

## Learning Partnership Conversation Guide

### Purpose

The goal of the learning partnership conversation is to engage an individual learner – whether a student or an adult colleague – in a *learning partnership* to build shared understanding of:

1. The learner’s feelings about their learning environment and themselves as a learner
2. The learner’s thinking process or approach to a particular concept or competency, or to engaging in a routine learning activity
3. The learner’s strengths and needs in that particular area

The purpose of the learning partnership is **not to assess or measure the learner’s competence, but to engage with curiosity** in order to more deeply understand one learner’s experience.

Students who experience these conversations feel more **seen and heard**. Leaders or teachers who initiate these conversations and reflect on them afterward become more **aware** of:

- a) Strategies to support the individual learner to thrive
- b) Ways to improve their teaching or leadership to more equitably meet the needs of all learners
- c) Their own assumptions and what those assumptions reveal about themselves
- d) Core educational values and priorities that can guide intentional decision making

### Getting Started

- **Identify 1-2 learners whose experience you are curious to understand better.** Explain that you are interested in understanding their learning experience better, so that you can improve your own teaching/leadership, and invite them to chat with you for a few minutes. Emphasize that this is not a quiz, assessment, or evaluation.
- **Plan to audio record the conversation (with permission from the learner) or take notes.** Recording enables your full attention to be on the learner during the conversation and supports deeper reflection afterward. You can assure the learner that the recording will only be used to help you remember what was said later, so you can better reflect and learn from them how to meet their needs.
- **Plan to ask no more than 3-5 questions,** with the option of spontaneous probing questions in between. The conversation need be no more than **5 minutes**.
- **Schedule 20 minutes for yourself afterward for reflection.** If possible, invite a colleague to listen to the recording with you and engage as a supportive thinking partner.

## Conversation Guide

1. Choose a **focal area** (learning routine, routine assignment, competency, or concept).
2. Lead with **curiosity**: Tell the learner that you are working on improving your teaching/leadership, and you would really like to **hear about their experiences**.
3. **Acknowledge positionality**: Invite them to speak honestly, acknowledging that this kind of conversation with you may feel different from what they are used to. Emphasize that this is not an evaluation or a quiz.
4. Ask **open-ended questions** to honor the learner's voice and agency.
5. Allow quiet **thinking space** and uninterrupted **response time**.
6. Acknowledge the learner's ideas, feelings, and experiences **without judgement**.

### *Suggested Questions (prioritize 3-5 of these)*

- How is it going for you in \_\_\_? What is working/not working for you? Why?
- What are you hoping to learn in \_\_\_? Why is that important to you?
- Why do you think we engage in \_\_\_? Why does it matter?
- How do you feel when you are working on or engaged in \_\_\_? Why?
- Tell me about a time when \_\_\_ went really well for you. What made that experience successful? How do you know that it went well? Is that how it usually goes? Why?
- What are you working on right now in \_\_\_? How are you doing with that? How do you know?
- Where are you going next in your learning about \_\_\_? How do you feel about that?
- Who is someone you feel connected to in \_\_\_? Why? When do you feel you most belong?
- Is there anything I should know about you as a learner that I don't already know?

## Reflection Guide

Use these prompts to guide your reflection **after the conversation**, alone or with a colleague.

- What did I learn that I didn't know before? What surprised me?
- What assumptions was I holding? Why? What does this tell me about myself?
- What appears most important to this learner? What do they care about?
- What was I hoping to hear? What does that reveal about my core values or priorities as a teacher/leader?
- What learning strengths are evident and how are they showing up?
- What learning needs are evident and how are they showing up?
- How might I adjust my mindset or practice to support this learner to thrive?
- How might I adjust my mindset or practice in support of equitable outcomes for all my learners?
- What follow up questions might I have for this learner over time? Which other learner(s) might I want to connect with in a learning partnership conversation?