

# FACILITATING IOWA GROW® CONVERSATIONS

**WHAT IS THIS?** This handout outlines different methods for using Iowa GROW® with your student employees and tips for effective GROW® conversations.

Iowa GROW® (Guided Reflection on Work) uses brief, structured conversations between student employees and their supervisors to help students connect the skills and knowledge they are gaining in the classroom with the work they are doing and vice versa.

Supervisors regularly check in with student employees on workflow, tasks, and assignments. Taking an extra minute or two to periodically ask how students are doing in classes and even helping them relate what they're learning on the job to coursework or vice versa can be all it takes to get learning connections firing. There are a variety of ways that you can implement GROW® conversations with student employees<sup>1</sup>. Think about the implementation strategy that makes the most sense for you and your team.

- Scheduled 1:1 meeting for conversations between supervisory staff and student staff members
- Drop-in conversations between supervisory staff and student staff during the shift
- Small group conversations during monthly staff meetings facilitated by supervisory staff or student leaders
- Small group conversations held with students before or after an event or shift
- 15-minute rolling blocks where student staff can sign up for a small group conversation

## Conversation Facilitation Tips

Utilizing facilitation skills can help your Iowa GROW® conversations flow better and be productive. We suggest supervisors use open-ended questions, paraphrase, and ask follow-up questions during the conversation.

**Open-ended questions:** Asking questions in such a way that they can't be answered by yes, no, or a oneword answer. The Iowa GROW® questions are already phrased as open-ended, but make sure that any other questions you ask are open-ended as well.

- Open-ended question: "What are you learning here that's helping you in school?"
- Not an open-ended question: "Have you learned anything here that's helping you in school?"

**Paraphrasing:** Summing up what the other person says in your own words is a good way to show that you understood what your student said and can also help you make connections to other points. In your Iowa GROW® conversations, paraphrasing can reiterate the connections students have made about their learning. Examples:

- "It sounds like you are learning time management skills here at work, and you've used these skills to make sure you are getting your homework and other tasks completed every week. That's great!"
- "You noted how much you've learned about communicating with your team. How has team communication been a part of your classes?"

**Follow-up probes:** Follow-up probes are questions you might add to help the student think more deeply. Probes are very helpful if the student doesn't seem to be able to think of an answer to one of the questions.

- They can be very simple: "What's an example of that?", "How so?", "Tell me more."
- Or more specific: "As a part of this position, you are developing customer service skills. Tell me how you've improved your customer service skills."

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<sup>1</sup> This list was developed by the Student Staff Development Task Force NIRSA Volunteer Group

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## Tips for Facilitating Group Meetings

Keep small groups of eight students or fewer so everyone has a chance to speak. Make sure to provide questions beforehand so students come ready to discuss. Below are some potential issues that might arise while facilitating a group meeting and strategies to address them:

Issues	Strategies
One person dominates the conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acknowledge their contributions, but ask, “What do others think?”</li><li>• Call on other individuals to speak</li><li>• Use a round-robin or popcorn format so each person shares</li></ul>
A student remains silent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ask in a non-pressuring way if they would like to share</li><li>• Use small-group discussions or partner sharing</li></ul>
A student keeps taking the conversation to a negative place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acknowledge their frustrations and offer to follow up with them later</li><li>• Move on to others who are interested in sharing</li></ul>

## Keep in Mind

No matter how you facilitate your GROW® conversations with student employees, keep the following in mind.

<i>Students and supervisors benefit from reflection before the conversation.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sending out the questions before the conversation gives students an opportunity to think about their answers before you meet, leading to deeper and more authentic reflection.</li><li>• For you, reflecting on what students are learning by working for you can help you add to the conversation and point out areas of learning to students.</li></ul>
<i>You are the air traffic controller, not the pilot.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It can often be difficult to give students the space to reflect on their learning. Your job isn't to provide the correct answer but give students the space to reflect and make connections.</li></ul>
<i>Make peace with silence.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It's not unusual for someone to need 15-30 seconds to think of an answer to a question.</li><li>• Give students the opportunity to reflect. Don't immediately ask and answer the question for them.</li></ul>
<i>Make sure to wrap up the conversation.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Remind students why you had the Iowa GROW® conversation and that you will continue to talk about learning in the workplace. Frequent reminders create an environment where learning is a key aspect of the student employment experience.</li></ul>