

Questioning Guide for Coaching Conversations

Although time can feel short, using questions throughout conversations conveys to the teacher that you are really listening and that you care about their unique situation and challenges. In turn, this investment in conversation pays off as you will be better equipped to recommend relevant, useful strategies.

Start the Conversation*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share a little more about _____. It sounds like that is really a source of _____ (name a feeling, such as overwhelm or frustration). • You mentioned _____. Tell me a little more about that.
Acknowledge the teacher's feelings and experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can see why that would be _____ (name a feeling the teacher has conveyed, such as frustration). • I'd be _____ (name a feeling, experience) in that situation too, I hear you! • Let me make sure I'm understanding. So you're saying _____. (revoice what was shared to confirm your understanding is on track)
Clarify	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There could be several factors at play here (list a few). Do you have a sense of what might be at the root of the issue? • Is this a new challenge? Something you've experienced before? • What have you tried so far? • Have you experienced this in the past? What worked well then?
Guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm listening as you describe _____ and what comes to mind are _____, _____, and _____. Do any of those resonate with what your gut is saying could be a good place for us to investigate more?

*For additional, detailed conversation starters, see the learning indicators in each playbook.

Questions to Avoid (and what to ask instead)

Despite well-meaning intentions, some questions may feel evaluative or judgemental to a teacher. Questions that seem to lead towards 1 "correct" answer might feel accusatory or judgemental, putting the teacher on the spot for the "right" answer. Instead, consider a conversational approach that acknowledges the complexity of multiple factors, the expertise and professionalism of teachers, and invites the teacher to share more about their challenge or circumstances. For example:

Asking this...	Could put a teacher on edge because....	Instead, consider...
What routines do you use for _____?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They might not currently use routines, and now feel inadequate because they do not. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What's your approach for _____? • In the past, what's worked well for _____? What hasn't?
How long are you spending on _____?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They might feel that there's a "right" amount of time to spend, and if they are doing anything other than that, they are wrong. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In your ____ block, you're trying to fit in ____, ____, and _____. What's the current balance of time between those things? Tell me a little more about how those factors balance within the time you have.

When the going gets tough....

If a conversation goes awry or a teacher starts to seem defensive, consider this structure for re-grouping:

1. Acknowledge the tension or miscommunication.
2. Take ownership for your words.
3. Ask for a moment to regroup and try again.

For example: *I'm sensing that maybe I've said something upsetting or that maybe didn't come across well. I'm sorry - I am trying to understand the situation and provide the best support I can. Let me take just a minute to think about another question that will help me better understand.*

As you know, tone is everything. If you're feeling annoyed, it is likely that your tone will convey that. It is OK to pause, ask for a moment to check in with your own feelings, take a breath, and then re-engage in the conversation.