

DAF #8

Surfacing and Engaging Theories and Beliefs

What It Is

- ▶ Seek to understand the constraints on own and others' actions.
- ▶ Understand that theories and beliefs can be aligned or misaligned with intended change.
- ▶ Be aware of theories and beliefs that are problematic (e.g., deficit theories).
- ▶ Be prepared to be courageous and take action when theories and beliefs get in the way of learning.
- ▶ Persist as beliefs may be entrenched, and people may not be aware of the beliefs that drive their actions.

Why It Matters

- ▶ Theories and beliefs drive actions consciously and subconsciously.
- ▶ Our theories and beliefs are connected to our personal and professional identities. Theories and beliefs are fundamental to how people learn, teach, facilitate, and lead.
- ▶ Theories and beliefs develop over long periods of time, are deeply held, and can be difficult to change.
- ▶ Theories and beliefs can change as a result of experiencing dissonance and from seeing students succeed.

How I Do It

- ▶ Be aware of how own theories and beliefs are impacting on situation.

- ▶ Make own and others' theories and beliefs visible.
- ▶ Provide a culture of support and safety for changing theories and beliefs.
- ▶ Provide opportunities for people to experience dissonance.
- ▶ Engage in talk about both cognitive and emotional aspects of changing theories and beliefs.
- ▶ Help identify and make outcomes of problematic theories and beliefs explicit.

Key Challenges for Me

- ▶ Changing theories and beliefs that can feel risky and confronting for those involved
- ▶ Understanding that what people actually believe may be different from what they say they believe
- ▶ Navigating own and others' emotional responses to have theories and beliefs challenged
- ▶ Supporting people to share their actual theories and beliefs

What I Should Notice

- ▶ What are people saying and doing?
- ▶ What do their actions say about their underlying theories and beliefs?
- ▶ What happens when people experience disconfirming evidence about their beliefs?
- ▶ How does cultural positioning influence theories and beliefs?
- ▶ How valid are the assumptions being made?