

SILENT CONVERSATION EXERCISE

Time: 20-30 minutes plus 10-15 minutes to reflect and discuss

NB: time can vary depending on size of group and discussions that ensue. If the group is large, break up into smaller groups of between 4-6 people

Useful for: Identifying important questions, as a visioning exercise, to grow group consensus.

Process:

- Cut up sheets of A4 paper into four pieces
- Explain that initially participants are going to work on their own in silence. On the small pieces of paper participants need to write down as many responses or questions that they can think of in relation to a given question or issue. For example “***what issues are very present for you at the moment as teacher?***” or “***what support do you need to further develop and promote the arts in your school?***”
- After five minutes of working to generate questions ask participants to stop writing.
- Then explain the next set of rules: Participants need to continue to work in silence but work as a group to prioritise the questions or comments created, by moving the slips of paper around to rank them in order of importance with the most important at the top. They are not allowed to talk at all while they are doing this.
- After 5 minutes give participants a one minute time check, asking them to come up with their top 10 (as a facilitator ask them to be bold in their decisions), and when the time is up remove all the other sheets.
- At the next round participants are again asked to add any new questions and to continue to prioritise them, this time coming up with their top 5. Continue to the top 3 and then ask them to select only their top 1. Use this question as a prompt for discussion or for another exercise of your choice.
- Bring the group back together for a reflection on the exercise.

Some reflection questions:

- How did it feel when your questions were moved down the ranking?
- How did it feel to work in silence?
- How assertive were you about your choices and decisions?
- Did you feel that a consensus was emerging during the exercise?