

You've Got Mail!

Purposes

This strategy can be used in mentor training and with new teachers

- To surface participants' issues, concerns, or questions
- To promote collegial interactions through suggestions and/or empathy messages
- To provide anonymity

Time

- 30 minutes to one hour

Materials

- Chart or PowerPoint slide with directions
- An envelope for each participant color coded to indicate original table group
- 8 to 10 index cards for each participant

Process

- Identify a focus area. Possibilities include:
 - Issues facing you at this time of the year
 - Working with school administration
 - Instructional concerns
 - Organizational concerns
 - Differentiation of instruction
 - Working with parents
 - Formative assessment
- Create a model envelope.
- Distribute envelopes and index cards.
- Post directions and talk through the process.
- Designate a table facilitator to handle the collection, passing, and distribution of envelopes between tables.
- Have participants put a "return address" in the upper left hand corner of the envelope. Suggest that they use their initials or the last four digits in their telephone number, or a code of their choice.
- Have participants write a question or describe a problematic situation on the outside of the envelope in the section where the address usually is placed.
- After the participants have written their questions or situations, ask the table facilitator to collect the envelopes and pass them to the next table in a clockwise pattern.

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- Have the table facilitators distribute the envelopes received from the other table.
 - Each person answers the question on the envelope received on an index card.
 - One answer to a card.
 - The answering of this set of questions continues for five minutes.
 - Some participants may answer only one question, others may answer several.
 - If the recipient of the question does not have a suggestion to make, he should write an empathy message.
- At the end of the five minutes ask the table facilitators to collect the envelopes and pass the envelopes to the next table.
- Repeat the process as long as time allows.
- Have table facilitators retrieve the envelopes for their table and return them to the senders.
- Allow time for senders to read the suggested solutions.
- Ask participants if they received either good suggestions or felt supported.