

LOOKING THROUGH THE LENS OF LEARNING

conversation guide



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As you carry on as a lifelong learner, it is important to take time to reflect on your experiences and how they shape and inform your practice.

PURPOSE OF THIS CONVERSATION GUIDE

This conversation guide highlights selected themes found in the book *Looking Through the Lens of Learning: An Interactive Journey*. These themes include: **Creating Culture, Relationships, Authentic Learning, Dare to Do, Feedback/Feedforward**. The above themes are accompanied by suggested discussion topics and activities, so feel free to modify the suggestions to suit the needs of your audience. Note the themes highlighted are not the only ones found in the interactive journal, nor are they presented in any order. They are meant to be a starting point to your interactive journey.

The journey is yours, embrace where it may lead you!

BEFORE EMBARKING ON THIS JOURNEY, TAKE SOME TIME TO THINK ABOUT AND DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING:

The Harvard Business School found that fitting in 15 minutes of reflection to the end of our day makes you more effective, and in fact employees who engage in this practice perform up to 22.8% better than those who don't.¹ Research in the area of psychology has found that even semi-regular journaling has positive impacts on individual's mental health and well-being. "Not only does regular writing make you feel good, it helps you relive the events you experienced in a safe environment where you can process them without fear or stress"²

NO JUDGEMENT

To be able to be authentic in a reflective process, we need to feel safe. Please help create a safe space by honouring the opinions and ideas of others and letting individuals share their own stories without judgement.

1 <http://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/learning-by-thinking-how-reflection-improves-performance>

2 <http://lifelifehacker.com/why-you-should-keep-a-journal-and-how-to-start-yours-1547057185>

AREA OF FOCUS

Creating Culture

THINK, DISCUSS, REFLECT

Culture is how we behave in a certain environment, and our behaviour is shaped by our values.

What do you value? How do your behaviours align with your values? What happens when your values and behaviours are not in alignment?

Are the values and behaviours in your environment aligned? How do you know?

If a guest were to enter your environment, what would they notice?

When you enter a new environment, how does it make you feel? What do you notice? What is the culture?

POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES

- ▶ Invite guests into your environment. Provide them with sticky notes. Ask them to write down what they see as they move through your environment; collect them and as you look through the sticky notes, consider the following questions:
 - What themes emerged?
 - What surprised you?
 - Did they pick up on what you are trying to do in this space?
 - What didn't they notice?
- ▶ On page 54 of your interactive journal, five norms are listed. Take time to discuss these with people you share your space with:
 - What are the norms within your own environment?
 - How are you modelling them?
- ▶ Pages 6 and 7 invite you to consider how you contribute to creating culture in your environment. List or draw the ways in which you make a positive contribution to your spaces.



AREA OF FOCUS

Relationships

THINK, DISCUSS, REFLECT

Relationships are the connections that we build with others. These connections have a ripple effect on our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours as well the people around us (see pages 10 & 11).

Why are relationships so important? Some people build connections easily, but for others it may not be that easy. What process do you use to connect with a new person? Is it easy for you to build relationships with others? How do you know when you have made a connection with someone?

POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES

- ▶ Create a list of three to five strategies you use to build relationships. What evidence do you have that the strategy works? Gather ideas from colleagues to add to your toolbox for building relationships.
- ▶ Think of a significant relationship you have. On a scale of 1-10, where would you rate the success of this relationship? If it is less than a 10, what can you do to improve it?

Nurturing relationships take time. What are your next steps? Write down ways you will commit to making this relationship more successful. If you would like, ask the person in this relationship to do the same, and share your ideas with each other. What did you discover?

- ▶ Like bridges, relationships are built upon a strong foundation. Reflect on pages 8 and 9.
 - What happens when the integrity of a bridge is compromised?
 - > How does this compare to the integrity of your relationship?
 - What can you do to strengthen a relationship that has been damaged?

THE 3Es

ENGAGED THINKER



"Being on task, being creative, raising your hand, sharing ideas. Pay attention, working hard and trying your best."

-Hailey and Preston



ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

"We are not afraid to talk in front of a large group of people. We help out in the school and try to raise awareness for good causes."

-Kallie and Caiden



ETHICAL CITIZEN

"I get to school on time, help people when they are hurt and listen to what my jobs are."

-Riley and Ella

AREA OF FOCUS

Authentic Learning

THINK, DISCUSS, REFLECT

What does it mean to be authentic? How do you know when you are being authentic? What is the difference between “fitting in” and “belonging”? Why is it so important to be yourself and when is it important to change yourself?

When in your life has your work been aligned with your authentic self? When working as your authentic self, how does your learning improve?

Part of creating an authentic environment is engaging in different ways of learning: PBL (Project Based Learning), the core competencies, the 3Es (Engaged Thinkers, Ethical Citizen with an Entrepreneurial Spirit), Literacy and Numeracy. These different approaches to teaching and learning provide authentic learning experiences, for students, teachers, and parents. Why is learning through real life experiences so valuable?

Challenges and possibilities are created by doing things differently. Consider how you approach new challenges. What excites you? What questions emerge?

POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES

- ▶ With a partner, discuss a time that you learned an important lesson. Why did this lesson stick with you?
- ▶ The “3Es” are the engaged thinker, the entrepreneurial spirit, and the ethical citizen. On page 26, students provided examples of how they demonstrate these qualities. Page 27 asks you to consider how you demonstrate them in your life. This can be personal or professional. Please record your answers using specific examples.
- ▶ In your subject area groups, please consider how literacy and numeracy are present in your curriculum. Also think of examples of literacy and numeracy in your everyday life. Record the information on pages 34 and 35. Have a member of your team share your work with the rest of your colleagues. Share this work in your classroom with your students.

- ▶ Pages 30 and 31 invite you to consider the competencies for learning in the 21st Century. These competencies are described by Alberta Education as a combination of the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for students to develop into Educated Albertans.

- Which of these competencies do you feel most comfortable with?
- Which ones are you trying to develop? How can you engage your students with these in mind?

Work intentionally with a competency outside of your comfort zone. Record your goal in your interactive journal.

- With colleagues or students, brainstorm and gather artifacts that represent our current teaching and learning environment. Use the directions on page 28 to create a “time machine” about learning in today’s society.
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AREA OF FOCUS

Dare to Do

HOW DO YOU
STEP OUTSIDE
YOUR
COMFORT
ZONE?

THINK, DISCUSS, REFLECT

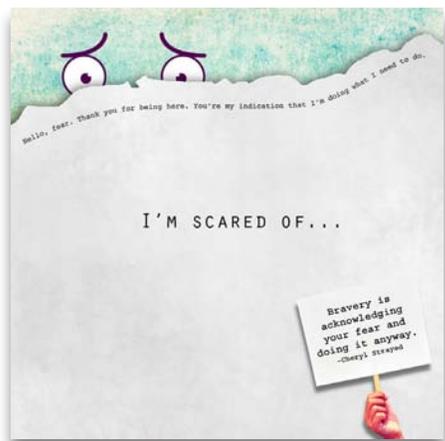
Being vulnerable is hard work. In order to be vulnerable, we need to feel safe. A culture in which we can “dare to do” is one that encourages and values risk taking. It supports and celebrates individuals when they make mistakes.

On page 25 of your interactive journal, Cheryl Strayed is quoted as saying “Bravery is acknowledging your fear and doing it anyway”. This is an example of taking a risk. How do you model and encourage authenticity and risk taking? How do you ensure that you are supportive of others rather than judgemental when people open up to you and share their vulnerabilities?

Risk takers often think outside of the box. They consider “what if” and “why not”. Pages 20–24 invite you stretch yourself and consider the many possibilities that lie in the “what ifs” and “why nots” of learning.

POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES

- ▶ Strength comes from being vulnerable. Page 38 invites you to write down the things that make you vulnerable. How do these vulnerabilities make you stronger?
- ▶ Think-Pair-Share: first think about how to create a safe space where it is okay to fail. Discuss this with a partner. As a whole group, consider how you celebrate failure. How can we grow from our failures? Reflect on page 40 in your interactive journal.
- ▶ Page 19 of your interactive journal asks you to consider what problems you think need to be solved. Reflect back on a time when you had to solve a big problem.
 - What tools or skills did you use to solve the problem?
 - Did you require support from someone?
 - If you did, who were you able to access help from?
 - > What qualities does that person possess that made you feel like you could approach them?
 - > Write them a thank you note for the help they were able to provide you with.
 - If you didn't require support from others, how did you tackle your problem?





AREA OF FOCUS

Feedback — Feedforward

THINK, DISCUSS, REFLECT

Feedback helps us be intentional about moving our work forward. For feedback to be valuable, it needs to be timely, constructive, and connected to our learning. In order to be receptive to feedback, trust needs to be developed! Sometimes, constructive feedback can be hard to hear resulting in tough conversations. This type of feedback propels your learning forward.

- When do you provide feedback?
- What criteria do you use to base your feedback on?
- How is this feedback provided?
- How do you know your feedback is being considered?

POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES

- ▶ To delve deeper into the benefits of feedback, refer to pages 42 and 43 of your interactive journal. Answer the questions and share your ideas with a partner.
- ▶ Feedback is best received from a “critical friend”. This individual is someone you can count on, and is honest with you in a constructive manner. Identify a “critical friend”. Ask them to provide you with feedback over the course of a few weeks about an outcome you are trying to achieve. Journal your discussions.
- ▶ A critical friend is **not** the same as someone criticizing you. On page 21, you are asked to consider Aristotle’s quote, “There’s only one way to avoid criticism; do nothing, say nothing, and be nothing”. Please consider what this means for you. Journal away!



