

COURSE SYLLABUS

Course: Improving Instruction through Strategic Conversations with Teachers

Presenters: Robyn R. Jackson

Hours: 30

Course Overview

This course presents the delicate art of conversations between educational leaders and teachers. Dr. Robyn Jackson, master teacher and teacher trainer, presents cogent strategies to help instructional leaders shift from supervisory feedback to strategic conversations that respect the needs of individuals. Four different types of strategic conversations—reflective, facilitative, coaching, and directive—empower educational leaders to motivate and support teachers. They target teachers' combined will and skill, which in turn directly affect student achievement. Dr. Jackson concludes with valuable tips for instructional leaders to help them maintain focus and confidence for using strategic conversations. She offers encouragement and support for educators in their continuing efforts to improve the quality of instruction and impact student learning.

Presenters' Bios

Dr. Robyn R. Jackson earned her Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Maryland. In her work with teachers, administrators, schools, and non-profit organizations, Dr. Jackson focuses on key principles of education rather than isolated strategies. Dr. Jackson founded Mindsteps, Inc. in 2006 to help teachers learn how to help every student meet or exceed rigorous learning standards. Her work with administrators helps them effectively train and support teachers and create highly rigorous school programs that ensure equitable access to college readiness for all students. She also works with school systems and non-profits to remove institutional barriers to equity, access, and rigor for all students, particularly students of color who are traditionally under-represented in advanced courses.

Objectives

After completing this course, educators will know:

- Four strategic conversational types
- How to prepare for and conduct strategic conversations
- The role of data in strategic conversations
- The potential impact of strategic conversations

Student Learning Outcomes

After completing this course, educators will apply the following skills:

- Impact student achievement by helping teachers improve their classroom instruction
- Provide teachers with motivating feedback and support
- Help teachers recognize their impact on student achievement



- Help teachers make necessary connections, commitment, corrections, and changes to their practice
- Collect data to determine teachers' primary needs
- Use data to develop conversational pathways with teachers
- Conduct the four types of strategic conversations

Unit 1: Strategic Conversations for Instructional Leaders

How can instructional leaders share feedback with teachers to help both teachers and students improve? In this unit, instructional leaders learn the difference between traditional supervisory feedback and strategic conversations. Dr. Robyn Jackson discusses the four types of strategic conversations: reflective, facilitative, coaching, and directive, all of which are specifically designed to motivate and support teachers. Educators will explore the impact of power dynamics on their ability to conduct these conversations effectively. They will also assess their own relevant foundational beliefs—all for the sake of tangible improvement in student learning.

Unit Objectives

After completing this unit, educational leaders will know:

- The foundational beliefs of strategic conversations
- How a strategic conversation is defined
- The four types of strategic conversations
- Why strategic conversations are more useful than traditional supervisory feedback
- How the dynamics of power affect leaders' ability to provide effective feedback to teachers

Student Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, educational leaders will apply the following skills:

- Articulate foundational beliefs relative to strategic conversations
- Develop strategies for negotiating the shifts in power dynamics
- Identify strategic conversation types applicable to each supervised teacher

Unit 2: Data Collection for Strategic Conversations

To properly inform strategic conversations, instructional leaders need data. In this unit, Dr. Jackson clarifies why leaders need data, how to collect it, and how to interpret it. Educators learn how to conduct walkthroughs and classroom observations (both formal and informal) and how to collect and examine both teacher and student artifacts. They learn to respect the use of data as a critical and ongoing component of their relationship with teachers.

Unit Objectives

After completing this unit, educational leaders will know:



- Why they need to collect data
- How to collect data
- The two types of data necessary for evaluation
- How to interpret the data

Student Learning Objectives

After completing this unit, educational leaders will apply the following skills:

- Collect data necessary for strategic conversations
- Choose data appropriate to the particular conversation
- Interpret the data and apply it to strategic conversations with teachers

Unit 3: Teacher Will and Skill

Effective teaching is the intersection between a teacher's will—his or her motivation and resolve to do what is best on students' behalf—and skill—his or her pedagogical and content area knowledge. In this unit, Dr. Jackson provides instructional leaders guidelines for quickly and efficiently assessing staff needs by looking at that intersection in each teacher's practice.

Participants learn to read the data in order to classify teachers on a will/skill continuum of four teacher types. They are then prepared to study how to use strategic conversations to best support these teachers.

Unit Objectives

After completing this unit, educational leaders will know:

- How to assess teachers' will and skill
- How to recognize each of the four teacher types

Student Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, educational leaders will apply the following skills:

- Implement assessment of teachers' will and skill
- Assess teacher need based on will and skill

Unit 4: Reflective Conversations

Reflective conversations, the least intrusive of strategic conversations, help teachers think intentionally about their instruction and draw their own conclusions. In this unit educators learn to provide the right environment for such conversations, to ask appropriate questions, to listen reflectively, and to summarize what the conversation was about. Dr. Jackson illuminates how instructional leaders can provide the context for teachers to identify their instructional challenges, develop a plan of action, and decide what



supports they will need. The unit is enhanced by simulated reflective conversations between Dr. Jackson and each of the four teacher types.

Unit Objectives

After completing this unit, educational leaders will know:

- How a reflective conversation is defined
- How and when to conduct reflective conversations
- How each type of teacher will likely react to reflective conversations

Student Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, educational leaders will apply the following skills:

- Describe the purpose and process of a reflective conversation
- Choose appropriate contexts for reflective conversations
- Engage in reflective conversations
- Predict and plan for reactions based on a teacher's will and skill

Unit 5: Facilitative Conversations

In this unit, Dr. Jackson introduces the substance and purpose of facilitative conversations. In a facilitative conversation, educational leaders cooperate with teachers to look at their data and then mediate the teacher's assessment of what the data means. Dr. Jackson presents strategies for setting goals with teachers so that instructional leaders are able to assess progress in improving their practice. Educators will learn how to remain as neutral as possible while providing enough guidance to help teachers reach their goals. The unit is enhanced by simulated facilitative conversations with Dr. Jackson and each of the four teacher types.

Unit Objectives

After completing this session, educational leaders will know:

- How a facilitative conversation is defined
- When and how to conduct facilitative conversations
- The steps to follow while conducting a facilitative conversation
- How each type of teacher will likely react to a facilitative conversation

Student Learning Outcomes

After completing this session, educational leaders will apply the following skills:

- Describe the purpose and process of a facilitative conversation
- Choose appropriate contexts for facilitative conversations
- Engage in facilitative conversations



- Predict outcomes based on a teacher's will and skill

Unit 6: Coaching Conversations

In this unit, Dr. Jackson explains that instructional leaders take a slightly more active role in coaching conversations than in reflective and facilitative conversations. Educators learn to collaborate with teachers to identify an area of need and then help the teacher to improve in that area by making recommendations and assisting in the development of an action plan. This unit is enhanced by simulated coaching conversations with each of the four teacher types.

Unit Objectives

After completing this session, educational leaders will know:

- How a coaching conversation is defined
- How and when to conduct coaching conversations
- How each of the teacher types is likely to react to a coaching conversation

Student Learning Outcomes

After completing this session, educational leaders will apply the following skills:

- Describe the purpose and process of a coaching conversation
- Choose appropriate contexts for coaching conversations
- Engage in coaching conversations
- Predict outcomes based on a teacher's will and skill

Unit 7: Directive Conversations

In this unit, Dr. Jackson presents the purpose and steps in conducting directive conversations. The most intrusive of strategic conversations, directive conversations often are last resorts. Instructional leaders will learn to use this kind of conversation with teachers who do not immediately demonstrate either the will or the skill to adjust their behavior in their students' best interests. The purpose of a directive conversation is to compel teachers to make immediate changes. The leader determines what change needs to be made, how it should be made, and the conditions for success. This unit is enhanced by simulated directive conversations with each of the four teacher types.

Unit Objectives

After completing this unit, educational leaders will know:

- How a directive conversation is defined
- How and when to conduct directive conversations
- How each of the teacher types is likely to react to a directive conversation



Student Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, educational leaders will apply the following skills:

- Describe the purpose and process of a directive conversation
- Choose appropriate contexts for directive conversations
- Engage in directive conversations
- Predict outcomes based on a teacher's will and skill

Unit 8: Staying the Course with Strategic Conversations

Dr. Jackson concludes the course with this unit reinforcing the importance and value of strategic conversations. Educators learn that strategic conversations need to be combined to create an overall approach for each teacher. It is not any one conversation that will make a difference; rather, it is the combinations of conversational approaches that will help teachers make lasting improvements in their instruction. In this unit, educators learn how develop a long-term strategic conversational approach for each teacher. In her conclusion, Dr. Jackson shares important tips for instructional leaders to help them maintain focus and confidence for using strategic conversations in continuing efforts to improve the quality of instruction and impact student learning.

Unit Objectives

After completing this session, educational leaders will know:

- How to develop a comprehensive plan for conducting strategic conversations with teachers
- How to identify priorities for having strategic conversations and with whom
- How to stay the course
- Other resources to access

Student Learning Outcomes

After completing this session, educational leaders will apply the following skills:

- Strategize conversations for each of the four teacher types
- Develop a comprehensive plan for a systematic approach to strategic conversations
- Prioritize conversations based on need and likelihood of success
- Access resources to support teachers as they reach for mastery in their teaching practice



Methods of Instruction

- Videos with PowerPoint presentations (teacher workshops and additional resources)
- Reflection questions (open-ended questions at intervals throughout the videos where educators are asked to reflect on the course content, their own practice, and their intentions for their practice)
- Quizzes (selected-response quizzes to assess understanding of the video presentations)

Plagiarism Policy

KDS recognizes plagiarism as a serious academic offense. Plagiarism is the passing off of someone else’s work as one’s own and includes failing to cite sources for others’ ideas, copying material from books or the Internet (including lesson plans and rubrics), and handing in work written by someone other than the participant. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade and may have additional consequences. For more information about plagiarism and guidelines for appropriate citation, consult plagiarism.org.

Passing Requirements:

In order to complete the requirements of the course, the participant must complete all course work. We do not award partial credit.

- Quizzes 40% of total grade
- Reflection Questions 60% of total grade

KDS Self-Assessment Rubric:

	Distinguished	Proficient	Basic	Unsatisfactory
Quizzes	100% Correct	80% Correct	60% Correct	0-40% Correct

	Distinguished	Proficient	Basic	Unsatisfactory
Reflection Questions	Participant provides rich detail from the content of the course in his or her responses Participant makes his or her responses to the questions personally meaningful	Participant includes appropriate content from the course in his or her responses Participant makes thoughtful comments in direct response to the questions	Participant includes some content from the course, usually appropriate, in his or her responses Participant answers the questions directly, not always fully	Participant includes no content from the course in his or her responses Participant does not address the questions posed