What is the Power of Leading With Questions?

Learning Forward Annual Conference
December 10, 2019

Donna Micheaux, Ph.D. and Jennifer Parvin Ph. D., P.C.C.

“When you change a period to a question mark, it changes everything.”
Google Pixel 2 TV Commercial
Pause and Reflect

1. What is the most powerful question you have been asked as a leader?
What Makes Questions So Powerful?
Questions Actually Change Our Brains...

Brain physically changes and actually “lights up” in very specific ways in response to questions as distinct from statements.

Questions produce insights in the brain and act as a catalyst, sparking thought and action.
Our Session Plan

- Four Ways to Use Questions
- Five Tools That Facilitate Using Questions
- Stories Starring Questions
- Pause and Reflect Questions
- Thinking and Interacting
Reflection Questions

1. What Is the Most Powerful Question You’ve Been Asked As a Leader?

2. What Do You Think Is the Impact of a Questioning Culture on Students?

3. What Makes It Especially Important for Educational Leaders to Develop a Questioning Culture?

4. What Are All of the Ways You Use Questions?

5. What Are One or Two Powerful Questions You’ve Asked?

6. Tell Us About the Kinds of Questions You Ask and How You Use Them?

7. How Has the Use of Questions Changed You As a Leader? How Could It?

8. What Has Been the Impact of Leading With Questions on Your Organization? What Might It Be?
Great Questions Define Great Leaders

“Leaders of the past may have been a person who knew how to tell, but certainly the leader of the future will be a person who knows how to ask.”

Peter Drucker, qtd. in *Leading With Questions*
Who We Are

and

How We Got Here...
Our Theory of Action Is...

When the learning for adults in the system mirrors the learning we desire for students, we will have radically exciting, engaging and equitable schools and school systems.
2. What do you think is the impact of a questioning culture on students?

3. Why do you think it is especially important for educational leaders to promote a questioning culture?
Asking the Right Question: Four Main Purposes

I. Asking Questions to Learn in PLCs

II. Asking Questions to Focus on What Matters

III. Asking Questions to Build a Higher Level of Capacity and Performance

IV. Asking Questions to Empower and Build Personal Accountability
I. Asking Questions to Learn in PLCs

Learning Walks and Professional Learning Communities
Jennifer Parvin, Principal, Dallas, Texas

“Questions have power and the form of the question, what question is asked, matters.”
Tools To Learn in PLCs...
Powerful Questions
Qualities of Powerful Questions
From Coaching Skills: A Handbook by Jenny Rogers

Connection
- Reflect Authentic Listening and Understanding
- Presume Positive Intent

Learning
- Lead to Learning
- Create Clarity and Commitment

Action
- Move Thinking Forward to the Future
- Move Thinking Inside to Introspection
## Qualities of Powerful Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive and Powerful</th>
<th>Not Positive and Not Powerful</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open</td>
<td>Closed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focused on the Future</td>
<td>Focused on the Past</td>
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<tr>
<td>Energized About Solutions and Potential</td>
<td>Energized About Problems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short and Sweet</td>
<td>Long, Rambling and Complicated</td>
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<tr>
<td>Centered on “What” and “How”</td>
<td>Centered on “Why” and “Why Not?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focused on Client’s Growth and Insight</td>
<td>Focused on Coach’s Expertise and Advice</td>
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Examples of **NOT** Powerful Questions

- *Have you thought of...?*
- *Can’t you...?*
- *Should you...?*
- *Will you...?*
- *Would you agree that...?*
- *Wouldn’t you agree that...?*
- *Aren’t you saying that...?*

- *Why did your student do that?*
- *Why does your boss believe that?*
- *Why did you do it that way?*
- *Since you went to the conference, it seems like things have been different in your team, like maybe some of the other teachers resented that you got the chance to go and they didn’t. Do you see that? Or do you think everyone is just tired from all of the STAAR preparation? Or do they just not like the principal? What do you think?*
Examples of Powerful Questions

Coaching Skills: A Handbook, Jenny Rogers

- How important is it on a 1-10 scale?
- How much energy do you have for a solution on a 1-10 scale?
- What have you already tried?
- Imagine this problem’s been solved. What would you see, hear, feel?
- What’s standing in the way of this ideal outcome?
- What’s your own responsibility for what’s been happening?
- Imagine yourself at your most resourceful. What do you say to yourself about this issue? (If I could wave a magic wand and give you all of the competence, courage and insight you needed, what would you do?)
- What are your options for action here?
- How will you decide which options seem best?
- What option seems best against the criteria you’re using?
- So, what’s the next / first step?
- When will you take it?
Using Positive Presuppositions in Powerful Questions

Positive Presuppositions
Presume:

Prior Thinking
Prior Planning
Noble Purposes
Positive Intent
Competence
Commitment
Caring
What Makes These Questions Powerful and Positive?

- In what ways are you already doing what you aspire to do?
- What do you do to keep yourself on track?
- What do you know about yourself as a learner?
- Tell me about a time you worked hard at something and got better at it.
- What seeds of your success are you already seeing?
- Thinking about where you started three months ago, what progress are you seeing?
- What skills and attributes do you already have that you think will serve you well in this new endeavor?
Thinking and Talking About Powerful Questions

Take Three Minutes to Discuss with a Partner:

- What is your best new insight about powerful questions?

- What is one way you can envision putting this intentional use of questions into practice?

- How do you think you need to change internally in order to do this?
Pause and Reflect

4. What Are Some Ways You Use Questions?

5. What Are One or Two Powerful Questions You’ve Asked As a Leader...Or Will Ask?
II. Asking Questions to Focus On What Matters

LEADERSHIP RUBRICS
Jennifer Parvin, Founder and Director of the Aspiring Principals Program, Dallas, Texas

BUILDING LEADERSHIP TEAMS
Donna Micheaux, Chief of Schools Officer, Dallas, Texas

“Simply asking a question provides a roadmap for desirable behavior and practices.”
Tools to Focus on What Matters
Leading With Questions
Developing the Coaching Habit

“Coaching is a foundational skill for every manager and leader.”

Michael Bungay-Stanier, *The Coaching Habit*

“Coaching is an art and it’s far easier said than done.” It takes courage to ask a question rather than offer up advice, provide an answer or unleash a solution. Giving another person the opportunity to find their own way, make their own mistakes and create their own wisdom is both brave and vulnerable.”

Brene Brown, *Daring Greatly*
Develop the Coaching Habit: Ask, Don’t Tell

• Stop Creating Overdependence

• Stop Getting Overwhelmed

• Stop Becoming Disconnected
Question Masterclass

1. The Kickstart Question—*What’s on your mind?*
2. The AWE Question—*And what else?*
3. The Focus Question—*What’s the real challenge for you here?*
4. The Foundation Question—*What do you want?*
5. The Lazy Question—*How can I help?*
6. The Strategic Question—*If you’re saying Yes to this, what are you saying No to?*
7. The Learning Question—*What was most useful to you?*
Discuss Your Coaching Habit With a Partner (3 minutes)

How Do You Think Using the Coaching Habit Can Help You:

- Stop Creating Overdependence
- Stop Getting Overwhelmed
- Stop BecomingDisconnected

When and How Will You Start (or Intensify) Your Use of the Coaching Habit?
Pause and Reflect
6. Tell Us About the Kinds of Questions You Ask
III. Asking Questions to Build a Higher Level of Capacity and Performance

Building the Principal Pipeline
Jennifer Parvin, Director of the Aspiring Principals Program, Dallas, Texas

Leading and Learning Schools: Identifying Instructional Leadership Practices That Work
Donna Micheaux, Deputy Superintendent, Pittsburgh, PA

“Asking questions can help to facilitate sense-making.”
Tools to Build Capacity and Improve Performance
Helping Your Team/Organization Get Smarter: Making Your Thinking Visible

- **High-level Skill:** Distinguishing Between the Data and Your Interpretation of the Data
- Using Statements and Questions to Make Your Thinking Visible
Helping Your Team/Organization Get Smarter: Making Your Thinking Visible

**Advocacy**
- Involves Clearly Stating Your Assumptions,
- Describing the Reasons For Your Assumptions, and
- Talking About How You Feel and Think About the Issue

**Inquiry**
- Involves Asking for and Exploring Someone’s Point of View, Assumptions, Feelings, and **Listening Deeply**
## Making Your Thinking Visible: Using the Language of Advocacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distinguish Data from Interpretation</th>
<th>“This is the information I’ve looked at. Here is what I think it means.”</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Here’s what I’m seeing. It could mean several different things. One possibility is...”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explicitly State Your Assumptions, Beliefs and Feelings</td>
<td>“Here’s what I think and here’s how I got here.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I generally assume that...”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I feel strongly about this because...”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Describe Your Reasoning</td>
<td>“I came to this conclusion because...”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Based on my belief that..., I think a course of action might be...”</td>
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More Sample Advocacy Statements

- This is what we are hoping / planning to accomplish.
- This is what I think success will look like.
- This is why this we believe this is important now.
- These are the ways I believe students will be served.
- This is why I think this is good for our school/district.
- Here are some possible ways to approach this.
- Here’s the data that I’m looking at that makes me think this is an important initiative.
Asking Others to Make Their Thinking Visible: Using the Language of Inquiry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ask Them to Distinguish the Data from Their Interpretation of the Data</td>
<td>“What leads you to that conclusion?”&lt;br&gt;“What data do you have to support that?”&lt;br&gt;“How did we get from this data to that conclusion?”&lt;br&gt;“What beliefs and assumptions are part of your plan, do you think?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draw Out Reasoning</td>
<td>“Can you help me to understand your thinking?”&lt;br&gt;“Does everyone agree on what the data is?”&lt;br&gt;“Can you run me through your reasoning?”&lt;br&gt;What problem are we solving with this proposed action?”</td>
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More Sample Inquiry Statements

- How do you see this initiative proceeding?
- What will success look like for you?
- How will you know if the team has succeeded?
- How does this benefit our students/our school/our district/you?
- What is another way to approach this?
- What am I missing? What might you be missing?
- What data are you looking at and what do you think it means?
Case Study
Using Advocacy & Inquiry

• You have all the resources (money, time, staff, etc.) to solve a critical problem in your school or district.

• What is the critical problem that you will solve?

• What will you do to solve the problem?
Rules of Engagement

• In pairs, select Partner A and Partner B
• Partner A: Put forth your ideas about your critical problem in the language of advocacy
• Partner B: Use the language of inquiry to help your partner make their thinking visible and for you to gain a deeper understanding
• Reverse Roles
Pro Tips

• Be Conscious and Intentional
• Select Several Advocacy and Inquiry Stems to Try Out
• Listen Deeply
• Remember to W.A.I.T.  (Why Am I Talking?)
What Did You Learn?

• How Did Using the Language of Advocacy and Inquiry Make Your Discussion Different?

• Why Is It Important for Leaders to Have Facility With BOTH Making Their Own Thinking Visible Through the Language of Advocacy and Asking Others to Make Their Thinking Visible Through the Language of Inquiry?
Take a 60-Second Pause
Pause and Reflect

7. How has the practice of leading with questions changed you as a leader? How might it?
IV. Asking Questions to Empower and Build Personal Accountability

DEVELOPING COACHES: USING LINDA THE AVATAR AND TWO REAL-LIFE TEACHER
Jennifer Parvin, ICF Certified Executive Coach

BUILDING A CULTURE OF SHARED LEADERSHIP
Donna Micheaux, Adjunct Trainer for New Leaders, Denver, Colorado

“The language of a positive presupposition demonstrates my belief in you as a competent and capable person and gives you the autonomy to take action on your behalf”.

“Leaders need self-authorship to be successful in their work...they need to be given the opportunity to own” their work, to understand and construct solutions, to make meaning of their unique situations and challenges.”
Tools to Empower and Build Accountability
Five-Step Delegation Process
Five-Step Delegation Process

1. Desired Results
   - What will great look like?
   - What are we trying to accomplish?
   - What are the key goals / deliverables?
   - Where are you (direct report) wanting and needing to grow and develop as a result of leading this project?
2. Guidelines (Advocacy and Inquiry)
   - Here Are My Key Do’s and Don’ts. What Would You Add?
   - I Would Like to Check-in At These Points. What Are You Wanting re: Check-ins?
   - Here Are the Parameters re: Expenditure of Time/Money. What Do you Understand About Your Level of Authority re: Decision-making?
Five-Step Delegation Process

3. Resources
   - What people, time, money, software, consultants, etc. can be used to achieve the desired results?

4. Accountability
   - What metrics will you use to measure the desired results?
   - How will you know if the project has succeeded?
   - When and where will the results be measured?
Five-Step Delegation Process

5. **Impacts**
   - What are the positive impacts on you by achieving the desired results?
   - On the individual leading the project?
   - On the team?
   - On the organization?

(What are the possible negative impacts for not achieving the desired results?)
Grounding in Purpose and Positivity

- Where are we with the project so far?
- How can we define the current situation, listing everything we know?
- What’s our goal again and where are we up to this point?
- What do you need to move this forward?
- How can you develop strength in this area?
- What does your team need to do to succeed?
- What has been your big insight this week?
- How can you transfer the new skills and habits you’re developing here?
- What are you planning to do next?
Spurring Reflection on Delegation

- Which parts of this presentation/project/initiative are going well?
- How could things be smoother/clearer next time?
- What am I learning about myself as a result of doing this project?
- What are the highlights of this project so far?
- What is not turning out the way I want it to?
- What part is under my influence?
- What can I do differently?
- What can I learn from this?
- What will I do differently next time?
- How can I get honest and helpful feedback on my leadership?
- What learning/training/help do I need to improve my performance?

Leading with Emotional Intelligence by Reldan Nadler
Quiet Leadership by David Rock
Pair Discussion on Using Questions to Delegate (3 Minutes)

What’s New About Using Questions to Delegate Effectively?

What Will Be Most Challenging for You About This?

If You’re Saying ‘Yes’ to Effective Delegation, What Are You Saying ‘No’ to?
Pause & Reflect

8. What Has Been Your Practice Around Leading With Questions? What Might It Be?
Take a 60-Second Pause
Powerful Reflective Questions for Leaders

*Tribe of Mentors*, Tim Ferris

- If you could have a giant billboard anywhere with anything on it, what would it say?
- What is one of the most worthwhile investments you’ve ever made?
- In the last five years, what new belief, behavior, or habit has most improved your life?
- In the last five years, what have you gotten better at saying ‘no’ to?
- What advice would you give to a smart, driven college student about to enter the field of education?
Powerful Reflective Questions for Leaders
Seven Questions to Ask Yourself, S. Mautz, Inc.

- Do you lift as you climb?
- Do you know what you don’t know and do you let others know about that?
- Do you care about your employees’ careers as much as your own?
- Is your voice loud when others’ are quiet?
- Are you providing both reality and hope?
In the Words of Leaders

Leading with Questions:


2. Builds a culture of thinking and promotes intellectual and emotional engagement.

3. Disrupts the hierarchical nature of the organization and brings out different perspectives and various areas of expertise.

4. Helps to set expectations and build personal accountability.

5. Builds trust and fosters authentic collaboration.

5. Promotes shared leadership.

7. Fosters growth.
Four Types of Questions

I. Asking Questions to Learn in PLCs

II. Asking Questions to Focus on What Matters

III. Asking Questions to Build a Higher Level of Capacity and Performance

IV. Asking Questions to Empower and Build Personal Accountability
Five Tools to Facilitate Leading With Questions

- Open-Ended / Powerful Questions
- Positive Presuppositions
- Coaching Habit Questions
- Advocacy and Inquiry Questions
- Questions to Facilitate Effective Delegation
Reflection Questions

1. What Is the Most Powerful Question You’ve Been Asked As a Leader?

2. What Do You Think Is the Impact of a Questioning Culture on Students?

3. What Makes It Especially Important for Educational Leaders to Develop a Questioning Culture?

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7. How Has the Use of Questions Changed You As a Leader? How Could It?

8. What Has Been the Impact of Leading With Questions on Your Organization? What Might It Be?
What’s Your Vision and Your Plan?

- Imagine your ideal state of leading with questions. What would that look like? What would we see and hear?
- If that’s a 10, where are you now?
- What are the obstacles?
- How will you overcome them?
- Who can help you with that?
- What are your first steps to put this into action?
- When will you take those steps?
- How will you hold yourself accountable?
Checking Out

- What **EXCITES** You About These Ideas?
- What **WORRIES** You About Putting These Ideas Into Practice?
- What Else Do You **NEED** to Know In Order to Implement These Practices?
- What Are Your Next **STEPS** In Becoming a Highly Effective Leader Who Strategically Uses Questions?
Take our 3 minute survey!

kic kup.co/2019LF

SESSION ID: 1320

NOTE: Session ID should be in all CAPS and is case-sensitive.

Your responses power our report.
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<tr>
<th>Donna Micheaux</th>
<th>Jennifer Parvin</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DWMicheaux@ comcast.net</td>
<td><a href="mailto:JLParvin12@gmail.com">JLParvin12@gmail.com</a></td>
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