

**Melissa Pedraza** : 1st Grade Inclusion,  
Queens, NY

**Curriculum:** Reading

**Focus:** Text-to-text connections and  
accountable talk

**Reflections:** On team teaching, inclusion, and  
teacher mentoring

**Resources:** Melissa's materials

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**Leslie Richmond mentors  
Melissa and her co-teacher,  
Nikki, around the subject of  
"accountable talk."**



3 min. quicktime video: FAST: 9.8 MB / SLOW: 1.4  
MB

*Leslie: "There are two goals, a teaching point, and an overall goal. One of your overall goals is the discussion, to get them to be independent. What I was noticing and demonstrated was this way of moving back as a teacher--not 'not talking,' but giving them instructions to make them more independent. If your goal is for them to be more accountable in their talk, to really talk off something the last person said, sometimes the answer itself is secondary to the discussion. The idea of coming in and giving the answer isn't the important thing, what's coming in is the discussion, we want to foster their ability to look to each other. So that's a model that we're moving towards. The teacher really has to change her frame of mind: it's not about having the best discussion or the right answers, but it's about helping them to be independent."*

- Melissa Pedraza

**Melissa and Nikki model  
accountable talk in their  
classroom.**



3:30 min. quicktime video: FAST: 11.7 MB / SLOW:  
1.7MB

*Melissa: "This was the first time that we split from the whole group. The past few days that we did whole-group, it still felt like the same people were talking, and they're very set in their ways, very comfortable with saying, "Do you have another idea?" and "What does that remind you of?" and those simple things that you can just ask. But they're not listening to each other, and it doesn't always relate to what the last person said. So I just said, let's make the group smaller, because it's too easy to be unfocused in the whole group, and not to listen to the person on the other side of the room. So just to take it a step back, and make the group smaller so there's less to concentrate on, so that they can focus a little bit more. And then we'll scaffold it back up again."*

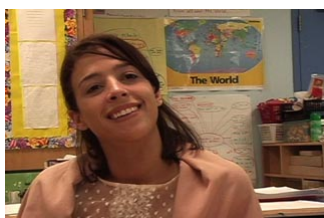
**Melissa explains the  
importance of having children  
be accountable to one another  
as they discuss books.**



1:53 min. quicktime video: FAST : 6 MB / SLOW: 940  
KB

*Melissa: "I knew it was going to be a challenge, but I didn't know it was going to be such a great challenge. This has required a lot of reflection and a lot of practice. Now I have a great interest in [discussion], because I think it's so important. Especially for this age. Especially for children with special needs. One of the most pivotal ways they take in information, and synthesize it, is by talking about it afterwards. That's why I think it's so important, why I'm still focusing on it."*

**Melissa talks about future  
plans for her class.**



1:44 min quicktime video: FAST: 4.3 MB or SLOW:  
860 KB.

*Melissa: "I see the students relying more on the prompts and the questions, I see them even thinking of their own questions. Just to see that, 'Oh, these are ideas that I can take, and change into questions to relate to what my friends are saying and what they're thinking about other books.' There are still those kids who, I know, are very capable of being in there and they're just not saying anything. I'm going to give them some more time. And I think I'm going to go to an even smaller group for those children. Maybe working with a partner who knows what we're expecting of them for a Book Talk, just kind of one-on-one to get them into it, and then move back to the larger group."*