Talk About It: Using Collaborative Peer Conversation to Articulate Intention and Reflect Upon Action

Dale Vidmar
Information Literacy and Instruction Librarian
Southern Oregon University Library
vidmar@sou.edu

http://webpages.sou.edu/~vidmar/ola-wla2013/vidmar.pptx

Oregon Library Association/Washington Library Association
2013 Conference
Vancouver, Washington
April 23, 2013
The Existential Conversation
Why are We Here?

Learning Outcomes:
Participants will be able to:

1. Structure a collaborative peer conversation with a colleague based on sample questions.
2. Differentiate formative on-going, collaborative assessment vs. summative periodic, high stakes evaluation activities.
3. Articulate intentions in a conversational manner with a colleague and reflect upon those intentions in the context of teaching.
4. Improve individual teaching practice by engaging in a personal formative assessment cycle of intention, action, and reflection.
Collaborative Peer Conversation

- Thinking about and talking about teaching to promote self-directed, purposeful changes and student learning.
- Observations from the “planning” of a lesson and the “actual” lesson (comparison of the intended outcomes and the actual outcomes).
Therefore, one of the most promising ways to improve learning is to improve teaching.

- Thomas Angelo

from *Classroom Assessment Techniques*
When you think about your teaching, what do you think about most often?

Be specific!
The Journey

Cognitive Coaching (Costa and Garmston)
- coach is integral—questioning technique

Reflective Peer Coaching
- self-actualization/teacher integral
- the word coach was confusing

Collaborative Peer Conversation
- self-actualization/teacher integral
- centers on colleagues
- formative on-going process
Collaborative Teaching

Peer and collegial approaches to teaching, all too often, takes the form of mentor/mentee, observer/instructor, or coach/understudy using checklists and comment sheets with the result being more of a peer review or evaluation.
Summative Evaluation
(sporadic, high stakes, judgmental “great teacher” or “good job”)

vs.

Formative Assessment
(continuous, introspective, self-improvement, growth)
What criteria can we use to observe and evaluate teaching?
Collaborative Peer Conversation

A formative process that facilitates introspection and self-awareness prior to, during, and after teaching.
I rarely have time to talk about teaching with my colleagues.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly Disagree
A desire for more conversation is not surprising given that teaching librarians experience teaching as an isolated act.

- Caroline Sinkinson (2011)
A primary characteristic of an outstanding teacher is intentionality—Having a purpose with which to cultivate informed reflection.
Levels of Reflection (Schön)

- **Knowing in action** - thinking about teaching is embedded in the act of doing—informs intention
- **Reflection in action** – teaching is informed by interpretation of the immediate situation during teaching without stopping
- **Reflection on action** - thinking afterwards about what happened while teaching
Collaborative Peer Conversation

**Teacher:** Introspection  
**Facilitator:** Elicits critical reflection  
**Observer:** Moderates the process and takes notes

Trust & Collegiality
Facilitators actively listen without judgment and encourage instructors to think about and explore their teaching practice.
Let’s try a planning conference

1. Team up in pairs.
2. Decide your role: teacher or facilitator.
3. Think of a class that you will be teaching.
4. Use the pre-conference planning questions as a guide to interview your teaching partner.
So far, the process seems very clear. I understand my role as teacher and as facilitator.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly Disagree
Collaborative Peer Conversation

Intention: Planning conference

Classroom Experience

Reflection: Reflective Conference

Critical Incidents: Transformative Events
Why Reflection?

“Experience itself is actually the ‘greatest teacher,’” . . .
Scientists from the RAND Corporation have created this model to illustrate how a “home computer” could look like in the year 2004. However, the needed technology will not be economically feasible for the average home. Also, the scientists readily admit that the computer will require not yet invented technology to actually work, but 50 years from now, scientific progress is expected to solve these problems. With teletype interface and the Fortran language, the computer will be easy to use.
“Experience itself is actually not the ‘greatest teacher,’” . . .
“we do not learn as much from experience as we learn from reflecting on that experience.”

- Thomas S.C. Farrell
from *Reflective Practice in Action: 80 Reflection Breaks for Busy Teachers*
Let’s try a reflective conference

1. Team up with your partner.
2. Decide your role: teacher or facilitator.
3. Think of a class that you have taught.
4. Use the reflective post-conference questions as a guide to interview your teaching partner.
The Cycle of Reflection

- What am I doing?
- Why am I doing what I do?
- Is what I am doing effective?
- How are students responding to my teaching?
- How can I improve what I am doing?
References and Resources

References and Resources


Talk About It: Using Collaborative Peer Conversation to Articulate Intention and Reflect Upon Action

Dale Vidmar
Information Literacy and Instruction Librarian
Southern Oregon University Library
vidmar@sou.edu

http://webpages.sou.edu/~vidmar/ola-wla2013/vidmar.pptx

Oregon Library Association/Washington Library Association
2013 Conference
Vancouver, Washington
April 23, 2013