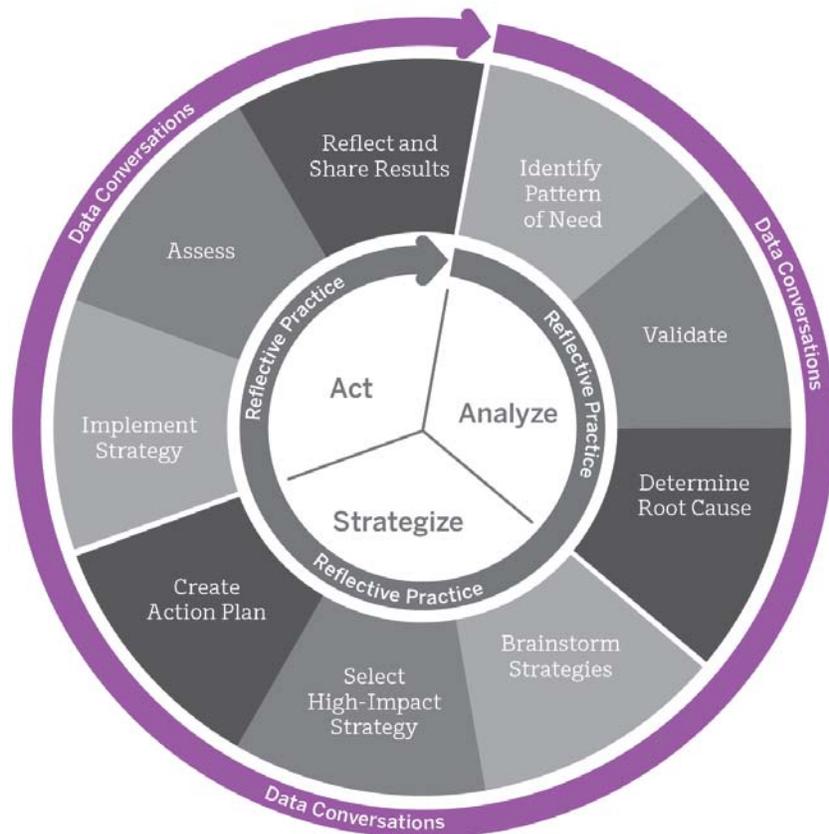




# Data Conversations

Data Use Professional Development Series  
Rhode Island Department of Education



[www.ride.ri.gov](http://www.ride.ri.gov)

[www.amplify.com](http://www.amplify.com)

The contents of this slideshow were developed under a Race to the Top grant from the U.S. Department of Education. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

Rhode Island educators have permission to reproduce and share the material herein, in whole or in part, with other Rhode Island educators for educational and non-commercial purposes.

© 2013 the Rhode Island Department of Education and Amplify Education, Inc.

# Table of Contents

Objectives .....	6
Opening Discussion: Presuming Positive Intent .....	7
Exercise 4.1: Positive Presumptions .....	10
Exercise 4.2: Applying Positive Presumptions.....	13
Exercise 4.3: Positive Presumptions Role Plays .....	15
Exercise 4.4: Asking Powerful Questions .....	19

# Data Conversations

In a school with a transparent data culture, frequent, low-stakes Data Conversations happen all the time. Although most schools engage in Data Conversations at times, there are some specific strategies and “listen-fors” that will assist you in making these conversations more productive, such as developing a low stakes set of questions framed using Positive Presumptions.

Introduce the following types of Data Conversations to educators:

## Gathering Information

- This type of Data Conversation happens when you need more information about something. It might be part of a Validation or Triangulation process.
- Gathering Information Data Conversations can take place between teacher and student, teacher and parent, administrator and teacher, teacher and teacher, etc. For example, you may have identified a Pattern of Need in a data set, formed a working hypothesis about what is going on, and then decide you need more information.
- This type of Data Conversation should take place frequently and without assumptions.
- If engaging in this type of data conversation with a student to examine test results, low-stakes non-judgmental questions might include: “How did you prepare for the test?”; “What was going on at home that week?”

## Guiding Improvement

- The focus of Guiding Improvement Data Conversations is to guide someone, driving toward improvement.
- Like all Data Conversations, this type of conversation may occur between different stakeholders including teachers, parents, administrators, students.
- It sometimes involves coaching techniques, and always involves stakeholders helping each other work toward improvement. If you are the individual in the conversation who is guiding improvement in the other, it is important to begin this type of conversation without a particular solution in mind. This way you can empower the other person to take ownership of the solutioning.

## Finding Solutions

- This type of conversation happens frequently among colleagues. Although collaborative conversations often happen in schools but they are not always solutions-oriented. Sometimes we engage in conversations where we are talking “about” the problem, but not actually driving toward solutions. “I’ve identified this Pattern of Need in the data and I know I need to re-teach this. What strategies have you used successfully?”

# Questioning Techniques for Data Conversations

## Presuming Positive Intent

Think of a time you felt put on the spot when asked a pointed question about data or student achievement. It may be that the question was phrased in such a way that it caused a *reaction* rather than a response.

**Consider your reaction to the following question: “Do you know anything about best practices?”**

The way questions are sometimes phrased can cause them to be misinterpreted as judgmental or accusatory. The listener may perceive the question as a challenge or insinuation, and in turn react defensively. One way to avoid this pitfall is to phrase questions in such a way that you remove negative assumptions. This is called *Presuming Positive Intent*.

When asking questions that Presume Positive Intent, it is necessary to consider the **desired outcome** and what potential assumptions you are making. In this way, you can phrase questions that foster communication while conveying respect.

**Presuming Positive Intent opens up communication and establishes an environment that is conducive to Data Conversations. Example:**

*Instead of saying:* “What did you do last year; because my students can’t add fractions?”

*Rephrase Presuming Positive Intent:* “What lessons were you able to cover on fractions last year so I know what to expect from my students this year? How well did the students master adding fractions when you covered it?”

In this context, if the listener has not done what is expected, Presuming Positive Intent can turn up the heat in a respectful and productive way.

Presuming Positive Intent does not mean being naively optimistic; nor does it mean viewing the world through “rose-colored glasses.” Instead, the approach presumes that the person being addressed is a competent, conscientious individual who is interested in a collaborative conversation.

The series of exercises that follow will support educators in developing their understanding of Positive Presumptions.

### Facilitator Note

Presuming Positive Intent takes practice. This guide will help you construct thoughtfully framed questions to raise the level of discourse and help move Data Conversations toward action.

*“The scientific mind does not so much provide the right answers as ask the right questions”*

– Claude Levi-Strauss

*“I always prefer to believe the best of everybody, it saves so much trouble.”*

– Rudyard Kipling

## Objectives

Upon completion of the Questioning Techniques for Data Conversations, educators will be able to:

- Create pre-planned open-ended questions which are phrased to convey a belief that the other person has the capacity to solve the problem and has performed as expected to date.
- Ask clarifying questions that use Positive Presumptions during conversations with various stakeholders.
- Articulate the three types of Data Conversations.

## Opening Discussion: Presuming Positive Intent

**Discuss the following with educators before starting the first exercise:**

Think about what types of conversations you have with colleagues.

- a. What data do you most frequently discuss?
- b. How do you make sure that Data Conversations lead to action?

# Exercise 4.1: Positive Presumptions

## Purpose:

Educators will practice reframing questions using Positive Presumptions.

## Objectives:

Upon completion of this exercise, educators will be able to:

- Identify characteristics of a well-framed question that uses Positive Intent.
- Construct questions for a Data Conversation using Positive Intent.

## Materials Needed (for each educator):

- Copy of *Exercise 4.1 Positive Presumptions* handout
- Copy of *Exercise 4.1 Reframing* handout

## Time:

Approximately 20 minutes

## Instructions:

1. Provide each educator with a copy of *Exercise 4.1 Positive Presumptions*. (Educators may also look on with a partner.)
2. Explain to educators that *Presuming Positive Intent* should be part of all our questions. Data Conversations, and other conversations, go more smoothly when we assume a positive answer to our questions.
3. Read through each set of questions with educators; then ask the following questions:
  1. What do you notice about the questions?
  2. What feelings do the questions on the left evoke? The questions on the right?
  3. How do the questions differ?
  4. What are the assumptions for each question?
4. Explain to educators that Positive Presumptions involve thinking through what you really want to know, and what assumptions you are making before you ask a question. They involve presuming a positive result has already taken place; so you ask a question with this presumption already in mind. And finally, presuming positive intent is not the same as “being positive.”
5. Provide each educator with a copy of *Exercise 4.1 Reframing*.
6. Depending on the level of scaffolding you feel is necessary, either:
  - Work as a group to rephrase each of the questions using Positive Presumptions.
  - Have teachers work in small groups, pairs, or individually to rephrase each of the questions using Positive Presumptions.

7. Ask educators to share out their rephrased questions, and reflect on the different ways other educators have rephrased them.

**Extension Discussion:**

Use the following optional questions to extend the discussion.

1. How does the way we talk to each other affect how we respond to each other?
2. How might a conversation with a student be different if a teacher used these two questions:
  - a. Do you know why you didn't get this one right?
  - b. What influenced your decision to answer A instead of B?
3. In the above questions, what were the presuppositions/expectations?
4. What strategies could you use to remind yourself to use Positive Presumptions?

**Note to Facilitator**

There is more than one correct way to rephrase the questions on the Reframing handout. Educators may have different responses. Have educators share out how they rephrased each question so they can learn and get ideas from each other.

## Exercise 4.1: Positive Presumptions

<b>Finding Solutions</b>	Is it just easier for you to teach that way because your students are more focused than mine?	versus	What strategies do you use to keep your students so focused?
<b>Gathering Information</b>	Is Johnny failing your class too?	versus	I want to learn more about Johnny's performance in different content areas; how is he doing in your class?
<b>Guiding Improvement</b>	Are your students going to be ready for NECAP?	versus	What strategies are you considering to prepare your students for the NECAP?

## Exercise 4.1: Reframing

Negative Presumptions	Versus	Positive Presumptions
Are you going to help Frank with that math problem?	Versus	
Did you use quiz results to form these groups?	Versus	
You failed this test. What happened, you didn't study?	Versus	
Have you developed differentiated lesson plans for your students?	Versus	

# Exercise 4.1: Reflections

## Handout

Write a question using Positive Intent for a Data Conversation that you will initiate within the next two weeks.

Rate your ability to construct questions for a Data Conversation using Positive Intent.

Cannot do it	Can do it with significant support	Can do it with some support	Can do it independently
1	2	3	4

Information I still need or want to pursue further:

## Exercise 4.2: Applying Positive Presumptions

### Purpose:

Educators will apply Positive Presumptions to authentic questions.

### Objective:

Upon completion of this exercise, educators will be able to:

- Reframe authentic questions using Positive Presumptions.

### Materials Needed (for each educator):

- Index card or paper
- Pen or pencil

### Time:

Approximately 10 minutes

### Instructions:

1. As a group, brainstorm some questions educators have heard teachers or administrators pose to students, colleagues, or parents. Decide who will take which role.
2. Either as a group, in pairs, or individually, have educators reframe the questions using Positive Presumptions.
3. Ask educators to discuss the impact on school culture and student learning if all questions were framed using Positive Presumptions. What would this look like at the classroom, grade, department, school building, and school district level?

#### Facilitator Note

Ask educators not to identify who asked the question. The purpose of the exercise is to have educators generate realistic questions to practice reframing with Positive Presumptions. It is not to criticize individuals who have not yet begun applying this technique.

# Exercise 4.2: Reflections

## Handout

Describe a question that you recently heard from a teacher, student, or parent and reframe the question using positive intent.

Rate your ability to reframe authentic questions using Positive Presumptions.

Cannot do it	Can do it with significant support	Can do it with some support	Can do it independently
1	2	3	4

Information I still need or want to pursue further:

## Exercise 4.3: Positive Presumptions Role Plays

### **Purpose:**

Educators will apply Positive Presumptions in role plays.

### **Objectives:**

Upon completion of this exercise, educators will be able to:

- Apply Positive Presumptions in a Data Conversation
- Apply Positive Presumptions in conversations with multiple stakeholders

### **Materials Needed:**

- One set of Positive Presumptions Role Play Cards

### **Time:**

Approximately 10 minutes

### **Instructions:**

1. Place all of the Role Play Cards face down.
2. Have educators work in pairs, choose a role play card.
3. Provide educators with the following instructions before they begin their role plays:
  1. Assume the people in the discussion are competent and dedicated (put aside any thoughts to the contrary).
  2. Take a moment – be thoughtful about your goal for the conversation and what you will say.
  3. Ask questions using Positive Presumptions.
3. After role plays are finished, debrief with educators.

## Exercise 4.3: Positive Presumptions Role Play Cards

<p><b>Teacher/Student Conversation</b></p> <p>You sit down with a student who earned a score at the low end of the proficient range on a benchmark reading assessment. You notice that the student scored significantly lower in Reading Comprehension (Literary &amp; Informational text). Combined with your knowledge of this student's class performance, you infer that the student is struggling with understanding informational text, even though you have been focusing a great deal attention to instructing your whole class in this area.</p>	<p><b>Teacher/Student Conversation</b></p> <p>You sit down with a student who, based on the data you have, understands all the concepts that you teach but does not participate in class or do much homework.</p>	<p><b>Teacher/Student Conversation</b></p> <p>You have a student whose grades and behavior declined suddenly around the winter holidays. Now two months later, neither has improved.</p>
<p><b>Teacher/Administrator Conversation</b></p> <p>You referred a student to the administrator for poor behavior in class. When the student returns to class, she brags that she did not get in trouble with the administrator. The next time you see the administrator, you decide to discuss the situation.</p>	<p><b>Teacher/Teacher Conversation</b></p> <p>You sit down with a colleague and are comparing scores on a weekly formative assessment. There are instructional areas where his/her class needs support, and this teacher is out of ideas and is stressed out.</p>	<p><b>Teacher/Teacher Conversation</b></p> <p>You and another teacher both teach the same student. The student behaves well for you, but he is constantly being referred for discipline problems in the other teacher's class. The other teacher has not approached you, but you want to help and so you approach the other teacher.</p>

<p><b>Teacher/Parent Conversation</b></p> <p>A parent is coming in for a parent/teacher conference. The child is well-behaved and has done fairly well on weekly quizzes, but you feel she could be doing better.</p>	<p><b>Administrator or Teacher/Parent Conversation</b></p> <p>You called a parent once because her child has been misbehaving in class. The parent seemed extremely concerned and promised her child's behavior would improve. The child apologized to you the next day, but now is behaving poorly again. You decide to call the parent a second time.</p>	<p><b>Administrator/Teacher Conversation</b></p> <p>Someone from the district office has asked you to have all the teachers in a particular department (or grade) collect weekly formative assessment. When you go to collect the data after the first two weeks, you find that one teacher does not have this data.</p>
<p><b>Teacher/Parent Conversation</b></p> <p>A parent is coming in for a parent/teacher conference. The student has performed well on multiple choice assessments but not as well on constructed response. He has turned in all of his homework assignments but 40% of them are not complete.</p>	<p><b>Administrator/Parent Conversation</b></p> <p>A parent is coming in for a parent/teacher conference.</p>	<p><b>Teacher/Parent Conversation</b></p> <p>A parent is coming in for a parent/teacher conference.</p>

## Exercise 4.3: Reflections

### Handout

Describe a situation (no names please) within the next two weeks when you will initiate a Data Conversation with a teacher, parent, or student and draft a few Positive Intent questions that you will use to begin the discussion.

Rate your ability to apply Positive Presumptions in conversations with multiple stakeholders.

Cannot do it	Can do it with significant support	Can do it with some support	Can do it independently
1	2	3	4

Information I still need or want to pursue further:

## Exercise 4.4: Asking Powerful Questions

### Purpose:

Educators will practice ask powerful questions while engaging in data conversations.

### Objective:

Upon completion of this exercise, educators will be able to:

- Ask a powerful question in a data conversation.
- Describe two characteristics of a powerful question.

### Materials Needed (for each educator):

- *Characteristics of Powerful Questions* handout
- *Asking Powerful Questions Scenario 1* handout
- *Asking Powerful Questions Scenario 2* handout

### Time:

Approximately 20 minutes

### Instructions:

1. Explain to educators that today you are going to talk about another technique to help them engage in successful Data Conversations: Asking Powerful Questions.
2. The technique of Asking Powerful Questions is a coaching technique outlined in the book *Results Coaching: The New Essential for School Leaders* (Kee, K. et al., 2010). Explain that you are going to talk about how we can adapt this coaching technique to our Data Conversations with multiple stakeholders.
3. Introduce the educators to the characteristics of powerful questions using the handout *Characteristics of Powerful Questions*. Talk through the characteristics and examples together. *Note: these are characteristics of powerful questions. These are NOT discrete categories. These are separated into different categories to provide guidance about how powerful questions can help “get at” different things when having a Data Conversation, but characteristics may overlap. For example, a question could demonstrate that you are listening, presume positive intent, but also help the receiver of the question clarify his/her own thinking.*
4. Give educators *Asking Powerful Questions Scenario 1* handout. Ask each educator to write down powerful questions that he or she could ask the fellow teacher in the scenario.

### Facilitator Note

“Powerful questions are a reflection of committed listening and understanding the other person’s perspective that is confirmed through paraphrasing. This suggests a progression from listening, paraphrasing for understanding, and then asking powerful questions that yield clarity or mediation of thinking.”

Powerful Questions are:

- Open ended questions with no hidden agenda.
- Meant to help the receiver of the question.

Kee, K. et al., (2010), *Results Coaching: The New Essential for School Leaders*, p. 62

5. In a fishbowl (or in the front of the room), conduct a role play where you play the role of the fellow teacher in the scenario. Ask for a teacher volunteer to come up and start a data conversation practicing one, or several, powerful questions.

*Optional: You may want to use the Asking Powerful Questions Role Play Cards in this activity to assign particular roles to educators while they are writing powerful questions.*

6. Stop the conversation at an appropriate stopping point and ask all the teachers to jot down some paraphrases that could be used in the data conversation, depending on how the conversation has gone up to this point.
7. Then, ask another teacher volunteer to come up and continue the data conversation using one, or several, of his or her sample paraphrases.
8. After that, you may want to offer additional teacher volunteers the opportunity to come up and try out some of their paraphrases or powerful questions.
9. Repeat the same process with *Asking Powerful Questions Scenario 2*.

#### **Note to Facilitator**

This activity is meant to provide multiple opportunities for teachers to practice writing paraphrases and powerful questions and also see as many models, in action, as possible.

# Exercise 4.4: Asking Powerful Questions

## Asking Powerful Questions

“Results Coaching: The New Essential for School Leaders” talks about how powerful questions have the following characteristics:

**1. Reflect active listening and grasps the perspective of the receiver of the question.**

Like paraphrasing, powerful questions illustrate that you actively listen to and understand what the receiver of the question is saying. All powerful questions should reflect that you listen, so this section will overlap with other characteristics.

**Examples:**

Can you tell me more about...? What did you mean by...?

**2. Presume positive intent**

Powerful questions should always affirm effort, skills, integrity, competence, caring and commitment

**Examples:**

What are you planning to...? How are you going to...?

**3. Evoke discovery, insight, commitment, or action on behalf of the receiver of the question**

Powerful questions can give the receiver of the question insight into their own patterns, thinking, or encourage them to take action

**Examples:**

What would you do if...? What were you thinking when...? How can you apply...?

**4. Challenge current assumptions**

Powerful questions can push the receiver of the question to consider their own patterns or assumptions and help them understand what blocks them or holds them back

**Examples:**

How else might you...? What is stopping you from...?

What would happen if...?

**5. Create greater clarity, possibility of new learning**

Powerful questions can help the receiver of the question find greater clarity about their own learning, their own behavior, or push them to look at something in a new way

**Examples:**

What do you think it means...? What will you learn from this...?

Help me understand what you mean by...?

**6. Move the receiver of the question toward what he or she wants**

Powerful questions can help the receiver of the question move forward and learn how to take action, set goals, and get the help they need

**Examples:**

What do you want to learn? What kind of help will you need? What have you tried so far?

Kee, K., Anderson, K., Dearing, V., Harris, E., Shuster, F. (2010). *Results Coaching: The New Essential For School Leaders*. Corwin: Thousand Oaks, CA.

## Exercise 4.4: Asking Powerful Questions Role Play Cards

Reflect active listening and grasp the perspective of the receiver of the question	Presume positive intent
Evoke discovery, insight, commitment, or action on behalf of the receiver of the question	Challenge current assumptions of the receiver of the question
Create greater clarity, possibility or new learning	Move the receiver of the question toward what he or she wants





# Exercise 4.4: Reflections

Describe two of the characteristics of powerful questions.

Rate your ability to ask powerful questions during Data Conversations.

Cannot do it	Can do it with significant support	Can do it with some support	Can do it independently
1	2	3	4

Information I still need or want to pursue further: