

# Finding your voice in facilitating productive conversations



THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ASSOCIATION

# Download the article and accompanying tools

This presentation features bulleted talking points from the full article. Find more information, resources, and tools to help you implement these ideas in *The Leading Teacher* (Summer, 2013).

Available at  
[www.learningforward.org](http://www.learningforward.org).



Learning to lead a meeting is more than just managing agendas. It means reading the group's mood and stepping in at the right moment to turn attention back to productive work.

Source: **Abrams, J. (2009).** *Having hard conversations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.



THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ASSOCIATION

# Challenge yourself

Teacher leaders need to step into discomfort, be open to the mystery of what happens when a group gets together, and get curious about what the possibilities are.

Source: **von Frank, V.** (2013, Summer). Finding your voice in facilitating productive conversations. *The Leading Teacher* 8(4). (p.1, 4-5).



THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ASSOCIATION

# Prepare emotionally

Being prepared emotionally can be half the battle. Prepare to facilitate by taking care of yourself first:

- Get a good night's sleep.
- Work out in the morning.
- Dress comfortably, but professionally.
- Listen to empowering music just before the meeting.

Source: **von Frank, V.** (2013, Summer). Finding your voice in facilitating productive conversations. *The Leading Teacher* 8(4). (p.1, 4-5).



THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ASSOCIATION

# Be self-aware of body language

Prepare mentally to be mindful of facial expressions and gestures. Keep body language and eye contact positive.

Source: **von Frank, V.** (2013, Summer). Finding your voice in facilitating productive conversations. *The Leading Teacher* 8(4). (p.1, 4-5).



THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ASSOCIATION

# Keep conversations at a high level

Maintain conversations at the highest possible level by keeping the topics tied to a framework, a standard, a research-based teaching practice, a job description, a school goal, or something that maintains neutrality.

Source: **von Frank, V.** (2013, Summer). Finding your voice in facilitating productive conversations. *The Leading Teacher* 8(4). (p.1, 4-5).



THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ASSOCIATION

# Be self-aware of language

Consider the language you choose to frame an issue or topic. Make sure it is professional.

For example, compare these two approaches:

- “We need to look for ways to effectively manage technology in the classroom to enhance children’s learning.”

versus

- “We’re not using our interactive whiteboards right.”

Source: **von Frank, V.** (2013, Summer). Finding your voice in facilitating productive conversations. *The Leading Teacher* 8(4). (p.1, 4-5).



THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ASSOCIATION



# Be self-aware of tone

A tone that goes down at the end of sentences provides the person speaking with a sense of authority, and gives listeners the feeling that the speaker knows the subject.

An approachable voice, where the tone goes up at the end of sentences, does not convey strength of conviction.

Source: **von Frank, V.** (2013, Summer). Finding your voice in facilitating productive conversations. *The Leading Teacher* 8(4). (p.1, 4-5).



THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ASSOCIATION

# Know when to speak

Silence can sometimes be OK.

Before intervening when you feel things aren't on the right track, consider:

- Timing.
- The stakes.
- The next step.

Source: **von Frank, V.** (2013, Summer). Finding your voice in facilitating productive conversations. *The Leading Teacher* 8(4). (p.1, 4-5).



THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ASSOCIATION

# Know when to have a private conversation

In deciding to ask for a private conversation, consider:

- Is this matter educationally or professionally unsound?
- Is the person's action physically unsafe for students or other staff?
- Is this an action or behavior that might cause emotional damage to students or staff?

Source: **von Frank, V.** (2013, Summer). Finding your voice in facilitating productive conversations. *The Leading Teacher* 8(4). (p.1, 4-5).



THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ASSOCIATION

Learn more with



THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ASSOCIATION

Learn more about professional learning at all levels of education with **Learning Forward**, an international nonprofit association of learning educators:

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

Membership in Learning Forward gives you access to a wide range of **publications, tools, and opportunities** to advance professional learning for student success.