



## FOUR KEY QUESTIONS THAT MATTER

An essential part of the *scanning* and *checking* phases of the spiral of inquiry

**Purposes:** To gain deeper insights into your learners and their experiences. To get feedback from your learners regarding the extent to which they feel connected to adults within the school. To develop an understanding of the extent to which your learners own their own learning. To reflect with your colleagues on what the learners' responses imply and the actions that you might take as a result.

**Advice:** Start with just one or two learners with the ultimate goal of involving as many learners as possible. Explain to them why you are asking these questions. As necessary, adapt the wording to the age of the learner. **DO NOT** change the INTENT of the question. Record their responses verbatim. Get together shortly thereafter with your colleagues to review the responses - and the implications. Keep at it. It takes time to develop confidence and ease with these questions.

| Question                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Learner Response |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| <p><b>Can you name TWO adults in this school who believe you will be a success in life?</b></p> <p><i>How do they show you that they believe in you?</i></p> <p>Some discussion about what is meant by success in life may be appropriate. From our perspective, success in life must include <i>crossing the stage with dignity, purpose and options</i> for life after secondary school.</p> <p><b>Listen for:</b> the extent to which students can provide specific examples of the range of ways in which adults are demonstrating their belief in their future success.</p> |                  |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| <p><b>Where are you going with your learning?</b></p> <p><i>What are you learning? What are the big ideas you are exploring? Why is this important?</i></p> <p>Make it clear that your question is about what they are learning in school right now - perhaps in a specific subject area.</p> <p><b>Listen for:</b> The purpose of what they are learning in their own words. The distinction between the task (what they are <i>doing</i>) and the purpose (what they are <i>learning</i> and why). See if they can connect it to life outside school. Probe as much as you need to get a full picture of the depth of their understanding.</p> |  |
| <p><b>How are you doing?</b></p> <p><i>What would you like to tell others about how you're doing with your learning? How do you know how you're doing?</i></p> <p><b>Listen for:</b> The extent to which learners understand the criteria for strong work in this particular area. Can they identify their own strengths and the areas for additional focus? Have they internalized the criteria or are they solely dependent on teacher judgment? What kind of feedback have they received? From whom?</p>                                                                                                                                      |  |
| <p><b>Where to next?</b></p> <p><i>Tell me what the next piece of learning is for you. What do you need to do to get better at this?</i></p> <p><b>Listen for:</b> Do learners know what they need to do to get better in this particular area of learning and how they will do it? Can they articulate the specific next steps?</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |  |