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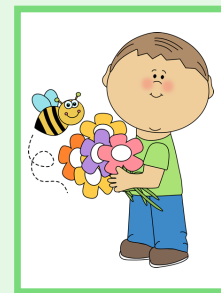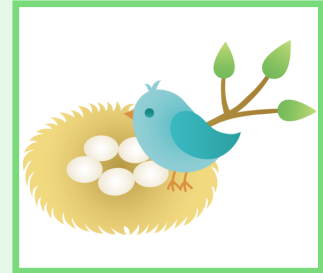
DO YOU HEAR WHAT I SAY? DO I HEAR WHAT YOU SAY?

By: Paula Rutherford and Sarah Hartman, Just Ask Publications

The questions in the title of this issue are questions that mentors and new teachers sometimes ask themselves when having conversations with one another. Does this person understand what I am saying? Did I convey the message I intended? Did she say what I thought she said? Often these questions can surface because there is a breakdown in communication. Messages can be misconstrued and misinterpreted leaving both sides of a coaching relationship in a state of confusion or worse, upset.

Empathy and trust provide the platform for communication and understanding in mentoring relationships. To demonstrate cognitive empathy and ultimately understanding, one must become a skillful listener. Listening is a learned skill that takes determination and focus. Many people take turns talking at one another rather than listening. We feel more efficacious when we share our opinions and experiences. It is a much easier act than listening and seeking understanding of the person with whom we are communicating. Maybe Stephen Covey was right in saying, "Seek to understand, before seeking to be understood." Do not underestimate the power of understanding how others view the world and the lens through which they process events, information, and authority. If we can predict or at least consider why people react and respond the way they do to us, new initiatives, new directions, conflict, and data, we can better plan our mentoring interactions.

Our life experiences combined with our natural tendencies to process information in certain ways influence the way we perceive the world. When the people with whom we work have different life experiences and process information in other ways, there can be breakdowns in communication. One mentoring hurdle is moving beyond personal preferred mode and into the mind of the one being mentored. The questions below are reprinted from The 21st Century Mentor's Handbook. Read through each category and identify your own preferences for processing information; then read through the questions again trying to see the world the way your protégé sees it. Once you identify the differences, you will be better prepared to accommodate them.

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Grading Day, No School, March 29th

- University of Delaware Project Search, April 11th

- Spring Break, April19th—26th

- Year 3/4 Presentations, April 29th

## DO YOU HEAR WHAT I SAY? DO I HEAR WHAT YOU SAY? (CONT'D)

Introverted or extraverted: Do you prefer to respond to new information immediately doing your thinking out loud or do you prefer information in advance so that you have time to think about the issues before you have to respond?

Global or analytical: Do you tend to see the big picture and like to have scaffolding on which to hang details or do you prefer to see the bits and pieces and then put them into the whole?

Random or sequential: Do you prefer to work through steps in sequence or are you more inclined to jump around and deal with ones that interest you in the moment?

Concrete or abstract: Do you want to see the real thing rather than hear about the theory or the possibilities? Sensing or feeling: Do you prefer to deal with what you can see, hear, and touch or do you prefer to go with your gut instincts? In the moment or in the past or in the future: Is what happened in the past, what is happening right now, or what the future will bring that matters to you most?

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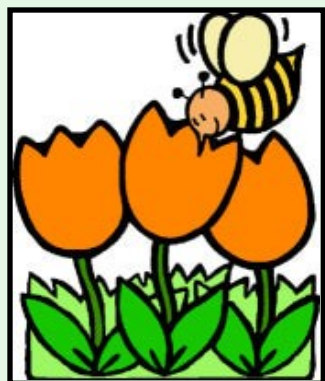
Head or heart: Do you lead primarily with your head or your heart? Do you say "I think" or "I feel?" Why or how: Which question is the first to come to your mind when someone presents information, "Why is that a good idea?" or "How would that look?"

Observer or hands-on active learner: Do you learn best by observing from a distance or do you need to get into the action and mess around with new ideas and processes?

Research or personal practice experience: Do you tend to seek out and cite research or do you prefer to rely on past experience? Plan ahead or wait until last minute: Do you finish projects well in advance and put them away until needed or are you inclined to fill all available time no matter when you start?

Internal attributions or external attributions: Do you tend to question the effectiveness of your own efforts or attribute success or failure to the variables that are beyond your control?

Negative or positive: Do you view the world through a rose-colored lens or are you more likely to see problems just around the corner?

Logical or intuitive: Do you prefer to measure and quantify things or are you comfortable knowing without knowing how you know?

Systems thinker or focused personal view: Do you think more about how actions and information impact the complex organization around you or do you focus on the world right around you?

Position power or personal power: Do you define authority primarily by the titles people hold or from the respect they have earned?

After you have assessed your own view of the world and made your best predictions about the person or persons with whom you are working, it is important that you not think that you have the correct view and they have the wrong one. It is a waste of energy to try to convince them to see the world through your lens. The way you present information or data is a variable that can be adjusted in order to promote acceptance, understanding, and action.

You may want to discuss these information processing variables with the new teachers with whom you are working. The information can be valuable to them in their interactions with colleagues, students, and parents.

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Mrs. Cameransi, "Teching the Halls for the Holidays"

COMPUTER APPLICATIONS AND BUSINESS EXPLORATORY AT SKYLINE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Tracy Cameransi is a graduate of Wilmington University and a first-year University of Delaware ARTC candidate at Skyline Middle School. She teaches 6th, 7th and 8th grade Computer Applications and Business Exploratory. Ms. Cameransi enjoys teaching her students real world business and computer applications. In her class, she incorporates current trends to utilize a variety of technologies to facilitate collaborative learning. She uses project based learning to create authentic projects where students see the relevance of their work not only within the classroom but also outside of the classroom. Mrs. C. encourages student choice. Just recently, Mrs. C. had a project based learning assignment called "Shark Tank". Students worked together to invent and market their ideas/product to their fellow classmates, "the Sharks". The students went all out on being creative and coming up with marketing their product. Mrs. C. also allows creativity to flourish in a new program called "Sketchup", where students design and implement 3D drawings on their Chromebooks. Mrs. C. celebrates the holidays with her students by "Teching the Halls" of Skyline with their Pixel Art Ornaments.
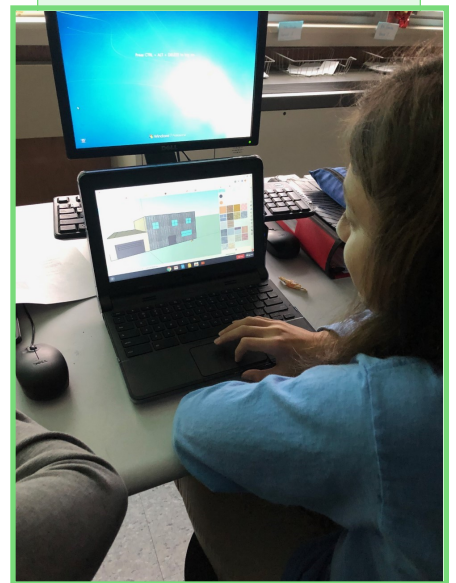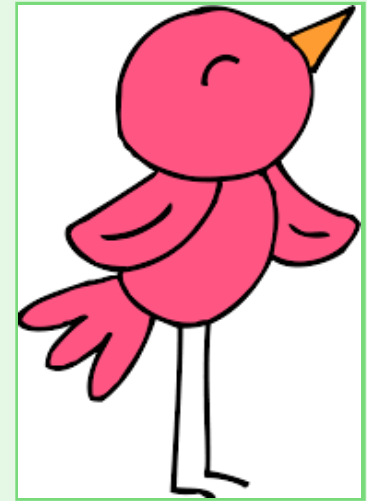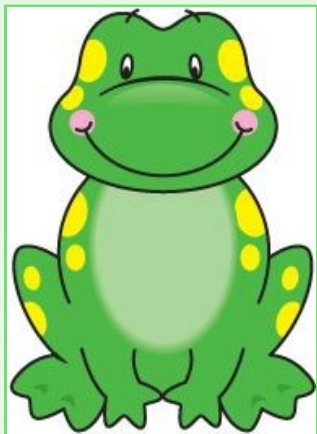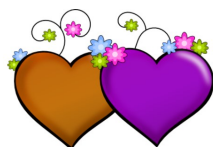
LOVE IS IN THE AIR

This past fall, first-year Cooke Elementary fifth grade teacher, Kelsey Hall, became engaged to Richardson Park teacher, Justin Cantrell.   Both Kelsey and Justin are also graduates of Red Clay High Schools.

Also this fall, first-year Baltz Elementary teacher, Cynthia Carr, celebrated her wedding day. She and her husband, Cody Ellison, were married at the Chesapeake Inn on October 12th. Best wishes to both happy couples!

SEND IN YOUR IDEAS

Are you a mentor or lead mentor who works with novice educators who are doing great things for students? Are you a novice educator who wants to spotlight your awesome mentor or lead mentor? Are you a principal who wants to celebrate your school's mentoring program? If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, please send your ideas in! There are many fabulous things happening within the district mentoring program and we need to celebrate.
You can send in stories, anecdotes, pictures, or names of mentees/mentors/student teachers who you feel should be spotlighted. All ideas are welcome! For more information or to submit for an upcoming newsletter, please send an email to: stacie.zdrojewski@ redclay.k12.de.us

JILL BOSSERT, YEARLONG INTERN, AIMS

Tell us about your school experience. What was school like for you as a student?

I always enjoyed school, especially English classes. I devoured books and loved to write, so English class came easily to me. Math, on the other hand, was a different story. I really struggled there, and I never made it past algebra in high school. It wasn't until college that I learned I could succeed in math. I think it really depends on your mindset, your environment, and the teacher.

Who or what inspired you to be a teacher?

I think everyone decides to come into teaching because they either had a really good experience with a teacher, or a really bad one. I am motivated by the latter. I struggled to decide what I wanted to do for a career because I had a passion for education and healthcare. But I was inspired to pursue education, and specifically special education, based on learning about my husband's negative experiences in school. He was placed in a special education program where he would not earn a high school diploma. He was given very limited options for his vocational shops, and teachers treated him like he could not accomplish much. I wanted to make sure this never happened to students again. I wanted them to know they are more than whatever label or diagnosis they are given, that they can accomplish great things, and that someone is rooting for them. I want to be an advocate for students with special needs.

"I want to be an advocate for students with special needs."

Why did you choose to participate in the WilmU YLR program instead of completing a traditional student teaching experience?

I wanted to gain more experience by student teaching for an entire school year. I wanted to see how it worked- from designing your classroom, all the way to the last day of school before summer break. I wanted to be a part of all the responsibilities the teacher fulfills, so I would be more prepared for my first year of teaching. I am learning so much, and I definitely feel that it is making me a better teacher. I will be able to serve my students better when I have my own classroom because of this experience.

What has been the most surprising thing about teaching so far?

I think the most surprising thing I have experienced so far is the relationships I have built with our students. I did not expect to be able to build those relationships this quickly. I have learned a lot about connecting with students and building a safe environment in order to be a more effective teacher. I have seen the difference it makes with student behavior and effort. Teachers who put the work in to understand, learn about, and connect with their students, are going to have a much different experience than those teachers who don't.

What is one piece of advice that you would share with another student   teacher?

Get involved! It is an amazing opportunity to learn from your school's community. Talk to other teachers, attend meetings, be involved in the IEP process, take the time to observe different teachers, and participate in professional development- you will not regret it!