



Questions and Assumptions World Café Style

Developed in the field by educators affiliated with the NSRF.

Preparation

There should be enough tables for 3-4 participants at each table. Each table should have 2 pieces of chart paper and several markers. You will also need a poster that says “No Child Left Behind” and another with the NSRF mission statement.

Round 1

1. Look at the first guiding question of this week’s seminar or another phrase/sentence (such as “No Child Left Behind”). In groups of 3-6 at separate tables, ask participants to spend 3 minutes brainstorming questions about the prompt, writing down as many as possible. With whole group back together, briefly explain the concept of assumptions and of suspending assumptions. (5 minutes)

Give an example of a phrase with embedded assumptions, i.e. education reform. Assumptions: there is such a thing as education, that it needs reform, that it is possible to reform it, etc. Explain concept of suspending assumptions: Could mean banishing them, pretending they don’t exist, like suspending a kid from school or suspend could mean “hanging” them out there for everyone to see, like laundry or drapes.

2. Ask participants to leave one person behind at their table to host the next group, and ask everyone else to shift one table clockwise. The host will share the questions raised by their group with the new group that has joined the table.
3. Now the new small groups will list as many of the assumptions embedded in these questions as possible. (3-5 minutes)
4. The group will again pick a host (different from the last host) and the rest of the group will move one table clockwise. Host will share the assumptions they discovered with their new group. (3 minutes)

Round 2

5. Repeat steps 1-4 in Round 1 using the NSRF Mission Statement. Groups will continue to pick new hosts and rotate to new tables.
6. Depending on time, have groups report back some of the assumptions they suspended to spur discussion about NSRF. (5-10 minutes)
7. Bring whole group back together for debrief. (5 minutes)
What did you discover about assumptions? What did you discover about questions? Encourage a few to share examples of questions and assumptions, but emphasis should be on the concepts rather than the individuals’ questions.