

Mentor Teacher and Teacher Candidate Co-Learning: An Introduction to the Asset-Focused Co-Noticing Tools (ACTs)

The clinical experience represents a unique opportunity for mentor teachers (MTs) and teacher candidates (TCs) to engage in ongoing learning from and with each other (i.e., co-learn). The Asset-Focused Co-Noticing Tools (ACTs) are designed to support MTs and TCs co-learning about equity-oriented mathematics teaching through opportunities to collaboratively notice students' strengths and participation patterns *during* instruction in order to inform more intentional decision-making. We have two ACTs each of which offers a different protocol for asset-focused noticing:

ACT: Huddling gives TCs and MTs a protocol to (1) select an equity-specific lens for noticing during the lesson; (2) “huddle” at various points during the lesson to share observations and make instructional decisions; and (3) debrief to reflect on how their noticing and decision making related to their equity goals.

ACT: Co-Confering offers a protocol to (1) select 2-3 focal students to confer with, discuss what they hope to notice/learn about and plan who will lead each conference; (2) collaboratively confer with students to elicit and make sense of students' mathematical assets; and (3) debrief about what was learned about students' assets and the work of conferring.

Supporting the use of the Asset-Focused Co-Noticing Tools:

We have piloted the use of these tools at six universities in both elementary and secondary teacher education programs and have learned a great deal about the contexts that support their use. Below, we share some key details about conditions that support meaningful and productive use of the ACTs.

(Note: While the tools were designed for and studied in the context of TCs and MTs learning in clinical experiences, educators may find them useful in the context of co-teaching, mentorship of early career teachers, instructional coaching or professional development.)

Guiding Principles for using ACTs to Support MT-TC Co-Learning:

The principles below reflect a set of assumptions about teaching and learning that support productive co-learning experiences using the Asset-Focused Co-Noticing Tools:

All learners (teachers and students) regardless of experience have valuable perspectives, strengths, knowledge and skills. Knowing this, we work to:

- a) Assume we can learn from one another



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- b) Approach the perspectives students and colleagues offer with curiosity
- c) Avoid deficit oriented language when talking about students, other teachers and ourselves
- d) Endeavor to challenge systemic inequities that result in power imbalances between individuals and groups of people, privileging some and inhibiting the participation of others

These tools are designed to support joint inquiry and co-learning. They are *not* intended to support evaluation. As such we ask teachers using this tool to:

- a) Raise authentic questions and uncertainties about teaching
- b) Offer evidence-based observations in service of grappling with questions about teaching
- c) Respect and lean into the vulnerability required when one shares their teaching and thinking with others

Supporting the use of the Asset-Focused Co-Noticing Tools *in Teacher Education Programs (TEPs)*

We have found that the ACTs are more likely to support generative co-learning experiences for TC-MT dyads when...

- **Both members of the dyad (MT - TC) are oriented to the purpose of the tools and have a sense for how the tools could support their ongoing learning.**
- Relevant members of the TEP program are familiar with the tools and are prepared to support TCs and MTs in using the ACTs to support co-learning in the field experiences.
- The use of the tools is embedded into the field experience or methods course in meaningful ways.
 - For example, teacher educators might create an assignment for TCs to use the tools in the clinical setting with an MT and write follow-up reflections on their experiences.
- The teacher education program and methods course share commitments which align with the guiding principles about teaching, learning and equity which informed the design of these tools.

Ideas for Orienting TCs & MTs to the Co-Learning Tools:

- Rehearsing and debriefing the use of the tool in methods classes
- Facilitating professional learning opportunities for MTs and TCs to learn about the tools together (and perhaps try it out in a supported context)



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- For example, both the teacher education program and methods coursework create opportunities for TCs to develop...
 - commitments to disrupting inequities in mathematics classrooms, in particular patterns and assumptions which marginalize students with diverse racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, gender/sexuality and linguistic identities.
 - an asset orientation towards students and student thinking and an interest in centering and exploring diverse perspectives and divergent thinking in the mathematics classroom.
 - a vision for rich mathematics instruction which engages students in sensemaking, justification and generalization.
- TCs and MTs use the tool during lessons in which students are making sense of mathematical ideas, and teachers are intentionally eliciting student ideas, in order to shape instructional decisions.
 - Examples of lessons that support tool use:
 - Lessons in which teachers intend to select and sequence specific students' work, as the basis for a whole-class discussion
 - Lessons organized around mathematical tasks which are open and invite multiple strategies or representations of ideas and/or prompt students to explain or justify their reasoning
 - Lessons in which students are exploring or collaborating in small groups to solve a rich problem, giving teachers opportunities to observe and co-notice what students are doing (i.e., there are moments where students are working independently and/or in groups)



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