Danielson, C. (2016). *Talk About Teaching! Leading Professional Conversations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Conversation Skills

Setting the Tone for Conversation

1. Linguistic Skills
   1. Trust between the evaluator and the teacher is vitally important for the evaluation process.
   2. Administrator should assume a problem-solving rather than an authoritarian approach.
   3. Evaluators should concentrate on asking the right questions in the right manner.
   4. If the evaluator asks enough good questions the teacher will have their own aha.
2. Establishing Rapport
   1. Body language and tone of voice are as important as the words being spoken.
3. Using Positive Presuppositions
   1. Use open ended questions.
   2. Be cautious about not questioning the capabilities of the teacher “by communicating doubt in the teacher’s awareness and ability to address the topic.”
4. Inviting and Sustaining Thinking
   1. Conversations should occur in a safe environment. (***RV recommends that these conversations take place in the teacher’s room with the evaluator and teacher sitting side by side***).
   2. ***RV recommends that the conversations be face to face and not digital.***
5. Nondichotomous Questions
   1. Avoiding asking questions that have a simple yes or no.
   2. Example: “Tell me more about that…”
6. Plural Forms
   1. “What are some possible explanations for ….?”
   2. “What factors do you consider when planning …?”
7. Promoting analytic thinking
   1. Ask follow up questions to a teacher’s statement.
   2. Example: Teacher states that students are not completing homework assignments; “What patterns have you noticed? Which days of the week seem to be most difficult? What might be some possible explanations?”
8. Encouraging metacognition
   1. Examples: “In what ways could you describe your students’ understanding of place value?” “How has your assessment of your students’ understanding of place value evolved during the past year?”
9. Examining assumptions and implications
   1. “Reflecting on your use of student choice in designing learning activities, in what ways have you found it to be effective?”
   2. “Recalling the mastery of complex content is satisfying to students, how might you devise activities that tap into that natural drive?”
10. Probing
    1. “Could you talk more about that?”
    2. “Could you give me an example of what you mean?”
    3. “Tell me more about that…”
    4. A powerful approach to probing is silence, simply saying nothing.
11. Paraphrasing
    1. When one paraphrases a statement, one repeats it in a slightly different manner.
12. Acknowledging and Clarifying
    1. “In other words…”
    2. “I’m not sure I understand what you are saying. Did you mean that …?”
    3. “Could you explain that a bit further?”
13. Summarizing and organizing
    1. “You seem to be saying that your students don’t demonstrate respect for one another. Do you think that’s an accurate summary of your comments?”

The Six Clusters

1. Clarity of Instructional Purpose and Accuracy of Content DOMAIN 1
   1. Teachers must determine the purposes for a given class on a given day.
   2. What does the teacher expect the students to learn, not do.
   3. Tasks and activities are sequenced and are designed to engage students in the intellectual work of learning. There must be clarity of purpose.
   4. Well run classrooms are purposeful and businesslike.
   5. What is it that students will be learning today?
   6. Evaluator questions to teacher:
      1. What do you intend for students to learn from the lesson?
      2. How will you know that students did in fact learn what you intended?
      3. How does this learning follow from what they, and you, did yesterday and where will it lead in future lessons?
      4. How will you help students consolidate their understanding?
      5. Questions about specific observed events related to clarity of purpose.
2. Safe, Respectful, Supportive, and Challenging Learning Environment
   1. Students must feel respected and honored as people.
   2. Students must feel challenged and they must be willing to accept that challenge.
   3. Teachers whose classrooms constitute a safe and challenging environment for student learning have artfully combined challenge with support.
   4. Group work is a great way for teachers to ensure high-quality work and enlisting students in the effort to engage everyone in the work at hand.
   5. Evaluator questions to teacher: DOMAIN 2
      1. How have you cultivated an environment of respect among the students in this class? What evidence do you have of the effectiveness of this approach?
      2. How have you worked to cultivate a commitment among the students in this class toward hard work, even in the face of challenges?
      3. How do you convey to students that while the wok in this class is challenging, they’ll be able to succeed if they apply themselves?
      4. What techniques do you use to encourage a culture among students in which they welcome challenging work, rather than seeking an “easy path?”
      5. Questions about specific observed events related to the classroom environment.
3. Classroom Management
   1. Routine tasks done routinely.
   2. Routines and norms should be created with student participation.
   3. Routines must be taught.
   4. Evaluator questions to teacher: DOMAIN 2
      1. To what extent were students involved in establishing the routines and procedures in this class? How did you enlist their participation?
      2. At the beginning of the school year, which of the procedures did you find it important to actually teach to students? How did you accomplish this?
      3. To what degree have you succeeded in engaging students themselves in maintaining the routines and procedures” What challenges have you had to overcome in doing this?
      4. What obstacles have you encountered in engaging students in establishing norms for conduct, and in helping to enforce those norms? What approaches have you found to be most effective?
      5. Questions about specific observed events related to classroom management.
4. Student Intellectual Engagement
   1. Student engagement is at the very heart of good teaching.
   2. The key to student engagement is not physical, but mental activity.
   3. It must be minds-on.
   4. Who’s doing the work? The teacher or the students?
   5. Who’s dong the thinking? The teacher or the students?
   6. There are two critical aspects to teaching for student intellectual engagement: designing and managing rich learning tasks and skillfully using student discourse.
   7. Evaluator questions to teacher: DOMAIN 3
      1. To what extent have you modified the tasks and activities in your adopted curriculum materials to make them more engaging to your students? How have you done that?
      2. How much of a challenge has it been to teach your students to ask higher-order questions?
      3. How have you taught your students to engage in discourse with one another? To listen, and disagree with respect?
      4. To what degree have you succeeded in teaching your students to be aware of their own thinking” How have you done this?
      5. Are there times when you find you’re not able to teach the content you want through engaging activities and learning tasks, when you just have to “lecture through it?” How do you decide when that is needed?
      6. Questions about specific observed events related to student engagement?
5. Successful Learning by All Students
   1. It is not sufficient for teachers to engage in an activity called teaching: they must ensure that students learn.
   2. Evaluator questions to ask teacher: DOMAIN 3
      1. How are you sure that all the important learning outcomes in your curriculum are included in summative assessments?
      2. What techniques do you use, in addition to those I observed, to make sure that all your students are “with” you during a lesson?
      3. Describe a strategy you developed before a lesson, to use at a critical point in that lesson, to check on the level of understanding to your students?
      4. What steps do you take to challenge your more advanced students?
      5. To what extent have you found that it’s important to engage parents in ensuring successful learning by all your students?
      6. Questions about specific observed events in successful learning by all students.
6. Professionalism
   1. Schools are learning organizations for teachers, whose full potential is realized only when they regard themselves as members of a professional community.
   2. Evaluator questions to ask teacher: DOMAIN 4
      1. How do you stay abreast of the subjects you teach?
      2. In what ways have you contributed to the professional environment of your grade or department or the entire school?
      3. Can you describe an occasion when you, out of concern for the welfare of your students, challenged the thinking of your colleagues?
      4. What resources within the school or district, or even in the larger community, have you enlisted to help one (or more) if your students?
      5. How have you taken a leadership role with your grade or department to support the learning of your colleagues?