**General Guiding Principles for Weekly Reflective Meetings**

**of Student Partners**

In Chapter 5 of *Student-Faculty Pedagogical Partnerships in the Classroom and Curriculum: A How-To Guide for Faculty, Students, and Academic Developers in Higher Education*, we pose the question: What approaches to facilitation of weekly meetings with student partners have been successful? Developing a structure that supports reflection and dialogue is among the most important roles of the director of pedagogical partnership programs and the student partners.

Below are three general guiding principles for reflective meetings that Alison has developed since the first years of SaLT. These are particularly important, from Alison’s perspective, in helping student partners develop a mindset that will make them most able to support, in turn, their faculty partners’ reflections.

Below those are two sets of general guidelines generated by two former student partners in the SaLT program, Melanie and one of her contemporaries, Natasha Daviduke who, in anticipation of our writing this book, spent one semester observing the student partner meetings in the SaLT program to identify useful practice. These lists offer student partners’ perspectives on what makes these reflective meetings productive.

**(1) Focus early on what strengths and capacities student partners bring and how they are putting those to work or further developing them**. Doing so helps student partners build confidence and capacity quickly. A simple approach to this is to do the following:

* In the first or second meeting, ask student partners to write down what strengths and capacities they bring—what they think prepares and positions them well to be pedagogical partners.
* Ask them to share these and generate a list together of what qualities contribute to successful partnership with and support of faculty partners as they explore pedagogical issues.
* Return to these regularly, but certainly within the first few weeks, invite student partners to reflect briefly (in informal writing) on what they have achieved thus far, what they want to work (more) on, etc.

Regular stepping back and reflecting on and mapping progress is key to confidence building and deepening of student partners’ capacities.

**(2) Regularly remind student partners that faculty partners are vulnerable and not necessarily accustomed to constant reflection and change**. Reiterate that it is vulnerable making to have someone observe your teaching and take notes, to reflect back and analyze your practice, etc. There is typically a huge difference between student comfort with/expectation for change and faculty comfort and expectation. Partnerships are not about change *per se*, but because both faculty and students still often bring that frame, it needs to be an explicit topic of discussion. Help student partners manage the tension born of their hope for rapid and sometimes sweeping change and many faculty partners’ need to take and make change more gradually. This tension is inevitable, to some extent, since students are expected and largely able to change quickly (to learn what is hoped of them) within the rhythms of any given semester, whereas faculty members are neither expected nor accustomed to such a rate or kind of change. This tension highlights an underlying question regarding this work: To what extent need it be about change? Or, more specifically, when is deepening or clarifying one’s awareness of practice sufficient change and when is revision of practice the goal?

**(3) Invite and explicitly name the links between classroom and life lessons** that emerge. Take the opportunity to point these out and emphasize their importance,not in a prescriptive way but in a way that acknowledges and affirms the links where they emerge. It is most helpful for student partners to find ways to support them making and acting on the links without suggesting that they must do so. Intentionally framing questions regarding the challenges student partners face as they offer their perspectives, the frustration they sometimes experience regarding rate and kind of change, and the links they experience and discern between classroom and life lessons, makes them better able to manage these challenges.

During reflective meetings of student partners, reiterate frequent reminders that the liminal position student consultants occupy offers both challenges and possibilities (Cook-Sather and Alter 2011). To help students navigate these, ask questions like: “How might Sasha frame that insight or critique so that her faculty partner can best hear it?”, “What is a reasonable and appropriate goal for this partnership?”, and “Does anyone have any thoughts about how what Anita just described might be applicable in other situations?” Making these challenges, complexities, and links explicit throughout the semester, framed in ways that each individual student partner and each group of student partners can take up in their own ways, acknowledges the complexities of this work and reminds student partners to make everything they experience a learning opportunity.

*Productive Approaches to Facilitation from the Student Partner Perspective*

In the box below is a list of techniques adapted from former student partner Natasha Daviduke ’s observations.

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| 1. **Use regular introductions and check-ins to bring people into the space.** For the first few meetings, be sure everyone has a chance to repeat their name and share other details about their work. As the semester unfolds, do a check-in (related to the pedagogical partnership work or not) that allows people to settle and express how they’re feeling.2. **Give students quiet writing time to consider a question or focusing idea of the session**. As suggested by the list of possible prompts for weekly student partner meetings further along in this chapter, it is important for students to have space, time, and support for reflection. Inform students that the writing is for them alone but that you will ask them to share from it what they feel comfortable sharing.3. **Consider how you respond when student partners share from their writing.** For the first go-around, you may want to respond or reflect back to each of the student partners, also leaving space for other student partners to respond, before moving on to the next person. We recommend that all of these responses be affirming and furthering. Consider how you can celebrate the work that the student partners are doing in their partnerships and use your expertise to help them consider how they can continue to observe and support their partners moving forward. Here are some ways to do that: a. Taking a point from what someone shared and turning it into general advice for everyone. For example: “When you notice something that you talked about and your faculty partner does it and it works, that’s a great opportunity for affirmation.”b. Asking a follow up question to encourage the student to analyze something they observed, such as: “Did your partner notice a difference in the class when he/she/they did that?”c. Drawing on your knowledge of the faculty member to empathize with and reflect back what the student is experiencing. You might also contribute your knowledge of the faculty member as helpful information that can guide and focus the work that a student partner is doing moving forward.d. Asking questions that prompt student partners to consider their role in the partnership, such as: “Are you saying why [the effective approaches she is using] are so effective?”4. **Bring in topics from conversations with faculty so that student partners have a better idea of what their partners might be exploring in other contexts.** Also use this as an anchor for introducing pedagogical techniques with which consultants may be unfamiliar.5. **Ask student partners directly if they want to share something in order to bring the conversation back from diversions.** If conversation wanders or seems not to be as productive as it might, provide small prompts and ask the whole group if anyone wants to share. For example, “Of all the issues we have discussed so far today, which as most helpful to you in thinking about your work with your faculty partner?”6. **Try to parse out the causality behind observations that student partners make.** Everyone makes assumptions when they observe, and part of the work of a student partner is to examine and, where appropriate, complicate those assumptions. Consider using questions like, “That’s a really interesting thing that you noticed. What did he do that made you think that?” Ask the student partners to dig deeper into what they’re observing and what technique or rationale is behind it.7. **Pick up on particular experiences that student partners share and ask the group to consider if they have ever done or observed something similar**. This affirms the student partners’ perceptions, invites dialogue across student partners’ analyses, and affords everyone an opportunity to deepen their awareness of the observation and analysis processes.8. **Suggest and invite readings on pedagogy that might be relevant to everyone’s partnerships.** It is most effective to link readings to actual experiences or issues that student partners—or faculty partners through their student partners—raise. These can be posted to a closed web-based forum that partners can access.9. **Offer concluding thoughts on a topic before switching gears to a new question.** This can be important so that the issues you think are most salient are named explicitly before you move on. Student partners—like students in classes—can find themselves inundated with information, ideas, and feelings, and it is important both to highlight what needs to stay in focus and to ensure a kind of closure for any given topic.10. **Give a lot of space to student partners to comment on each other’s work and ask questions**. It is important that these meetings are conducive to open discussion and that you are not always the first person to respond to each comment. When something is important, you might speak more quickly, but another approach is to ask what others think about something and then affirm and respond to their comments.11. **Make space to student partners to express their experience as students in context.** People often share something they appreciated about past professors that they have worked with through SaLT or worked with as students. The conversation makes all pedagogical observations relevant.12. **Ask student partners to write up something about their experiences if they find them to be especially salient.** Asking people to contribute to the growing archive of resources that can be drawn upon by current and future consultants is a great way to affirm current student partners and perpetually to generate resources. 13. **Consistently offer affirmation.** Student partners will look to you to confirm their ideas and observations, and if you do this very consistently, as well as honestly raise questions and concerns when you have them, you will build trust and confidence among student partners. |