

Dialogue: Critical to Professional Development

Connie Briggs

Texas Woman's University, TX

Salli Forbes

Mississippi Bend Area Education Agency , IA

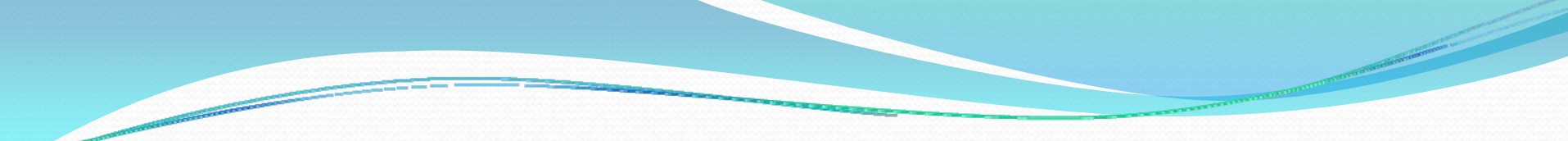


Professional Development

A good school is but a collection of good classrooms.

Only by investing in classroom teachers can any school hope to become a school where all children learn to read and write.

Allington, D. (2001). *What really matters to struggling readers.*



“No other intervention can make the difference that a knowledgeable, skillful teacher can make in the learning process.” (p. 8)

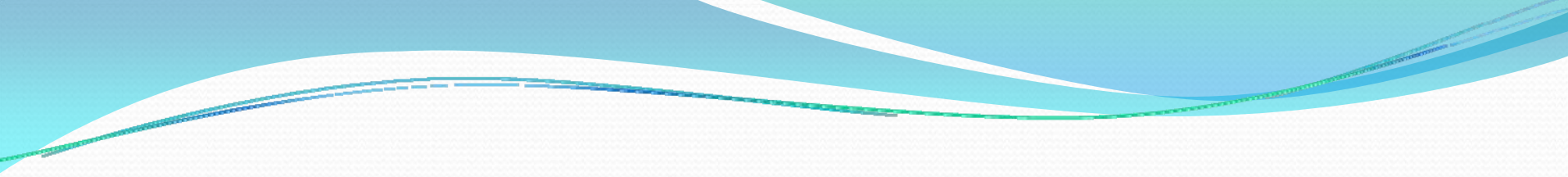
Investments in teacher development produced far greater student achievement gains than investments in new materials, reducing class size or increasing salaries, “spending on teacher education swamped other variables as the most productive investment for schools.” (p. 9)

The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 1997



One of the most important factors in raising student achievement is a highly qualified teacher.

U.S. Department of Education, 2006



“We have added more support programs, more instructional aides, more specialist teachers, and more computer and software programs while ignoring the powerful evidence on the importance of high quality classroom teaching.”

Allington, D. (2001). *What really matters to struggling readers.*

School– A Place for Learning

“School is not a place for important people who do not need to learn and unimportant people who do. Instead it is a place where students discover, and adults rediscover, the joys, the difficulties, and the satisfactions of learning.”

Achieve Your Vision of Professional Development, SERVE, 1999.

A New Model of Professional Development Constructivist Learning—

Constructivism has been generally accepted as the best approach for working with adults and has emerged as an important educational paradigm for professional development.

Garmston and Wellman 1999; Joyce & Showers 1995; Lambert et al 1995; Lyons, Pinnell, and DeFord 1993

Constructivist Principles of Teaching


1. Encourage active participation
2. Organize small-group discussions around common concerns
3. Introduce new concepts in context
4. Create a safe environment
5. Develop teachers' conceptual knowledge through conversation around shared experiences
6. Provide opportunities for teachers to use what they know to construct new knowledge
7. Look for shifts in teachers' understandings over time
8. Provide additional experiences for teachers who have not yet developed needed conceptual understanding.

Lyons, C. & Pinnell, G. S. (2001) *Systems for Change*, p. 4.

Principles of Effective Professional Development

- Professional development should be grist for thinking.
- Teachers need to learn about teaching through teaching.
- Learning communities should be formed.
- Teachers are in the best position to change other teachers.
- Student outcomes should be examined.

Rodgers, E. , Fullerton, S. & Deford, D. (2002). Making a difference with professional development in *Learning from Teaching in Literacy Education*, p. 53.



As opportunities increase for professional learning that moves away from the traditional in-service training mode and toward long-term, continuous learning in the context of school and classroom and with the support of colleagues, the idea of professional development takes on even greater importance. For if teacher learning takes place within the context of a professional community that is nurtured and developed both within and outside the school, then the effects may be more than just an expanded concept of teacher development. Indeed, such teacher learning can bring about significant and lasting school change.

Lieberman, A. (1995). Practices that support Teacher Development: Transforming Conceptions of Professional Learning. *Phi Delta Kappan* 76:591-96.

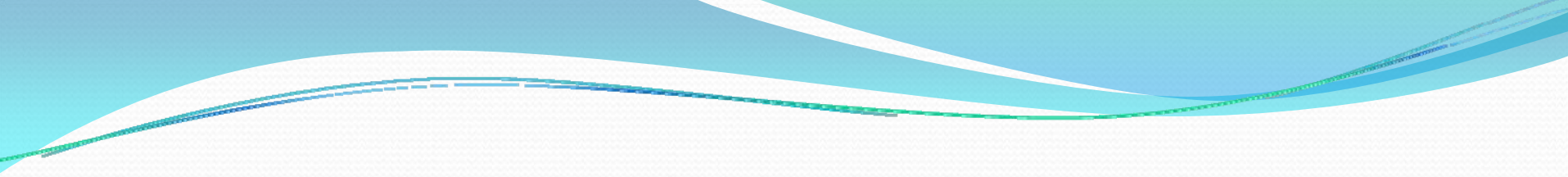
Learning is Accomplished Through Conversation

When a group engages in true communication with the goal of learning they ...

- take responsibility for supporting their statements with evidence and observations of behavior
- model the process for others
- ask questions that demand evidence to support ideas and opinions
- work to uncover underlying beliefs and assumptions
- suspend judgment and engage in reflective thinking

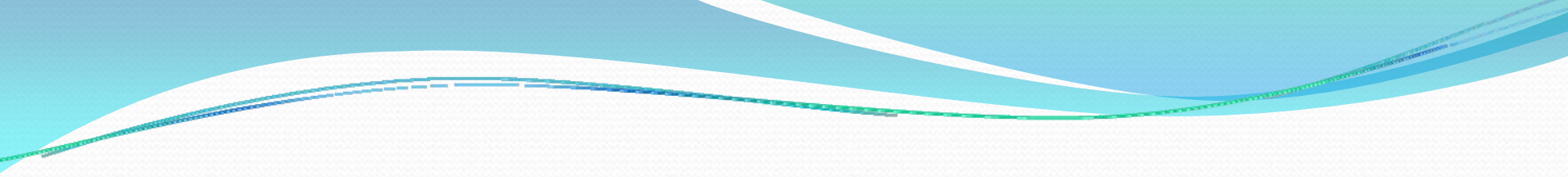
Learning is Verbally Constructed

Language is paramount in mediating learner change. . . .It is through shared conversation that teachers have opportunities to question, hypothesize, clarify, rethink, affirm, and acquire more complex understandings of how children learn to read and write.



Just as children learn through conversation with their teachers, so too do teachers learn through conversation with their colleagues and mentors.

Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development emphasizes the role of social interaction through language.



“Vygotsky’s (1986) theory suggests that learning never stops and is always recursive. The more we know, the more we do not know, and the more we need to seek assistance to grasp new knowledge and insights. It is through assistance by more knowledgeable others that we are challenged to stretch our boundaries to learn more.”

Lyons, C. A., Pinnell, G. S. & DeFord, D. E. (1993) *Partners in learning*, p. 180.

Dialogue . . .

is a reflective learning process in which group members seek to understand one another's viewpoints and deeply held assumptions.

Group members inquire into their own and one another's beliefs, values, and mental models to better understand how things work in their world.

Garmston, R. & Wellman, B. (1998). Teacher talk that makes a difference. *Educational Leadership*, p. 31.

Dialogue Vs. Discussion

Dialogue leads to collective meaning making and shared understanding. It builds a sense of connection and belonging, and creates an emotional and cognitive safety zone where ideas flow for examination without judgment.

Discussion leads to decisions that stay made.

Rules of Dialogue

Burbules (1993) defines dialogue as communication aimed at the pursuit of intersubjectivity that may or may not result in agreement.

Burbules, N. (1993). *Dialogue in teaching: Theory and practice*.

1. Rule of Participation

Dialogue is pedagogical—

Any participant should be able to raise topics, pose questions, challenge other points of view, or engage in any of the other activities that define the dialogical interaction.

Knowledge is co-constructed.

Things that help . . .

- Organize the seating in a circle
- Avoid Inquiry-Response-Evaluation questioning

2. Rule of Commitment

Dialogue is communicative—

Because usually dialogue's pedagogical purposes can only be achieved over time, a willingness to stay with the process, even when outcomes are uncertain or unclear is essential for success.



Things that help . .

Plan long-term professional development that focuses on one topic (over a semester or a whole school year)

Choose topics based upon teacher interest and need, or by analysis of school-wide student data

3. Rule of Reciprocity

Dialogue is a relationship--

The capacities, or virtues, that foster an effective dialogical relationship frequently need to be developed and improved among participants as they learn together, not only about the topic at hand, but also about the communicative process itself.

Burbules, N. (1993). *Dialogue in teaching: Theory and practice*.



Things that help. . .

In order for the group dynamic to build over time the rules of dialogue must be made transparent and evaluated regularly by the group



Evaluate the Group's Participation

Think about how you contributed to the group today?

Did everyone contribute to the conversation today?

How did you contribute to lifting the group's understanding today?

Ways to Facilitate Socially Constructed Dialogue

Clarifying- use student artifacts to clarify interpretation

Challenging- call for teachers to give evidence

Eliciting- asking for more information

Extending- take teachers from their current understandings to new understandings

Shaping Language- develop shared understandings

Ways to Facilitate Socially Constructed Dialogue

Linking- to other PD sessions, resources, experiences, etc.

Reinforcing/affirming- agreement and emphasis

Summarizing- a quick check with the group to sum up what has been said

Restating-clarifying language or understandings

Opportunities for Dialogue in Professional Development

Whole School

***Study groups**

***One-to-One Coaching**- (staff developer or peer)

Study Groups

In a study group, peers engage in focused study of a single concept or idea. Groups have clear goals, regular schedules for meetings, and specific expectations for members.

Study groups may be based upon:

- Reading and discussing books or articles
- Analyzing teaching
- Examining student behavior and student work
- A combination of reading, analyzing, teaching, and examining student work



Video



Coaching

In a one-to-one setting teachers work with a colleague or staff developer to further understandings, develop conceptual and analytic skills and/or refine teaching.

Essential Features of Coaching Conversations

1. They are tied to a specific event that has just occurred.
2. They take place in the context of the teacher's attempt to learn a specific technique or concept.
3. They make use of specific teacher and student actions as well as words.
4. **They include reciprocal reflection and constructive dialogue between teacher and coach.**
5. They result in new learning and a plan of action to improve teaching.

Lyons, C. & Pinnell, G. S. (2001) *Systems for Change*, p. 141.

Coaching is a Conversation Directed Toward Inquiry

There are two kinds of inquiry:

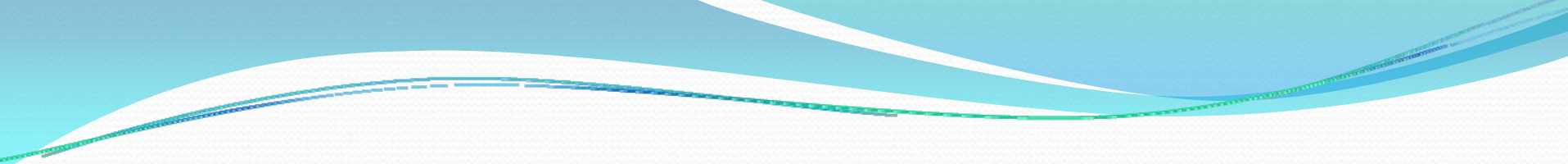
- Information seeking, which mean clarifying, explaining, and confirming,

And

- Wondering, which means reflecting exploring, and considering , many possibilities

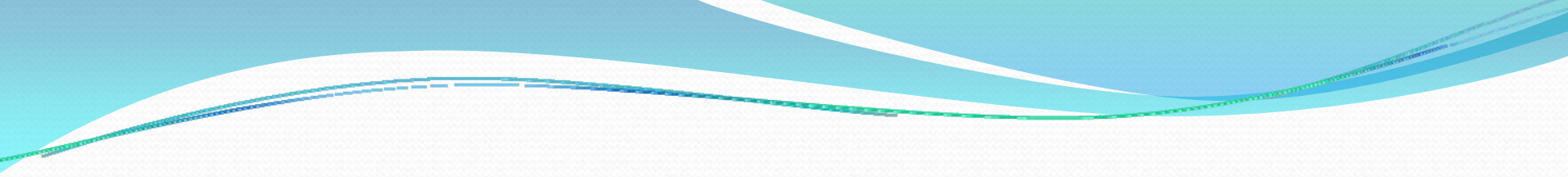


Video



When people learn, they build tentative theories to explain what is happening. They come to know by constructing understandings, a process that involves the interaction of prior knowledge with the experience at the moment.

Lyons, CA. (1994). Construction chains of reasoning in Reading Recovery demonstration lessons. In C.K. Kinzer & D.J. Leu (Eds.), *Multidimensional aspects of literacy research, theory and practice. Forty-third yearbook of the National Reading Conference* (pp. 276-286). Chicago: National Reading Conference. p. 276



Direct experience and the gradual accumulation of knowledge from reflection on the experience over time are critical processes and are supported by conversation with others.

Lyons, CA. (1994). Construction chains of reasoning in Reading Recovery demonstration lessons. In C.K. Kinzer & D.J. Leu (Eds.), *Multidimensional aspects of literacy research, theory and practice. Forty-third yearbook of the National Reading Conference* (pp. 276-286). Chicago: National Reading Conference. p. 276