

Strategies to Facilitate Deeper Thinking

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards® values collaboration among colleagues as they pursue certification. You have the opportunity to work with fellow teachers to facilitate their thinking about what they have written for one or more entries for certification. Keep in mind that pursuing certification is not a competition and you have nothing to lose and everything to gain by assisting a colleague in reviewing written entries.

Two important strategies you can use to assist your peers in clarifying their thinking and improving their writing are the coaching behaviors of paraphrasing and questioning. Intentional language can be a powerful tool for promoting analytical and reflective thinking and encouraging articulation of thoughts in writing.

Much of what teachers do is done automatically. Teachers may need help in elaborating on what they do or think intuitively. Paraphrasing allows teachers to hear the content of what they have said. Questions allow teachers to articulate and fill in the blanks, establish rapport with colleagues and even internalize the questioning so it becomes part of their everyday teaching activity.

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is a restatement by you of what you understood the teacher to say. Paraphrasing another's words, whether they were written or spoken, sends three messages:

- 1.** I am listening
- 2.** I care
- 3.** I understand you

There are three ways that you can paraphrase:

1.	Acknowledge & Clarify	This is a restatement of what you have read or heard. <u>Example:</u> <i>So, you encourage the students to bring books from home that they can add to the classroom library.</i>
2.	Summarize & Organize	In this paraphrase you suggest some sort of order to the other's ideas. <u>Example:</u> <i>You are not quite sure of how to proceed; on one hand, you know that it is important for the parents to be involved but at the same time, you are concerned that Joseph's mom may be a distraction for him.</i>
3.	Shifting conceptual focus	This paraphrase allows you to broaden or bring more focus to what you have read or heard. <u>Example:</u> <i>So, something that is important for you is to know that you have made a difference to these children at the end of the day.</i>

When you paraphrase, the teacher has the opportunity to determine whether the message is understood or whether more clarification is needed.

Questioning

Questions are posed when you do not understand what the teacher is saying, or think it might not be clear to others. The intent of posing questions is to gather more information about the teacher's descriptions, understandings and interpretations of his or her practice. It helps a teacher write clearly and to be specific about his or her own thinking. Questions should never be used to redirect or be critical.

Questions fall into two general categories. Those used to broaden thinking and those used to focus a teacher's thinking.

Inquiry Broadens Thinking

Inquiry questions use:

- Plural forms
What ideas have you....?
What changes do you ...?
- Exploratory/tentative language
What are some of the options...?
What are your hunches about...?
- Positive presuppositions
What feedback did you receive that shows they understand?
What plans did you share with the teachers?

Probing questions focus on thinking. Probing clarifies nonspecific language.

- Generalizations: all, everyone, never, forever
Ask: *Everyone?*
Never?
- Rule Words: should, must, can't have to
Ask: *What would happen if you did?*
Who determines that you should?
- Vague verbs: make, think, do, feel, know
Ask: *Think? What, specifically do you think?*
Tell me more about what you feel.
- Vague nouns, pronouns: students, they, people
Ask: *Which students?*
Who do you mean?
- Comparisons: better, more interesting, larger
Ask: *Better than what?*
What do you mean by ...