstorm two or three potential follow-up questions.
- Call on a few students and then pick the question that has the most potential.

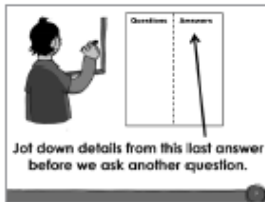
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Slide 8



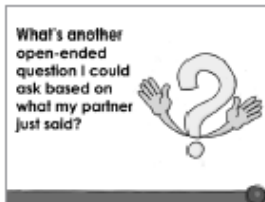
- While the Student Scribe and the class write down a follow-up in the Questions column, have your partner silently think about it.
- Tell the class:
  - *Having your partner think about the question while you write it down builds in wait time. That way your partner should be able to give you a better, more detailed response.*

Slide 9



- After the partner answers, have the note taker and the class jot down some key details in the Answers column.

Slide 10



- Again, ask partners to brainstorm questions based on what information has come out of the interview so far.
- Pick a question and try it out.

Slide 11



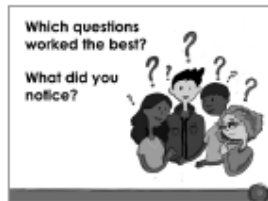
- The note taking continues for several questions and answers.
- Conclude your interview after three or four questions and answers.

Slide 12



- At the end of the interview, allow the note taker and interview subject to return to their partners, thanking them and calling for another big round of applause.

## Slide 13



- Have partners review the interview and talk together about what kinds of questions got the most interesting details.
- Share responses with the whole class.

## Slide 14



- After sharing, emphasize that the best questions are the ones that show you are really listening and are based on what your partner has just said.
- Good questions will continue the conversation on a topic in more detail.
- Also make this clear:
  - *It's the interview subject's job to answer the questions as thoroughly as they can. You're not being a good partner if you are giving one word answers or making it hard for the interview to be conducted.*

## Slide 15



- Check to see if anyone has any questions on how to take notes or conduct the interview.
- When students are first practicing this interview activity, it's easier if you tell them who interviews first: the person with the darkest color shirt, the person whose birthday is closest to July 4th, etc. Later, students can decide on their own.
- As students interview, monitor for open-ended questions and good note taking. As the initial interviews are winding down (two to three minutes), call time and have partners switch roles.

## Slide 16



- After partners have experienced both roles (about five to six minutes), end by having a few groups share what they talked about.

## Slide 17



- Then, last but not least, have partners turn to each other and thank each other for the great interviews.

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