

3.8 Engaging in Intentional Dialogue

Educator Objective

Educators will role-play around stereotypes and judgments in order to learn how to effectively engage in intentional dialogue with students, colleagues, and families.

Overview

Engaging in honest, respectful dialogue with another person increases the level of trust between the individuals. Honesty and respectfulness must be at the core of this “intentional dialogue” or active listening as beliefs, feelings, and ideas are shared openly. Putting one’s self aside to genuinely listen is a skill that shows concern and respect for another person and fosters stronger personal relationships. Fully paying attention to another person, particularly during sensitive or difficult conversations, can be a deciding factor in whether the dialogue is helpful or is simply conversation.

Materials/Set-Up

- Chart paper or document camera to display the guiding principles for intentional dialogue and the related scenarios (to be created and put on display before the lesson)

Instructional Steps

- Introduce the concept of intentional dialogue by asking educators to silently consider the following questions about engaging in conversations that are very personal:
 - Do you think about assorted things while the other person speaks?
 - Do you hurry the conversation with your verbal cues or body language?
 - Do you quickly share your views or experience?
- Solicit from educators other actions or thoughts that can interfere with being fully engaged in conversations.

“Seek first to understand, then to be understood.”

Stephen R. Covey

- Inform educators that, as they discuss the need for intentional dialogue with students and adults from diverse cultures and experiences, the guiding questions below offer a solid reference point:
 - *What is the purpose of the dialogue, and what do I want to accomplish?*
Sometimes, taking a moment to consider what the goal is, along with a possible outcome, provides one with the opportunity to reflect on word choices and possible solutions and outcomes.
 - *Will I have this conversation one-on-one, with just the person involved, or as part of a whole-group discussion to use as a teachable moment for all?*
Depending on the topic of the conversation, many students may feel embarrassed or threatened by engaging in intentional dialogue in front of their peers. Consider how the environment can critically influence the outcome.
 - *What will I need to remember and reflect on later? What information might I need to pass along to others?*
Key information might come up and need to be addressed at a later date. Being prepared to pass along or record information may contribute to a more effective follow-up conversation.
- In preparation for role-playing with intentional dialogue scenarios, explain to educators that they will pair up and assume the role of a student or an educator in the scenarios. One person will be the student or educator making an inappropriate statement, and the other person will be the educator who responds.
- Provide the following instructions: “Based on the given scenario, role-play how you would engage in intentional dialogue and provide a safe space for your students and colleagues.”
- Read the scenarios one at a time to the group, post them on chart paper for viewing, or display them via a projector. Allow about three minutes for each ensuing dialogue.

Scenario 1:

- *Statement by student: “She must be mentally ill. She can’t do anything right.”*
- *Educator: How do you respond to the student within the classroom or learning community?*

Scenario 2:

- *Educator 1: “These kids on free/reduced lunch are always late to school. I can’t do anything about them and their situation. They’re all like this.”*
- *Educator 2: How would you address this statement about children living in poverty?*

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Scenario 3:

- *Educator 1, who has had a difficult teaching day: “He doesn’t care about his grades! Have you seen his parents? He will probably just end up in jail.”*
- *Educator 2: How do you respond to individuals who stereotype students?*

Scenario 4:

- *Educator 1, overhearing students using inappropriate names with one another: “Oh, they are just kids being kids.”*
 - *Educator 2, also overhearing the students: How do you respond to both the educator and the students?*
- Halfway through the activity, switch roles so that the responding educator becomes the student/educator making the inappropriate statement and vice versa.
 - After completing all of the scenarios, ask volunteers to share out some of their responses to the given scenarios.
 - If time allows, provide educators with an opportunity to share out other common situations with their sites or district and how they have handled the intentional dialogue when it occurs.

Extension

- To extend the learning:
 - Consider having educators work collaboratively to create scenarios that they have encountered, which may be prevalent in their learning community, and bring them to a follow-up session.
 - Have educators review the Using “I” Messages resource, which is available for download through the *AVID Culturally Relevant Teaching* webpage on MyAVID, before completing a reflection. Ask them to think about a time when they were engaged in a conversation with someone, and the individual used a “you” message. What was their reaction? How might the response have been different with the use of an “I” message?
- To modify the activity, ask educators to work within their individual professional learning communities or grade levels to discuss common situations that require intentional dialogue and how these situations have been addressed.
- To integrate technology, introduce the concept of intentional dialogue or research more scenarios online to share with your staff. Rita Pierson and Ruby Payne have several videos with vignettes of student/teacher conversations.