

- (18) Rahel: /So they go on the arrows. To push it up.
- (19) Noe: And also bad is storms and wreck the ship.
- (20) Rahel: What is most heavy?
- (21) Noe: I think over the land.
- (22) Rahel: Why?
- (23) Noe: Diseases kill you. Snakes not so bad. And cold don't kill you if you got coats and fire.
- (24) Rahel: I think Panama is good. Is faster so not so much time out to get sick. Not so cold. No mountains or snow. And is most popular. What should we choose?
- (25) Noe: I can change to Panama. I don't wanna push wagons over mountains.
- (26) Rahel: Me too. OK, so we choose it. Cuz is warm, no snow, and is faster.
- (27) Noe: OK.

Notice the collaborative argumentation in this conversation. They build the first idea (overland route) and then the second one (Panama isthmus route). After they have clarified and supported the ideas using the balance scale visual, they then disagree on which side has evidence and reasoning that weighs more than the other. Noe eventually gets convinced that the Panama route is better, but he didn't have to. Notice that they referred to the text in Line 17 and used the visual organizer to organize their ideas according to their pushing down or pushing up (strong points or weak points of the evidence). They also put themselves in the shoes of historical people faced with the same decision.

FIFTH-GRADE LANGUAGE ARTS

Before this lesson, students had read "Learning the Game," a story by Francisco Jimenez (1997) that has parallels between two bullies, an older boy who excludes a younger friend from playing a game, and a boss that demeans a coworker of Francisco's by having the

coworker pull a plow. The teacher wanted students to work on skills of building an idea in their conversations, supporting it with evidence, and explaining how the evidence supports it. She used hand motions to help students remember these three key parts of making an argument. Look for conversation skills and different thinking skills. Do students challenge themselves and one another to use clear language and strong ideas? Also watch for when the teacher intervenes. Did her intervention help the conversation?

- (1) Teacher: Remember the last story we read with the caterpillar and how Francisco changed. In your conversations I want you to think about themes that are based on comparisons. And the title, this title is “Learning the Game” by Francisco Jimenez. Remember that authors include things for a reason, and they love to put in symbols and metaphors to teach us themes and lessons. Our focal skill for today is fortifying ideas with evidence. (She puts one hand under her other hand making a fist.) But we also want to use skills from the last two days, such as making a claim (fist out and down), and explaining them (hands up to face). Begin.
- (2) Ixchel: I think we need to talk about the game, and how Carlos makes up rules, and about Gabriel and the fight and Francisco and the game.
- (3) Ismael: They’re like each other.
- (4) Ixchel: What do you mean?
- (5) Ismael: Carlos makes his rules. Not fair. Diaz makes Gabriel pull a plow. That not fair. And he fired him. Also not fair.
- (6) Ixchel: Oh. OK. Diaz makes his own rules, like Carlos in the game. So it’s like rules of life, but they are bad. And Francisco stands up to Carlos, like Gabriel did to Diaz. So the theme?
- (7) Ismael: The theme maybe is not follow rules if not fair.

- (8) Ixchel: Not just games, I think. Life, too. Like Gabriel wasn't in a game. He was working. I don't know if/
- (9) Ismael: /So the game is life, and you don't follow rules if not fair. That's mine. What's your theme?
- (10) Ixchel: That's my theme, too!
- (11) Teacher: If you both built the theme, you both can own it. But remember that you need to work together to make it strong and clear to others. You need to use evidence and explain it clearly to others.
- (12) Ixchel: So we have to do the hands, claim (fist out and down), support (hand under fist), and explain it (hands to face).
- (13) Ismael: OK. Evidence. Francisco don't play the game cuz the rule that Manuelito . . . no puede jugar (can't play).
- (14) Ixchel: And evidence is Gabriel breaks Diaz rules. I think he was right. Then Francisco learns to break bad rules. And it's like that word (Ixchel looks at vocabulary chart on wall): boycott. All his brothers stop playing, and Carlos can't play.
- (15) Ismael: But Gabriel? He gets fired. He/
- (16) Ixchel: /Maybe he comes back and wins, like a movie.
- (17) Ismael: It's not a movie. It happened, and I think it's more real. Like in history things aren't fair, and bad people win.

Notice all the thinking and language in this conversation. The two were looking at two examples of evidence, one that was a literal game and one that was more figurative. They had to compare the two and use them to support their theme of not following rules if they aren't fair. There was also plenty of clarification, a use of a key word, *boycott*, and even the beginnings of a critical look at how movies don't always portray the injustices of real life (Line 17). We doubt if this much thinking and language would have happened in