



Can Talk Make Us Better?





Developed from the Contents of
Reginald Leon Green's

Practicing the Art of Leadership:
A Problem-based Approach to
Implementing
the ISLLC Standards

Conversations

- ◆ If communication in schools is to become more effective, one would think that engaging in *ethical dialogue* would be the answer.



The Major Question

- ◆ Can individuals truly be effective members of a school faculty if they are not open to dialoguing in an ethical manner?



Ethics

- ◆ Ethics is a very important part of an adult conversation.





Conversation Ethics

- ◆ Displaying a sense of fairness-taking turns
- ◆ Controlling impulses-having patience and control
- ◆ Displaying empathy-listening to others and putting oneself in the speaker's position

Grant (1996)



Conversation Ethics

- ◆ Exercising self-restraint
- ◆ Listening, rather than waiting for your turn to talk
- ◆ Resisting the inclination to formulate a response while the other individual is talking

Grant (1996)

A Good Conversation



- ◆ For a faculty to engage in a good conversation, certain qualities of character are required, and those qualities are reinforced through conversing.

A Good Conversation

- ◆ If engaging in conversations will make us better faculty members, what type of conversation is effective in schools and what explains its ethical impact?



Dialogue

- ◆ With respect to participating as a member of a school faculty, dialogue or deliberation is likely to be the most effective type of conversation.

Grant (1996)



Dialogue

- ◆ A dialogue is a conversation in which different opinions are critically evaluated, distinctions are made, and arguments and evidence come to light as most reasonable, and with the expectation for something new and better.



Dialogue



- ◆ Dialogue, at its best, is a modest, self-forgetting experience.
- ◆ One gets lost in dialogue and forgets the time.
- ◆ The search for the solution becomes completely absorbing.

Some Key Concepts of an Effective Dialogue

- ◆ Just
- ◆ Reason
- ◆ Persuasion
- ◆ Responsibility



Justice in a Dialogue

- ◆ Just – In this particular situation, what actions are just?



Reasoning in a Dialogue

- ◆ Reason – Are we open to reason or are we simply holding firm to our point of view?





Persuasion in Dialogue

- ◆ Persuasion is generally superior to force as a way of dealing with disagreement.
- ◆ A dialogue presumes that all participants are equally open to persuasion.
- ◆ Every participant accepts an obligation to yield to the better argument.

The Ethics in Persuasion

- ◆ If you see that two plus two is four, you are not free to dispute the point, prolonging the argument.



The Ethics in Persuasion

- ◆ Self-discipline--Individuals alter their position when they are convinced of the truth of another. Humility is engendered.





Practicing the Art of Persuasion

- ◆ It becomes easier to accept the position of another when one understands that he/she is not yielding to his/her fellow teacher, but to the better argument.

Some Key Concepts of Persuasion

◆ Responsibility



Responsibility

- ◆ Participants should take responsibility for the statements they make and the opinions they put forward.
- ◆ In a true dialogue, participants are required to supply reasons and evidence in support of their positions.



Responsibility

- ◆ In a conversation where one participant has authority over another, “Because I said so” can trump an argument.



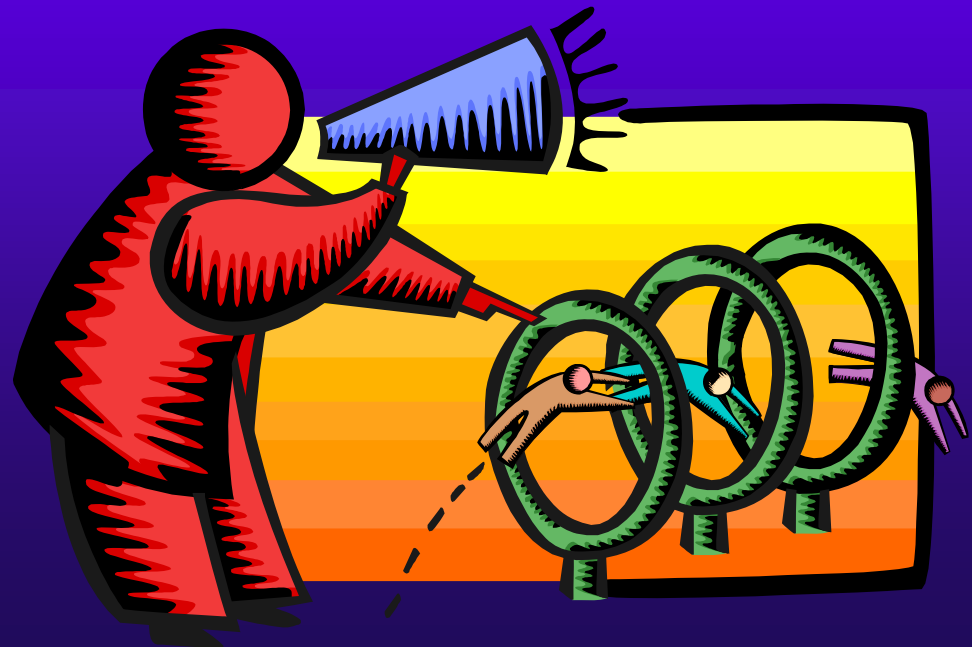
Responsibility

- ◆ When one's position is challenged, to respond with, “Well that's my personal opinion” is just not acceptable.



Ethical Reasoning

- ◆ One learns that there are some opinions for which reasons and evidence can and must be supplied.





Ethical Reasoning

- ◆ One learns that, while it is perfectly sufficient to say, “my favorite ice cream flavor is strawberry,” one cannot similarly say, “My favorite curriculum model is ‘Success For All’” and leave it at that.

Effective Communication

- ◆ Effective communication requires tolerance.




Tolerance



- ◆ The grounds for tolerance is the recognition that:
 - important questions do not have easy answers, and
 - sometimes doubts remain.

Tolerance

- 
- ◆ The grounds for tolerance is the recognition that:
 - it is easy for people to make mistakes and therefore understandable when they do.
 - many disputes are not about what is right and wrong but about what is most important, which is more difficult to say with certainty.



Effective Conversations

- ◆ In an effective conversation, every position is open for exploration, even the commitment to be reasonable.
- ◆ In an effective conversation, no position is too shameful or disgraceful to consider.



Effective Conversations

- ◆ In an effective conversation, there is a commitment to be reasonable that motivates faculty members to cultivate the qualities that make conversation possible among people with opposing views.

Effective Communication in Schools

- ◆ What does it mean to engage in this kind of communication?





Effective Communication

Means that you, as an adult member of a faculty, functioning in a school:

- ◆ are expected to have an opinion,
- ◆ will have others listen to what you have to say,
- ◆ are concerned about what ordinary people think, and
- ◆ are concerned about getting things right.

An Informed Opinion

- ◆ We are not only expected to have opinions, but to take responsibility for seeing that they are reasonable and defensible and grounded in the facts.





Effective Communication

- ◆ Faculty members in a school are expected, not only to have opinions, to take positions, and to make decisions collectively, but also to defend their positions and to engage with others in mutual attempts at persuasion.



Effective Communication

- ◆ The ability to participate in the conversation is important in itself.
- ◆ It gives faculty a sense of dignity and respect.
- ◆ It shows that individuals are valued members of the faculty.

Effective Communication

- ◆ Everyone has something to say.
- ◆ Everyone listens.
- ◆ Through this process, the best of the best may come to light.



Effective Communication

- ◆ Put simply, to be part of good conversation is to be accepted as a contributing member of the faculty.





References

- ◆ Barge, J. K. (1994). *Leadership: Communication skills for organizations and groups*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- ◆ Grant, Ruth W. (1996). The ethics of talk: Classroom conversation and democratic politics. *Teachers College Record*, (97) 3, pp. 471-482.
- ◆ Lewis, P. V. (1987). *Organizational communication: The essence of effective management*. New York: Wiley.