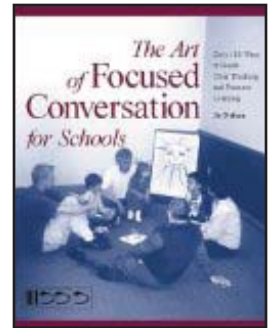




Look At This Book: The Art of Focused Conversation

By Michelle Sears, Director of Consulting Services

Successfully educating and preparing youth for the future is a challenge that educators and parents rise to each day. With that in mind, it is important that every interaction school administrators have with students, staff, and parents are focused and effective. The book, *Art of Focused Conversation for Schools*, by Jo Nelson explores the social interactions between students, staff, parents and the community. Each chapter demonstrates the different uses to the focused conversation method and how it can be applied to everyday life.



The focused conversation method is a four-level process for engaging a group in conversation and is based on the natural thinking processes behind everyday communication. When used in an educational setting, it uses focused questions to encourage and assist teachers, administrators, students, and others to work together as a team to address school concerns. The four levels consist of the objective level, reflective level, interpretive level, and decisional level.

The book is broken down into specific sections that address theory, application, and use examples of focused conversations that can help improve human reflection processes and encourage improvement within individual group experiences. The method demonstrates how planned focused conversations can improve educational settings for grades K-12. With more than 100 examples within the chapters, the book addresses making learning meaningful, making communication effective in groups, preventing and solving problems, and the use of creative applications in a variety of situations. For example, one of the methods that would be beneficial for school district administrators includes thought provoking questions like: "Why can't students do higher order thinking?, Why do educators have endless staff meetings with few results? How can parents and teachers communicate better?"

I would recommend this book to anyone who wants to improve their school's ability to stimulate conversations to uncover the changes and improvements needed within a school. As more pressure is placed on educators to teach more material, relate to students with different cultural backgrounds, and leave no children behind while doing so can be challenging and anything that makes that easier, is a great resource tool to introduce in the classroom.

Source: Nelson, Jo. *Art of Focused Conversation for Schools*. Canada: New Society Publishers: 2001.