

WHAT IF Collaboration IS THE ANSWER? Consider these 7 questions By Cortnee Phifer

"We are not meant to do life alone." I've heard this phrase numerous times from mentors and sages in my life. I believe it also applies to teaching. Too often, teachers find themselves simply trying to survive each day on their own — nurturing class community, differentiating for diverse learners, implementing new curriculum, and more. But when we connect with others as mentors, coaches, or peers, we create the conditions to thrive. If you're wondering whether collaboration could make a difference for you, take a few minutes to reflect with the questions below.

Reflect 	Where Are You? 	
1. Is it important to you to feel a sense of belonging in your teaching space?	Belonging is a core human need, as transformational coaching expert Elena Aguilar reminds us. Teaching is more meaningful when we feel connected.	I prefer to work independently, but I can find alternative ways to collaborate.
2. Do you want to continue growing and developing your craft?	No matter the number of years I've taught, I believe I am worthy of attention, support, and growth.	I feel confident in what I'm doing right now and haven't been focused on growth, but maybe there's room for more.
3. Are you open to giving and receiving advice?	I see advice as a kind, future-focused way to support and be supported by others.	Sharing advice feels vulnerable, and receiving it can be uncomfortable, but I know growth often starts there.
4. Can you make time to reflect and learn with someone?	I can plan for reflection and collaboration, even if it means starting small.	It's tough right now. My schedule feels full, and finding time is hard — but I know it could be worth it.
5. Are you open to new ideas about teaching?	I believe in holding my values tightly and my ideas loosely.	I tend to rely on what I know works, but I'm learning to stay open to new possibilities.
6. Do you want to deepen your impact on student learning and well-being?	I believe collaboration can help me better meet my students' unique needs and support their growth.	I care deeply about my students but haven't thought much about how coaching or mentorship could help me do that differently.
7. Do you want to find joy in teaching and celebrate learning and growth?	Joy is as essential as the air we breathe, and celebrating growth keeps us going.	I've lost sight of that. Joy feels distant right now, but I'd love to find my way back to it.

Whether you answered yes, maybe, or not yet to any of these, it could be a sign that collaboration might help reignite your passion for teaching, sharpen your practice, and reconnect you with joy.

Start small. Think of one person you trust—a coach, mentor, or peer—and send a quick message today. Share what's on your mind, ask a question, or request support with something that's resonating with you, and set a time to talk. Collaboration doesn't have to be big or formal to be successful—it just has to be genuine.

Teaching is too complex to navigate alone. Through coaching, mentorship, or peer collaboration, we can create the kind of spaces where both teachers and students can truly thrive.