

Learning Focused Conversations Guide



Many mentors may find themselves engaged in the three types of conversations:

- Anticipating a new project, assignment or unit of study (Planning)
- Looking back upon a meeting, event or any completed task (Reflecting)
- Addressing a specific challenge or concern that is top of mind (Problem Solving)



Step by Step Mediation Conversation

(1) Elegant Paraphrase	
<p><i>“So even though the rest of your class is coming along well you’re feeling frustrated because there’s one student you just don’t feel is connecting with anybody.”</i></p>	<p>As the beginning teacher begins the planning, reflecting or problem solving conversation, the mentor models the elements of listening illustrated above, thereby encouraging the person to continue speaking. When the person is “finished” explaining their issue in one sentence the mentor summarizes the “gist” of what they have heard.</p> <p>An elegant paraphrase can reflect heart (how the person is feeling) or content (the big issue or challenge). In the illustrative example to the left, the mentor has summarized both feeling and content. Usually the speaker responds with an emphatic yeah and/or elaborates on the concern or issue in greater detail.</p>

(2) Explore Options

<p><i>“Given all that you know about building inclusion in your classroom, what are some of the options you are considering as you try to bring your new student on board with the rest of the class?”</i></p>	<p>Instead of offering advice or autobiography, the mentor assists the beginning teacher in accessing their thinking about the choices they have. Key to this step is a “positive pre-supposition” that the speaker has already given the issue thought and has internal strategies and resources they can bring to bear.</p> <p>Note that the question in the illustrative example is forward looking. At this point the speaker will often provide a synopsis of a number of things they are considering. The role of the mentor is to continue to listen without offering any counsel. Once a number of options have been surfaced, consider proceeding to step # 3.</p>
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(3) Plan Next Steps

<p><i>“Wow, you’ve obviously given this a lot of thought. As you go back to your classroom, what will be the first step you take in your effort to help this student find an entry point into your classroom community?”</i></p>	<p>The mentor’s goal here is to have the beginning teacher consider all the options they have shared and articulate a specific next step or strategy that they will apply to the issue, problem or challenge.</p> <p>Once the beginning teacher has articulated the practical idea(s) they are going to walk away with from this conversation and attempt to implement in their context, consider proceeding to step # 4.</p>
<p>(4) Self-Evaluation</p>	

<p><i>“So you’re going to start by having the student work more in groups with others - how will you know if this strategy is working?”</i></p>	<p>When next steps have been established, the mentor assists the speaker in developing some “measures” that will let them know about whether the approach they’ve chosen is working.</p> <p>The mentor encourages the beginning teacher to respond with specific indicators that they would like see. At this point the mentor may choose to affirm what she or he has heard and bring the conversation to a close.</p>
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