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BRUCE WELLMAN

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Teacher Feedback: What works?

Session 3

MELBOURNE

BRUCE WELLMAN

Bruce Wellman, a consultant, has served as a classroom teacher, curriculum coordinator and staff developer. He is co-director of MiraVia, LLC, a publishing and special development company in the United States. He consults with school systems and professional organisations in North America and around the world, presenting workshops and courses for teachers and administrators on the patterns and practices of learning-focused classrooms, learning-focused conversations for supervisors and mentors, presentation skills, and facilitating and developing collaborative groups.



Bruce is the author of multiple books on learning-focused education and collaboration, and he has written for numerous publications on organisation and professional development, mentoring, quality teaching and improving professional cultures. He has been honoured in the United States by the Education Writers Association and National Staff Development Council. He holds a bachelor's degree from Antioch College and a master of education from Lesley College.

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Hawker Brownlow Education
P.O. Box 580, Moorabbin, Victoria 3189, Australia
Phone: (03) 8558 2444 Fax: (03) 8558 2400
Toll Free Ph: 1800 334 603 Fax: 1800 150 445
Website: www.hbe.com.au
Email: orders@hbe.com.au

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Teacher Feedback: What Works?

Developing Professional Expertise in Standards-Driven Systems

Developed by

Laura Lipton & Bruce Wellman



Purposes

To engage with:

- **Practical structures for using data to focus attention and energy while sharing feedback with individuals and groups**
- **Assumptions about Learning-focused Relationships as a vehicle for promoting teacher growth**
- **The Continuum of Learning-focused Interaction**
- **Tools for talking**

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Guiding Assumptions

Teaching is complex and contextual

Skillful teachers manage the social, emotional and academic needs of increasingly diverse student populations. Total classroom awareness requires attention to these three dimensions while simultaneously tracking the lesson plan, content accuracy, use of examples, clarity of explanations and directions and choice of language to match student readiness. All of this work is done in an ever-shifting context inside and outside the classroom. These dynamics include changing politics and policies, shifting societal expectations, breakthroughs in the science of teaching and learning, ever-expanding content knowledge, and new technological tools that increase access to information and learning platforms.

Research-based standards define effective teaching

Well-articulated standards reflect the complexity of professional practice. These detailed descriptions provide common language and reference points for talking about teaching in a variety of domains. Clear standards organized by levels of performance foster shared agreement about the qualities of effective teaching. A robust body of research clearly demonstrates that highly rated teachers produce high performing students.

Thoughtful and thorough depictions of teacher actions student behaviors and student work products establish the foundation for meaningful conversations about and improvements of instructional practice. High quality, standards-driven feedback establishes growth targets for teachers across the range of teaching skills.

Data have no meaning

Data are simply information. Individuals and groups create meaning by organizing, analyzing and interpreting data. Interpretation is subjective; data are objective. Frames of reference, the way we see the world, influence the meaning we derive from the data we collect and select. The ability to share data in ways that engage teachers in learning-focused conversations is a vital resource for promoting growth for both teachers and students.

Knowledge is both a personal and social construction

Human beings are meaning-making organisms. Knowledge is socially constructed and individually integrated. We sift experience through personal and social filters, forming beliefs and ways of knowing. Individuals interact with information and with others to shape new understandings from our world and about our world. Schools and teams with norms of continuous improvement operate with shared goals and shared definitions of the components of "good work"

There is a reciprocal influence between the culture of the workplace and the thinking and behavior of its members

Like societies, organizations have cultures that determine modes of behavior. Cultural artifacts, symbols and rituals reflect and transmit acceptable and unacceptable patterns and practices for individuals and groups. The introduction of new behaviors opens opportunities for testing cultural boundaries and shifting organizational norms. Shared standards for both teaching and learning form the basis for feedback to teams and individuals.

Cycles of inquiry, experimentation and reflection accelerate continuous growth and learning

Learning occurs when we shift from professional certainty to conscious curiosity, from isolated individual to collaborative community member, and from passive technician to active researcher. The pursuit of meaningful questions arises from thoughtful data analysis, careful problem framing, and ongoing monitoring of gaps between goal achievement and current conditions.

Feedback

Two types of feedback

1. *Constraining Feedback* - The return of a portion of the output of any process or system to the input, especially when used to maintain the output within predetermined limits. --- A thermostat is an example
2. *Amplifying feedback* - Increasing returns, in which each iteration of feedback information is amplified through the system. --- Microphone feedback and viruses are examples.

In practice: Feedback is information about *past* behavior delivered in the *present* which may influence *future* behavior.

Instructional improvement is a feedback relationship between two systems: what a *growth agent* attends to and how the *growth agent* responds is one system; what the teacher attends to and how the teacher responds is the other system.

The paradox of feedback: When feedback works well we tend not to notice it.

And:

- Even when requested, feedback describes the values and beliefs of the giver.
- Feedback that is not absolutely relevant to the task at hand will not be accepted, and even worse will interfere with that task.
- If you have to make a case for the task-relevance of your feedback, you probably don't have a case, and you certainly won't have any success.
- Feedback is a collaborative process which one person cannot sustain alone.

Adapted from, What Did You Say?: The Art of Giving and Receiving Feedback. Charles N. Seashore, Edith Whitfield Seashore & Gerald M. Weinberg, © 1997, Bingham House Books, Columbia, MD.

Feedback Intervention Theory

- Learners regulate their behavior by comparing feedback with goals or standards and identifying gaps.
- Feedback directed at the self-identity of the receiver (praise or criticism) reduces the cognitive (and emotional) resources needed to improve performance.

Kluger, A., & DeNisi, A. (1996). The effects of feedback interventions on performance: A historical review, a meta-analysis, and a preliminary feedback intervention theory. Psychological Bulletin, 119 (2), 254-284.

Thanks for the Feedback

"It doesn't matter how much authority or power a feedback giver has; the receivers are in control of what they do and don't let in, how they make sense of what they're hearing, and whether they choose to change" p. 5

"Receiving feedback sits at the intersection of two needs -- our drive to learn and our longing for acceptance." p. 8

"Receiving feedback well means engaging in the conversation skillfully and making thoughtful choices about whether and how to use the information and what you're learning." p. 8.

Three Feedback Triggers

1. *Truth triggers* are set off by the substance of the feedback itself -- it somehow feels off, unhelpful or simply untrue. In response, we feel indignant wronged, and exasperated.
2. *Relationship triggers* are tripped by the particular person who is giving us the gift of feedback. All feedback is colored by the relationship between the giver and receiver, and we can have reactions based on what we believe about the giver and how we feel treated by the giver.
3. *Identity triggers* focus neither on the feedback nor on the person offering it. Identity triggers are all about us, whether the feedback is right or wrong, wise or witless, something about it has caused our identity -- our sense of who we are -- to come undone. We feel overwhelmed, threatened, ashamed, or off balance.

Stone, D. & Heen, S. (2014). Thanks for the feedback: The science and art of receiving feedback well. New York: Penguin Books.

Four Qualities of Learning-focused Supervision

Learning-focused supervision is a growth-oriented process that embeds four essential qualities. This approach to building professional expertise is developmental, standards-driven, data-based and customized.

Developmental

Learning is a developmental process, for children and adults alike. In teaching, as in all fields, there is a definable novice to expert journey. Rubrics describing performance levels illuminate this pathway. As student demographics shift, as technology infuses classrooms and expectations for higher levels of understanding drive changes in assessment systems, all teachers will be on a developmental trajectory no matter how many years of experience they have. Learning-focused supervisors take a growth-oriented approach --- shaping their interactions based on both a teacher's present practices and shared expectations for future practices.

Standards-driven

Standards frame shared expectations and establish and clarify measures of excellence for teacher and student performance. Applied effectively, they become rallying points for important conversations about teaching and learning and they set aspirations for goal setting and continuous growth. In learning-focused cultures, standards not only shape expectations ---they raise them. Deeply researched and validated teaching standards with their associated rubrics now define and describe good teaching. Excellence is a measurable destination, not a vague aspiration or locally developed checklist.

Data-based

Productive supervisory interactions are grounded in a variety of data that capture the effects and outcomes of a teacher's practice. Literal notes, student work products and other forms of objective data focus supervisory conversations on tangible evidence that become a catalyst for exploration and analysis. Without accurate information, conversations drift in a sea of inference and distraction. Clear data establish the foundation for calibrating performance against standards, stimulating goal setting and the clarification of desirable actions and measureable results.

Customized

Growth-promoting supervisors customize their work with teachers. The classroom practices of two teachers with similar overall ratings might be vastly different. By clarifying and contextualizing specific elements and discrete components within standards, learning-focused supervisors and teachers can explore fine-grained variation in skills. During planning and reflecting conversations, skillful supervisors clarify expectations using examples based on the teaching assignment, grade level or content area. These supervisors flexibly apply templates and tools to personalize their approach and build professional expertise in individual teachers.

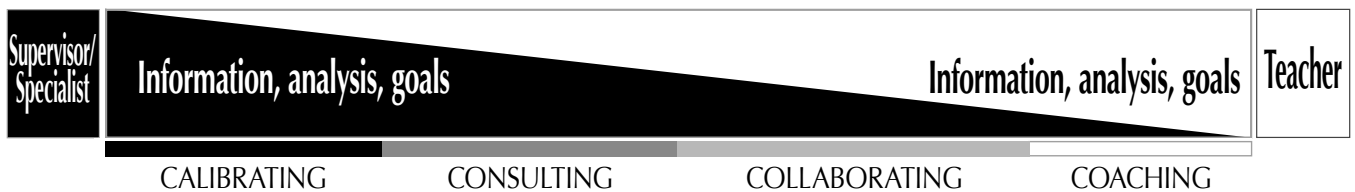
Four Stances: A Continuum of Learning-focused Interaction

Introduction

HOW SUPERVISORS interact with teachers is as important as what they interact about. In learning-focused conversations, accomplished supervisors shift between four stances, calibrating, consulting, collaborating, and coaching to develop teachers' capacities to reflect upon data, to generate ideas and options, and to increase personal and professional awareness and skill. Versatility across this continuum of interaction supports supervisory practices that are developmentally and contextually appropriate for serving the learning needs of teachers across a range of skill and experience. The ultimate aim of each of these stances and their cumulative effect is to support continuous learning on the part of teachers and to enhance their capacity to engage in productive collegial relationships.

Three attributes ultimately define the supervisory stance in any learning-focused conversation. One defining trait is the way that information emerges during the interaction. The second defining trait is the source of problem definition and gap analysis related to differences between planned goals and actual results, or learning standards and student performance. The third defining trait is the source of goals for teacher growth.

The Continuum of Learning-focused Interaction



Three Supervisory Capacities: Fluency, Flexibility and Fluidity

The skillful learning-focused supervisor draws upon three important capacities when navigating the continuum; fluency, flexibility, fluidity.

Fluency of interaction: Fluent supervisors recognize that they have choices in their approach to supervisory conversations. They are clear about the definition and purpose of each of the four stances and are able to operate across them, with a repertoire of strategies for each.

Flexibility of interaction: Flexible supervisors understand that different individuals and different contexts require different approaches. These supervisors have internalized criteria for choosing a given stance in a given situation and are able to be responsive to the teacher's immediate cognitive and emotional needs while being mindful of the ultimate goal of development over time.

Fluidity of interaction: Fluid supervisors are able to skillfully apply the continuum, seamlessly shifting stances as needed. They attend to both verbal and nonverbal cues from colleagues; listening and responding strategically. These supervisors have a level of automaticity that supports their ability to attend and respond to complexities and nuances, drawing upon a wide repertoire of knowledge and skill to make the match that produces the most learning.

There is a sequence to the development of these capacities as they build upon one another. Fluent supervisors become flexible as they expand their skill sets to include differentiated practice and the ability to monitor goals for teachers' development over time. As their integrated skill set becomes more sophisticated and nuanced, flexible supervisors can pay attention and construct responses with increased fluidity.

The Four Stances

In professional conversations, supervisors apply standards and communicate expectations as they support teachers in using data to determine performance gaps and establish goals for improving practice. Learning-focused supervisors operate across a continuum of interaction to accomplish these responsibilities.

In each stance, the approach to these functions differs, as does the internal question supervisors consider when determining which stance to apply.

Calibrating

In the calibrating stance, the guiding question is, "What are the gaps/growth areas indicated for this teacher based on present performance levels and the standards?"

In a learning-focused supervisory relationship, the calibrating stance is the stance of judgment. Based on a variety of data sources, the supervisor determines a level of performance and organizes the data and the conversation to inform and discuss this rating with the teacher. It is the part of the conversation when the supervisor presents and explains his or her thinking about the teacher's level of performance. This stance is necessary when a teacher is unable to analyze his or her own practice and any gap between current performance and desired standards. For example, a supervisor might provide data and highlight examples of distinguished practice to motivate and clarify goals for a developing or proficient teacher who lacks a vision for professional growth.

In the most extreme cases, the calibrating stance becomes the dominant stance in the conversation, with the greater percentage of time spent there. Some triggers for this choice include: teaching behaviors that create an unsafe or harmful environment physically or emotionally, teacher responses that are inappropriate, classroom management that is non-existent, student performance that is consistently below expectations and instructional planning and delivery that is ineffective. Calibrating is also an effective stance for motivating effective teachers to set goals for achieving higher levels of performance.

Supervisory Functions

In the calibrating stance, the supervisor defines and reinforces teaching standards and expectations. The verb to calibrate means an active process of matching an object or performance to an agreed upon value. Simplistically, that value might be a shoe size or the diameter of a section of tubing. In contemporary educational discourse such values are expressed as standards. Important standards include creating a learning environment of respect and rapport, managing classroom procedures and student behaviors, communicating effectively with students, parents and colleagues, engaging students in meaningful learning and demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness based on assessment of student performance.

To operate with integrity within a calibrating stance the conversation must be driven by data. These data are used to identify gaps between expected standards and the present results. Clearly articulating the standards and accessing available resource materials the learning-focused supervisors define and illuminate problems. They present models and examples of such standards in action that are content and grade level specific and explicitly name expectations. In planning for action, skillful supervisors determine achievable goals, success criteria and timelines for completion.

In most cases, the calibrating stance then leads to a rich conversation, shifting among the other stances. When used with chronically low-performing teachers or teachers who appear not to be “getting it,” this stance is the most prescriptive of the four. Follow-up and follow through on the part of the supervisor are vital to ensure standards are being interpreted appropriately, performance targets are clear and student progress is occurring. Taking this stance may be necessary when other approaches are not producing the evidence of the transfer of the teacher’s learning into improved classroom practices that produce positive changes in student actions and outcomes.

Cautions

For each stance there are potential pitfalls. In the calibrating stance, it is easy for our personal preferences to become prescriptions. It is critical then, that any judgments are data based and standards driven, supported by clear, external criteria and evidence.

Avoid subjectivity or bias by using literal observation notes, specific classroom artifacts and assessment data. Supervisors’ inferences or interpretations can increase the teachers’ potential perceptions of personal attack.

Consulting

In the consulting stance, the guiding question is, “What information, ideas and technical resources will be most useful to this teacher at this time?”

Based on the teacher’s responses to initial inquiries, the supervisor recognizes gaps in content knowledge, student knowledge, or instructional repertoire. In some cases the teacher’s problem frame is narrow, or potentially inaccurate or the range of strategies is limited. As a result, the supervisor shifts to the consulting stance.

Supervisory Functions

From the consulting stance, the supervisor clarifies standards by offering context specific examples to ensure that the teacher understands expectations. The consulting supervisor offers perspectives on present concerns, by naming possible causes and possible approaches to improve performance. Beyond this gap analysis, a thoughtful supervisor also shares essential information about learning and learners and curriculum and content as they relate to existing issues, principles of practice, connections to expected performance standards and relevant craft knowledge. By offering, “Here’s what you should pay attention to” and “Here’s why that matters” and “Here are some options,” learning-focused supervisors make their thinking transparent. As teachers internalize principles of learning and teaching, these understandings become resources for more generating their own approaches and solutions.

In planning for action, skillful supervisors propose a menu of teacher goals to promote student achievement and professional growth, and provide opportunities for the teacher to choose and prioritize. Defining indicators of success and confirming timelines for completion are essential parts of the planning process.

Cautions

The verb to consult comes from the Latin ‘consultare’ meaning to give or take counsel. It is important to distinguish learning-focused consultation from simply fixing or telling. For many supervisors, the pressing needs they observe in classrooms triggers the impulse to help, by providing information and offering advice. While in the short-term this inclination may reduce the burdens of busy teachers or temporarily resolve an urgent issue, context-rich learning opportunities may be missed if advice is the only resource offered. Further, advice without explanation of the underlying choice points and guiding principles rarely develops teachers’ abilities to transfer learning to new settings or to generate novel solutions on their own.

If overused, the consulting stance builds dependency on the supervisor for problem solving. Consultation that is learning-focused within a professional relationship offers the teacher both immediate support and the resources for tackling future problems with increasing independence, whatever that teacher's level of performance. Learning-focused supervisors do not allow their personal passion or organizational pressures to overcome patience with a teacher's developmental process.

Collaboration

In the collaborating stance the guiding question is, "What are some ways to balance my contributions with this teacher's experiences and expertise?"

The collaborative stance creates a shared platform for the co-construction of knowledge. In this stance, either participant can offer ideas, solutions, analysis, and so on. In many cases the learning-focused supervisor shifts to a collaborative stance to increase the teacher's confidence in their own ability to analyze data, frame problems, develop strategies. Much like the gradual release concept in classroom practice, it works towards greater ownership of the information and actions generated.

In this stance this supervisor provides support for idea generation balanced with respect for the teacher's ability to generate ideas and solutions. A rich, inquiry-driven collaboration creates permission for the supervisor to add ideas and perspectives without dominating the conversation.

Supervisory Functions

From the collaborative stance, the supervisor and teacher jointly clarify standards to ensure shared understanding. Together, they use data to analyze gaps between expectations and current practice. In partnership, they analyze problems, generate potential causal theories, develop ideas and produce strategies for action. Shared perspectives lead to greater insights for both teacher and supervisor.

Each stance is in large part defined by which participant in the conversation is producing the information and/or analysis at a given moment. The collaborative stance has the widest range of participation. In this stance, both parties are contributing, however, the supervisor might lean more towards consulting by suggesting criteria or offering a principle of practice upon which to base the ideas. Or the supervisor might lead with a completely open-ended inquiry which leans more towards coaching.

Cautions

To collaborate with integrity, supervisors need to resist their own impulses to dominate and provide the bulk of the analysis and thinking. It is important to purposefully invite and create a space for teacher contributions. Pausing to allow the teacher time to think and prompting and encouraging idea production communicates a belief in their personal and professional capacities.

Learning-focused supervisors need to be especially careful to monitor for balance in the collaborative stance. Personal enthusiasm and interest in a topic, or a strong preference for a specific solution may override the intention to co-create ideas and actions. False collaboration then becomes disguised consultation or tacit calibration.

Coaching

In the coaching stance the guiding question is, “What mental and emotional resources might be most useful for this teacher at this time?”

The coaching stance assumes that the teacher has the resources necessary to engage in data-centered reflection on practice and modify and manage personal learning. Operating from this stance conveys the supervisor’s respect for the teacher’s expertise and potential regarding these capacities.

Supervisory Functions

In the coaching stance, the supervisor references teaching and learning standards and a variety of data as focal points for the conversation. The supervisor inquires into the teacher’s thinking about each of these resources as they relate to existing issues. In this stance, the teacher is the primary source of problem frames, gap analysis, potential solutions and strategies. Through an inquiry process, the supervisor’s role is to enhance teacher’s capacities for planning, reflecting, problem solving and decision-making. The coaching stance is one of inquiry. This means that there are multiple appropriate responses, and that the supervisor has not predetermined a correct answer.

The value of these questions is that they influence the teacher’s underlying thought processes. By inquiring, pausing, and probing for details as data are explored, the supervisor supports both idea production and the exploration of the “whys” and “hows” of choices, possibilities, and connections. This nonjudgmental approach applied over time, enlarges the frame, developing the teacher’s ever-increasing capacity for expert thinking and practice. The ultimate aim of the coaching stance is to develop a teacher’s internal resources for self-coaching so that with time and practice, an increasingly sophisticated inner voice guides professional self-talk.

In planning for action, supervisor questions guide the teacher’s exploration of goals, success criteria and reasonable timelines for action.

Cautions

In a coaching stance, supervisors reduce potential frustration by posing developmentally appropriate questions. These questions should stretch, not strain, thinking. Questions that require more knowledge or experience than is presently available to the teacher create anxiety and feelings of inadequacy. In such cases, it is more effective to offer information from a consultative stance and then shift to a coaching stance to explore that information.

Effective questions should invite teachers’ thinking. The syntax and intonation of these inquiries welcomes multiple possible responses and does not signal that there is a preferred or correct answer. Supervisors should take care that their own preferences don’t influence their listening or direct their questions.

Except for calibrating, stance is not predetermined and best practice suggests both entering the conversation from a coaching stance with an initial inquiry and ending the conversation with an inquiry to clarify next steps. Both supervisors and teachers must be clear that the intention of the supervisory process is to support learning and growth. Without this clarity, a potential “learning moment” might be lost, or the teacher might misinterpret the supervisor’s intent.

The calibrating stance is unique in that it focuses on what needs to be learned; that is, it names gaps between present practice and expected standards. This stance does not produce the learning, it names the learning targets for the teacher.

Once learning goals have been established, flexible supervisors navigate strategically across the continuum, choosing the most appropriate stances for promoting a teacher’s growth.

Learning-focused Supervision: The Continuum of Interaction

Supervisor-driven		Information, analysis, goals				Teacher-driven	
Information, analysis, goals		Information, analysis, goals				Information, analysis, goals	
	Calibrating	Consulting	Collaborating	Coaching			
Guiding question for the supervisor	What are the gaps/growth areas indicated for this teacher based on present performance levels and the standards?	What information, ideas and technical resources will be most useful to this teacher at this time?	What are some ways to balance my contributions with this teacher's experiences and expertise?	What mental and emotional resources might be most useful for this teacher at this time?			
Supervisory function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulating standards • Using data to identify gaps between expected standards and present results • Defining problems • Prescribing results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarifying standards • Using data to analyze gaps between expected standards and present results • Offering information and ideas • Providing problem analysis and perspectives • Naming principles of practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jointly clarifying standards • Using data to co-analyze gaps between expected standards and present results • Co-generating information and ideas • Co-analyzing problems • Expanding perspectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referencing standards as a focal point • Using data to explore gaps between expected standards and present results • Facilitating teacher idea production • Mediating teacher problem-framing and analysis • Enhancing teacher capacities for planning, reflecting, problem solving and decision making 			
Supervisor role in planning for action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determining teacher actions/goals • Naming success criteria • Establishing timelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposing teacher actions/goals • Defining success criteria • Confirming timelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-constructing teacher actions/goals • Co-developing success criteria • Agreeing on timelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring teacher actions/goals • Eliciting success criteria • Clarifying timelines 			
Cues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credible voice • Using neutral language, as in "These data ..." • "This example ..." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credible voice • Using neutral language or personal pronouns, as in, "I think that ..." • "It is important to ..." • "Here is one way to think about that" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approachable voice • Collective pronouns, as in "Let's think about ..." • "How might we ..." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approachable voice • Second person pronouns, as in "What are some of your ...?" • "How might you ...?" 			
Cautions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take care not to let personal preferences become prescriptions. Judgments must be supported by clear, external criteria. • Use literal observation notes, classroom artifacts and assessment data to avoid subjectivity or bias. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor and manage the impulse to help or rescue. Stay learning-focused and don't let personal passion overcome patience with the developmental process. • Be aware that overuse of the consulting stance may build dependency on the supervisor for problem solving. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resist the impulse to dominate the conversation and provide the bulk of the analysis and thinking. • Monitor for balance in idea production. Don't allow personal enthusiasm or preferences to override the intention to co-create ideas and options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce potential frustration by posing developmentally appropriate questions. Questions should stretch not strain thinking. • Be sure that questions allow for multiple responses and do not signal that there is a preferred answer. 			

Nine Strategies for Learning-focused Consultation

EXAMPLES

Offer a Menu

If one idea is useful, several are even more effective. Suggesting multiple options when planning or problem-solving (we suggest at least three) provides information and support while leaving the choice making, and the responsibility for making that choice, with your colleague. This might sound like: *“Given your concerns about developing meaningful homework assignments, here are three options to consider....”*

Think Aloud

Just as in instructional problem solving or modeling strategic reading strategies for students, sharing the thought process along with a solution or idea enhances the learning and maximizes the likelihood of transfer to future applications. This might sound like: *“When I encounter student confusions like this I first search for the underlying knowledge gaps and thinking patterns that might be contributing to those confusions. Then I try to figure out the instructional building blocks that will help develop essential understandings. So, in this case, you might look at ways to scaffold your students’ understandings of these objectives.”*

Share What, Why and How

When sharing expertise, an effective verbal pattern is describing the ‘what, why and how of an idea or suggestion. This might sound like: *“Here is a strategy for addressing that issue (what); which is likely to be effective because (why); and this is how you might apply it (how).”*

Refer to Research

Referring to specific research-based best practices is often a productive consultation strategy. This approach offers expert advice drawn from credible sources that can be applied to the current situation. This might sound like: *“The research on having students create graphic representations has been very consistent across grade levels and content areas. One application of those ideas to consider here would be to teach your students how to develop cause and effect diagrams to illustrate the important relationships in this history lesson.”*

State A Principle of Practice

Connecting a specific strategy or solution to the broader principles of effective practice provides an opportunity to learn and apply the principle, as well as the individual idea, in other situations. This might sound like: *“An important principle of practice related to giving directions is to make sure you have students’ full attention before you give directions -- the big idea here is ‘Attention First’.”*

Generate Categories

Ideas or solutions as categories provide a wider range of choice and a richer opportunity for learning than discrete strategies or applications. For example, a category such as ‘grouping students’ is broader than ‘putting students in pairs’ or suggesting a specific partnering strategy. This approach is especially effective when categories are offered as a menu. This might sound like: *“Several broad categories of successful classroom management include attention moves, establishing routines, maintaining momentum and developing effective transitions between activities.”*

*Examples***Name Causal Factors**

Rather than suggesting potential solutions, it can be very productive to offer several factors that might be producing the problem. This option is particularly effective when working with experienced teachers. This might sound like: *“There are several things that typically would produce that behavior (or result); for example _____, _____ or _____.”* Followed by a shift to a coaching stance to add: *“Given what you know about your situation, what’s your hunch about which of these, if any, might be an influence?”*

Consider an Alternative Point of View

Effective problem solving can be stimulated by an exploration of multiple perspectives. When idea generation bogs down, surfacing additional points of view can re-energize the conversation. For example offering thoughts on how parents might consider the issue, or administrators, or the students, and so on. This might sound like: *“It is possible that your students are not perceiving the purposes of the new reward system in the ways that you had intended. It might be effective to consider their beliefs about motivational rewards.”*

Reframe the Problem or Issue

Expert problem solvers spend a greater amount of time defining a problem than they do strategizing solutions. Novel approaches to the problem definition not only release new energy and ideas, but often lead to a more effective solution. Related to considering alternative perspectives, reframing is changing the context or representation of a problem; including positive or useful aspects of the issue and alternative descriptions of the goal or approach to the problem. This might sound like: *“There are several ways to think about classroom climate and culture. Typically teachers search for simple rules and fair consequences to apply equally. Another approach might be to work from the inside out and support students in developing the self-management skills to be productive classroom citizens and contributing group members.”*

Establishing the Third Point

Establishing the Third Point

Skilled supervisors establish a clear focus for the conversation, a third point. In learning-focused supervision, a lesson plan or data and a standards-based scale with levels of performance serve as effective third points. The third point shifts the cognitive and emotional energy from the supervisor/teacher relationship to the data. Effective use of a third point includes both verbal and nonverbal elements: a physical shift from face-to-face to eyes on the data; physical reference to the data source with a still hand, or frozen gesture; and neutral pronouns when referring to the data, for example: the observations, these results, this student work.

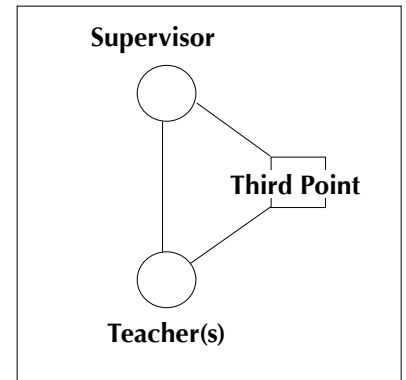
Learning-focused supervisors facilitate thinking from any stance. Skillful supervisors intentionally guide the teacher's experience, through questions, highlights and references. Supervisors also use emphasis to clarify their purpose and importance, to sort significant principles or patterns from less significant details, and to create opportunities for their teachers to build and construct understanding.

Imagine, for instance, a supervisor and teacher are exploring post-observation data. They are focusing on the standards for instruction and reviewing the supervisor's script of the teacher's questions. The supervisor offers the following question:

Supervisor: *"As you look at the script of your questions during this lesson, what are some comparisons you're making between your choices and the rubric description for Using Questions and Discussion Techniques?"*

Teacher: *"I noticed that for three of the questions, there was practically no wait time and many of the questions were recall. But, those are the kinds of questions my students can answer."*

At this point, the supervisor might take a consulting stance, sharing some principles of practice related to teacher questions and promoting student thinking, offering a menu of ways to scaffold for greater student success. She might then use a similar pattern exploring other observational data related to standards for instruction. In this way the teacher has several concrete examples that clarify and calibrate to the standards, as well as a model for a more sophisticated lens for examining her own practice. As they continue the conversation, the supervisor might then shift to a collaborative stance, suggesting that they brainstorm ideas for challenging student thinking.



Applying the Third Point

Eyes on the "data"

Frozen gesture

Neutral pronouns

Neutral Pronouns

"The data indicate . . . "

"Given these behaviors, it is likely that these students . . . "

"Based on these results, next steps need to be . . . "

Mediating Nonverbally

Physically referencing the third point in a space off to the side between the parties provides a psychologically safe place for information, concerns and problems. This careful use of space and gesture depersonalizes ideas. It is now not the supervisor's information or problem, the teacher's information or problem or even 'our' information or problem. It is simply information or a problem about which and with which to think. Information placed as a third point frees the teacher to accept, modify or reject the idea as an idea – not connected to personalities. Thus, placement of the conversational focus creates a triangle, either literally or referentially, keeping the conversational container psychologically safe. Without this subtle, but critical distancing, the teacher might feel trapped in a web of relationship and have difficulty freely accepting or rejecting an idea, for fear of hurt feelings or repercussion.

Nonverbal tools, such as posture, gesture and voice tone are all indicators of the stance we are taking. In a calibrating stance, physical and visual focus should be on the third point documents. While referencing the documents with a frozen gesture, speak with a credible voice using neutral language such as *"the standard"*, *"this domain"*, *"the results"* to articulate expectations and performance gaps. The intention is to make standards and performance metrics the authority and not set up a power struggle between supervisor and teacher.

In a consulting stance, the third point information or referential space focuses the conversations on information and ideas and not on the supervisor or the teacher. Here again, the credible voice conveys the tonality of wisdom and experience. At times it may be appropriate to use personal pronouns as in, *"Here's how I've learned to think about issues like this."* or, *"In my experience is often works best to..."* The possible danger is that some teachers upon hearing the personal pronoun will respond to it as a command and not a suggestion. When in doubt use neutral language such as, *"Best practices suggest that..."* or, *"Other teachers with this dilemma have had success with..."*

In a collaborating stance supervisor and teacher are operating both physically and metaphorically side-by-side, dividing their attention between the third point information and each other. The supervisor's voice tone is collegial and approachably confident using inclusive pronouns such as *"Let's think about this..."* or, *"We might want to start by..."* or, *"Our next step might be to..."*

In a coaching stance, the third point information is a catalyst for idea generation and problem solving by the teacher. There tends to be greater eye contact between the teacher and supervisor who uses a more rhythmic and approachable voice modulation to create a safe space for thought and reflection. The dominant pronoun is "you", as in *"So you're noticing some patterns in your classroom routines that seem to be working."* or, *"What are some ways you're thinking about increasing student engagement in your next math lesson?"*

Because learning-focused supervision is standards-driven and data-based, the use of a third point is especially important in the calibrating and consulting stances. Physically referencing the third point depersonalizes delivery of any information or judgment. It creates a "thing" to which the teacher can attach emotional reactions. By purposefully establishing a third point, the supervisor transforms a potential confrontation into an opportunity to provide clear feedback. By reducing the perception of personal attack, the feedback becomes information that can be heard and applied.

Third Point Examples

Observational data

Samples of student work

Rubrics

Lesson plans

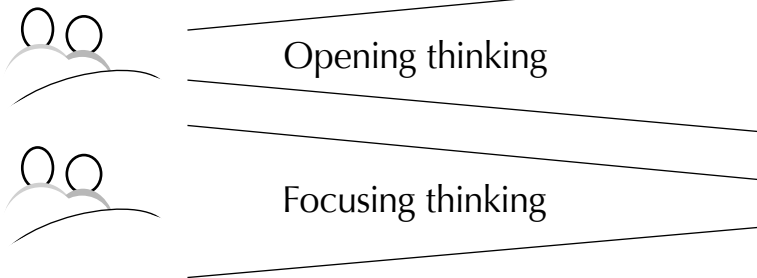
Standards (content, student work or effective teaching)

Test results or other performance data

Designing Questions to Promote Thinking

Skillful supervisors are purposeful in their use of questions. A supervisor's linguistic repertoire includes the capacity to frame language that opens thinking, as well as language that focuses thinking. Both types of questions mediate thinking. Questions intended to open thinking, invite multiple responses and are generally asked from a collaborative or coaching stance. These questions communicate a spirit of curiosity and a desire to explore information and ideas. Questions intended to focus thinking probe for increased specificity of information. These questions elicit examples, criteria, and details that support precision in verbal responses. This precision of language reflects precision in thinking. Both types of questions are an important part of the learning-focused supervisor's repertoire. Both types of questions contain verbal and nonverbal elements designed to invite thinking.

Invitational Inquiry

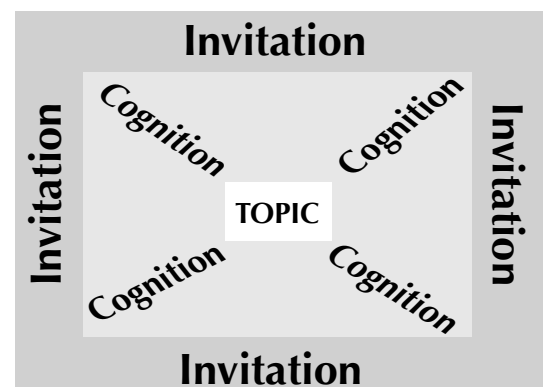


A Template for Inquiry

Questions that extend and illuminate thinking invite a wide range of potential responses. Language and thinking once surfaced can always be honed and refined. But without it emerging, there is little with which to work. The intention of inquiry is to support a colleague in exploring issues, problems, concerns and ideas.

Well-crafted inquiries integrate three essential elements; an *invitation* to engage and think, a *topic* to think about and a *cognitive* focus for thinking about the topic.

These elements can be combined in a variety of ways and do not always appear in the same order. Both personal style and context play a part in question construction.



Inviting Thinking

Elements of the Invitation

The invitation to think functions as a total package wrapped around our communications. This invitation begins with clear signals that our full presence is available for this conversation and that we intend no harm. To these tools we add several important verbal patterns that invite thinking.

- Approachable Voice

The first verbal element in the invitation to think is the use of an approachable voice for framing our own language in a nonthreatening manner. We learned this pattern from Michael Grinder, a classroom management expert and specialist in nonverbal patterns of communication (Grinder, 1997). An *approachable voice* is well modulated and tends to rise at the end of the statement, paraphrase or question, signaling openness and exploration. This intonation contrasts with the *credible voice* which is more evenly modulated and tends to drop at the end of a statement. Voice choice also signals the stance within which we are operating. The more approachable voice indicates a collaborating or coaching stance; the more credible voice indicates a calibrating or consulting stance.

- Plural Forms

Two key syntactical choices make it emotionally easier for the teacher to think and increase the options for thinking. The first is to use plural forms: *goals* instead *goal*, *concerns* rather than *concern*. This pattern frees the teacher from having to evaluate and sort at this point in the conversation. It is useful to generate a number of options before determining which are most central.

- Exploratory Language

The second language move is to use exploratory phrasing by inserting words like *some*, *might*, *seems*, *possible* and *hunches* into our questions. These terms, like the use of plurals, widen the potential range of response and reduce the need for surety. Words like *could* and *why* tend to decrease the confidence of listeners and may seem to seek premature commitment to ideas or actions.

Some examples of exploratory language include:

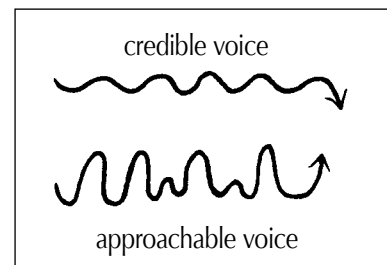
“How **might** you go about doing that?”

“You're naming **some possible** solutions. Which **seem** most promising at this point?”

“What are **some** of your **hunches** about why that **may** be so?”

Nondichotomous Forms

Questions that invite thinking are framed with open-ended, nondichotomous question forms. A nondichotomous question is one which cannot be answered yes or no. For example, instead of asking “Did you notice any unusual behaviors?”, ask “What are some of the behaviors you noticed?” In fact, by eliminating dichotomous stems such as “Can you,” “Did you,” “Will you,” or “Have you” we both invite thinking and communicate positive presupposition.



Inviting Thinking

- Attending Fully
- Approachable Voice
- Plural Forms
- Exploratory Language
- Nondichotomous Forms
- Positive Presupposition

Syntactical Substitutions

- the---some
- could---might
- is---seems
- why---what

- Positive Presuppositions

Presuppositions are embedded in our language, not in the words, necessarily, but in the assumptions underlying the communication (Elgin, 2000). A positive presupposition communicates our belief in a colleague's capacity, positive intentions and willingness to engage.

For example, instead of asking, "Can you see any . . . ?", you might say "As you examine this student's work, what are some of the details that you are noticing?" or "As you develop the plan for this class, what are some things that are important to you?"

Intention-Driven Questions: Providing Cognitive Focus

Planning, problem-solving and reflecting require specific ways of thinking. Learning-focused supervisors craft inquiries that are purposefully driven by a specific cognitive intention. For example, we develop expertise in planning by identifying, predicting and sequencing. Similarly, we make sense of experience by inferring, comparing and analyzing cause and effect. Productive reflection derives from generalizing, hypothesizing, applying and synthesizing. Questions that invite and focus thinking build professional capacity and self-directed learning. The inquiries within each phase of the Conversation Templates are intended to focus and produce specific cognitive processes.

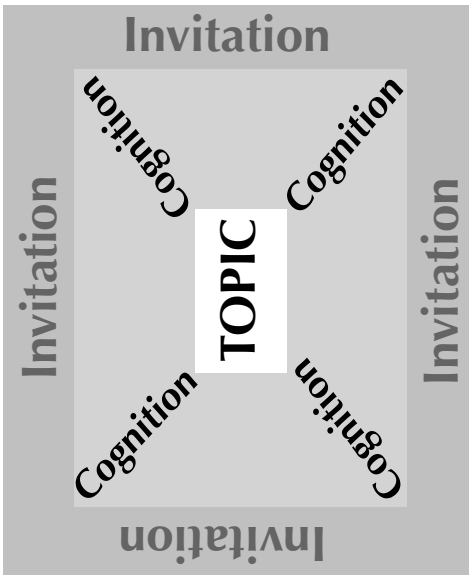
Directing the Inquiry: The Topic

The choice of language for the topic of a question influences degree of focus. Potential topics can range from higher to lower levels of abstraction. Inquiries with topics at higher levels of abstraction stimulate a broader range of responses. Inquiries with topics at lower levels of abstraction narrow the focus of the response. For example, a question topic might be classroom management, "What are some ways you monitor classroom management procedures?" The response categories might include instructional grouping, managing materials, or record keeping.

Or the topic could be student transitions, "What are some ways you monitor transitions?" In this case, the responses would be directed towards maximizing instructional time, student clarity about what to do and where to move, or giving clear directions about expectations. Higher levels of abstraction include Domain names, in this case Classroom Environment. Lower levels of abstraction include indicators, critical attributes or specific examples.

Focusing the topic increases the time efficiency of the conversation by allowing the supervisor to go directly to critical areas, while still inviting teacher thinking about the topic. Further, a more directed question feels safer for the teacher, because there is less ambiguity about a potentially desired response range.

INVITATIONAL INQUIRY



The Elements of the Invitation:

- Attending Fully
 - Approachable Voice
 - Plural Forms
 - Exploratory Language
 - Nondichotomous Forms
 - Positive Presuppositions
- Syntactical Substitutions

- the-----some
- could-----might
- is-----seems
- why-----what

Sample Stems

- Given your knowledge of...
- Based on your experience with...
- Reflecting on...
- As you consider...

INVITATION	COGNITION	TOPIC
How might ...	Predict	Outcomes
What would ...	Recall	Curriculum
What are some ...	Summarize	Instructional strategies
What might be some...	Identify	Student readiness
In what ways ...	Describe	Student behavior
How might you ...	Compare	Student work
What seem(s) ...	Contrast	Student engagement
Given your ...	Prioritize	Performance standards
Based on ...	Interpret	Assessment results
Reflecting on ...	Infer	Expectations
As you ...	Conclude	Lesson
	Generalize	Materials
	Connect	Groups
	Apply	Classroom climate
	Evaluate	Procedures

EXAMPLES

What are some ways you are comparing this student's work to the performance standards?
 (Invitation) (Cognition) (Topic)

Recalling your concerns, how might you address this student's behavior?
 (Cognition) (Invitation) (Topic)

As you consider these assessment results, what seem to be priorities for next steps?
 (Invitation) (Topic) (Invitation) (Cognition)

Learning-focused Conversations

A Template for Planning

ACTIVATING AND ENGAGING

CONTEXT

- What are some things about your students' readiness (social skills, routines, self-management) that are influencing your lesson (unit) design?
- What are some of the skills/ knowledge students will need to bring to this lesson (unit) to be successful?

PRESENTING ISSUES

- What are some special areas/ student needs you will need to address?
- What are some issues you anticipate might influence student learning?

EXPLORING AND DISCOVERING

GOALS AND OUTCOMES

- As you think about what you know about your students, and the content, what are some key learning goals?
- What are some ways that these goals integrate with other content learning?
- What are some thinking skills students will need to apply?

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

- Given these goals, what are some things you expect to see/hear as students are achieving them?
- Given these goals, how will you monitor student learning?
- What kinds of assessments will you use to determine student success?

APPROACHES, STRATEGIES AND RESOURCES

- What are some strategies you're planning that will both challenge students and support their success?
- What are some ways you'll ensure high engagement for all students?
- What are some resources or materials you/your students will need to support and extend student learning?

POTENTIAL CHOICE POINTS AND CONCERNS

- As you anticipate teaching the lesson, what are some points where students might struggle?
- What are some options for supporting struggling students and enriching those who need greater challenge?
- Should you notice that students' attention is drifting, what are some possibilities for reengaging them?

ORGANIZING AND INTEGRATING

PERSONAL LEARNING

- What are some ways that this lesson provides opportunities to pursue your own learning goals?
- What new learning/skills will you try or exercise in this lesson?

NEXT STEPS

- As a result of this conversation, what are some next steps?

Learning-focused Conversations

A Template for Reflecting

ACTIVATING AND ENGAGING

RECOLLECTIONS

- As you reflect on this lesson/unit, what are some things that come to mind?
- Given your recollections, what are some things that captured your attention?

PERSPECTIVES AND PERCEPTIONS

- In this lesson/unit, what was particularly satisfying?
- In this lesson/unit, what were some things that concerned you?

EXPLORING AND DISCOVERING

WEIGHING EVIDENCE

- What is some of the evidence that supports your impressions/ judgments?
- What are some examples that stand out for you (student responses, work samples, interaction patterns)?

SEARCH FOR PATTERNS

- Given what occurred, how typical are these results?
- What percentage of the time does this (behavior, learning, response patterns . . .) tend to happen?

COMPARE/CONTRAST

- How similar or different is what you anticipated from what occurred?
- How might you compare students who were successful to those who were less so?

ANALYZE CAUSE-EFFECT

- What are some factors that influenced what happened?
- Given (specific success/concern), what's your hunch about what may have it produced it?

ORGANIZING AND INTEGRATING

GENERALIZATIONS

- What are some big ideas that you are taking away from this conversation?
- Based on this experience, what are some new connections (about students, curriculum, instruction) that you are making?

APPLICATIONS

- What are some things that you are taking away from this experience that will influence your practice in the future?
- As a result of new learning, what are some goals you're setting (for yourself, for your students, curriculum, this unit)?

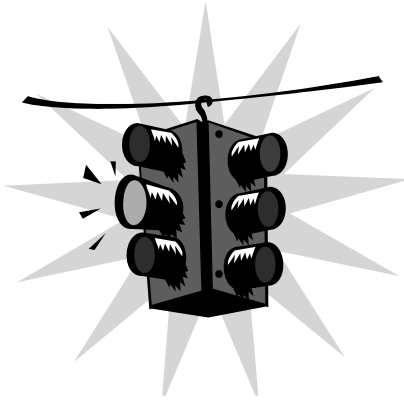
Think & Write

As you consider developing learning-focused relationships, what are some goals you are setting:

- *For yourself?*

- *For your supervisory relationships?*

What are some things to which you will pay attention to determine your success?

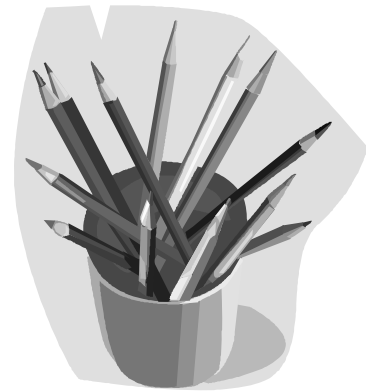


Based on your experiences today, what might you:

- Stop doing
- Continue doing
- Start doing

Learning Partners

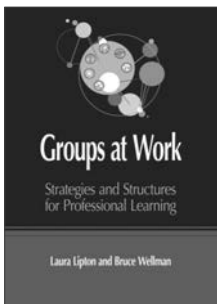
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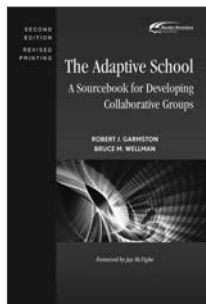
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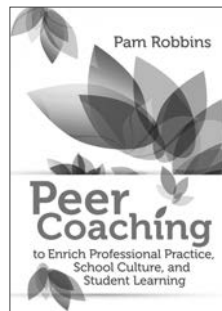
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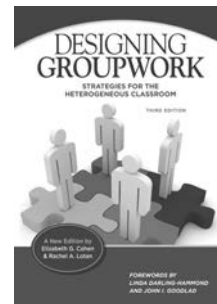
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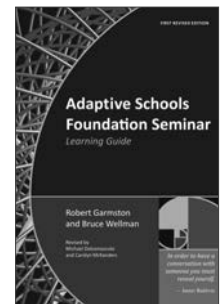
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