

Be Curious (Ask Nonjudgmental Questions)

WHAT: Be Curious

WHY: Being curious helps us gather data, push thinking, and guide leaders to do the heavy lifting toward solving the problems or challenges they wrestle with.

HOW: Ask Nonjudgmental Questions

Prompts to get grounded and/or propel the conversation forward

- What's clearer to you?
- If you did know, what would you say?

Prompts to specifically coach to equity

- How are you beginning with self to examine implicit and explicit biases?
- What does an equitable school look, feel, and sound like for students, staff and families?
- How are you creating a sense of belonging?
- What are you doing to create conditions for students, staff, and families to feel free to be authentic?
- What are you doing to inhibit the creation of conditions for students, staff, and families to feel free to be authentic?
- How have you recently noticed and/or acted upon opportunities to interrupt systemic racism?
- How are you actively creating equitable schools, organizations, and communities?
- What are the power dynamics?
- Who has a voice? Who doesn't?

Prompts that seek specific, transactional information

- What have you already tried? (*Imbue them with their own intelligence*)
- How have you solved other similar problems? (*Imbue them with their own intelligence*)
- What's at stake? (This helps them get to the heart of the matter)
- What is your job as you understand it?
- Do you know how to ask for what you need?
- Are you focusing on an outcome or an end in mind?
- Do you know what's expected of you?
- How do you know you're being effective?
- What are the consequences of this decision or action?
- Does your staff know the Why?
- Do your students understand the Why?
- Is it urgent?
- What's your strategy?
- Do your teachers know what is expected of them?
- Do you meet regularly with your teachers?
- What are one or two things that you choose as priorities for your school?
- Are you spending time on the things that advance your vision/mission? What can you delegate?

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Transformational prompts that seek to understand, provoke reflection, and help clarify

- What would you like me to know? (This question gives the leader control of the material.)
- What makes this situation important to you?
- If you were coaching someone about this challenge, what would you tell her?
- If this were a movie scene, how would you rewrite it?
- How do you foster relationships?
- What does success look like?
- How will you know when you're successful?
- How do you articulate your vision?
- What parts of your work give you the most pleasure and satisfaction? Which parts don't?
- What are you encouraged by?
- Are you thinking as a teacher or a leader? (New leaders often need help making this distinction.)
- What are you doing that's having the biggest impact on students?

Observational prompts anchored in being bold

- A *pattern* I notice is...
- Drama is seductive

Prompt without language

- Silence. (Silence allows reflection, particularly for people who are introverts. Silence often elicits rich information.)

Prompts for self-care

- How are you taking care of your physical self? Emotional self? Spiritual self? Is it in your calendar?
- Are you getting enough sleep?

Potential Traps

- Asking leading rather than curious questions
- Overreliance on asking questions when being bold and interrupting patterns would be more effective
- "Why" questions can sound accusatory and cause defensiveness. Ask What questions instead
- Asking multiple questions at a time is confusing
- Asking sarcastic or judgmental questions, such as "Shouldn't you find a way?," "Why did you do that?," or "What's the point of that?"

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