



Teaching & Learning Initiative

Update Number 3

10.18.12

⇒ “Collaboration is a relationship among people committed to supporting each other in achieving a shared goal,” writes Dennis Meadows, a designer and facilitator of international collaborative simulations. “We speak of it lightly, but collaboration is an intense discipline that doesn’t happen accidentally; it requires intention, attention, and integrity.” Collaborative inquiry is the central method of the Teaching and Learning Initiative.

⇒ Each participant in the Teaching & Learning Initiative is paired with another; they become Learning Partners. The importance of their developing collaboration increases at this point, as their learning relationship takes on qualities of **peer coaching**.

Peer coaching serves three overarching aims. First, it is to build communities of educators who continually engage in the study of their craft. Coaching is as much ... a relationship among seeking professionals as it is the exercise of a set of skills. Second, peer coaching is to develop the shared language and common understandings necessary for the collegial study of new knowledge and skills and of student learning. Third, peer coaching is to provide a workplace structure for transferring and applying workshop learning that is essential for constructing new understanding and developing and refining new skills and strategies.

Peer coaching is a strategy in which two or more educators work together for a specific, predetermined purpose associated with constructing understanding, reflecting on current practice, and developing new thinking and practices. Typically, teachers exchange observations of one another in the classroom. Then, using information from that observation, the teachers support each other in developing or improving their instructional understandings and skills. Peer coaching focuses on the collaborative development, refinement, and sharing of professional knowledge and skills in service of improving student learning.

(Adapted from B. Showers, *Educational Leadership*, 1985 and J. Gordon, National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2009)

⇒ Building on the first two Norms of Collaboration, **pausing** and **paraphrasing to listen for understanding**, participants learned and practiced tools for the third norm, **posing questions** ([Posing Questions: Tools for Inquiring and Probing](#)).

⇒ Participants also focused on Area of Performance 3, Creating and Maintaining an Effective Environment for Student Learning. This will be the focus of the observations and conferences between sessions three and four.

⇒ The [Extended Learning](#) between this and the next session will engage participants in an exchange of observation cycles of one another, focusing on Area of Performance 3. A cycle includes a Planning Conversation, guided by a shared protocol, an observation that is guided by the interests of the teacher within the realm of Area 3, and a Reflecting Conversation, also guided by a shared protocol.

⇒ The next session will focus on:

- ❑ Reflecting on experience with Area of Performance 3, and
- ❑ Learning the Framework's Area of Performance 4, Engaging and Supporting All Students in Learning.
