

### ***Bitesized Belonging: What's talking in rough draft?***

As allies, educators, activists, and employees working in an environment where consideration and intersectionality are becoming drivers of culture, having any type of cultural conversation can feel really complex.

The more complex the conversation, the more pitfalls we can unknowingly fall into. Whether it's our own unconscious biases or simple exhaustion after an arduous day, sometimes when we're trying to say something meaningful and productive things might not come out quite right.

One technique that a recent cohort of Cengage ERG Co-Leads learned while attending the Brevity & Wit DEI Change Agent Certification was the idea of speaking or thinking in "rough draft". The concept as a whole is simple; by admitting up front that you're still piecing together your final thought, decision, or concept, you invite others to critique and engage with thoughts in a developmental and productive way.

Douglas Barnes describes "Rough Draft Thinking" as exploratory talk that allows learning through unfinished thinking and the revising of creative ideas.

In allowing students to have "Rough Draft Thinking" sessions, teachers are witnessing a change in the classroom culture. Students are shifting "from a focus on performing correctness to a focus on learning . . . through communicating.

"Below are a few steps for using Rough Draft talking/thinking most effectively:

#### **1.State it outright.**

"I'd love to have a rough draft conversation" or "I'm thinking in rough draft right now but maybe..." are great ways to show folks you're still piecing together your final draft. If you're the leader of a team it might be best to establish this as a team norm at the beginning of the meeting so all attendees are aligned.

#### **2. Ask clarifying questions.**

"Is this a "rough draft" or are you making a decision here?" are great ways to dig down to whether or not someone is inviting critique or not.

#### **3. Bring it back to the draft.**

When many people start making definitive decisions that all seem to conflict, that can be a sign of a need for more brainstorming or returning to a "rough draft" mentality. Don't hesitate to restart conversations and level set the idea that everyone is speaking in draft.

Consider: How can you bring this as an effective practice to your team/squads?  
Conversations? Communications?