

Taking the Pulse of Your School [Link]

(For internal coaches who are part of the school faculty)

At each school “taking the pulse” will look different and every interview will have its own tone and rhythm. For that reason, there cannot be one prescriptive plan. Please adapt the tools and interview guides as you see fit; the purpose is to save time so you would not have to start from scratch.

As the coach review the suggested ***Taking the Pulse of your School*** adding or editing questions to fit the school context.

Don’t skip this piece because you believe you know a great deal about your school.

Focus questions to guide the interviews

- What implicit or explicit beliefs about teaching and learning to teach guide decision-making at this school?
- How do those beliefs manifest themselves in day-to-day practices?
- What is it like to learn to teach at your school?
- What structures of strong, school-based induction are currently in place?

Interview Guide for Head of School

Lets talk about teaching and learning in a school. I want to understand a bit about what you all are striving for here in terms of excellent teaching. When you walk into a classroom, what do you hope to see?

- What indicates “good teaching” to you?
- What might the teachers be doing?
- What about the students?
- What does it look like in the classroom?
- Does that change for different subject areas?

What do you see as the major strengths of the school right now? (What is going well?) And what areas are you focused on improving?

Assessment and Evaluation

How are new teachers evaluated? By whom? How often?

- What are you looking for in the evaluations?
- Did any teachers receive unsatisfactory evaluations this year? What was the issue that tripped them up?
- Did you decide not to rehire any of this year’s new teachers? How come?
- When did you tell them?
- What was that process like?
- What kinds of things do teachers need to be successful at in order to get rehired?

As we kick off the induction partnership, what are your hopes?

Interview Guide for New teachers

As the internal coach you should schedule one-on-one conversations with a handful of recently-hired teachers, in order to ask about their experiences. (It is not necessary to gather information from every single person teacher hired in the last year or two. However, we do recommend talking with at least three. Teachers who are new to the school but not new to teaching are appropriate to include here.)

We have found that talking to people one-on-one yields much richer and more interesting information than facilitating group conversations or distributing paper surveys. Also, it is very important to take detailed notes!

General / Background

First I'd like a little background information about you and what you teach.

- Is this your first or second year at the school?
- What courses /subjects /grade(s) do you teach?
 - (If a second year teacher, did you teach the same thing last year?)

Summer and Orientation

I want to ask you about the summer between when you were hired and when you started teaching.

- Did you have contact with anyone from the school over the summer?
 - Who?
 - What kind of contact?
- Did you come into the school?
 - What did you do when you were here?
- Did you attend any PD?
 - What did you attend? Did it involve other teachers from your school? Who?
 - Was that something the school arranged for you, or did you do it on your own?
- Was there an orientation for new teachers?
 - What did it include?
 - What do you remember learning from it?
 - After orientation, did you better understand the school community?
 - ...the Jewish Mission of the school?
 - ...what good teaching looks like here?

Curriculum

So I understand that you are teaching XXX.

- What materials did the school provide related to this topic? How do you know what to teach? How to teach it? When to teach it?
- Did you bring any materials of your own?
- Where have your unit and lesson plans come from?
 - Is anyone helping you to create them?
- Do you have the resources you need to teach this successfully?
- Is curriculum a guide or a restriction?

Interaction with Colleagues

Now I want to ask you about the opportunities you have to interact with your colleagues.

- Do you have a mentor?
 - How often do you meet?
 - What kinds of things do you talk about?
- Has anyone in the building ever watched you teach?
 - Who?
 - When/ how often?
 - Did they give you feedback about your teaching afterwards? Was that feedback helpful?
- Have you watched anyone else in the building teach?
 - Who? When?
 - For what reason?
 - Did it serve the expected purpose?
- Have other teachers shared curricular ideas or lesson plans with you?
- Do you ever co-plan with other teachers? How often? Who?
- Who do you go to when you need help planning or problem solving something that came up in your classroom?

Assessment

Finally, I want to ask you about how your teaching practice is evaluated at this school.

- How do teachers know if they are successful at this school?
- Is there a formal evaluation process for teachers?
- What does it entail?
- Have you been formally evaluated?
- When and by whom?
- Did you get any feedback during the process? What was it?
- Are you returning next year?
 - If not, why not?
 - If so, do you know the criteria administrators used in deciding to rehire you?

Overall Impressions

- What do you like best about teaching here? Why?
- What has been most challenging for you about teaching here?

- What support have you received in dealing with this challenge?
- Do you think you have had a successful year?
 - What leads you to believe that?
 - Is there anything the school could have done differently to make your year more successful?
- Do you think you are a better teacher now than you were at the beginning of the year?
 - What leads you to believe that?
 - In what areas do you think you have most improved?
 - To what do you attribute that improvement?

If you could give any advice to the administration about how to better support and develop new teachers, what would that advice be?

Interview Guide for Experienced Teachers

- What was most challenging for you when you first started teaching here?
 - How did you deal with it / learn about it?
- What do you like best about teaching here? Why?
- Do you think you have had a successful year?
 - What leads you to believe that?
 - Is there anything the school could have done differently to make your year more successful?
- Do you think you are a better teacher now than you were at the beginning of the year?
 - What leads you to believe that?
 - In what areas do you think you have most improved?
 - To what do you attribute that improvement?