

Principles for Principals September

For questions or comments, please contact LouisianaLeaders@la.gov.

September's Topic: Capacity Building - Collaborative Practices

Picture two scenarios: 1. "Last week in ILT, we established the need to use criteria in our classrooms. How well is it going?" Versus: 2. "On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being *I never want to hear those words again* and 10 being *I can present this at the Teacher Leader Summit*, how well would you say implementing criteria within your classroom is going?" "What can I do to help that number increase by 2?"

As school leaders, we often seek feedback on our initiatives through questions that require our collaborators to evaluate our work — a difficult task, particularly when trust has not yet been established. In the example above, asking "How well is it going?" may embolden respondents, currently in a negative space, to focus on the negative - "it's awful, the kids aren't responding, I'm spending too much time planning... etc." It may also make it difficult to get an honest response that naturally leads to a more nuanced discussion. "It's going well" doesn't provide much feedback, meaning the leader must do more work to gain insight into collaborators' needs.

Why This Strategy

In Krister Ungerbock's bestseller **22 Talk Shifts: Tools to Transform Leadership**, he establishes the strategy "On a scale of 1 to 10..." to elicit reflection and ownership over the strategy or topic being evaluated. Setting a scale "with one being... and ten being..." opens up the possible responses and forces the collaborator to narrow the focus themselves. Following up with "what would it take to increase that number by two" provides a safe means for the collaborator to ask for support in a meaningful way without feeling like they may be crossing a boundary of what is appropriate, and establishes the leader's desire for growth as an achievable end. Other questions Ungerbock suggests as follow-up:

- "Tell me more about why you chose ___"
 - This reflective prompt allows them to open their thoughts, worries, and criticisms to you by establishing your genuine desire to learn more about them and their needs.

Anesha Ross
Supervisor of Admin.
DeSoto Parish Schools



My 3 Three Things

1. **One thing I wish I would have done differently my first year:** developed more confidence in my leadership skills serving as a first year principal.
2. **One thing I was glad I did my first year:** immediately building genuine relationships and connections with staff, students, families and stakeholders.
3. **One thing every principal should know/do:** always listen more than you speak.

- “What does a nine look like for you?”
 - This question allows the collaborator to define the scale further and may serve as a launching point for questions such as “How do we increase your __ by 2?” or “What would it take to get to a 9?”
- “What do you suggest we start doing, or stop doing, to get closer to a __?”
 - Again, this question invites the collaborator to provide genuine feedback through their lens of expertise, allowing you, as a leader, to meet your staff where they are and help them reach their desired destination.

By using this method, we have the opportunity to deliver on the principle of **Coaching to Grow and not just Correct.**

Note for Use

Ungerbock suggests that before using this strategy, you should provide a brief disclaimer about what you hope to achieve: a more honest and nuanced conversation about the topic under discussion. This also helps avoid some respondents feeling like the leader is being overly analytical. Ultimately, collaborators will grow to trust this strategy when they see that their answers are handled responsibly and addressed appropriately.

Ungerböck, K. (2020). 22 talk shifts: Tools to transform leadership in business, in partnership, and in life. Lioncrest Publishing

Questions for Reflection:

Based on this month’s topic.

1. What are some of the negative ways you have been “coached” previously? What about those experiences were negative?
2. What are some of the positive ways you have been “coached” previously? What about those experiences were positive?
3. Have you used the “How well is it going?” strategy in previous situations similar to the one presented here? How did it go?
4. What impact do you feel it has had on the feedback you have received?
5. Can you think of current situations on your campus where using the “On a scale of 1 to 10...” strategy would be beneficial?
6. What hesitations may you have when using this strategy? What can you do to help overcome those hesitations?