**Principles of Productive Classroom Discussions**

Behavior - mutual respect guides all behavior:

1. One person speaks at a time.
2. Respect everyone’s right to have an opinion.
3. Focus on the idea, not the person.
4. Avoid inappropriate language.
5. Don’t sabotage the discussion with outbursts, sarcasm, or attempts at humor.
6. Don’t have side conversations.
7. Take notes and write down your ideas so that you have them when your time comes to talk.
8. Speak loudly and clearly so that everyone can hear you.
9. Be confident in expressing your point-of-view but be open to other ideas. *“The mark of an educated mind is to entertain and idea without accepting it.” – Aristotle.*

Skills

1. Practice Active Listening. Good listening takes effort.
2. Ask for clarification. “What do you mean by…?”
3. Paraphrase other ideas. “So what I hear you saying is…”
4. Build on others’ ideas. “I think what John says about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is true, and it also applies to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
5. Challenge other ideas respectfully. “ I don’t agree with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”
6. Support ideas with evidence, if possible from the text.
7. Elaborate – don’t assume we know what you’re thinking.
8. Synthesize – make connections among ideas. “John and Sue seem to be talking about the same thing, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
9. Develop big questions. Often the key to finding a solution is to ask the right question.