APPLYING SESSION TO INSTRUCTION

The session is not over! A critical phase of learning anything new is application, when the learner takes new knowledge and applies it. There is some application included in the session, but with all professional learning for instructors, the rubber meets the road (or trail) when the instructors apply what they’ve learned to their instruction, and when they keep thinking about it and discussing it with their peers. If you want your instructors to try out “new” activities/approaches, program leader support is crucial. Even if they are excited by new ideas, it is easy for instructors, especially veteran instructors, to keep doing that they have been successfully doing already, and not try out new approaches. Leading discussions, in particular, will likely challenge even very experienced instructors in the beginning. Below are a variety of follow-up activities and discussions to dig deeper into the topic, and help you facilitate thoughtful implementation.

- **Staff brainstorm of what they and you can do to encourage incorporation of discussion strategies.** After the session reflection, your staff will have already written ideas they have about implementation into their instruction. You can tap into these, and other ideas through a brainstorm of what they plan to do, and how you can support them in doing it.

- **Discussing Implementation of discussion routines.** Assign your staff to each try out one or more of the discussion routines featured in the session during your next student program, and to write in their journal about how it went. Then, lead them in a discussion on the activity at the end of the program during a meeting. Here are some suggested questions to focus a reflection or discussion on:
  » What were some interesting student ideas that came up?
  » What surprised you?
  » Did you notice evidence of student meaning-making?
  » What was successful about the activity?
  » What might you do differently the next time you lead it and why?
  » How did you incorporate the routine into students’ other field experiences? What ideas do you have about incorporating it in the future?

- **Instructor Observations.** If you do observations of instructors, discuss how you might incorporate elements from this session into the observations.

- **Continuing a discussion.** If there was a topic that came up during discussion that you had to cut off, and if it seems like your staff is interested in, and would benefit from continuing the discussion, set aside some time to do so.

• **Together, make a chart of different discussion routines, including the advantages, challenges & uses of each.** Title the first column of the chart, “Routines,” the second column, “Advantages,” the third column, “Challenges,” and the fourth column, “Uses.” Lead your group to fill in the chart, brainstorming a list of routines, their advantages, challenges and uses. Make this list available to the team on a wall poster or handout, so they can use it when choosing which discussion routines to learn/use. This is a nice application, in which instructors immediately apply what they have learned, think more deeply about each routine, and practice making informed choices about what to do with their students.

• **Discuss research findings on discussion.** The information on the Research Related to Promoting Discussion handout can be discussed and re-discussed throughout an entire career in education. It’s worth it to spend more time discussing them during short staff meetings. We recommend assigning your staff to read one of the topics, and then think about it for a week or so of instruction before discussing what the research shows and how to apply it to their teaching practice.

• **Brainstorm site-specific broad questions for discussion.** Assign your instructors to brainstorm and write down broad questions that could serve as good discussion prompts in the specific program and locations of your site.

• **Watch the BEETLES Discussion Strategies video.** As a staff, discuss opportunities for instructors to include more meaning-making discussion on their hikes.

• **Follow up with th Evidence and Explanations session.** Once staff are feeling more comfortable, use the Evidence and Explanations session to continue talking about building a culture of discussion and encouraging more student talk.