

# **Playing Well With Others**

## **Collaboration Skills Self-Assessment**

**Trust – Bryk and Schneider  
Adult Learning Assumptions-Lambert**

**Rapport & Non-Verbals  
Listening Skills  
Questioning Skills  
Presuppositions  
Suggestions**

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## About the Presenter

Jennifer Abrams is an international educational and communications consultant for public and independent schools, hospitals, universities and non-profits. Jennifer trains and coaches teachers, administrators, nurses, hospital personnel, and others on new employee support, supervision, being generationally savvy, having hard conversations and collaboration skills.

In Palo Alto USD (Palo Alto, CA), Jennifer led professional development sessions on topics from equity and elements of effective instruction to teacher leadership and peer coaching and provided new teacher and administrator trainings at both the elementary and secondary level. From 2000-2011, Jennifer was lead coach for the Palo Alto-Mountain View-Los Altos-Saratoga-Los Gatos Consortium's Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program.

In her educational consulting work, Jennifer has presented at annual conferences such as Learning Forward, ASCD, NASSP, NAESP, AMLE, ISACS and the New Teacher Center Annual Symposium, as well as at the Teachers' and Principals' Centers for International School Leadership. Jennifer's communications consulting in the health care sector includes training and coaching work at the Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula and Stanford Hospital.

Jennifer's publications include *Having Hard Conversations, The Multigenerational Workplace: Communicating, Collaborating & Creating Community* and *Hard Conversations Unpacked – the Whos, the Whens and the What Ifs*. Her upcoming book, *Swimming in the Deep End: Four Foundational Skills for Leading Successful School Initiatives*, will be out March of 2019. Other publications include her chapter, "Habits of Mind for the School Savvy Leader" in Art Costa's and Bena Kallick's book, *Learning and Leading with Habits of Mind: 16 Essential Characteristics for Success*, and her contribution to the book, *Mentors in the Making: Developing New Leaders for New Teachers* published by Teachers College Press. Jennifer writes a monthly newsletter, *Voice Lessons*, available for reading at and subscribing to on her website, [www.jenniferabrams.com](http://www.jenniferabrams.com) and is a featured columnist, writing about personal development at [www.eschoolnews.org](http://www.eschoolnews.org).

Jennifer has been recognized as one of "21 Women All K-12 Educators Need to Know" by *Education Week's* 'Finding Common Ground' blog, and the International Academy of Educational Entrepreneurship. She has been a featured interviewee on the topic of professionalism for ASCD's video series, *Master Class*, hosted by National Public Radio's Claudio Sanchez, and in the lead article, "Finding Your Voice in Facilitating Productive Conversations" for Learning Forward's *The Leading Teacher*, Summer 2013 newsletter; as a generational expert for "Tune in to What the New Generation of Teachers Can Do," published in *Phi Delta Kappan*, (May 2011), and by the Ontario Ministry of Education for their *Leadership Matters: Supporting Open-to-Learning Conversations* video series.

Jennifer considers herself a "voice coach," helping others learn how to best use their voices - be it collaborating on a team, presenting in front of an audience, coaching a colleague, supervising an employee and in her role as an advisor for Reach Capital, an early stage educational technology fund. Jennifer holds a Master's degree in Education from Stanford University and a Bachelor's degree in English from Tufts University. She lives in Palo Alto, California. Jennifer can be reached at [jennifer@jenniferabrams.com](mailto:jennifer@jenniferabrams.com), [www.jenniferabrams.com](http://www.jenniferabrams.com), and on Twitter @jenniferabrams.

**Our conversations invent us. Through our speech and our silence, we become smaller or larger selves. Through our speech and our silence, we diminish or enhance the other person, and we narrow or expand the possibilities between us. How we use our voice determines the quality of our relationships, who we are in the world, and what the world can be and might become. Clearly, a lot is at stake here.**

**Harriet Lerner, The Dance of Connection**

## **Are Good Social Relationships Key To School Improvement?**

**Gordon, David T., *Fuel for Reform: The Importance of Trust in Changing Schools*, Harvard Education Letter, July/August, 2002, Vol. 18, #4**

**A lesson learned from Chicago's decade of school reforms, according to a new book by Anthony S. Bryk and Barbara Schneider. In Trust in Schools: A Core Resource for Improvement, the University of Chicago researchers examine the role of social relationships in schools and their impact on student achievement. Their conclusion? That "a broad base of trust across a school community lubricates much of the a school's day-to-day functioning and is a critical resource as local leaders embark on ambitious improvement plans."**

**Bryk and Schneider contend that schools with a high degrees of "relational trust," as they call it, are far more likely to make the kinds of changes that help raise student achievement than those where relations are poor.**

**Bryk and Schneider take the bold step of seeking empirical evidence that links trust and academic achievement.**

**Teachers' relationships with each other can often be more challenging than those between teachers and their bosses, the authors found.**

**The evidence from Chicago suggest that while not all schools with high levels of trust improve – that is, trust alone won't solve instructional or structural problems – schools with little or no relational trust have practically no chance of improving.**

**In top-quartile schools, three-quarters of teachers reported strong or very strong relations with fellow teachers, and nearly all reported such relations with their principals. By contrast, at schools in the bottom quartile, a majority of teachers having little or no trust in their colleagues, two-thirds said the same about their principals, and fewer than 40 percent reported positive, trusting relations with parents.**

**Bryk and Schneider found that schools with strong levels of trust at the outset of reforms had a 1 in 2 chance of making significant improvements in math and reading, while those with weak relationships had a 1 in 7 chance of making gains.**

**Good relationships and trust won't compensate for bad instruction, poorly trained teachers or unworkable school structures, as Bryk and Schneider are careful to note. But by the same token, reform efforts are bound to fail if they ignore the importance of how teachers, principals, parents and students interact.**

## **Trust – Research by Bryk and Schneider**

**Schools with a high degree of trust are more likely to make changes that help students achieve.**

**According to these researchers, there are four vital signs for identifying and assessing trust in schools.**

**Respect: Do we acknowledge one another's dignity and ideas? Do we interact in a courteous way?**

**Competence: Do we believe in each other's ability and willingness to fulfill our responsibilities effectively?**

**Personal regard: Do we care about each other personally and professionally? Are we willing to go beyond our formal roles and responsibilities to go the extra mile?**

**Integrity: Can we trust each other to put the interests of students first, especially when tough decisions have to be made? Do we keep our word?**

**What are your thoughts about the degree of trust on at your school? What do you think are some of the things that could increase the trust in your school?**

## **Guiding Questions – Participation in School Community**

### **Participation in collaborative efforts to improve the school.**

- Do I “show up”? Show up on time or late?  
Show up at staff meetings? Department meetings? On Staff Development Days?  
At team meetings? At events that are related to school improvement?
- Do I know, understand, respect and follow the learning outcomes/course descriptions of my classes? If so, how? Follow the objectives for the department? The goals of the school?
- If asked to complete some paperwork or attend a meeting on behalf of the department or do some work for the team, do I get it done?
- Do I share an enthusiasm for the “pursuit of teaching excellence”? If so, how?
- Do I look like I enjoy teaching? Enjoy the school? Enjoy my colleagues? If so, how?
- Do I communicate with parents in a timely fashion? If so, how? Answer calls?  
Meet with parents? Show up to Back to School Night?
- Do I hold myself to a high standard for what I do and produce? If so, how?
- Do I continually refine lessons and units and work to improve my teaching? If so, how?

### **Demonstration of the interpersonal skills needed to work on a team with colleagues, and community members.**

- Am I aware of the school values, norms, the way the school sees itself? Do I work well within those values? If so, how? Do I embody them or just give them lip service?
- Do I seem to understand the implicit or explicit code of dress for the teachers and other professionals in the school and wear appropriate clothing for the age of the students and the school culture? If so, how?
- Do I hone my communication and process skills as well as work on my classroom instruction? If so, how?
- Do I show consideration for the feelings of others? Say “Hello,” say “Thank you,” say “I’m sorry,” say “What can I do to help?”
- Do I gossip? Talk poorly of colleagues in front of others or to students?

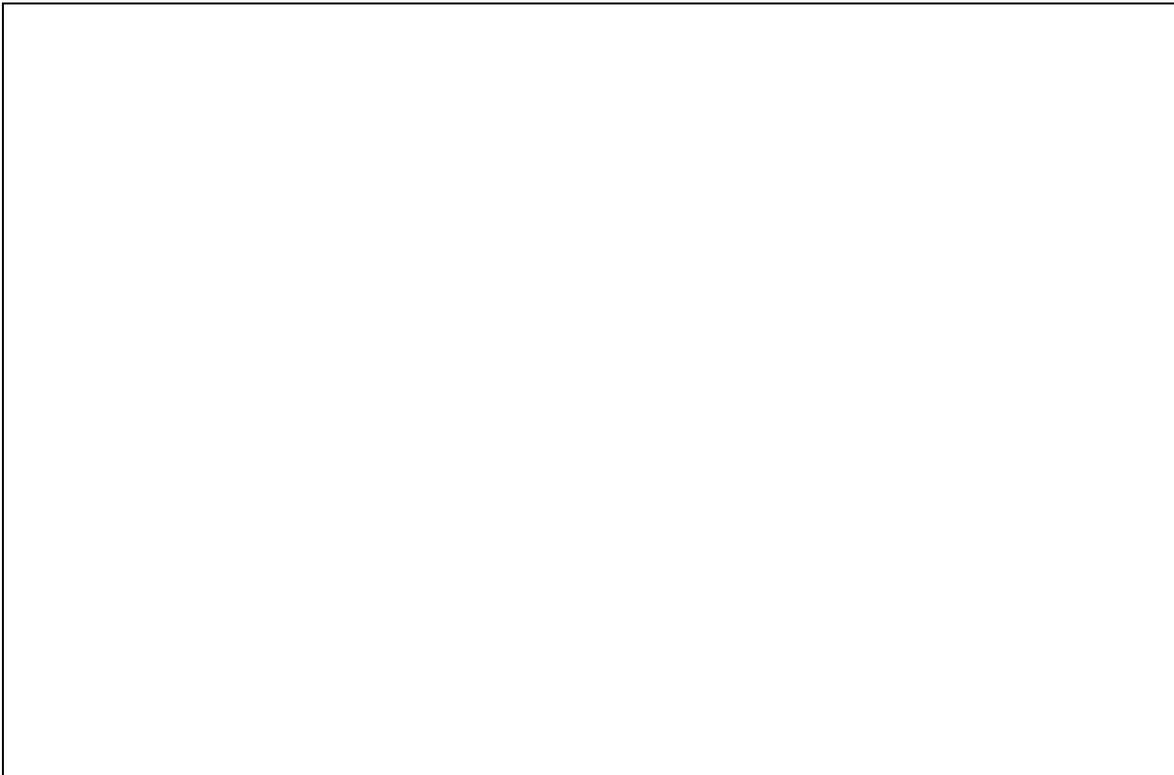
## Guiding Questions – Participation in School Community

- Am I aware of my assumptions and values and know when they are getting in the way of moving forward with my colleagues?
- Am I able to stand outside myself and see how I might be impacting others or be seen by others? If so, how?
- If I am given feedback, do I listen to it and react appropriately, changing behavior if necessary? If so, how?
- Am I open to rational and intuitive ways of thinking? If so, how?
- Am I open to doing things in a way other than my way?
- Am I open to hearing all perspectives? If so, how? And when hearing all perspectives do I honor them or shut down?
- Do I cooperate with special education staff so that services are provided to the students? Do I fill out the progress reports and do the required/suggested accommodations with a positive attitude?
- Do I work with counselors or administrator when there is a problem? Do I attend SSTs, etc. and do so in a “willing” way?
- Do I manage my anxiety in a way that is appropriate? Not yelling at or crying in front of all staff or students?
- Do I know of the hierarchy of positions in the school? Do I know where to go to the appropriate person for the appropriate concern? Do I look for solutions rather than sit with the problem and complain in the parking lot?
- Do I want to work in a group and do I show that through my body language, contributions, and attitude?
- When communicating with other adults, do I ask for other perspectives? Seek to understand the other’s point of view?
- Do I show an ability to listen for understanding and empathy?
- Do I manage impulsivity or interrupt more often than not, inserting my POV?
- Do I use positive presuppositions when coming together with a given group – presuming positive intention and potential?

## **Guiding Questions – Participation in School Community**

- Do I seem to have a sense of humor? Can I laugh at myself?
- Do I have a sense of personal space, body language and appropriate sense of decorum in a given setting? With both adults and students?
- Am I aware that I am not allowing equitable participation by talking too much at meetings or talking too little and not contributing?

### **What Else?**

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their responses to the 'What Else?' section.

# Adult Learning Assumptions

- **Adults have a drive toward competence, which is linked to self-image and efficacy.**
- **Learning is enhanced when adults are active, involved and self-directed.**
- **What is to be learned must hold meaning; it must connect with current understandings, knowledge, experience and purpose.**
- **We don't learn from experience as much as we learn from processing our experience – both successes and failures. Self-reflection, self-assessment, and self-direction are critical to learning and development.**
- **Learning is both an opportunity and a risk; it requires dissonance and change.**
- **Learning is the continual process of identity formation, or growing into more of who we are becoming**

**Adapted from the work of Linda Lambert, Professor, Department of Educational Leadership, California State University, Hayward**

## The Seven Norms of Collaborative Work

**Pausing:** Pausing before responding or asking a question allows time for thinking, enhances dialogue, discussion and decision-making.

**Paraphrasing:** Using a paraphrase starter that is comfortable for you: “So...” or “As you are...” or “You’re thinking...” and following the starter with a paraphrase that assists members of the group to hear and understand each other as they formulate questions.

**Probing:** Using gentle open-ended probes or inquiries such as, “Please say more...” or “I’m curious about...” or “I’d like to hear more about...” or “Then, are you saying...?” increases the clarity and precision of the group’s thinking.

**Putting ideas on the table:** Ideas are at the heart of meaningful dialogue. Label the intention of your comments. For example, you might say, “Here is one idea...” or “One thought I have is...” or “Here is a possible approach...”.

**Paying attention to self and others:** Meaningful dialogue is facilitated when each group member is conscious of self and of others and is aware of not only what she/he is saying, but also how it is said and how others are responding. This includes paying attention to learning style when planning for, facilitating and participating in group meetings. Responding to others in their own language forms is one manifestation of this norm.

**Presuming positive intentions:** Assuming that others’ intentions are positive promotes and facilitates meaningful dialogue and eliminates unintentional put-downs. Using positive intentions in your speech is one manifestation of this norm.

**Pursuing a balance between advocacy and inquiry:** Pursuing and maintaining a balance between advocating a position and inquiring about one’s own and others’ positions assists the group in becoming a learning organization.

From Bill Baker and Adaptive Schools

**Key Rapport Skills  
For Better Colleague-Colleague Conversation**

**Watch Your Rapport**

**Physical**

**Muscle Tension**

**Posture**

**Gesture (hands)**

**Eye Contact**

**Physical Space between you**

**Where you sit/stand in the room**

**Which room you are in**

**Vocal**

**Intonation/Pitch**

(approachable vs. credible)

**Pace**

**Word Choice**

**Breathing**

**Depth**

**Duration**

**Rate**

**Attend to Rapport If**

**You anticipate tension or anxiety**

**Tension or anxiety emerges**

**You are having difficulty understanding the  
other person**

**You are distracted**

**Adapted from Mentoring Matters: A Practical Guide to Learning-Focused Relationships by  
Laura Lipton and Bruce Wellman**

## **Be Aware of “I” Listening**

**Personal Referencing – autobiographical**

**Personal Curiosity – gossip, etc.**

**Personal Certainty – solution-oriented**

**Ask yourself: What are my reasons for saying this?  
Does it serve for my colleague to hear this?**

# Paraphrasing

## **Pause**

**Using wait time before responding to or asking a question allows time for more complex thinking, enhances dialogue and improves decision-making.**

## **Paraphrase**

**Let's others know that you are listening, that you understand or are trying to understand them and that you care.**

## **Inappropriate Paraphrases**

- **No paraphrase**
- **Too often (too frequent)**
- **Too long**
- **Same words (parroting)**
- **Wrong pronoun (using "I" – so what "I" hear you saying is...)**

## **Possible paraphrasing stems...**

**So...**

**In other words....**

**What you're suggesting is...**

**You're saying...**

## **Key Questioning Skills For Better Colleague-Colleague Conversations**

### **Pause**

**Leave space after you ask a question**  
**Leave space after they finish answering**  
**Leave space before you respond**

### **Have an Approachable Voice**

**Rise at the end of a statement**  
**Use a credible voice when you are “consulting”**

### **Use Plural Forms**

**To increase thinking and not block it use plural forms.**  
**“What are some of your goals?”**  
**“What ideas do you have?”**  
**“What accommodations are you considering?”**

### **Use Tentative Language**

**To reduce need for absolutes/surety**  
**“What hunches do you have?”**  
**“What might be some of the possible solutions?”**  
**“What may the students think of this idea?”**  
**“How might you go about doing that?”**

### **Use Positive Presuppositions**

**Presumes our colleague is capable of thought and is willing to reflect.**  
**“As you think about this with your content expertise...”**  
**“Considering you know the students well...”**  
**“As you plan for this class, what are some of the things that are important to you?”**  
**“As you move through the lesson, what are some of the indicators you will look for to see students are progressing?”**  
**“What do you make of...”**  
**“What leads you to believe...?”**  
**“What are some other ways you have thought about looking this challenge?”**  
**“How do you see/envision this working out....?”**

## **Open Suggestions – Consulting Stance**

- **Are offered in the spirit of support and are expressed with invitational, positive language and voice tone**
- **Offer choices to encourage ownership**
- **Are often expressed as a question or include a “tag question” to invite further thinking**
- **Are achievable and offered in brief – enough to encourage but not to overwhelm**

## **Suggestion stems**

- **One thing I’ve noticed is....**
- **Something to keep in mind when dealing with....**
- **There are a number of approaches....**
- **From the work I have seen others do, one thing I think has worked for others is...**

**Try following a suggestion with a question that invites the teacher to imagine/hypothesize how the idea might work in his/her context.**

- **How do you think that would work?**
- **Which of these ideas do you think makes most sense for you?**
- **What do you think of trying that idea out in class?**

*Adapted from New Teacher Center and Lipton and Wellman*

## Resources

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Dancing at the Edge: Competence, Culture and Organization in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – Maureen O'Hara and Graham Leicester, International Futures Forum, 2012

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Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life – Martin Seligman, Vintage, 2006

Lemons to Lemonade: Resolving Problems in Meetings, Workshops and PLCs – Robert Garmston and Diane Zimmerman, Corwin, 2013

Learning-focused Supervision: Developing Professional Expertise in Standards-Driven Systems– Laura Lipton and Bruce Wellman, Miravia LLC, 2013

Mindset: The New Psychology of Success – Carol Dweck, Ballantine, 2007

The Multigenerational Workplace: Communicate, Collaborate & Create Community – Jennifer Abrams, Corwin, 2013

The Multiplier Effect: Tapping the Genius Inside Our Schools – Liz Wiseman, Lois Allen and Elise Foster, Corwin, 2013

## Resources

[www.newteachercenter.org](http://www.newteachercenter.org)

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Social: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Connect – Matthew D. Lieberman, Crown Publishers, 2013

Switch: How To Change Things When Change Is Hard – Chip Heath and Dan Heath, Crown Business, 2010

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