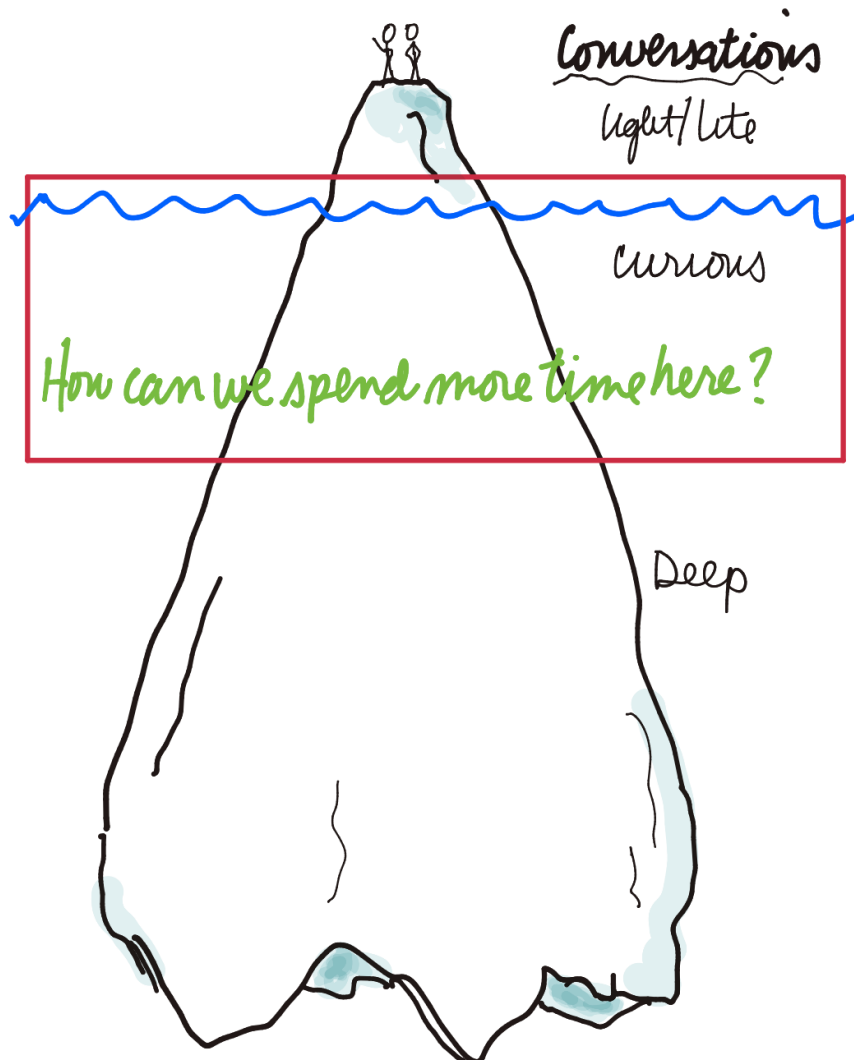


Low Prop Activities for Thinking Conversations, ACCT 2026

Workshop presentation by Dr. Chris Cavert

“How can we spend more time having curious conversations in our programs?” This premiss is what we briefly explored during the workshop.



I contend that providing more information and practice about having engaging, meaningful, and memorable conversations is a priority for all educators. Conversations skills, and conversations, are foundational to growing lasting relationships and communities.

Thank you for joining me at ACCT. And thank you for the important work you do!

Chris

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Playing Cards for Groups of Three: I removed one suit from a standard deck of cards so that I would have three cards remaining of each rank: 3 – Aces, 3 – 2s, 3 – 3s and so on. As participants came into the room, I greeted them and handed them a card. I started with all the Aces, then all the 2s, then the 3s and so on, so I knew I would be able to call for groups of three by asking everyone to find others holding the same rank as they were. (I intentionally wanted groups of three for the Conversation Pods activity. Removing a suit from the deck allows for a quick formation of threes. Keeping all the cards in the deck allows for easy groups of four, or pairs – and other quick group formations.)

NOTE: I pick up decks of cards at the Dollar Store. I don't worry about getting them back to a full deck at the end of a program.

Blind Shuffle: We learned the blind shuffle. Without looking at the ranks of the cards, I asked you to exchange cards with five different people, then stop moving, and to not look at your card until instructed to do so. After stopping, you were still allowed to exchange cards with others needing help. When everyone stopped moving, we knew the exchanges were complete. The Shuffle is done any time you want to mix-the-masses to form new-faces groups.

Then, I asked you all to find your people – those holding the same rank as you.

Conversations Pods: Together with your group, you put together three (or four) chairs into a small triangle (square) grouping near the outside walls of the room. Since we had chairs, we used them. For the Icebreaker Rounds activity, it is a nice treat to sit down during the conversations. If you don't have chairs to use, the good-old standing together works, or sitting on the floor/ground works for many groups as well (be mindful – some people are challenged with standing up after sitting on the ground).

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Icebreaker Rounds



Needs: We used Chad Littlefield's original **We Connect Cards** for this one. (You can find them at: Weand.Me – he now has a new 'Forward Thinking' deck of questions as well).

I spread out the green (fun, lite questions), and the blue (deeper questions) on the table.

Play: You were all together with your rank groups of three sitting at a conversation pod. I explained the depth of the green and blue question

cards at the table and then invited the person from your group who travelled the furthest to get to ACCT to pick up a card from the table and bring it back to their pod.

Round 1 As a 'thinking conversation' I invite the person with the card to answer the question – first reading the question to pod mates and then answering it with a focus on one or two key points without going too in depth. Then, the pod mates, after listening with some curiosity, get to ask the person with the question, some questions about their answer.

Depending on the age, and interest of the group, let this conversation go on for 3 to 5 minutes.

After this first conversation we reflected and shared together briefly:

- How did this 3-minute conversation feel?
- What are some skills of a good conversation?

Round 2 A second person (with the most hair on their cranium) was invited to pick up a question from the table. The pods repeated the process for 3-minutes. After this conversation we reflected and shared again:

- What are some roadblocks to good conversations?

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Shift to Conversation: Traditionally, everyone picks up an icebreaker question, pairs up, and then shares answers. Then, they switch cards and find another partner. One person answering a question and then fielding questions from curious listeners creates conversation. And the listeners do not have a question of their own to think about (distract them).

Thinking Phraseology

Head over to this [FUNdoing Post](#) for all the details on using Phraseology Cards and to download Deck 1. Go to [This Post](#) to get the new Deck 2.

Needs: One of both Decks of Phraseology cards ready to use.

Play: We had the Cards (Deck 1) laid out on the table and I explained to you about how we use the cards to make phrases. I asked you to identify, by looking at the cards, two cards that go together to make a common phrase, like “You can always” with “Get what you want”. Or “What goes up” with “Must come down”. We talked a little bit about what these common phrases mean.

Our mode of play was to think about and make new phrases with original meanings. Each of you chose a card from the table (and free to change cards any time). Then, you we’re invited to mingle, look at the cards in the group, think and find connects (with one or more cards/people) to make new meanings.

The purpose of this experience was to create the opportunity to be curious and have some conversations with others about making something new.

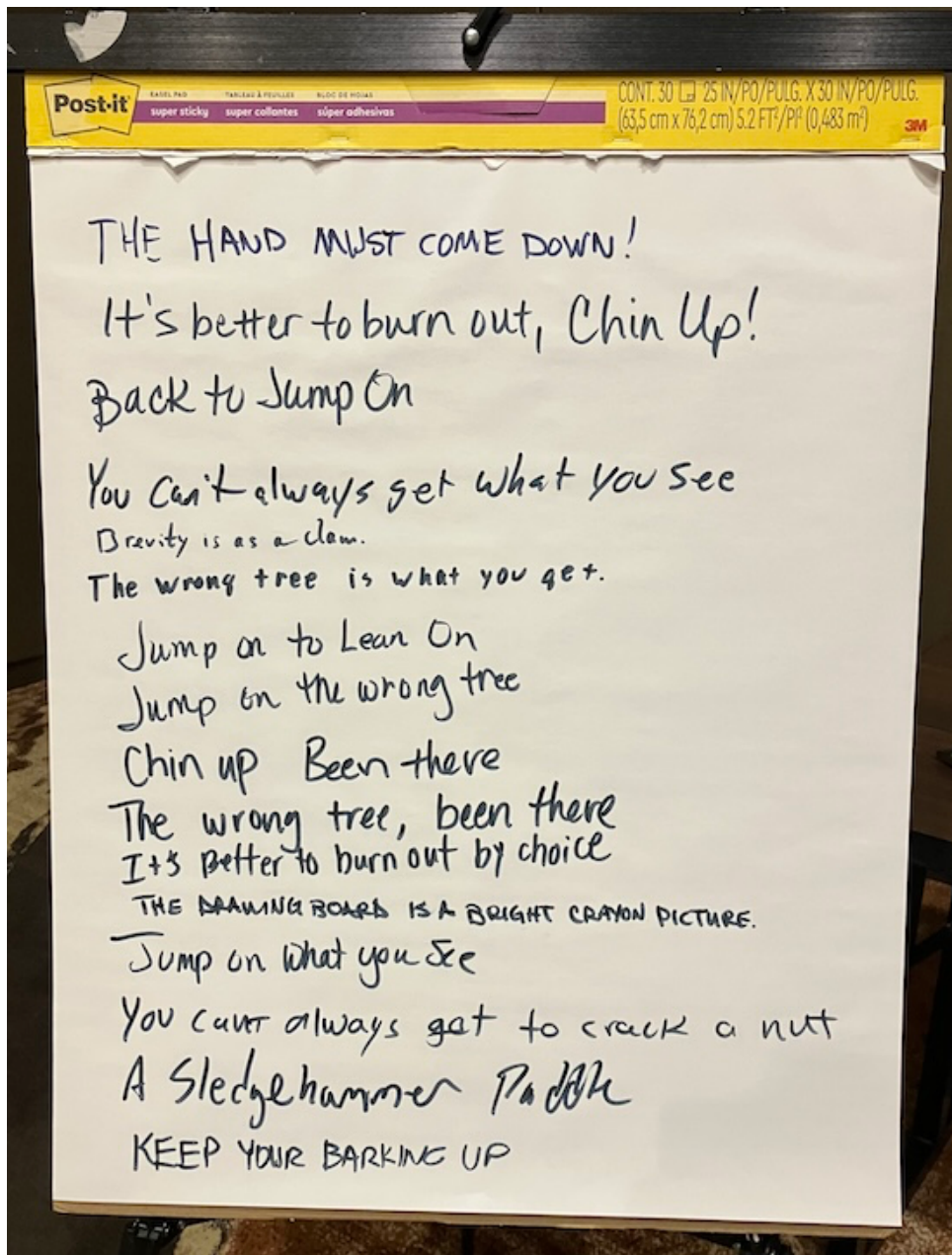
You were also invited to write your creations on the flip chart. (Learning: If you use this one, have multiple flip cart papers available for sharing.)

Here’s what you created:



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When the Chips Are Down

Needs: Two or three sets of numbered chips – each set numbered 1 to 30. (Have at least 2 chips for each person in play.)



Play: I placed 60 numbered chips, numbers down, on the table in the room. (If you don't have a table, you can place the chips on the floor/ground.)

Before introducing the activity, I asked you to do a blind Shuffle (five card exchanges and stop). Then you got into groups of three by the rank on your card.

The thinking conversation technique I introduced is a way to do some planning and problem solving in smaller groups prior to the action phase of a task. It takes more time than the usual: instructions, talk/plan as a group, pick (force) an idea, and go process. However, taking the additional time provides conversation practice.

I shared the overview of the task:

- There are only two sets of chips on the table, each numbered 1 to 30.
- The objective will be to line each set of chips up sequentially from 1 to 30 – in the end there will be two lines of chips in numerical order.
- This will be a timed activity. Before the time begins each person in the group must pick up at least one chip from the table. All chips must be picked up from the table.
- The numbers on the chips may not be looked at until the group timer says, “GO!” The time starts.
- Each person must place their chip or chips they picked up from the table in the proper place in the numerical order of either line.
- When the chips are in two lines of 1 to 30, in numerical order, the time stops.
- The Challenge: How fast can you place down the chips?

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After the overview I asked you (all groups of three) to sit at a conversation pod and have a conversation about how you would approach this challenge. In other words, what plan would you make for the group to solve this task in the quickest way possible.

With the limited time left, I gave you all 5 minutes to have this conversation. Without a time constraint, I would give at least 10 minutes or more.

After the planning time, I invited you back to the table. I added in another layer – a decision making tool. I assigned to the one group of four the task of making the initial decision on whose plan you would use for the first attempt. Having a decision making process in place, that a group agrees upon, is vital to timely group progress. (Setting up a process like this happens early on in a group's formation. For the workshop I imposed the process for the sake of time and demonstration.

We ran out of time to share all the plans and make a decision on the first plan. Again, it will take time to do this. Benefits?

- In smaller groups more voices and ideas are heard
- The small group comes to a consensus on a plan faster than in larger groups (in most cases).
- Conversations in smaller groups have more participation and understanding can be reached sooner.
- A spokesperson can share their voice and plan giving them leadership practice.
- All groups are heard.
- The decision process save time so data collecting can begin. After an attempt another idea can be chosen, or the same plan repeated, and more data collected.

We did play a quick round, under my instruction, so we could get a little closure.

My hope is that the process sparked curiosity and interest – creating more opportunities for meaningful conversations.

THANK YOU for joining the adventure. Reach out if you have questions!