
Helping Team Set Challenging and Achievable Goals

“Something a Coach Might Say...”

Examples of opening phrases or guiding questions that a coach may use to move a team through the decision making/problem solving process

Explore Stage:

Brainstorming

- “In the brainstorming phase, we want to get as many ideas as possible, and allow everyone to contribute.
- In order to do this, I’d like to suggest some guidelines that will make this a valuable use of our time.
 - One voice at a time
 - Please keep your ideas short and to the point – like a bumper sticker
 - This is not the time to comment, ask questions, or critique any of the ideas; there will be an opportunity for that as we move through the process

Is there anyone who cannot live with those guidelines?”

- “In order to get everyone’s input, let’s go around the room and get one idea from each person just to get started.”
- “Let’s take a few minutes to each think about and jot down the three most effective ways we can... and then we’ll capture your thoughts on the flip chart.”
- “We haven’t heard from everyone yet; _____, how do you feel about this topic?”
- “Let’s use the ‘popcorn’ method to generate some discussion; one voice at a time, please.”

Listing Possibilities

- “Looking at our target outcomes, I have three possibilities which would fit the criteria for our task; let’s hear your reactions to each of these proposals. _____, let’s start with you and we’ll keep moving clockwise.”
- “Now that we have a representative list of ideas here, are there any items on this list that anyone would like to have clarified before we proceed to the next phase of making our decision?”

Transitional Language

- “Now that all ideas have been generated and clarified, let’s move on to the next phase of the process, by focusing our choices to a manageable number.”

Adapted from: Coaching for Capacity Building - Illinois State Board of Education - www.schoolimprovementcoach.org

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Focus Stage:

- “Let’s take a look at the list of our ideas, and see if there are any that convey the exact same message.”
- (Note: It is more effective to get agreement from the “authors” of both ideas that they are the same.)
- “Are there any ideas here that, given our current situation, could not be successfully implemented?”
- “Let’s take some time to identify the top # (one-third) items on the list that are of most interest to you in this moment in time. Remember, we are not making any final choices here, just sharing our interests.”
- “Looking at this list, please place a sticky dot next to your top three choices.”
- “Now that we’ve taken a close look at the ideas that are of most interest, is there anyone who would like to advocate for any of the ideas on the list regardless of how much interest was shown?”

Transitional Language

- “We have combined those ideas that reflect the same idea, we’ve eliminated those that are not feasible at this time, and we’ve shown our preferences. We’ve made significant progress in meeting our Target Outcome. Let’s move on to the next stage and make some final decisions.”

Decide Stage:

- “Now let’s take a closer look and see if there are any ideas that are similar enough that they could be combined in some way”
- “_____, you shared that idea B is not acceptable to you because_____. What would it take for you to be able to live with that idea as one that is on our final list?”

Summarize

- “Looking at our target outcomes, we have generated ideas; we have combined some, eliminated others, and added to some to make them more reflective of our group’s thinking. Is there anyone who would not agree that we have met our target outcome?”
- “Good, now let’s make sure we are all on the same page about the action plan that will be developed to reflect our decision.”

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