Structured Interview Design and Dialogue

Purpose: To gather data from a number of people at one time in response to several questions or prompts. To get everyone's voice in the discussion. To prevent any voices from dominating.

Overview: Interview Design and Dialogue is a multi-step process where each participant first collects information through interviewing at least four other participants. The interview questions are generated in advance on a relevant topic. Persons with like questions are then grouped for the purpose of analyzing the responses in-depth. In the final step, each group "depicts" their response in the form of a graphic display that is shared with the whole group in debriefing the group process. The process works well with groups of eight or more. It balances participation and requires active involvement.

Audience: Data team; grade-level or department meetings; whole faculty…..

Use: **Primary Tasks**: Any task in which you want to gather information about a topic or issue from a team or a larger constituency like a whole faculty. For example, Interview Design can be used to collect information about current practices related to data use and collaborative inquiry. A team can gather information from the faculty about their implementation of a curriculum, instructional practices, or their professional development needs. A team or an entire faculty can cull successful teaching practices, strategies for teaching students problem-solving, or assessment ideas. The procedure can be used for collecting data about the implementation of an action plan and can help the leadership team learn how to compile and analyze qualitative data. And it can be used very productively to review a policy or practice proposal about which a decision must be made.

Time: 60-90 minutes.

Materials:

Resources
Examples of Questions
Interview Recording Sheet Template
Room Configuration

Other
Card stock (for durability) or paper for questions
Timer
Chart paper
Marking pens

Research for Better Teaching, Inc. • One Acton Place, Acton, MA 01720 • (978)263-9449 • www.rbteach.com

Advance Preparation:

1. Create a set of four to eight interview questions on a single topic that is relevant to the group.

   Calculate the number of question sets by dividing the number of participants by the number of questions, e.g., 12 participants and four questions equals three sets. (Note: If there is an unequal number of participants, have one spot in the row of chairs occupied by a pair.)

2. Print one question on each sheet and copy the appropriate number on card stock or paper.

3. Set up the room with two physical spaces: one for the interviews to occur and one for the groups to analyze their work.

   For the interview space, arrange chairs in rows facing each other. The number of chairs in the row equals the number of questions for the interview. For example, if there are four questions, arrange four chairs on each side, accommodating eight people; if there are eight questions, arrange eight chairs on each side, accommodating 16 people. To accommodate more people, arrange multiple sets. If there is an uneven number of people, add a chair at the end of a row to form an interview triad.

   After the rows of chairs are arranged, place one Interview Recording Sheet on each chair so that participants sitting opposite one another will have the same question.

Procedure:

1. Frame the purpose of the interview design. Introduce the content for the interview and the related questions.

2. Explain the steps of the Interview Design and Dialogue Process.

3. Ask participants to move to the pre-arranged chairs.

Facilitation Note: *If there are late arrivals, have the participants join the end of a row and work as a triad. If participants arrive after the rotation has started, ask them to be seated at a table, hand them a set of questions, and ask them to interview each other as time permits.*

4. If appropriate, begin the interview process by asking each person to introduce herself or himself to the person sitting across from them.

5. Let participants know that they will have three minutes per person (six minutes per pair) to conduct the interviews. Each participant at this point has the same question. Signal the three-minute mark so that participants can change roles.

6. After the first set of pairs has had a chance to interview each other, designate one row to remain seated and the other row to move one seat to the right; the individual seated in the last chair walks around to the first chair. The new pairs begin the second interviews. Each interviewer is posing the same question they originally had to the other. But now, because of the change in seating, each is responding to a new question. Continue this process until everyone has responded to all the questions in their row.

Facilitation Note: *Four to six questions usually provide enough conversation to generate the necessary information.*

7. Begin the analysis process by asking participants to join with others who have been asking the *same* question. Ask the group to analyze their data/information and make a graphic to summarize what they learned. What ideas occured most frequently? What statements can be made from the data? Is any additional data needed to verify these statements?

Facilitation Note: *Consider using Data-Driven Dialogue as a process for having the groups analyze and discuss the data that has been collected.*

8. Ask groups to share their findings with the larger group. Look for similarities and differences in the reports. Summarize important ideas.

Adapted from the Wharton School of Business, 1987

RBT
Research for Better Teaching, Inc. • One Acton Place, Acton, MA 01720 • (978)263-9449 • www.rbteach.com

Outline of Interview Design and Dialogue Process

INTERVIEW:

- Using your Interview Recording Sheet, interview your partner and record responses (2 to 3 minutes).
- Change roles so that your partner interviews you. Respond to the question your partner poses (2 to 3 minutes).
- Change partners as directed by the Facilitator and repeat the interview process.

ANALYZE AND SYNTHESIZE:

- Assemble in question-alike groups.
- Analyze the data:
  - What was said, with what frequency?
  - Go Visual by creating a graph or another type of visual such as a graphic organizer to display the data collected.
  - Make observations: What themes or trends are apparent?
  - Infer: What questions do you have about the data? What possible explanations?
- Summarize analysis and add to the graph or other type of visual you created (or create a new graphic to share your synthesis).

REPORT OUT:

- Share your presentation with the whole group.
- Look for similarities and differences across groups.

RBT

Research for Better Teaching, Inc. • One Acton Place, Acton, MA 01720 • (978)263-9449 • www.rbteach.com

Examples of Questions

Topic:

Using Data in our PLCS to Improve Student Achievement

Question A: Consider your involvement in the using data in PLCs. When have you felt most energerized? Why?

Question B: Comment on the following statement: Using data will not positively impact student learning within a school unless [fill in a possible ending].

Question C: What are the greatest challenges you face in your work facilitating the use of data? How might you navigate these challenges?

Question D: What criteria will/did you use to identify a student-learning problem? Explain your thinking about these criteria.

Question E: What process/steps do you use for analyzing student work?

Question F: What do you think are the student-learning problems at our school? Why do you think these problems exist?

Question K: What do you think needs to happen to overcome the student-learning problems at our school?

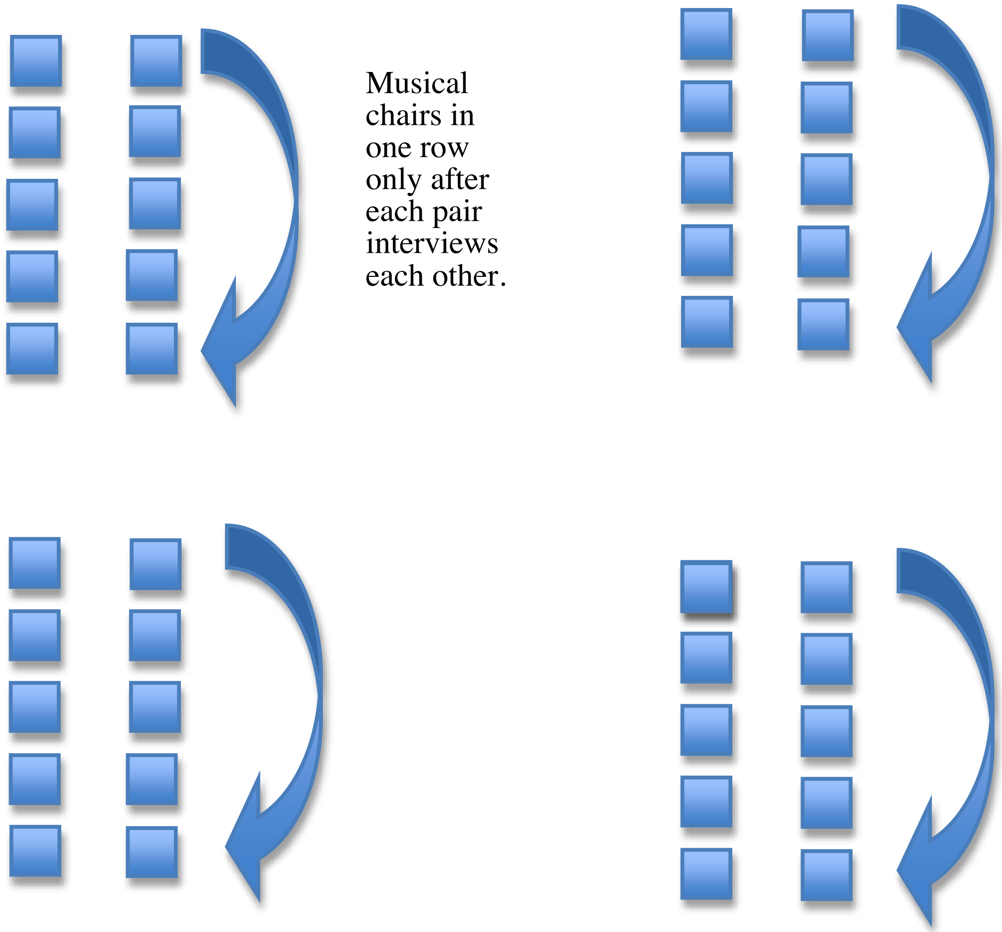
Topic:

Adopting a Policy of Students Being Encouraged to Re-take Tests on which they do poorly and re-do projects/papers on which they do poorly. No averaging of grades. Students get the highest grade they attain.

1. What are the plusses of adopting this as a policy?
2. What are the minuses of adopting this as a policy?
3. What would we take as evidence/indicators that it was working?
4. What would we have to do operationally to make it work?
5. What would we have to do with parents before starting?

Research for Better Teaching, Inc. • One Acton Place, Acton, MA 01720 • (978)263-9449 • www.rbteach.com

Rows of participants facing each other knee to knee.



Research for Better Teaching, Inc. • One Acton Place, Acton, MA 01720 • (978)263-9449 • www.rbteach.com

Re: Adopting a Policy of Students Being Encouraged to Re-take Tests on which they do poorly and re-do projects/papers on which they do poorly. No averaging of grades. Students get the highest grade they attain.

1. What are the plusses of adopting this as a policy?

Research for Better Teaching, Inc. • One Acton Place, Acton, MA 01720 • (978)263-9449 • www.rbteach.com

Re: Adopting a Policy of Students Being Encouraged to Re-take Tests on which they do poorly and re-do projects/papers on which they do poorly. No averaging of grades. Students get the highest grade they attain.

2. What are the minuses of adopting this as a policy?

Research for Better Teaching, Inc. • One Acton Place, Acton, MA 01720 • (978)263-9449 • www.rbteach.com

Re: Adopting a Policy of Students Being Encouraged to Re-take Tests on which they do poorly and re-do projects/papers on which they do poorly. No averaging of grades. Students get the highest grade they attain.

3. What would we take as evidence/indicators that it was working?

Research for Better Teaching, Inc. • One Acton Place, Acton, MA 01720 • (978)263-9449 • www.rbteach.com

Re: Adopting a Policy of Students Being Encouraged to Re-take Tests on which they do poorly and re-do projects/papers on which they do poorly. No averaging of grades. Students get the highest grade they attain.

4. What would we have to do operationally to make it work?

Re: Adopting a Policy of Students Being Encouraged to Re-take Tests on which they do poorly and re-do projects/papers on which they do poorly. No averaging of grades. Students get the highest grade they attain.

5. What would we have to do with parents before starting?