Tea Party/ Chillin’ with Scholars Activity Protocol

The following is a DESCRIPTION of how to engage in a “Tea Party”/ “Chillin’ with Scholars” Activity with quotes/excerpts from an expository/literary text:

➢ To begin the activity, each participant/student should have a quote/excerpt from a text
➢ Then each participant/student will pair up with another participant/student to:
  o First, read the text aloud/silently to the other participant/student and vice-versa; before engaging in the activity the teacher will determine if students will read aloud/silently.
  o Then share an immediate reflection of how the quote/excerpt relates to your classroom experience and/or to other pedagogical literature you have read related to the given topic; with students you would ask them to make text-to-self, text-to-text, or text-to-world connections as a way to focus their reflection.
  o Before moving on to selecting a new participant/student, exchange quotes
➢ Select a new partner and begin the process over again

What is a “Tea Party”/ “Chillin’ with Scholars” Activity? And, why use it?
This activity is very helpful in getting English Language Learner (ELL) students to engage in a discussion about a new topic/theme. Gibbons (1993) argues in order for students to learn English, you must provide a risk-free classroom environment with a low affective filter, with targeted and purposeful communicative opportunities to engage in academic language within context. This will allow ELLs to feel comfortable and confident in group discussions while using newly learnt academic language within context that mimics real world situations.

How do you use the “Tea Party” / “Chillin’ with Scholars” activity in the classroom?
The following are the steps to implement the Strategy:
1. The teacher copies or retypes quotes/excerpts (on a word document) from either expository or literary text.
2. Then the teacher cuts apart each of the quotes/excerpts into slips of paper. In order to make the activity durable, you can glue the quotes/excerpts onto index cards – if your school owns a laminating machine, laminate the quotes/excerpts for long-term use and durability.
3. Next, the teacher explains what a “Tea Party” / “Chillin with Scholars” Activity is, making it a point to emphasize the foregoing activity is to encourage “talk on task”, and for ELL students to have the opportunity to talk with others in the room. The objective here is to encourage students to engage in discussion with students they do not normally speak to. They are also reminded to only discuss the given quote/excerpt at hand.
4. Then the ELL students engage in the “Tea Party”/ “Chillin’ with Scholars” activity as noted above under the “DESCRIPTION”.
5. After about 15-20 minutes, the teacher directs all students to take their seats, and a group share is initiated. ELL students are encouraged to share their quotes/excerpts with the class, as well as to share anything new they learned from another peer. There is no pressure for every ELL student to ‘share’ because the notion here is to keep the affective filter low and of course, allowing Beginners to listen to language as well as speak when they feel confident and ready – remember they are exploring and learning about a new topic/theme. ELL students also have the opportunity to hear their peers express their thoughts or opinions through a class discussion ensued from a ‘Share’.

How can I “TWEAK” the “Tea Party” / “Chillin’ with Scholars” activity to generate different purposes?
Predictions of what the expository or literary text is about:

The activity is basically the same as noted above. However, instead of reflecting on the quote/excerpt using the context of text-to-self, text-to-text or text-to-world, the students move on to another student after they have read their quote/excerpt aloud to another student. After 15-20 minutes, the students are asked to return to their seats. A group discussion is ensued and students are asked to make predictions of what the text (as a whole) is about.

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Sources: Modified from “60 Strategies for Improving Reading Comprehension in Grades K-8” by Kathleen Feeney Jonson