
Communication Skills for Instructional Mentoring Skills

Paraphrasing: Communicates to the speaker that the listener has truly heard what is being said.

- Acknowledge/Clarify: A brief statement reflecting what was said in the listener's words.
 - You're concerned about . . .
 - You're pleased with . . .
 - You're trying to figure out . . .
- Summarize/Organize: A statement illuminating themes or containers.
 - You have two goals here -- one is . . . and the other is . . .
 - So, on one hand . . . ; on the other hand . . .
 - There seems to be three themes: 1) . . . 2) . . . 3) . . .
- Shift Conceptual Focus: Shift down to focus on a specific smaller idea. Shift up to broaden the scope of the thinking.
 - So, a value you have here is . . .
 - So, a goal you have is . . .
 - You are thinking that . . .

Clarifying Statements/Questions: Communicates the listener has heard but is unclear on a few points. Clarify to (1) gather more information, (2) get clarity about the speaker's reasoning or emotions, (3) test connections between ideas, and (4) clarify the focus or issue at hand.

- Tell me more about . . .
- Let me see if I understand . . .
- So, you are saying that . . .

Powerful Questions: Help the colleague think about possibilities, analyze issues, and explore connections.

- Tell me more about . . .
- What's another way to look at that?
- What would happen if . . .
- How is that different from . . .
- What is the upside? Downside?
- What are the criteria that will help you decide?

Positive Presuppositions - Language shapes thoughts, feelings, and expressions. Using language to its full, positive potential means becoming aware of our habitual ways of speaking and the messages, positive and negative, that are sent to others. By paying attention to the presuppositions that we use and choosing our words with care, we can more positively influence the thinking and feelings of others with whom we are communicating.

➤ Compare these contrasting statements:

What objectives have you planned for your lesson?	Vs.	Do you have an objective for your lesson?
What goals have you set for yourself this year?	Vs.	Do you have any goals?
As a teacher who always puts her students first, what strategies are you considering to ensure their success?	Vs.	Have you thought of any strategies?

Suggestions: Offer the colleague choices that are expressed as a question. Follow a suggestion with an invitation to think about how it might work in the colleague's classroom.

- Some teachers have tried . . . Might that work for you?
- What I know about _____ is that . . . Does that sound like it could work?
- There are a number of approaches . . . Which ones sound like possibilities for your situation?
- Sometimes it's helpful to . . . What are your thought about . . . ?