

Behaviors That Foster and Undermine Effective Conversations

What Do We Want to Hear and See in Group Conversations?

- Active listening through paraphrasing and by asking follow-up clarifying and probing questions
- Active listening through nonverbal communication (making eye contact with each other, nodding)
- Questions and wonderings grounded in genuine inquiry
- Summarizing of each other's ideas
- Invitations to quieter members
- Making sure that everyone's voice is heard
- Probing questions that go below surface comments
- Clarifying questions that elicit more information
- Appreciation for what others say and do and for taking risks
- Productive conflict around ideas
- Respect for the opinions of others and valuing their input
- Problem-solving
- Offering of ideas, suggestions, solutions, and next steps
- Empathy for each other and others outside of our team (including students, parents, and administrators)
- Flexibility and vulnerability
- Thoughtfulness around the language that is used and awareness of the impact that certain words have
- Awareness of emotions when appropriate

What Don't We Want to Hear and See in Group Conversations?

- Going off topic and into long digressions
- Dominating the conversation by taking up too much airtime or trying to dictate the conversation
- Being sarcastic
- Disengaging and not participating
- Avoiding contentious topics
- Criticizing people and their ideas with negative comments
- Dismissing the ideas of others with "Yeah, but"
- Taking pride in being a devil's advocate
- Being contrary and blocking team progress
- Boasting about personal skills or experience
- Pulling rank on each other
- Insulting team members or others outside of our team (including students, parents, and administrators)
- Gossiping about others
- Blaming others
- Complaining about things that are outside of our sphere of influence
- Using emotions to hijack a conversation
- Using language that is explosive and can trigger others as a way to bully the conversation
- Being distracted by other things (technology) or people

Exhibit 7.5. © Elena Aguilar, *The Art of Coaching Teams: Building Resilient Communities that Transform Schools*. Jossey-Bass, 2016.