

Structuring Data Conversations

Unstructured conversations around student learning results can often end in emotional disasters. As a result, effective learning teams carefully structure data conversations. Use the following template to provide focus to your team's next attempt at studying learning outcomes.

Date: _____

Common Assessment to Be Reviewed: _____

Teachers Present: _____

Step 1: Prepare Your Mind		
<p>The most effective learning teams recognize that successful data conversations start slowly, with teachers collectively reflecting on intended outcomes and preconceived notions. Use the following reflection tasks to prepare your mind for today's data conversation.</p>		
Reflection Task	Examples	Responses
<p>Start With Learning-Centered Questions</p> <p>By starting with specific learning-centered questions, a team can move past superficial observations and on to more productive analyses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Across the grade level, were there any specific objectives or tasks with which multiple students appeared to struggle? 	
<p>Identify Preconceptions</p> <p>What beliefs do you hold about yourself, your students, your colleagues, and your instructional practices? In what ways might those beliefs skew the way you look at student learning data?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael is a master teacher who can do no wrong. • Sarah struggles with classroom discipline and does not challenge her kids. • This year's students are completely irresponsible. • The lessons we taught were some of the best we've taught in years. • The test we gave was poorly written. 	

<p>Step 2: Prepare Your Data Set</p> <p>The most effective learning teams recognize that successful data conversations depend on approachable data sets that have been carefully prepared to spotlight trends and patterns in student learning. Use one of the following strategies to prepare the results of the common assessment that your team is studying today.</p>		
<p>Christmas Tree Highlighting</p> <p>Collectively decide on a score that represents passing performance on today's assessment. Highlight all scores in today's data set that are at or above this passing indicator in green and all the scores below this passing indicator in red.</p>	<p>Stoplight Highlighting</p> <p>Use two jointly determined cut values to highlight today's data set; for example, all the scores above 85 percent might be highlighted green, all the scores between 70 and 85 percent might be highlighted yellow, and all the scores below 70 percent might be highlighted red.</p>	
<p>Step 3: Prepare Your Findings</p> <p>Now that your team has carefully set initial questions, brainstormed potential preconceptions, and prepared your data set, it is finally time to begin looking at your results. Use one of the following strategies to draw some conclusions about what it is that you've learned.</p>		
<p>Sticky Notetaking</p> <p>Use self-stick notes to record up to five observations and up to five questions about today's data set. After organizing the observations and questions into categories, start an open discussion centered on those categories.</p>	<p>Final Word</p> <p>Give one participant 60 seconds to share a thought or insight about today's data set. Then, each team member takes up to 30 seconds to respond to that insight. After everyone has had a chance to comment, the participant gets 30 seconds to respond to what he or she has heard from the other members of the group.</p>	
<p>Step 4: Prepare Your Next Steps</p> <p>The most effective learning teams recognize that successful data conversations end in actions that are designed to improve student learning across entire grade levels and departments. Use the following questions to plan next steps.</p>		
<p>Conversation Task</p>	<p>Examples</p>	<p>Responses</p>
<p>Interpret Results</p> <p>It's time to dig into your results! Begin discussing the patterns that you see in student performance. Brainstorm a list of three to five specific result statements on which your team can take action. Remember to avoid emotionally loaded words and phrases. What patterns do you see in student performance?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost all of our students scored above 70 percent on the assessment. • The active boys in our classrooms all seemed to struggle with the questions at the end of the assessment. • Question 4 was missed by almost 80 percent of the students in our advanced classrooms. 	

<p>Leave With Questions as Well as Answers</p> <p>For highly accomplished learning teams, data conversations are as much about questions as they are about answers. Never leave a data conversation without new questions to pursue.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The data say that some students are struggling with multiplying fractions. Why? • What aspect of multiplying fractions do they find difficult? • Why were the students in first block more successful at multiplying fractions than the students in second block? 	
<p>Step 5: Write a Set of Summary Statements</p> <p>The most effective learning teams end data conversations with a set of short statements summarizing the outcomes of this powerful professional learning experience. Use the following sentence starters to craft summary statements for today's data conversation.</p>		
Prompt		Response
<p>The finding that surprised us the most in today's data conversation was . . .</p>		
<p>Today's data conversation has left us convinced that . . .</p>		
<p>Today's data conversation has us continuing to wonder whether or not . . .</p>		
<p>To act on today's data conversation, we plan to . . .</p>		