PROFESSIONAL CONVERSATIONS: Tips for conducting your Individual Planning Conference, Post-Observation Conferences and other Professional Conversations regarding OUR practice!

- Dispel yourself of any fear (and we all have a little). Remember this is OUR career, OUR profession and OUR students. Together, administrators are to assist us, not micro-manage or disparage.
- Start the conversation! “Leaning in” on the conversation sets a positive and authoritative tone from the outset.
- Command the conversation! State your expectation of avoiding a deficit-centered conversation on practice (anyone can critique!). One purpose of professional conversations is to continually improve our practice. Request specific and tangible assistance and resources to improve.
- State and remember that these conversations are not personal. Be aware of the potential feelings of all parties, avoid judgment and encourage your counterparts to do the same.
- Try to abandon ‘ego’ in professional meetings. There are no ‘good’ or ‘bad’ educators, only human beings who are seeking to continually learn and grow. Specific requests for assistance and programmed plans for improvement are superior to citing where practice is in need of improvement.
- Instead of asking an administrator to ‘model,’ ask where you can observe specific practices in action.
- Describe in detail the variety of students you work with, the many challenges they face and ways to address challenges now and in the future.
- State one or two goals that you hope to accomplish and specific ways how administration and colleagues can assist.
- Remember and state that coaching and facilitating is not giving directives or pointing to failures. Coach the coach by stating specifically what you want by way of assistance and why the person is having this conversation with you and request specific, timely and actionable assistance.
- Request professional development opportunities and speak to colleagues about forming or strengthening your school’s PD Committee.
- Begin informal inter-visitation (not evaluation) among colleagues and share experiences in group settings with administrators where we demonstrate the importance of giving accolade and providing constructive feedback with sensitivity and warmth.
- Invite administrators and colleagues in your room.
- Remind administrators that the DOE’s framework for great schools is ‘encircled’ around the concept of trust. Determine and voice the practices that the entire school will take to engender trust.