

SUPPORTING INTERNS WITH QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES

During the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years, we spent our mentor forums working on **Component 3b on the Danielson rubric: Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques**. This is a consistently challenging aspect of teaching practice. Groups of mentors will focus on how to help our Interns and colleagues develop high-quality questions and engage all students in classroom discussions.

Why will this topic be valuable for mentors to explore together?

- Teachers across disciplines and age levels seem to struggle with this.
- Provides for critical thinking – goal of learning and education
- Important to increase repertoire of questioning strategies—critical for engaged classrooms.
- Some schools and departments are focusing on this skill.

Which mentors would benefit most from exploring this topic?

- All mentors

Mentors in this group will spend between 60-75 minutes at each of our next four Forum sessions focused on this topic. Create one or more learning targets/essential questions/mentoring goals that will be useful for this group to explore over the course of this year.

What specific mentoring situations and questions should be addressed during these focused learning sessions? Please be as specific as possible.

- What are some ways we can help Interns/colleagues consistently build higher-order questioning into curriculum and lesson plans?
- How might we address Interns who are unaware (and/or don't wish to be aware) of areas like questioning where they can improve?
- How might we model good questioning techniques for our Interns that will engage students and encourage critical thinking?
- What are some of the most effective ways to check for understanding (formative assessment) using questions?
- What research-based strategies are most effective in class to engage students in discussion and maximize student responses?
- How can we help Interns make time and create opportunities for higher-order questioning with limited time?
- How do we respond to Intern who says "when I ask a question, nobody answers?"
- How do we help an intern to build a class culture so students feel safe to share

Between our forum meetings, we need to have experiences, complete tasks, and/or collect evidence that will provide material for reflection, discussion, and growth. For this topic, what are some strategies to try, evidence to collect, tools to use, and/or texts to read that would encourage productive, constructive, and relevant professional learning during our Forum sessions?

- Template of questions for mentors to use
- Identify the use of questioning techniques as it happens
- Identify impact of consistent use of questioning techniques
- List of possible strategies, questioning stems.
- Think, Pair Share; Back-to-back Talk; Quick Writes; Student-developed Questions; Fist to Five; Popsicle Sticks; Polling;
- Focus Observation using Seating Chart to track participation
- Rubric for Questioning Expectations

SUPPORTING INTERNS WITH CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Cultural competence centers on the skills and knowledge to effectively serve students from diverse cultures. Discussions about race, culture, and poverty can be difficult for new teachers. After all, they remain difficult for many of the most seasoned veterans. More than ever, teaching in an urban district demands “courageous conversations” on sensitive topics if we are to best serve our students. Groups of mentors will focus on how to explore these issues with our Interns and colleagues and to help them develop their cultural competence.

Why will this topic be valuable for mentors to explore together?

- Interns must be aware of student diversity and cultural nuances.
- People do not understand what this means.

Which mentors would benefit most from exploring this topic?

- All teachers need this kind of training in our diverse district.

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- What are some of the key elements of creating a culturally responsive classroom?
- How can we encourage teachers to attend culturally responsive PD sessions?
- How do we activate conversations that engage culturally responsive dialogue?
- How can we develop a toolkit of mentor resources to assist Interns to display or model cultural competence?

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- Use of short article that teachers can read to define culturally responsive teaching.
- Develop a mentoring toolkit to assist new teachers.
- Compile examples of best practices.

SUPPORTING INTERNS WITH COLLABORATIVE TEACHING

One of the more persistent mentor challenges is facilitating our Interns' relationships with other adults in the classroom. Collaborative teaching strategies will likely grow in importance as models for supporting Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners continue to shift. Groups of mentors will focus on how to help our Interns and colleagues get the most out of collaborative teaching for the benefit of their students, and to help them manage relationships with their co-teachers.

Why will this topic be valuable for mentors to explore together?

- Challenging topic for experienced teachers and so even more challenging for new teachers.
- System-wide concerns over co-teaching; special education teachers not treated as professionals
- Important to be aware of the various models of collaborative teaching.
- Need to understand resources and current collaborative teaching models already being utilized.
- Many of our Interns are team teaching.

Which mentors would benefit most from exploring this topic?

- ESOL, Special Education, anyone supporting Interns with Collaborative Teaching.
- All mentors, teachers

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- What are some ways mentors might assist Interns to have focused conversations with their co-teachers to establish a collaborative working environment?
- How can we help Interns to delegate responsibilities in a professional manner to staff members that are supporting students in our classroom?
- How can we help Interns push into a classroom in a professional and supportive manner?
- How can we address the lack of professional respect for an Intern; teacher used as paraprofessional?
- What are some ways to co-plan and co-teach with a colleague?
- How are the various models of collaborative teaching applied in the classroom?
- How do we help Interns handle an unwilling or uncooperative collaborator or other interpersonal issues? What are some ways to address if staff are "not on the same page," not a shared decision-making process, different management styles?
- How do we support Interns with equal division of classroom labor (roles, planning, responsibilities); sharing of plans, materials, space, students?
- How to maximize the strengths of all—good utilization of all staff.

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- Marilyn Friend's Six Models of Collaboration, *The Power of Two*
- Pre- and Post-Surveys from staff re: working together, co-teaching
- Observation that notes every interaction between adults and between adults and students—nature and duration of the interaction.
- RCSD co-teaching lesson plan template, Co-teaching lesson plans.
- Shared experiences, Case studies, scenarios, role plays
- Collaborative teaching checklist
- Awareness of new regulations and district models for Students with Disabilities.
- Books, Videos on effective co-teaching.

ADVANCED PRACTICE WITH LEARNING-FOCUSED CONVERSATIONS

The conferencing strategies we use as we shift between Coaching, Consulting, and Collaborating are the key to our work with colleagues and a skill set that requires continual practice and reflection. Groups of mentors will re-ground themselves in the Laura Lipton/Bruce Wellman principles for Learning-Focused Conversations, apply them to working with colleagues, and strengthen their mentoring practice.

Why will this topic be valuable for mentors to explore together?

- Because mentor time is limited and valuable, important to stay focused and prepared
- Communication is the key to the whole process.
- Practice increases comfort level.

Which mentors would benefit most from exploring this topic?

- Mentors with less than three years of mentoring experience
- All mentors

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- How can we continue to clarify the differences between coaching, consulting, collaborating, find examples of effective transitions between these roles, and practice when to use the appropriate technique?
- How might we effectively “zoom in” on one aspect of the teaching rubric?
- What are some paraphrasing techniques to effectively focus a topic?
- What are some examples of effective engagement, planning, and instructional support?

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- Modeling, role-playing
- Video analysis
- Analyze post-conference document and plan of action
- Use self-assessment and goal-setting to refer and plan for support.

SUPPORTING INTERNS WITH CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

Creating a positive classroom environment (Domain 2 in the Danielson rubric) is usually the first priority in our work with Interns, and it is also the component of teaching practice that gives struggling veteran colleagues the most trouble. Working on this domain can be challenging, especially when you are trying to help a colleague “undo” a negative environment. Groups of mentors will focus on how best to support colleagues who are struggling to establish an environment of Respect and Rapport.

Why will this topic be valuable for mentors to explore together?

- Challenge for every Intern; most difficult issue for most Interns
- Importance of “setting tone” for all other aspects of practice
- Opportunity to share best practices, pool resources
- Need lots of ideas to share in order to find some that will work

Which mentors would benefit most from exploring this topic?

- All classroom mentors

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- What are some new strategies I might encourage my Intern to use in order to establish a positive classroom environment?
- What does a classroom with a productive and positive environment look like? What characterizes a well-established student-run classroom?
- What would be a valuable menu of strategies for supporting a positive classroom environment?
- What are some ways mentors might address problems with disruptive students, behavior management systems, time management, different learning spaces?
- What are some strategies to address environment challenges in Middle School classrooms?
- What are some ways to help Interns be more consistent with classroom procedures (rituals and routines), help Interns who have trouble with follow-through?
- How might we approach an Intern/colleague whose classroom has a negative environment, is “out of control,” has no evident established rituals and routines, has no learning happening?
- What might a mentor do when at a loss to make a difference in the classroom environment?
- How might we approach Interns who blame students when addressing student behavior or have not built relationships with students?
- How might we encourage Interns to focus on systems/strategies rather than on problem behaviors?
- What are some ways to “re-establish” a positive classroom environment?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• compile a list of available mentors with specific skills for Interns to visit• match elementary/secondary mentors• restorative tools, practices• best practice checklist , create menu/toolkits• behavior charts, reward boards• Setting limits in classroom, lists of classroom expectations and consequences• Class Dojo, Remind 101-family contacts | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wongs, <i>First Days of School</i>, <i>Discipline with Dignity</i>, <i>Positive Classroom Discipline</i>; <i>Conscious Classroom Management</i>, <i>Diffusing Disruptive Behavior</i>, <i>Teach Like a Pirate</i>, <i>Fires in the Bathroom</i>, <i>Teach Like a Champion</i>• Total Participation Techniques, PBIS• video clips to analyze/discuss• review Domain 2 for specific rubric language and collect evidence• behavior scenarios, real-life experiences |
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THE ART OF THE “CRUCIAL CONVERSATION”

Some veteran mentors may feel confident in the principles of the Learning-focused Conversation, but even experienced, skilled mentors still struggle when faced with the tense, emotional conversations when opinions differ and the stakes are high. Our legitimacy as a Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) program relies on our ability to provide colleagues with honest feedback, even when that feedback may not be welcomed. Groups of teachers will focus on improving their skills for having these “crucial conversations.”

Why will this topic be valuable for mentors to explore together?

- Essential to provide honest, difficult feedback so it can be heard and without conflict

Which mentors would benefit most from exploring this topic?

- Experienced mentor committed to peer assistance and review with struggling colleagues

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- How can we develop the skills to navigate tense, emotional, high-stakes conversations?
- What are some strategies for effectively communicating difficult or unwelcome topics?
- How do we address the “unconsciously unskilled” Intern who resists reflection or rejects support?

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- Practice using “crucial conversation” skills and document experience in journal narrative.