Productive Talk Moves for Building Intellectual Communities

Revoicing: Students often have a difficult time verbally expressing their mathematical thoughts. Sometimes the teacher struggles with understanding just what a student is trying to say so there is even a greater possibility that other students are also struggling.
"Revoicing" allows teachers to restate what they think they understand and then asks the student to verify whether or not the teacher is correct. This helps a student clarify his own thinking and is important to improve the mathematical thinking and reasoning of all students. "Revoicing" is effective when a teacher understands what a student said but is not sure that other students understand. It allows more "thinking time" as students hear the idea again and can continue with an on-going discussion.

"So you're saying…"

"Let me see if I understand. I think I hear you say…"

Repeating: Having one student repeat what another previously said gives the class another rendition of the first idea and allows more time for them to process the idea. It helps students follow the conversation and understand the idea. "Repeating" also proves that other students were listening and provides evidence that the student's thinking was valued and taken seriously. Students come to realize that people are truly listening to their ideas and try to make their ideas clearer to understand by all.

"Can you repeat what John said?"
"In your own words, tell me what John said."

Reasoning: After a student's idea has been shared, a teacher can continue respectful discussion of that idea by asking other students whether they agree or disagree and why. The teacher remains neutral without supporting either position. This move allows focus on other's reasoning and causes students to apply their thinking to another's contribution.

"Do you agree or disagree? Why?"
"Why do you think it's different?"
"Tell me why you agree."

Adding on: "Adding on" might often follow the talk move of "revoicing" after a teacher or student restates an idea that has emerged. "Adding on" increases participation by asking others to either state agreement or disagreement or to add other comments. The prompting for more input on previous ideas helps students become more willing to weigh in on what the group is discussing.

> "Do you agree or disagree? Tell us what you're thinking about or say anything else you want to add."
> "Would someone like to add anything to this or say anymore about this?"

Waiting: Teachers are familiar with research about the importance of wait time following a question before calling on someone. However, wait time is also important after a student has been called on. Students should be given time to organize their thoughts before making their response. This allows students, especially second-language students, to make important contributions in the discussion. This waiting is often difficult for teachers to incorporate consistently because we are uncomfortable with the silence and feel we are putting students on the spot. If it is not used consistently, students often give up and fail to participate knowing they cannot "beat the clock."

> "Take your time…"
> "Think about what you want to say."