



In 2006, a group of principals participating in an SF-CESS iGroup (professional learning community) decided to prioritize developing their skill to ask Discourse 2 Probing Questions¹ as they saw its value not only in Critical Friends Protocols but also across all the equity centered, radical discourse needed in their work. At the end of year showcase, the iGroup to share their learning by creating a game for other principals who would be give a set of questions for a topic and the principals had to discuss and decide whether a question was not a probing question, was a probing question, or was a Discourse 2 Probing Question (D2PQ).

Example: Topic – Grading

- *What is the most common grade you give?* (Not a Probing Question)
- *What does an “A” represent to you?* (A Probing Question)
- *Who do your grades favor – and not favor?* (A D2PQ)

This exercise led SF-CESS to create its first set of Discourse Questions. Since that time, SF-CESS has created four different Discourse Decks (with more in process). Our current decks:

1. Probing Questions to Transform Your Practice

Unlike clarifying questions, which are factual and benefit the asker, probing questions are open-ended and intended to help a practitioner think differently or more deeply about an issue – moving from reaction to reflection. Not recommendations, probing questions empower the practitioner to find her own solutions. SF-CESS finds the most transformative probing questions to be steeped in or inviting of Discourse 2.

2. In2Out Questions – Personalization Cards for Educators and Their Students

Originally designed to support Advisory teachers to deepen knowledge of and personal connections with students, these cards have become a staple for teachers who wish to increase academic discourse by scaffolding both the process and depth of topics intended to be relevant to students’ lives.

3. Advisory as an Equity Pedagogy Cards

Developed around SF-CESS’ core components of an effective Advisory program (see Aces), these cards are not lesson plans, but rather a starting list of scaffolds to help Advisors collaborate, plan and teach for personalization and excellence.

4. Race Cards

Social justice calls for healing. Healing from racial injustice requires courageous reflection & discourse. These cards offer prompts, perspectives & provocations to begin such discourse (in racial affinity & across racial difference). These cards are not a comprehensive study of race. Continuous & rigorous study & reflection is necessary for each of us.

¹ **Probing Questions** are open questions for the benefit of the presenter and, based in positive suppositions, uncover passions & beliefs, and deepen & challenge current thinking.

Discourse 2 is the language that tends to be about uncomfortable, unequal, ineffective, prejudicial conditions and relationships in schools.

Discourse 2 Probing Questions (D2PQs) are Probing Questions (see above) that are equity-focused and steeped in or inviting of Discourse 2.

Using “Probing Questions to Transform Your Practice” Cards

Educators use these cards in a variety of ways to support teams and communities to foster a sense of inquiry, reflection and transformation. As with all SF-CESS’ Discourse Cards, facilitators should consider the intent and feel free to edit actual words to match the intended goals and context.

In general, the format of the card is:

Topic
Probing Question
Discourse 2 Probing Question

Consider using these cards...

- To develop your own probing questions to offer within critical friendship and/or collaboration. This includes using protocols to explore equity dilemmas or to look at adult practice and student results (i.e. Critical Friends Protocols, Consultancy Protocols, Issaquah Protocol, group debriefs...).
- To facilitate meaningful community builders in which participants reflect and share individually, in pairs or small groups about a topic through a personal lens. These cards are great scaffolds to support the act of sharing and hearing stories with each other.
- To invite more engagement when giving critical feedback during supervision, observations, etc.

Conditions: Before using these cards, participants should adopt norms that support critical friendship, and they should have professional development or review key concepts of Discourse 2, Probing Questions.

Using “In2Out Questions – Personalization Cards for Educators and Their Students” Cards

The In2Out protocol, designed from the belief that real transformation is most sustainable when we start with our own stories, is an equity-centered protocol with the intended goal of facilitating inside-out, transformational work. Educators use these cards with students and with each other to link personal life to a community’s context (curriculum, current events, group dynamics, etc.), increase engagement, and develop authentic relationships. In2Out discussions offer a great way to open up a new topic or unit.

The protocol asks open ended questions to foster deep reflection and provocative discourse by scaffolding both structure and content from engaging in individual and personal work (**In**), to making and sharing meaning with another or a few others (**2**), to considering larger issues about and with community (**Out**).

In general, the format of the card also serves as a basic lesson plan:

After carefully choosing and editing a card to be grade and content relevant,

In (Into)

Written Reflection/ Do Now (~4-5 minutes)

2 (Through)

Pair Share (~4-6 minutes)

Out (Beyond)

Table Talk with report out (~10 minutes + ~2’ per table report out)

or

Class Discussion (~10-20 minutes depending on size of class)

Total time can be as short as 18 minutes or as long as 30+ minutes.

Conditions: Before using these cards, educators or facilitators should have practiced the protocol themselves a number of times to better understand and navigate the nuances of the protocol. Additionally, they should consider debrief questions in advance.



Using “Advisory as an Equity Pedagogy Cards” Cards

Educators use these cards when they work in a school that is designing or redesigning its Advisory program. Based on a field-tested model and supporting strategies, these cards are intended to initiate collaboration and design decisions for Advisory teams (that can and should include students and families).

Each of the card suits aligns with one of core design elements:

1. Academic Advising
2. The Essential Class (*essential knowledge and skills to achieve this school's mission*)
3. Family and Community Building
4. School Design

Conditions: Before using these cards, schools/ Advisors should share a vision for why Advisory is an equity and personalization strategy. There also should be a commitment to the program (from resources to personal buy-in). Ideally the vision of the larger program should be held by the school and the responsive strategies for reaching that vision should be led by Advisory teams

Using “Race Cards”

Perhaps the most provocative of SF-CESS’ Discourse Cards, the premise behind these cards is that working towards equity and justice requires informed discourse and developing the skill and capacity to interrupt inequities in real time requires radical discourse. Yet, too often our schools (amongst other places) are not places where such discourse is accepted or fostered. As a result, we created the Race Cards as a way to engage in positive, informed and radical discourse.

The goal of using SF-CESS’ “Race Cards” is not to seek “right” or “wrong” answers, but rather to invite participants to reflect, share, hear and... reflect some more around provocative topics. By engaging in ways that allows individuals to connect both to a topic and to each other is more humanizing – a necessary condition to engaging in this level of discourse.

Consider using these cards...

- To explore content for individual or shared reflection, learning and exploration.
- Simply to begin conversations that might otherwise be avoided (a school or community can map out a series of cards to engage in open-ended, small or large group discussions over the course of multiple gatherings).
- To find an entry point for discussing incidents that arise and are feared to be discussed.
- To scaffold into larger engagements with related content.
- (For the daring) to have a poker game and let the cards fall where they may...

Conditions: Before using these cards, participants should invest in deep community building and have practices strategies for engaging in radical discourse (i.e. shared norms, practice using discourse protocols, calibration of key language/terminology). Additionally, it is quite helpful when the community has shared and strong, mission and vision driven leadership.