

## Sarah Michaels discusses “talk moves” as a teaching tool

Professor Sarah Michaels of Clark University engaged students and faculty Nov. 15 with her discussion about “Conceptualizing Talk Moves as Tools,” based on Michaels’ research and that of her collaborator, Cathy O’Connor, of Boston University. Michaels was invited to speak by School of Education Professor Bill Penuel.

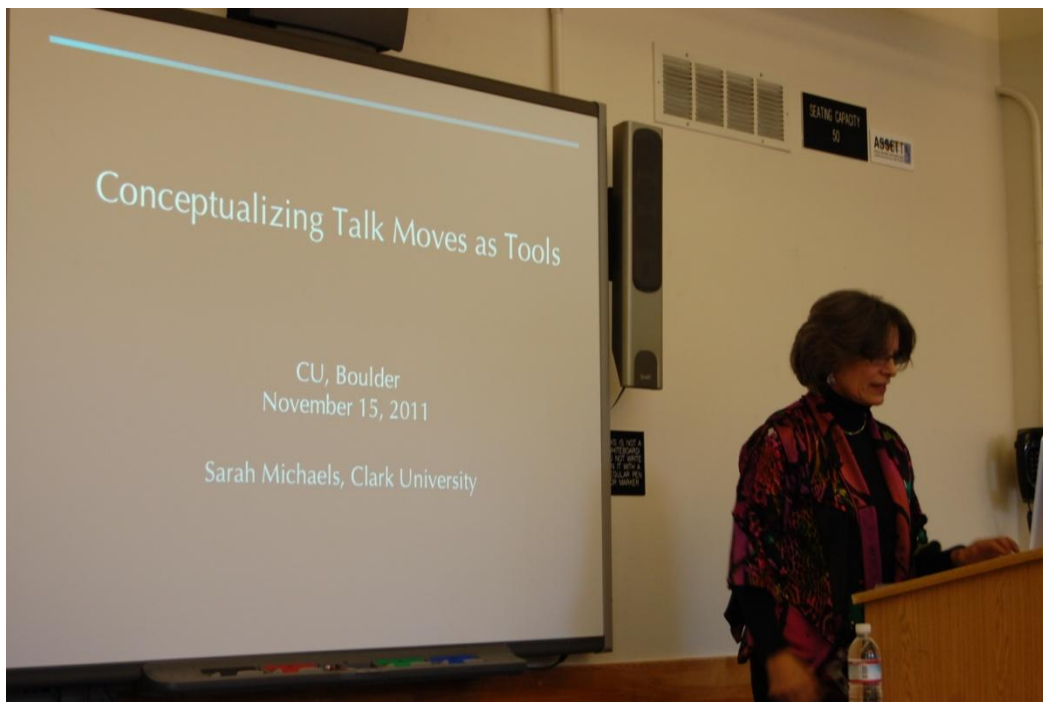
Michaels’ research works to bring together teacher education, educational research on classroom discourse and district-based efforts at educational reform. A sociolinguist by training, she has been



actively involved in teaching and research in the area of language, culture, “multiliteracies,” and the discourses of math and science.

In this particular presentation, developed with Cathy O’Connor, Michaels developed the idea of talk moves as tools that can serve a range of productive interactional, socializing and intellectual functions in mathematics and science classrooms.

*Professor Bill Penuel opens the Sarah Michaels program.*



*Sarah Michaels of Clark University was a guest speaker at the School of Education.*

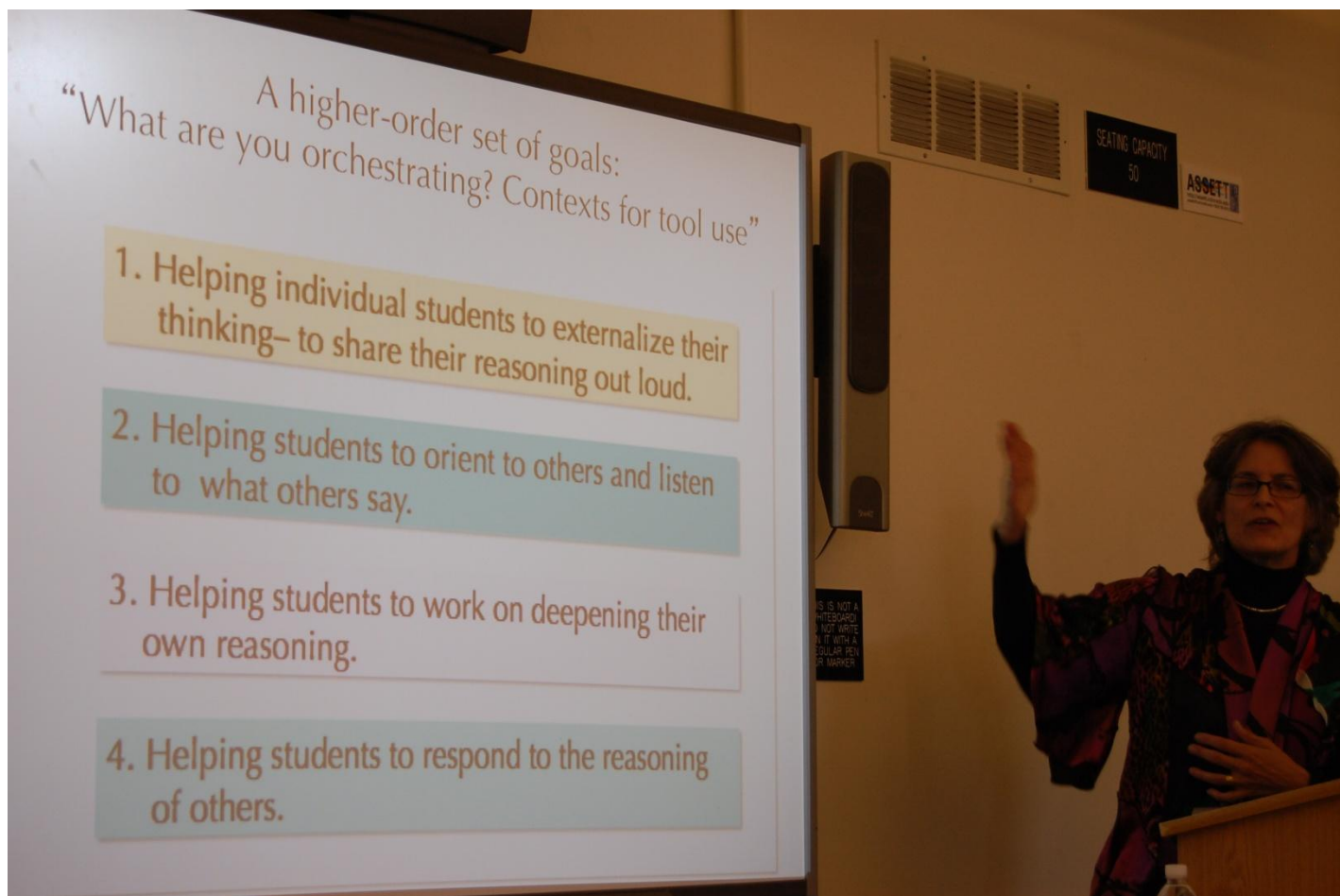
According to Michaels, “well-structured talk builds the mind” with achievement gains that transfer to other domains and persist over years. She noted three interlocking challenges:

1. Theoretical—what are core elements that drive learning
2. Empirical—what are core elements that constitute an instance of practice

### 3. Applied—what are core elements that support teacher learning and development

Talk moves help to engage students and push them to develop their reasoning and communication skills. Among the small set of “all purpose” productive talk moves (that can be used in any subject area or at any grade level) are the following:

- Say more about that.
- Who can repeat or rephrase what she/he just said?
- Why do you think that?
- Where do you see evidence for that claim?
- So, are you saying...? Do I have that right?
- Do you agree or disagree with what was said, and why?
- Who can add on to the idea that X is building?



*Sarah Michaels indicates advantages of using “talk moves.”*

Michaels pointed out that an utterance has a particular linguistic form, socializing or intellectual function, positions specific academic content and makes certain reasoning experiences available. Educators, though, struggle with the concept of “language as a tool,” Michaels said. There are websites that offer tools for teachers: [www.mathsolutions.com](http://www.mathsolutions.com) and <http://inquiryproject.terc.edu/>. An audio tape is available of her talk. Contact: [William.Penuel@colorado.edu](mailto:William.Penuel@colorado.edu) for details.