The World Café

Hopkins School Board Workshop

January 9, 2012
Magic In The Middle

As people share insights between tables, the "magic in the middle" and a sense of the whole become more accessible.
The Method

The World Café is a method for creating a living network of collaborative dialogue around questions that matter in real life situations. It is a provocative metaphor . . . as we create our lives, our organizations, and our communities, we are, in effect, moving among “table conversations” at the World Café. (From TheWorld Café Resource Guide)
Assumptions of World Café:

- The knowledge and wisdom we need is present and accessible.
- Collective insight evolves from honouring unique contributions; connecting ideas; listening into the middle; noticing deeper themes and questions.
- The intelligence emerges as the system connects to itself in diverse and creative ways.
1. Seat 3 people at café-style tables or in conversation clusters.
2. Set up progressive rounds of conversation, usually of 10-15 minutes each — have some good questions.
3. Ask one person to stay at the table as a “host” and invite the other table members to move to other tables as ambassadors of ideas and insights.
4. Ask the table host to share key insights, questions and ideas briefly with new table members, then let folks move through the rounds of questions.
5. After you’ve moved through the rounds, allow some time for a whole-group harvest of the conversations.
Guide for Hosts:

• Table hosts can participate in the discussions.

• Table hosts work to make sure everyone participates, make sure no one dominates, and keep the discussions from becoming judgmental or personal.

• When necessary, remind people to be non-judgmental. This is not about right-wrong. It is about coming together to learn from each other and gain understanding of the differing perspectives on public education.

• Invite participants to stay open to different perspectives.

• Tensions will likely be at the table. Honor and hold them and allow them. Part of what will happen is participants will experience some of the same tensions and frustrations that teachers, parents, legislators and the public are experiencing. This is OK.

• Manage your own tensions/needs.

• Encourage participants to use the sheets and markers to remember ideas, list key points, etc. This helps keep them in a shared dialogue space and adds to transparency.
Commitment to honor our different perspectives (use your color energies)

• Create hospitable space
• Explore questions that matter
• Encourage each person’s contribution
• Connect diverse people and ideas
• Listen together for patterns, insights and deeper questions
• Make collective knowledge visible
Question One

Describe an experience you had where there was successful shared leadership (informal or formal) or where there was a successful exchange of thoughts, ideas and skills in service of a common goal. How was the final “product enhanced” as a result of leadership being shared?
Question Two

As you think about the concerns regarding public education, what’s at the heart of the matter for you?
Question Three

What will it take for us to get together and find new, creative, and innovative approaches to the work we need to do?
Harvesting

At the end of round three, each table host will report out and share the harvested work from their table with the whole group. The harvested information can be circulated to the members in picture or written form throughout the year to remind them of the values, vision and collective thought that was generated “At the World Café”