

Reframing Our Thoughts

Audience:

K-12 Teachers, Principals

Time:

15 minutes

PROCEDURES

- 1) Explain that the purpose of this activity is to develop an ability to reframe issues and problems. When we frame, we place boundaries on what we see. These boundaries are influenced by our personal perceptions. The opposite of framing, reframing, is the process of changing one’s frame of reference. It opens up thinking, revealing additional solutions.

Example:

Initial question: Why are our students failing in mathematics?

Reframed question: How are the learning experiences provided by our district, school or classroom failing our students?

Note: This reframed question shifts perspective, targeting the support needed at all levels of the system.

- 2) Ask each participant to hold a pen or pencil in their hand pointed toward the ceiling and high above their heads. At a signal, all participants begin rotating their pencil or pen clockwise. At a second signal, they slowly lower the pen or pencil without moving their body and keeping it pointed to the ceiling. After the pens/pencils pass their eye level, ask participants to tell you which way the pen/pencil is rotating.

- 3) Spend time discussing what happened (the pen/pencil began rotating counter-clockwise once it passed eye level) and the implications for the group. Possible questions:
 - What just happened? What shifted? (The pencil movement stayed the same, our perception or the way we viewed it changed.)
 - Has anyone had a similar experience?
 - What is the connection between this experience and the situation we find ourselves in at school?
 - Changing perspective requires reframing. What kind of reframing can we expect to do as we work together to improve instruction?

COMMENTS TO FACILITATOR

The pencil activity is adapted from *30 Reflective Staff Development Exercises for Educators*, by Stephen S. Kaagan.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Participants will consider instructional challenges from multiple perspectives, expanding the range of possible solutions.

DESCRIPTION

This warm-up activity is designed to bring a new awareness to the importance of individual perspective and thinking outside of the box. It begins with an explanation followed by the “pencil” demonstration, illustrating that changing our perspective often requires that we reframe our thinking.

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

- Optional: one pencil or pen per person

VARIATIONS & EXTENSIONS

A picture book read aloud can be substituted for the pencil activity. Examples include *Zoom* by Istvan Banyai and *Perspectives* by Ann Jonas.

Include personal examples of reframed questions as appropriate.

Provide time for individual reflection on the topic of reframing. The *Quick Write* strategy outlined in the *Facilitator’s Guide* has step-by-step directions.

NOTES
