Communication:
Five Talk Moves that Promote Access for All Learners

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What is Discourse?

The discourse of a classroom—the ways of representing, thinking, talking, agreeing, and disagreeing—is central to what students learn about mathematics.

Discourse is both the way ideas are exchanged and what the ideas entail:

- Who talks? About what? In what ways?
- What do people write, what do they record and why?
- What questions are important?
- How do ideas change?
- Whose ideas and ways of thinking are valued?
- Who determines when to end a discussion?

Discourse is shaped by the tasks that students engage in and the nature of the learning environment.

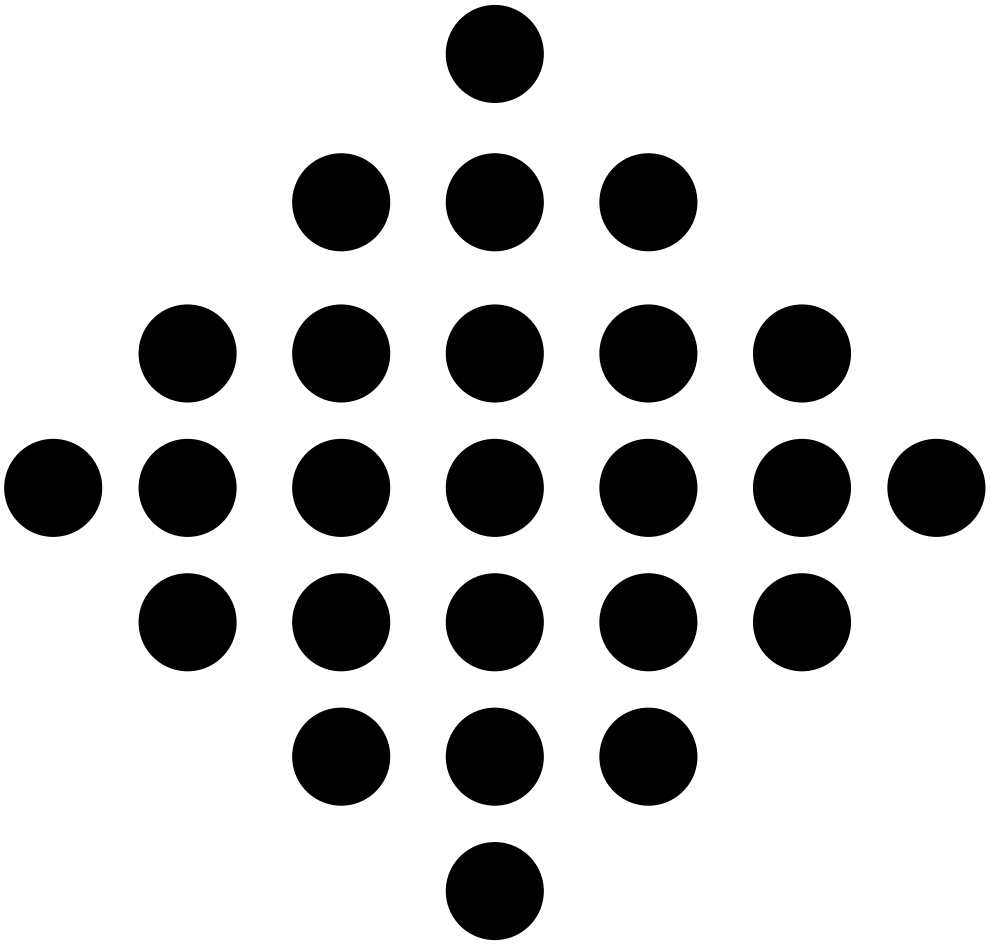
Adapted from NCTM *Professional Standards for Teaching Mathematics*

Talk Expectations

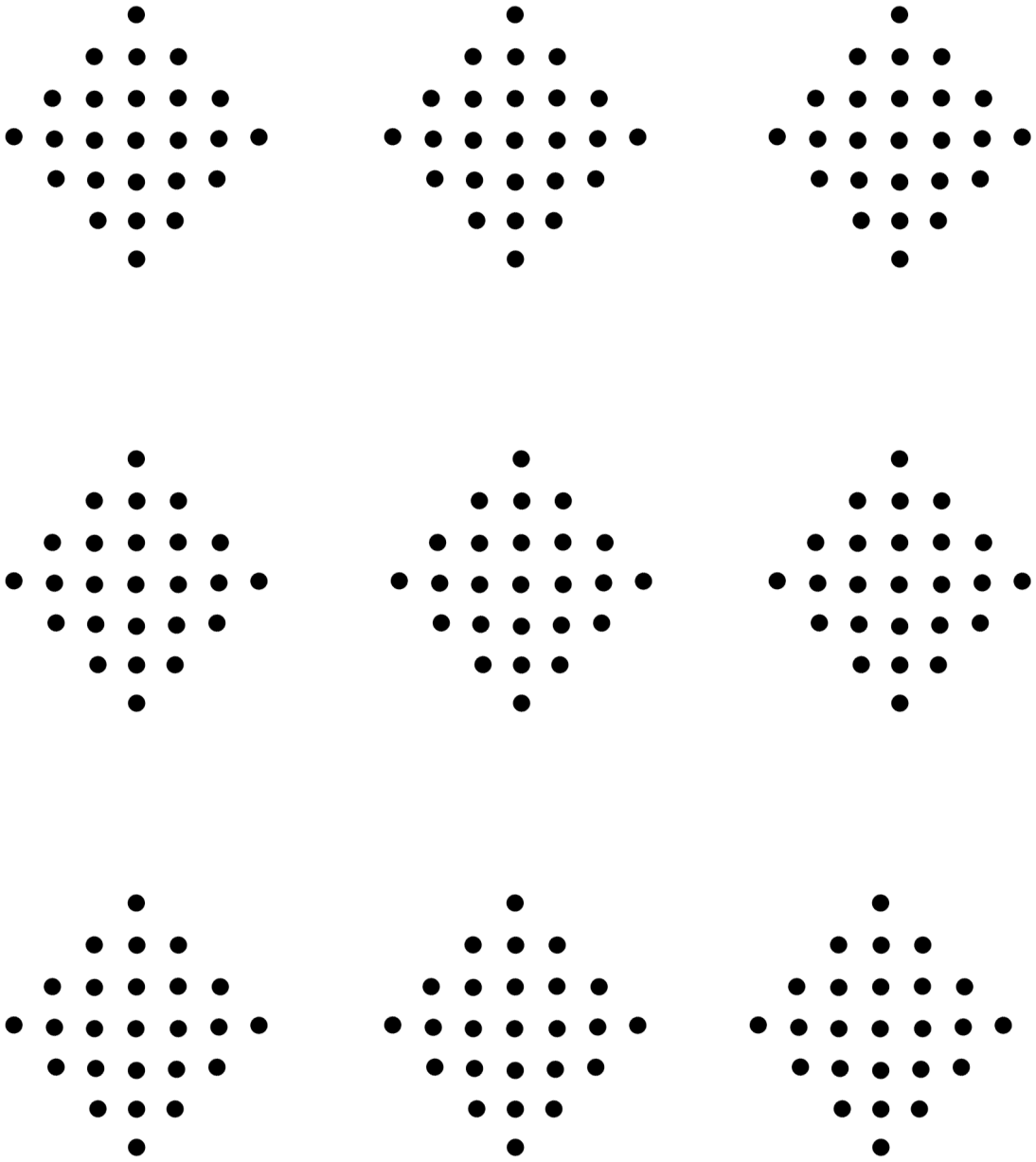
- **Everyone has the right to be heard**
- **Everyone has an obligation to listen and try to understand what the speaker is saying**
- **Everyone is obligated to ask questions when we don't understand**
- **The speaker has an obligation to try hard to be clear**
- **Everyone has a right to participate**

Adapted from *Classroom Discussions* by Chapin, O'Connor, and Anderson, Math Solutions Publications

Dot Pattern—Square Shape



Dot Pattern—Multiple Square Shapes



Talk Moves

- Revoicing
- Asking students to restate someone else's reasoning
- Asking students to apply their own reasoning to someone else's reasoning
- Prompting students for further participation
- Using wait time

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Principles of Productive Talk

- **Establish and maintain a respectful, supportive environment**
- **Keep the talk focused on the mathematics**
- **Carefully orchestrate talk to provide for equitable participation by all learners**
- **Explain expectations for new talk**
- **Try one new thing at a time**

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Our goal is not to increase the *amount* of talk in our classrooms,

but to increase the *amount of high quality* talk in our classrooms—the mathematical productive talk.

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