Why Rehearsals?

Discussions play a central sensemaking role in OpenSciEd units. However, leading discussions with the goal of deepening conceptual understanding where students are reasoning through complex ideas while the teacher acts as facilitator is challenging. Additionally, teachers must make principled decisions about when and what to interject, how to dig deeper with particular ideas, and how to keep the discussion equitable for all students.

A discussion rehearsal is an opportunity during PD for teacher(s) to practice leading a discussion with other participants who are in student hat. Discussion rehearsals give teachers a chance to practice and reflect on leading discussions and are one way to support teachers in shifting how they orchestrate talk. Rehearsals involve volunteer teachers, who have prepared to facilitate a particular discussion. Rehearsals provide an opportunity to slow things down by periodically freezing time and reflecting in the moment so that all participants can learn together. This work can support not only the teacher(s) leading the discussion, but also the participants in student hat to highlight and support moves they might make in their classrooms with their students. As the facilitator, it can be important to consider your role in establishing rehearsal norms and in supporting the discussion and the rehearsal debrief.

Establishing Rehearsals Norms

It is important when setting up for the rehearsal to establish some norms with your participants that foreground a learner stance. Example norms include:

- Remember that we are all learners, working on our practice in ongoing ways;
- Keep an open mind and maintain our learner stance—we often learn more from our mistakes.
- Stay focused on the practice and not the person;
- Avoid statements involving a binary (good/bad, right/wrong) and instead focus on actions and evidence/results.

During the Rehearsal

- During the rehearsal the PL Facilitator can call a “timeout.” It can be productive to call one or two timeouts during the discussion. In these “timeouts,” facilitators might:
  - ask a question such as “what prompted that feedback?” or “can you tell us what you’re thinking right now?”
  - point out to the group something that the facilitator did, as well as the results of that move
  - offer a suggestion or provide feedback
• The teacher leading the discussion can also call a timeout to ask a question about how they might respond to a particular comment or idea.
• Other participants and observers should not call timeouts.
• The timeouts should be brief, and then the teacher and facilitator can decide whether to "rewind" to try the moment again, or continue without rewinding.
• It can also be helpful for the facilitator to act as a student in order to share ideas, correct or incorrect. This gives the practicing teacher the opportunity to respond to situations that are likely to occur during enactment with real students. If the facilitator chooses to act as a student, it can be helpful to explicitly share this with participants at the beginning of the discussion to explain their role in the circle.

Rehearsal Debrief

Thank the teacher rehearsing before and after the rehearsal for making their practice public in service of the group's learning. During the debrief of the discussion:

• Give the rehearsing teacher an opportunity to reflect on the discussion including what went well in the discussion, what was challenging, and describing a moment when they were not sure what to do and what happened.
• Share “noticings” – concrete, specific observations of something that occurred: something either the participants or the teacher said or did. Keep noticings very close to the actual interaction, referring explicitly to notes to cite specifics and verbatim comments and how that supported the discussion.
• Give participants an opportunity to reflect on what was helpful and challenging as a “student” and implications for their own teaching.
• Connect back to the discussion planning and how that supported the discussion.

Reference