


Spring 1999

The Development and Design of a Peer Coaching Model Program for High School Teachers and Administrators

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ABSTRACT

THE DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN OF A PEER COACHING
MODEL PROGRAM FOR HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS AND
ADMINISTRATORS

by

Kenneth John DeVries

May, 1999

Clinical supervision is a coherent process for teacher evaluation. A significant investment of time and training for teachers and administrators is necessary to successfully implement the clinical supervision model. A peer coaching program presents the opportunity of improving upon the clinical supervision model and establishing a lasting staff development program. The Critical Friends Group model, developed by the Coalition of Essential Schools, provides the structure which fosters collegiality, professional development, and improved student learning. The success of a Critical Friends Group peer coaching program relies on the leadership of the principal through active participation, financing, and modeling professional collaboration.

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CHAPTER I
BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

Introduction

“The degree to which I create relationships which facilitate the growth of others as separate persons is a measure of growth I have achieved in myself.”

-Carl Rogers

The importance of student growth in education is obviously apparent. To help students become productive members of society, educators must master the tasks of supervision and evaluation of their students' growth. Likewise, the importance of teacher supervision and evaluation cannot be overstated. Professional growth and development for teachers is an essential element in providing a effective education for students. Teachers must be afforded the opportunity to improve upon their craft in order to make the education experience of their students truly meaningful.

American society has become increasingly critical of public schools and the competence of it's teachers. Taxpayers are asking how “pedagogically impaired” teachers received tenure and why they are allowed to remain in the classroom (Shuler, 1996). The answer to this and other pointed questions lies within teacher supervision and evaluation. In an interview with Thomas McGreal, professor of Educational Organization and Leadership at the University of Illinois, he explains how teachers and administrators are also dissatisfied with what schools have, or have not, done in addressing the problem. “I sense that

both teachers and administrators are frustrated that conventional evaluation practices do not really serve the purpose of either group” (Brant, 1996).

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to develop a peer coaching model for Eastlake High School in Western Washington. The model was centered in the practice and procedural strategies that would assist teachers in helping one another in professional development and formative evaluation plans with administrators. The model would also focus on inter-departmental involvement, i.e. peer coaching, mentoring, and formative evaluation within the limits of Washington State Law.

Limitations

- 1) Participation by the staff must be voluntary.
- 2) Each Critical Friends Group member should make a two year commitment to the program.
- 3) To receive Critical Friends Group workshop training and network support, the school should be a member of the Coalition of Essential Schools.
- 4) Administrative support must be substantial in order to provide the time and money necessary to sustain a CFG program.
- 5) The true success of the CFG model is limited to the individual’s level of commitment to the program and trust of its’ participants.

Definition of Terms

1. **Peer Coaching** - A staff development concept where a small group of colleagues form a team to share their teaching strategies, develop new approaches to student instruction and assessment, and strive to solve problems related to their profession.

2. **Coalition of Essential Schools (CES)** - An educational organization which strives to promote student achievement and school excellence through the guidance of The Ten Common Principles and The Eight Organizational Principles.

3. **The Ten Common Principles** - “The Ten Common Principles which guide the work of the Coalition and its member schools call broadly for schools to set clear and simple goals about the intellectual skills and knowledge to be mastered by all the schools’ students; to lower teacher/student loads; personalize teaching and curriculum, and make student work the center of classroom activity; to award diplomas based on students’ “exhibition” of their mastery of the school’s program; to create an atmosphere of trust and respect for the school, faculty, students and parents; and to accomplish such changes with no more than a 10 percent increase in the schools’ budget

1. The school should focus on helping adolescents learn to use their minds well. Schools should not attempt to be ‘comprehensive’ if such a claim is made at the expense of the school’s central intellectual purpose.

2. The school’s goals should be simple: that each student master a limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge. While these skills and

areas will, to varying degrees, reflect the traditional academic disciplines, the program's design should be shaped by the intellectual and imaginative powers and competencies that students need, rather than necessarily by "subjects" as conventionally defined. The aphorism "Less Is More" should dominate: curricular decisions should be guided by the aim of thorough student mastery and achievement rather than by an effort merely to cover content.

3. The school's goals should apply to all students, while the means to these goals will vary as those students themselves vary. School practice should be tailor-made to meet the needs of every group or class of adolescents.

4. Teaching and learning should be personalized to the maximum feasible extent. Efforts should be directed toward a goal that no teacher have direct responsibility for more than 80 students. To capitalize on this personalization, decisions about the details of the course of study, the use of students' and teachers' time and the choice of teaching materials and specific pedagogies must be unreservedly placed in the hands of the principal and staff.

5. The governing practical metaphor of the school should be student-as-worker rather than the more familiar metaphor of teacher-as-deliverer-of-instructional-services. Accordingly, a prominent pedagogy will be coaching, to provoke students to learn how to learn and thus to teach themselves.

6. Students entering secondary school studies are those who can show competence in language and elementary mathematics. Students of traditional high school age but not yet at appropriate levels of competence to enter secondary school studies will be provided intensive remedial work to assist them quickly to meet these standards. The diploma should be awarded upon a successful final demonstration of mastery for graduation - an 'Exhibition.' This exhibition by the student of his or her grasp of the central skills and knowledge of the school's program may be jointly administered by the faculty and by higher authorities. As the diploma is awarded when earned, the school's program proceeds with no strict age grading and with no system of 'credits earned' by 'time spent' in class. The emphasis is on the students' demonstration that they can do important things.

7. The tone of the school should explicitly and self-consciously stress values of unanxious expectation ('I won't threaten you but I expect much of you'), of trust (until abused) and of decency (the values of fairness, generosity and tolerance). Incentives appropriate to the school's particular students and teachers should be emphasized, and parents should be treated as essential collaborators.

8. The principal and teachers should perceive themselves as generalists first (teachers and scholars in general education) and specialists second (experts in but one particular discipline). Staff should expect multiple

obligations (teacher-counselor-manager) and a sense of commitment to the entire school.

9. Ultimate administrative and budget targets should include, in addition to total student loads per teacher of eighty or fewer pupils, substantial time for collective planning by teachers, competitive salaries for staff and an ultimate per pupil cost not to exceed that at traditional schools by more than 10 percent. To accomplish this, administrative plans may have to show the phased reduction or elimination of some services now provided students in many traditional comprehensive secondary schools.

10. The school should demonstrate non-discriminatory and inclusive policies, practices, and pedagogies. It should model democratic practices that involve all who are directly affected by the school. The school should honor diversity and build on the strengths of its communities, deliberately and explicitly challenging all forms of inequity” (CES, 1998).

4. The Eight Organizational Principles - “The Eight Organizational Principles serve as tenets of organizational practice to help deepen the work of schools.

First and foremost is the notion the CES should be a learning community, modeling the practices it expects of schools. The work at all levels should be of a size and scale to allow for personalization. The principles stress the importance of valuing the local wisdom of the schools and centers and recognize the school as the fundamental unit of change. The current priorities of the national organization are reflected in the principles - a commitment to demonstration and documentation, an emphasis on collaboration and critical friendships at all levels

of the work, and attention to issues of equity and democracy. The Eight Organizational Principles also assert that CES should maintain a voice in the national discourse about educational reform and seek alliances with like-minded organizations.

1. CES should be a learning community, modeling the practices it expects of schools. Inquiry should inform the practices of the organization as well as the practices of schools and of adults and young people within them.
2. CES, its centers and member schools, should commit themselves to documentation of change efforts, demonstration of student achievement, using the most effective combination of objective, subjective and performance-based data, and public sharing of all that has been learned.
3. Just as students differ one from another, so do teachers, schools and communities; therefore, CES, its centers and member schools, should value local wisdom and have the flexibility to respond to their local contexts.
4. The whole school, including parents, should be the fundamental unit of change.
5. Collaboration and critical friendship should be central to all levels of CES work, whether in classrooms or among colleagues and community members to fully explore and thoughtfully utilize the enormous potential of a wide range of technologies to advance this goal.
6. CES should maintain a voice in the national discourse about educational reform and should seek alliances with like-minded

organizations. Decisions about the nature and extent of such alliances should be made as close as possible to the school and community.

7. CES, its centers and member schools, should model democratic practices and should deliberately and explicitly address challenges of equity in relation to race, class and gender.

8. Since they have direct bearing on intellectual, interpersonal and organizational processes, CES work at all levels should be of a size and scale to allow for personalization” (CES, 1998).

5. **Critical Friends Group (CFG)** - The name of the peer coaching model endorsed by the Coalition of Essential Schools.

6. **Protocol** - The process that is followed by the members of a CFG which examines a piece of instructional work, chosen by the teacher presenting his/her work.

7. **Presenter** - The teacher (or other educational professional) who presents a piece of their instructional work to the CFG.

8. **Facilitator** - The “coach” of the CFG who facilitates the chosen protocol, maintaining strict adherence to the procedure.

9. **Team Coach** - The “administrator” of the CFG and primary facilitator of the protocols.

10. **Pod** - A CFG consisting of seven to nine members and a Team Coach.

11. **Constructivism** - A philosophy that effective CFG’s improve instructional strategies in hope or raising student achievement.

12. **Norms** - Structures and operating procedures which help a CFG to work together effectively.

13. **Cycle of Inquiry** - A method used to improve instructional strategies in Clinical Supervision and CFG protocols:

- 1) Develop a vision for teaching and learning
- 2) Form a researchable question
- 3) Design a method of instruction
- 4) Teach and collect data (student work/observations)
- 5) Analyze data
- 6) Derive implications for changing instruction
- 7) Repeat the cycle

14. **Student Work** - The artifact provided by the presenter which is appropriate for the chosen protocol.

15. **Teaching Portfolio** - A portfolio maintained by a CFG member which demonstrates the growth of the teachers' lesson/unit plans and student growth as measured by collected artifacts and assessments, and teacher reflection.

16. **Professional Development Plan (PDP)** - Short term and long term strategies which emphasize goal setting and are utilized in the teachers' formative assessment by administrators.

17. **Team Building Activities** - Ice breakers and getting acquainted activities which create a positive atmosphere in the CFG pod.

18. **Beliefs and Structures** - A list created by the CFG pod which guide their efforts in maintaining a formal collaborative teaming structure, which is an integral part of school culture.

19. **Pod Charter** - A creed which is written and agreed to by the team members in a pod.

20. **Trust Agreement** - A constitution written by team members which address such topics as attendance, promptness, meeting place and time, participation, assignments, basic conversational courtesies, agendas, decision making model, what is o.k./not o.k.

21. **Feedback (warm, cool, hard)** - The opportunity to allow the presenter to state what kind of feedback he/she is comfortable with. Warm feedback is supportive and positive, cool feedback is probing and discerning, hard feedback is challenging and extending.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

Chapter two provides a detailed review of current literature, research, and workshop training on peer coaching. The research and literature addressed in Chapter 2 was identified through a computer search, specifically the Education Research Information Center (ERIC) and research library periodicals. Additionally, related information was obtained from a Critical Friends Group peer coaching workshop on October 14-16, 1998, sponsored by the Northwest Coalition of Essential Schools. Specifically the chapter has been organized to address:

1. The clinical supervision model and its contributions to peer coaching as a process.
2. The rationale for implementing a peer coaching program at the building level.
3. A comparative review of three peer coaching models.
4. The roles and responsibilities of teachers and administrators in the peer coaching program.
5. A summary.

Clinical Supervision

Clinical supervision provides a detailed description of interactions between the teacher and supervisor to supply evidence of change in teacher behavior (Nolan, Hawkes, Francis, 1993). Based on the methods developed by

Cogan and Goldhammer at the Harvard School of Education in the 1960, Clinical Supervision focuses on the face-to-face relationship between the teacher and the supervisor, and the teacher's behavior in the classroom (Acheson, Gall, 1997). The first phase of clinical supervision is the planning conference, which allows the teacher and supervisor to make a cooperative decision on what observational data will be collected. Observational techniques such as selective verbatim, records based on seating charts, wide-lens techniques, checklists, and timeline coding provide specific data which the supervisor gathers during the second phase (the observation) may be utilized. The third and final phase of clinical supervision is the feedback conference. The teacher reviews the collected data with the supervisor. The following goals of clinical supervision are:

- To provide teachers with objective feedback on the current state of their instruction.
- To diagnose and solve instructional problems.
- To help teachers develop skill in using instructional strategies.
- To evaluate teachers for promotion, tenure, or other decisions.
- To help teachers develop a positive attitude about continuous professional development (Acheson, Gall, 1997, pp. 14-15).

When determining an effective approach to evaluate teachers the question to be asked is: which teacher evaluation approach avoids creating a psychological obstacle to their further development? The teacher is a professional and ought to be treated as one (Van der Linde, 1998). According to Sergiovanni and Starrat (1988) formative evaluation should be the focus of clinical supervision. Teachers

are different and their individual needs must be recognized. When teachers are actively engaged in forming the criteria by which they will be evaluated, as opposed to a one-best-way approach, they are more likely to respond positively (Sergiovanni, 1995). Allowing teachers involvement with curriculum planning establishes a sense of purpose for the content and environment of the curriculum, allows a teacher to address the needs and priorities of his/her students, promotes an understanding between the current program and the proposed changes, and helps shape the guiding criteria for the development of curriculum implementation (Fentey, 1998).

Sergiovanni suggests, however, that clinical supervision should not be used all the time for all teachers. This supervisory process may be too much supervision for some, especially if it is overused. If teachers continuously go through this process every second, third, or fourth year, clinical supervision can become too routinized and ritualized. Participation in clinical supervision requires more training in conferencing, data collection, and supervisory techniques burdening the teacher and administrator with additional time demands. A possible solution to these concerns with clinical supervision lies in collegial supervision (Sergiovanni, 1995).

Peer Coaching

Recognizing clinical supervision as a rational process to foster improved instruction, collegiality, and confidence is a strong beginning, but it is not enough. A school must invest in the development of its teachers, expanding their capacity to teach in effective ways (Falk, Ort, 1998). Staff development not only refers to

workshops and course work leading to credits and certification, but to erasing weakness or enhancing previous experiences while developing new learnings (Fentey, 1998). An important component within the context of training, implementation, and general school improvement is peer coaching.

Not to be confused with, or used for, the evaluation of teachers, peer coaching is based on the traditional clinical supervisory mode of pre-conference/observation/post-conference (Garmston, 1987). Peer coaching proposes to build communities of teachers who continuously engage in the study of their profession. The process requires long-term commitment to establish a framework which embraces the holistic importance of staff development. Forming community-like organizations which share norms and values with a focus on student learning, reflective dialogue, deprivitization of teaching practices, and collaboration requires change beyond first-order restructuring (Louis, Kruse, & Marks, 1996). Coaching develops the shared language and common understandings necessary for the collegial study of expanding the repertoire of teaching skills. Peer coaching provides the structure for follow up to training that is essential for acquiring new teaching skills and strategies (Joyce and Showers, 1985).

Comparison of Peer Coaching Models

The Joyce and Showers peer coaching model differs from other staff development practices called “coaching” (except for the School Innovation Through Teacher Interaction and Critical Friends Group “team coaching” models)

in that verbal feedback is not the vehicle for improving or changing classroom instruction. The following are Joyce and Showers' principles of peer coaching :

1. All teachers (entire faculty) must agree to be members of peer coaching study teams. The teams collectively agree to (a) practice or use whatever change the faculty has decided to implement: (b) support one another in the change process, including sharing planning of instructional objectives and developing materials and lessons: and (c) collect data about the implementation process and the effects on students relative to the school's goals.

2. Omit verbal feedback as a coaching component. When teachers try to give one another feedback, collaborative activity tends to disintegrate. Collaborative planning is essential if teachers are to divide the labor of developing new lessons and unit sequences and use one another's products.

3. When pairs of teachers observe each other, the one teaching is the "coach," and the one observing is the "coached." Teachers who are observing do so in order to learn from their colleague. Typically, these observations are followed by a brief conversation on the order of "thanks for letting me watch you work. I picked up some good ideas on how to work with my students."

4. The collaborative work of peer coaching teams is much broader than observations and conferences. Teachers learn from each other while planning instruction, developing support materials, watching one another work with students, and thinking together about the impact of their behavior on their students' learning (Joyce and Showers, 1996).

One of the greatest criticisms of peer coaching has been that teachers were asked to judge each other's performance (Acheson, Gall, 1997). However, in the School Innovation Through Teacher Interaction (SITTI) model, written and verbal feedback is a key component. The teachers working on a peer coaching training team:

- 1) Provide training in observational and feedback skills;
- 2) Build team cohesiveness;
- 3) Develop action plans for each team member;
- 4) Establish a peer observation cycle;
- 5) Provide formative feedback after each observation;
- 6) Evaluate personal performance against previously set goals (Pierce and Hunsaker, 1996).

The principle difference between the peer coaching model presented by Joyce and Showers and other peer coaching such as the SITTI model is the evaluative component. Joyce and Showers found that peer coaches slipped into "supervisory, evaluative comments" despite intentions to avoid such comments. Because of past experiences with clinical supervision, teachers admitted that they often pressured their coaches to exceed technical feedback and give them "the real scoop" (Joyce and Showers, 1996). "By omitting feedback in the coaching process, the organization of peer coaching teams has been greatly simplified. Technical feedback which required extensive training is no longer necessary" (Joyce and Showers, 1996, p. 15). They have also found that omitting feedback in

the coaching process has not depressed implementation or student growth (Joyce, Showers, 1996).

The Critical Friends Group peer coaching model shares many common elements with the SITTI and Joyce and Showers models, such as the Clinical Supervision dynamics (of the observation process), voluntary participation, and building trust. As in any business, whether profit-oriented or people-oriented, cooperation between the evaluator and the person being evaluated can only be obtained through effective communication and good rapport (Van der Linde, 1998). The uniqueness of the CFG model is a result of the importance and focus placed on building trust. It is this trust which allows the CFG model to surpass other peer coaching models through its' critique dimension, allowing the presenting teacher to receive thoughtful feedback (Costa, Kallick, 1996). Another superior feature of the CFG model is that the presenting teacher has complete control over how, and through what process, their work will be examined. "Above all it impressed upon me the fact that the agendas must be those of the teacher. Moreover, it does demonstrate that change can occur as a result of a stimulus outside the teacher, but the change was short lived" (Nolan, Hawkes, Francis, 1993, p. 55). A. Costa and B. Kallick describe one (of many possible) process that a CFG uses to facilitate conversation:

"1. The learner describes a practice and requests feedback. For example, a teacher might describe a new problem-solving technique, or a student might describe a project being considered.

2. The critical friend asks questions in order to understand the practice described and to clarify the context in which the practice takes place. For example, the friend may ask the learner, 'How much time did you allow for the students to do problem solving?' or 'What do you hope other people will learn from your project?'

3. The learner sets desired outcomes for this conference. This allows the learner to be in control of the feedback.

4. The critical friend provides feedback about what seems significant about the practice. This feedback provides more than cursory praise; it provides a lens that helps to elevate the work. For example, the teacher's critical friend might say, 'I think it's significant that you're asking students to do problem solving because it will help them become more self-directed.' The student's critical friend might say, 'I think your project will be significant because you are trying to bring a new insight into the way people have understood the changing role of women in the United States.'

5. The critical friend raises questions and critiques the work, nudging the learner to see the project from different perspectives. Typical queries might be, 'What does the evidence from your students' work indicate to you about their capacity to do problem solving?' or 'When you do this project, how will you help others follow your presentation?' One 2nd grade student said to his partner, 'You might want to glue the objects. It needs to be neater.'

6. Both participants reflect and write. The learner writes notes on the conference - an opportunity to think about points and suggestions raised. For example, the learner may reflect on questions such as; Will changes make this work better or worse? What have I learned from this refocusing process? The critical friend writes to the learner with suggestions or advice that seem appropriate to the desired outcome. This part of the process is different from typical feedback situations in that the learner does not have to respond or make any decisions on the basis of the feedback. Instead, the learner reflects on the feedback without needing to defend the work to the critic” (Costa, Kallick, 1996, p. 50-51).

Roles and Responsibilities

Strong leadership from principals, as well as central administrative staff support, is essential for a successful peer coaching program. This leadership is manifested in priority setting, resource allocation, and logistics, as well as substantive and social leadership. Principals must engage in creative problem solving in order to deal with the time demands of the continuous study and analysis of teaching. Administrators need to commit to covering classes, providing substitutes on a regular basis, and explore scheduling alternatives to insure program success. In March of 1999 The National Staff Development Council released criteria for a professional development program that could serve as the basis for policy making in federal and state programs:

- 25% of a teacher’s time spent at school should be devoted to planning with other colleagues, writing curriculum, working on school

improvement plans, participating in study groups, new teacher mentoring, and observing and coaching one another.

- Professional development should be part of the routine of the day or week, professional activities should be “job-embedded.”
- School districts should devote 10% of their budget to staff development directly linked to improving student learning.
- A school district should reserve 30% of the funding spent on technology for training staff to use that technology (Lewis, 1999).

Because most staff development budgets will not sustain a peer coaching program and traditional staff development consultants, funding will have to focus primarily on peer coaching support and training (Joyce and Showers, 1985, p. 47).

One of the most important duties of a principal is the supervision of instruction with the emphasis on improving a teacher’s performance in the classroom (Lunenburg, 1998). Research and experience confirm the limitations of the short-term “training” staff development model (Falk, Ort, 1998). The National Science Foundation has funded projects that build collaborative learning communities which carry out teacher-directed classroom-based research, such as the Mathematics Teacher/Researchers Collaborating for Collaboration in the Classroom project (Tinto, 1998). If administrators are to establish a committed peer coaching program, he/she must demonstrate that they themselves value peer coaching (Garmston, 1987, p. 26). Principals can reduce pressure in peer coaching experiences through their own active participation, modeling collegiality

and professionalism. Phyllis Levenson Gingiss outlines facilitative management tactics (Gingiss, 1993) to include:

- 1) announcement of expectations that collegiality and coaching is part of the school's values;
- 2) modeling the process of professional collaboration;
- 3) sanctioning or rewarding the desired behavior by providing rewards and incentives such as credit and recognition for efforts;
- 4) serving as a program champion on campus, with the district office, and in the community;
- 5) arranging for the logistics of coaching.

The dividend of the administrator's investment (time and money) into a peer coaching program is a portfolio assessment system that is useful for both formative and summative applications (Weber, Somers, & Wurzbach, 1998). Authentic assessment such as exhibitions and portfolios, which are becoming more prevalent in student assessment, provide a rich source of information for administrators to assess teacher performance and professional growth (Jonson, Jones, 1998). Professional Development Plans (PDP) developed by Critical Friends Group participants provide administrators with the necessary documentation for their formative teacher evaluations.

Summary

The review of current literature and research support the following themes:

1. Clinical Supervision can provide a basic structure for a peer coaching model.
2. The Clinical Supervision model is a process which fosters improved instruction, collegiality, and confidence.
3. The Critical Friends Group model provides a detailed and structured outline for staff development, formative teacher assessment, and improved student learning.
4. The Critical Friends Group peer coaching program relies on the strong leadership of the principal's active participation, financing strategies, and modeling the process of professional collaboration.

CHAPTER III
PROCEDURES OF THE PROJECT

Purpose

The intent of this project was to develop a peer coaching model that would be implemented at Eastlake High School in the Lake Washington School District. The purpose of the model was to focus on inter-departmental involvement in peer coaching, mentoring, and assisting teachers and administrators in their formative assessment duties. The Critical Friends Group (CFG) peer coaching model, conceived by the Coalition of Essential Schools, was utilized to accomplish the goals of the project;

- 1) to increase collaboration, collegiality, and trust amongst the staff,
- 2) to improve instructional techniques, curriculum content, and student assessment,
- 3) to promote professional growth for all staff and academic growth for all students.

Chapter 3 explores the specific needs of Eastlake High School for a Critical Friends Group peer coaching model and describe the development and support for the project. A plan for the implementation of a CFG program at Eastlake High School will be presented. A survey will also be presented to assess and evaluate the effectiveness of the project.

Need For The Project

The faculty at Eastlake High School is a very eclectic group of individuals. Each member of the staff brings a unique set of knowledge, talent,

and personality which enriches their students' learning. As is the case with virtually any high school in The United States, Eastlake High School is changing. The changes that the staff and administration face are challenging and will require substantial support and remediation through staff development. The most significant changes include:

- 1- A staff initiated block program, which involves approximately twelve teachers and three hundred students - twenty five percent of the staff and student body. The new block program will begin September 1, 1999.
- 2- A new co-principalship model and new assistant principal. The new administration begins September 1, 1999.
- 3- A new direction in technology (entire school district) which involves replacing all Macintosh Computers with Compaq Personal Computers for all staff. The Eastlake High School Staff began receiving their new computers in October, 1998.
- 4- Implementing new Washington State learning and assessment requirements as mandated by the Lake Washington School District. The implementation of "Level Five" begins September 1, 1999.

The staff initiated program at Eastlake has been a controversial and philosophically divisive concept. Both sides agree that program's auspicious beginning produced a negative effect on staff trust. CFG's may provide a structure to rebuild whatever trust has been lost between the factions and provide a means to share in the common vision of improved student learning.

The new administrative team faces the challenge of gaining the acceptance and trust of the staff at Eastlake High School. Two of the three administrators are new to the building. The summative evaluation component of the Clinical Supervision Model utilized at Eastlake High School may be quite challenging to the new administration and the staff. The elements of familiarity and trust between the administrator and teacher must be developed in order for the clinical supervision model to be effective. CFG's could prove to be a most effective tool for new administrative personnel by providing a formative evaluation model. CFG's would allow the new administrators to operate within a supervisory framework which is already familiar with the participating CFG members. The remaining staff who require summative assessment would be evaluated by the principal who is already familiar with all staff members.

Society has become dependant upon the computer, especially educators. Changing from one computer format to another in the middle of the school year has been extremely challenging for the staff at Eastlake. Converting documents, learning new programs, and familiarizing ourselves with the hardware while maintaining all other aspects of the profession has produced many frustrated teachers. CFG's provide an excellent source of relief from the isolated frustration of managing new technology. Those familiar with the IBM Format in the CFG's become a great source of guidance to those CFG members only familiar with the Macintosh Format.

Similar to the challenges of introducing new technology to a staff, the new Washington State learning and assessment requirements can be confusing and

intimidating. Teachers within a CFG are more comfortable in asking questions about the new requirements. CFG's provide the perfect venue to discuss the implementation of new state requirements and to receive individual feedback in a non-threatening way.

Development And Support For The Project

Support from building and district administrators is paramount for the development of this project. Administrative support begins with the school's membership to the Coalition of Essential Schools and the school's commitment to the principles and beliefs of CES. Once the school has secured a charter with The Coalition of Essential Schools, administrators must recognize the value of the Critical Friends Group program and seek out members of their faculty who share those ideals. Once the administration identifies those teachers who are interested in pursuing the program, principals must engage in creative problem solving in order to set priorities, secure resources, create time, and provide ongoing leadership.

The ultimate success of a Critical Friends Group peer coaching model hinges on the support from the Coalition of Essential Schools. CES membership by the participating school is strongly recommended. The initial success of a CFG relies on the leadership and guidance of the CFG coach. Team coaches must be certified through intensive workshop training provided by the Coalition of Essential Schools. The workshop training (approximately 30 hours) provides future CFG coaches with the necessary materials and procedures to initiate the program. Collaboration with other certified CFG team coaches allows new team

coaches to draw from the expertise of more experienced team coaches.

Networking with other CFG team coaches from other schools provides a rich source of effective practices as well as information on certain practices that may have not been successful. Finally, support from the directors at the Northwest Coalition of Essential Schools directors affords the team coach to stay abreast of developing theories and practices within the CFG model.

Planned Implementation

Eastlake High School began its implementation of the Critical Friends Group Peer Coaching Program in November, 1998, and has established two CFG pods, consisting of six members in each pod and a team coach. The coaches have set the goal that each pod meets at least once a month for three hours. Initially, it is important that each pod engage in team building activities which help members to become better acquainted, build trust, and create a positive atmosphere within the CFG pod.

The next phase will be to establish operating procedures (Norms), a list which guides the group's efforts in maintaining a formal collaborative teaming structure (Beliefs and Structures), and a creed which is written and agreed to by the team (Pod Charter). All of these structures are essential to assure that the pods are well organized and are committed to the professional relationship of its' members.

The third phase of implementation will be to familiarize the team with the various protocols established by The Coalition which guide the process of examining instructional work, student work, and other professional work. It is

during this phase of planned implementation that CFG members should gain a real understanding of the professional and collegial benefits that a CFG can provide for its' members.

The last phase of planned implementation will be to evaluate the program through a survey completed by the CFG members at the end of the school year.

The findings of this survey will be presented to the building administrators for their evaluation of the CFG Program. The building administrators must determine:

- 1- Do CFG's foster collegiality amongst its' members?
- 2- Do CFG's promote improved instruction?
- 3- Do CFG's contribute to improved student learning?
- 4- Do CFG's facilitate formative teacher evaluation?

Assessment And Evaluation

Upon the completion of the 1998-1999 school year, a survey will be developed to assess the effectiveness of the CFG Program at Eastlake High School. Each member of a CFG pod will respond to the following questions:

1. How many times did you meet with your CFG this year?
2. How many meetings did you miss?
3. How many times did you present student work to you CFG?
4. How many times did you present your own work (units, lessons, issues, case studies, etc.)?
5. How often did you bring a text to your CFG to be discussed?
6. What are the protocols that you used? How many times each?

7. How often did you visit or observe a colleague?

CHAPTER IV

THE PROJECT

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop a peer coaching program for Eastlake High School based on the Critical Friends Group model created by The Coalition of Essential Schools, and is presented in the following pages of Chapter four.

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SECTION I

Organization and Planning for CFG's

Introduction

A Critical Friends Group (CFG) is a small group of educators who commit themselves to professional growth. The CFG usually consists of six to eight teachers who represent a variety of disciplines in the school, but may include other professionals in the school such as instructional aids, certified staff, or even administrators. Each member realizes that CFG's are not about evaluation, but rather supporting one another in their quest for professional development and improving the quality of education. To accomplish these goals the CFG strives to develop a foundation of trust and honesty so that colleagues are able to share their passions, anxieties, and visions for educational change.

The Coalition of Essential Schools

The Coalition of Essential Schools call broadly for schools to set clear and simple goals about the intellectual skills and knowledge to be mastered by all the schools' students; to lower teacher/student loads, personalize teaching and curriculum, and make student work the center of classroom activity; to award diplomas based on students' "exhibition" of their mastery of the schools' program; to create an atmosphere of trust and respect for the school, faculty, students and parents; and to accomplish such changes with no more than a 10 percent increase in the schools' budget.

Critical Friends Group Peer Coaching Training

The Coalition of Essential Schools Northwest has established a CFG Coach training workshop where schools (CES member schools and non-member schools) may send selected members of their staff to receive instruction on how to lead a CFG. Participants in the workshop undergo 30 hours of intensive training. Future CFG coaches are equipped with all of the necessary materials (presented in Section IV) and organized into “CFG Pods”. The newly formed CFG’s begin a series of trust building activities necessary for the success of the group. The directors of the workshop model CFG coaching behaviors and practices while the future CFG coaches participate as CFG members. For the next three to five days all participants are actively engaged in team and trust building, establishing group norms and expectations, teaching demonstrations, protocol work, and goal setting. At the conclusion of the workshop, each future CFG coach develops a plan for implementing CFG’s at their respective schools. The workshop encourages the new CFG coaches to maintain contact with the newly formed CFG members from the training as an additional source of support and networking.

Presenting to the Faculty

Teachers are very busy people. A common complaint of the teaching profession is that there is just too much to do - there is simply not enough time in the day to accomplish the endless tasks that are required of teachers. Even the most dedicated teacher will tell you that the last thing he/she needs is another meeting after school! Convincing your colleagues that joining a CFG will enrich their teaching experience will be a challenge. In order to gain support for CFG’s,

it is vital to help your staff understand how CFG's will improve their professional lives as well as enrich the learning experience of their students. By joining a CFG, teachers will:

- Create a supportive environment among colleagues
- Reduce teacher isolation
- Develop trust in the school culture
- Strengthen teaching through reflective practice
- Broaden the repertoire of instructional techniques
- Expand assessment techniques
- Develop effective observation skills
- Increase curriculum integration
- Establish higher standards for student work
- Initiate the construction of teacher portfolios
- Refine existing teaching practices
- Introduce the Professional Development Plan for teachers
- Raise awareness of critical educational issues
- Construct a local, regional, and national support network
- Promote whole-school change

A brief presentation at a staff meeting which outlines the numerous benefits for teaching professionals is the first step. Once you have peeked the interest of your colleagues, invite those who would like to know more about CFG's to attend another gathering which explains the program in more detail. Individual invitations can be left in each teacher's mail box in the main office, or a simple

invitation via email will do. It is suggested that the second meeting occur within a week of the initial introduction to the entire staff.

This second meeting should be less formal and it is recommended that the gathering include refreshments. Food and drink is an excellent motivator for attendance and provides the necessary nourishment for intellectual discourse!

Timing is everything, and this crucial second meeting is no exception. It is important to plan the meeting during a time of day that is most convenient to the staff. Don't forget the coaches and their practice schedules, nor the meetings of other school organizations. Now is a good time to solicit the support of building administrators to ensure maximum attendance. The "recruitment meeting" agenda might include the following:

- (10-15 minutes) Refreshments
- (5 minutes) Welcome staff and share agenda
- (20-30 minutes) Explain the dynamics of a "CFG Pod"
 - 1- A CFG Pod consists of six to eight teachers
 - 2- Heterogenous (teaching disciplines, years of experience, gender, age, etc.) dynamic of pod members
 - 3- Voluntary participation is essential
 - 4- Groups commit to meeting regularly (twice monthly is recommended)
 - 5- Explain the use of protocols, observations, text reviews
 - 6- Stress the importance of non-evaluative assistance
- (10-20 minutes) Answer staff questions

- (5 minutes) Circulate a roster for new CFG members

Organizing CFG Pods

Critical Friends Group are organized into “pods” of 6 to 8 members, including the trained CFG coach (Eastlake High School currently has two pods of 6 and 7 members). Each CFG will operate independently to allow flexibility in determining their individual focus, goals, schedules for meetings, and operating norms. Each CFG coach within a school will organize a secondary pod of coaches to coordinate a systemized experience across the CFG pods in the school to assure alignment through common readings and issues which facilitate whole school change.

An important goal of CFG’s is to provide teachers relief from the professional isolation that is dominant in their profession. Because of teacher isolation, it is very difficult for educators to break away from the limited options for effective and long-term professional growth. Heterogeneous registration is a vital dynamic in forming CFG pods. Heterogeneous membership includes gender, background, age, teaching experience, and interdisciplinary focus. There is no formula to achieve an optimal mix for CFG pods. Because participation in the program is strictly voluntary, CFG coaches must work with the pool of volunteers that exists.

The interdisciplinary focus of forming pods is one of the most significant strengths of CFG’s. The diversity of membership provides a wealth of insights and experiences that is usually not available in the teaching profession. A heterogeneous CFG pod will afford members the opportunity to engage with

colleagues from other departments and disciplines - something that rarely occurs in the course of a typical school day. Participants should be debriefed on the importance of heterogeneous groups and told that the program director reserves the right to mix and match the members in order to create a diverse CFG pod.

Although diversity is an important dynamic of CFG pods, the inclusion of other stakeholders such as administrators and classified staff is not recommended for teacher CFG pods. The rationale is that this would compromise the chemistry and objective of teachers supporting teachers. Due to the candid nature of conversations within a pod and the objective of non-evaluative classroom observations, a high degree of trust among its members is paramount. By definition, administrators remain in the official position of power within the school's hierarchy, and their duties include the formal evaluation of staff. Administrators are encouraged to initiate an administrator's pod and retain their own self-perceived needs for professional growth.

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SECTION II

Specific Preparation Tasks for a CFG

The Learning Phase

Once CFG's have been organized, specific preparation tasks are identified which serve as a means to achieving the ultimate goal of CFG's - increased student learning. Each task addresses three levels of participation in the peer coaching program; individual professional goals, CFG goals, and whole school goals. The learning phase is the first of two phases which organizes the specific preparation tasks for a CFG sequentially:

1. Team Building (trust building practiced)
2. Collegial Support Group Developed
3. Protocols Understood and Practiced
4. Educational Issues Discussed
5. Teaching Portfolio and Professional Development Plan (PDP)

Created

1. Team Building (trust building practiced)

In establishing trust, The CFG coach must be patient in developing trust amongst the members in the CFG pod. The pacing of a developing CFG is a vital component to successful planning. It will be difficult for each member to resist the temptation to do too much too fast. The coach should facilitate team building activities that emphasize trust and minimize anxious expectation. The developing CFG will have the tendency to run before they learn to walk. CFG norms (detailed in Section IV) serve as a self-assessment tool in maintaining steady,

consistent progress in trust development. The individual must trust himself/herself, the CFG must learn to trust each other, and the school as a whole must learn to trust its established operating principles.

2. Collegial Support

As team building and trust building develop, CFG members begin to realize the goal of collegial support. Individual teachers find greater satisfaction in sharing their teaching experiences with their CFG colleagues as well as other teachers in the building. A major benefit of CFG's is destroying the teacher isolation that has been a prominent adversary in the teaching profession. CFG's not only encourage partnerships in teaching amongst its members, but foster collegiality with entire school staff. An important dynamic of CFG's is extending collegial support to all teachers. Reserving this support for CFG members only is self-defeating and goes against the trust levels of professional development - individual, CFG, and whole school improvement.

3. Protocols Understood and Practiced

Protocols serve as a protective procedure for professional development. Without established rules of the game, chaos is the end result. Just as important as the rules themselves, respecting the rules and enforcing the rules determine the level of success with each CFG activity. Participants need to respect the purpose of following protocols and resist the temptation of shortcuts or alterations. Coaches have the responsibility of enforcing the procedures, quickly righting any deviation, no matter how slight they may be. Professional readings, lesson plan analysis, student work observations, and teacher observations place the presenter

in a vulnerable position. Individual trust in the chosen protocol, trust in CFG member participation with the protocol, and sharing the results with the whole school hinge on the procedural function of protocols.

4. Educational Issues Discussed

Discussing educational issues presents a great opportunity for CFG members to explore the dynamics of a text-based protocol (and protocols in general) with a low level of personal risk. It is suggested that CFG's utilize educational issues as a warm-up to familiarize themselves with protocol procedure. That is not to say there is no vulnerability associated with discussing educational issues. Philosophical discussion will be the first test in trust with a developing CFG. Another important aspect that discussing educational issues plays in the new CFG is how these issues may affect the direction of an individual member, the CFG, and even the school as a whole. Educational issues provide a source of innovation in professional and educational development.

5. Teaching Portfolio and Professional Development Plan (PDP) Created

Participants in CFG's will begin an important component in their professional development by gathering materials to be placed in a teaching portfolio. Artifacts such as lesson and unit plans, student work, teacher observation data, educational issues, and personal reflections on the CFG process will provide the substance of the participant's Professional Development Plan (PDP). The PDP is an important product of CFG's which facilitates the teacher's formative assessment process with his/her administrator. The advantages of using a PDP in formative assessment are numerous:

- 1) The PDP provides the administrator an accurate and comprehensive document to assess the teacher's professional development and progress.
- 2) PDP's promote and establish a teacher as being more self-sustaining with respect to assessment and evaluation. PDP's free the administrator from the planning duties associated with traditional formative assessment procedures.
- 3) PDP's reaffirm the utility and value of the CFG program for administrators.
- 4) Because the PDP is integrated with the teaching portfolio, teachers have even greater "buy-in" with the formative evaluation process.
- 5) PDP's are more integrated with the objectives and goals of other teachers in the building due to their collaborative origin.
- 6) Due to the ongoing commitment of participants to the CFG program, PDP's produce a more enduring and continuous formative assessment plan than traditional yearly plans. This further reduces the time spent with administrators in the planning phase of formative assessment.
- 7) The teacher portfolio and Professional Development Plan provide a model for teachers to develop student portfolio assessment practices.

The Practice Phase

The Practice Phase of specific preparation tasks for a CFG involves an increase in participation with the activities utilized by the CFG peer coaching program. In the practice phase CFG's are actively engaged in criticizing student work, rehearsing and learning new teaching strategies, and developing peer observation skills - all of which rely heavily on established protocols. CFG

participation at this level assumes that the participants have satisfactorily developed the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes outlined in the Learning Phase.

6. Student Work Critiqued

Each participant will be expected to present a piece of student work to the group. Although examining a piece of student work may seem less risky than peer observations or refining teaching strategies, that is not necessarily true. CFG members realize that student work critiqued goes far beyond how a particular student performed on an assignment or exam. Critiques of student work consider a variety of factors such as lesson/unit design and sequencing, instructional strategies utilized by the teacher, student learning activities, assessment tools and rubric design, time allocation, etc.. The presenter realizes, that to a varying degree, student work is a reflection of the teacher him/herself. Keeping in mind that the ultimate goal of CFG's is improved student learning, student work critiques place the presenting teacher in a very vulnerable position.

7. Teaching Strategies Learned and Rehearsed

Teaching strategies learned and rehearsed in a CFG represent one of the most rewarding aspects of the peer coaching program. Teacher isolation retards the development of new teaching techniques which leaves the teacher with a limited repertoire to work. Learning new approaches to teaching relatively static curriculum content can rejuvenate the tired teacher. One of the most appealing aspects of our profession is the freedom we are given to present required

curriculum to our students. The content that we must cover in a school year is relatively restricted, but the approaches that we can employ are limitless!

One of the most important tasks for Critical Friends Group coaches is to introduce and/or demonstrate effective and diverse teaching strategies. The task is not necessarily to present a technique which has never been heard of before by the group, but to simply demonstrate the when, why, and how of a teaching strategy that has been effective in achieving increased student learning. If done effectively, the coach “gets the ball rolling” in such a way that other CFG members invite the opportunity to share a particular approach that has been successful for them. Even the most inexperienced member can contribute to the revitalization of the group. To assure equal participation in this task, the coach will establish a teaching strategies schedule which is agreeable to the group.

8. Peer Observations Arranged and Debriefed

Peer observations provide a natural progression and forum to demonstrate the teaching strategies that are learned and rehearsed in a CFG. Each participant is expected to observe colleagues’ classrooms on a regular basis. Due to the high degree of vulnerability associated with classroom observations from visiting administrators, great care must be taken to erase past experiences and establish new one’s based on trust. Once again, protocols play a vital role in assuring the participants’ safety and positive results.

For a CFG pod of eight members, it is suggested that the pod divide into two subgroups in order to maximize participation as an observer and observee. Colleagues from subgroup A would be able to visit each teacher’s classroom in

subgroup B in a month, provided that classroom observations take place once a week. The next month, teachers from subgroup B would visit each of the teacher's classrooms from subgroup A. The next two months, participants would rotate within their subgroups. In a 4 month period, each CFG member would have the opportunity to visit everyone's classroom and be visited by every member, leaving 2 "flex weeks" to accommodate for scheduling anomalies. This schedule would allow each CFG member to visit, and be visited by everyone twice in a school year.

The frequency of classroom observations is dependant upon the administrative support. In order that participants are provided the time necessary for pre-conferencing, observations, and debriefing, release time is essential. As discussed earlier in Chapter 2, Administrators must be creative in establishing a staff development budget that supports the CFG program.

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SECTION III

Goals and Expectations

This section will outline the goals and expectations of the CFG peer coaching model. CFG's, coaches, CFG members, administrators, and students are the key players in this peer coaching model. The duties and expectations of each is vital to the success of the program. It is suggested that these goals and expectations be included with the other CFG printed materials, which are provided to the participants in the program.

Expected Outcomes for CFG Coaches

- 1. Facilitate Meetings:** The coach of a Critical Friends Group acts as the principal of the pod. The coach is responsible for organizing and facilitating each CFG meeting. The coach will remind CFG members of all meetings, provide a printed agenda for the meeting, and facilitate (directly or indirectly) all meeting activities.
- 2. Use a Variety of Strategies:** As facilitator of each CFG meeting, coaches will be responsible for creating each meetings agenda based on the progress and needs of it's members. An important consideration for coaches is to provide her/his group with a variety of activities and approaches to accomplish the goals of the group. Variety of strategies and active participation by members will contribute to continued involvement of CFG members.
- 3. Deal Effectively with Controversy:** The coach is the leader of the CFG and must be able to address controversy immediately. The high level of trust which a CFG depends upon is protected by the decisiveness and direct intervention of the

coach in all controversial matters. The efficiency in dealing with controversy modeled by the coach will help direct appropriate behavior amongst CFG members and reduce the occurrence of controversy.

4. Serve as a Resource for Whole School Change: A professional goal of CFG coaches is to stay abreast of innovative educational issues which address whole school change. Educational issues are discussed regularly in CFG meetings. The focus of these discussions is change at the personal, CFG, and whole school levels.

5. Serve as an Advocate for CFG Members: The administrative role of a CFG coach within the group includes serving his/her members as an advisor. The coach will act as a conflict mediator within the CFG as well as advocate for CFG members at the whole school level.

6. Collaborate with the School Principal: A CFG coach is actively involved in whole school change with building administrators. Coaches should debrief administrators on issues that arise in CFG's which address whole school change as well as communicate administrative decisions on such issues with CFG members.

7. Networking Activities: Coaches will be actively involved in networking activities with other CFG coaches within the building, other CFG coaches in the region, and with the Coalition of Essential Schools Northwest Center.

Expected Outcomes for CFG Members

1. Participate and Contribute: Each CFG member makes the commitment regularly attend meetings, to participate in all CFG activities, and to work towards achieving personal professional goals.

2. Ability to be Reflective: Participants will strive to improve their own teaching practices by developing reflective skills. Learning how to receive feedback from colleagues is a vital component for personal and professional growth in the peer coaching program.

3. Develop Documenting Skills: An important function of CFG's in the school is the development of teaching portfolios and the Professional Development Plan (PDP). Participants will be expected to document, with increasing accuracy, their participation in CFG's as well as their teaching practices in the classroom.

Documenting student progress serves as an important assessment and rationale for the CFG program.

4. Develop Analyzing Skills: In conjunction with developing documenting skills, participants must be able to analyze their documentation in determining their course of action for future teaching practices. Developing reflective skills is an important part of this expectation.

5. Exhibit Collaborative Behaviors: One of the main objectives of the CFG peer coaching program is to destroy teacher insolation and increase collaboration with peers. Once a participant develops collaborative behaviors within the CFG, members are able to transfer those behaviors to the whole school environment. It

is understood that competitive behavior has no place within the teaching community.

6. Articulate the Standards of Student Achievement: CFG members are expected to understand and incorporate the learning objectives of the school and school district. An objective of CFG's is not to develop different learning standards than those endorsed by the school and district, but to develop and explore new ways to accomplish those student achievement goals.

7. Participate in Regional Networking: CFG members are expected to attend and participate in regional networking events and activities sponsored by the Coalition of Essential Schools Northwest Center.

Expected Outcomes for Principals

1. Assist Teacher Leaders: Administrative support of CFG coaches is essential in establishing the CFG program as a legitimate institution within the school. In order to be an effective coach and leader, these people must be confident in their leadership role. Official validation from the building administrators provides CFG coaches with additional confidence and effectiveness to perform their duties in the program.

2. Serve as Advocate for CFG's: Unless building administrators buy in to the concept of the Critical Friends Group peer coaching program, CFG's will be little more than another fleeting staff development project. Administrators must place CFG's at the top of their staff development priority list to assure its establishment as an enduring program in the school. Administrators must also seek the support

3. Provide Support for Coaches: Assuming that building administrators are philosophically supportive of the CFG program, they must confirm their support with adequate funding. Financial support is particularly important in the first two years of the program. Administrators must understand the growth dynamics of a CFG peer coaching program, realizing that the first two years require a significant financial commitment while offering limited returns. Before the dividends of Professional Development Plans for formative assessment and measured student achievement are realized, a significant investment in time and money must be made. CFG coach training, release time for classroom observations, networking conference expenses, and CFG activity materials must be financed to assure the exponential benefits of a CFG program in the coming years.

4. Shared Responsibility and Leadership with CFG Coaches: The function of a CFG coach is comparable to that of a department chairperson. Administrators and CFG coaches will establish a reciprocal relationship where coaches assist administrators in their formative assessment duties and administrators extend financial resources and whole school priority status. Much like a department chairperson, a CFG coach will be responsible for operating within an established budget, facilitating PDP development, and documenting student achievement. Administrators will address and respond to educational issues generated within CFG's that promote whole school change.

5. Share in the Responsibility and Leadership for School Change:

Administrators understand the importance of voluntary participation in CFG's by the staff. If the CFG peer coaching program is to become a permanent institution

5. Share in the Responsibility and Leadership for School Change:

Administrators understand the importance of voluntary participation in CFG's by the staff. If the CFG peer coaching program is to become a permanent institution in the school, administrators must take the role of facilitator to encourage full staff participation. Ultimately, the future of a CFG program relies on the leadership of the Principal.

6. Participate in Regional Networking: Principals should actively participate in district and regional networking events sponsored by CES.

General Goals of the CFG's

1. Improve Academic Success: The most important outcome of any educational program is improved student achievement. Students whose teachers are active participants in a CFG will reflect the personal and professional enrichment of their educators in their academic work. Virtually every aspect of a student's academic experience will be enhanced (directly and indirectly) through a well established CFG program in the school.

2. Empower Teachers: The main objective of CFG's with respect to teacher empowerment is to reduce teacher insolation and establish a collaborative working environment where teachers are exposed to innovative educational practices and given the autonomy to fully develop those practices.

3. Alter the Leadership Structure: CFG's do not seek a radical reconstruction of a school's leadership structure, but rather extends the site-based management model to include CFG coaches at the department chairperson level and identify CFG's as an operating body similar to a department discipline. CFG's also seek

to assist administrators in their formative assessment duties through utilization of the Professional Development Plan.

4. Sustained Professional Growth: Critical Friends Groups represent and alternative to traditional staff development approaches. CFG's are simply teachers teaching teachers. The program seeks to establish a program where colleagues explore and improve their professional skills through peer observation and coaching. There are no consultants who stop by, unload their material, and leave. Instead, the experts are teachers who are in the building every day and are able to sustain the professional growth of their colleagues for the entire school year.

5. Facilitate Networking: CFG's are connected to a larger family of educators (CES) that offers a large and powerful source of innovative educational information to it's members. The Coalition of Essential Schools provides a forum comparable to a cooperative learning environment for teachers on a national level.

6. Advance Whole School Change: Critical Friends Groups seek to initiate whole school change that begins with the teachers and ends with the superintendent. CFG's operate on the premise that teachers know best what teachers need to be successful in the classroom - to promote student achievement. The CFG peer coaching model initiates whole school change, not through the efforts of one individual but, through the collaborative efforts of a group of teachers. Once the success of the individual CFG is demonstrated to the whole school, it is theorized that others will become interested in joining the program - resulting in whole school change.

Ultimately, students whose teachers participate in the CFG program will exhibit improved performance on school assignments and projects, develop student portfolios and demonstrations which address whole school assessment, and have greater success on standardized tests.

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SECTION IV

Tools for a Developing CFG

Guidelines for Receiving Feedback

The following are techniques to help teachers deal with their own defensiveness so that they can make use of criticism when it is offered.

How to Process Feedback

- Listen carefully. Don't interrupt or discourage the person offering criticism.
- Think about what has been said. Do you understand why the person feels the way they do?
- Ask for specifics if the statement is general. "Can you tell me what I do or say that makes me appear so aggressive?"
- Let the other person know that you have heard and understood what they have said, whether you agree with it or not.
- Paraphrase the feedback in your own words.
- Empathizing with the criticism is helpful for understanding the other person's viewpoint and reducing defensiveness. "I can see how my statement could make you feel upset."
- Ask what you could do differently in the future if you are not sure. Be sure you know why their suggestion would be better.
- If not sure, ask for time to think about it. "That's heavy. I need a moment to think about it." Do this whenever you need to (but don't use it as an escape hatch).

How to Evaluate the Criticism - Questions to ask yourself

- Am I being asked to change something I am capable of changing?
 - Am I willing to work at changing it?
 - What is true in what the person is saying? What is not true?
 - What are the consequences of changing and of not changing?
-

How to Respond

- Don't deny it.
- Agree with the truth in the statement. "I find certain things you say to be quite true."
- Agree in principle. "I guess I do lose my temper a little too easily."
- If nothing else, agree that the criticism is their perception. "I can see that you see me as domineering."
- If you agree and are willing to make changes, say so.
- Apologize if appropriate but don't beg forgiveness. Then try to change the situation and enlist the other person's help if you want.
- If you disagree with the criticism, say so and explain the situation as you see it.
- Maintain an open atmosphere and try to problem-solve a solution that meets both your needs.
- Get a third party to help if necessary.

Creating and Reducing Defensiveness

The research of Dr. Jack Gibb has identified several types of behavior that often produce defensive people. Depending on how insecure a person is at the time, these behaviors may or may not be perceived as a threat to his/her self-

The following list of behaviors reduce defensiveness and support the self-concept. These behaviors, also reciprocal, encourage a sense of safety and reduce threat.

Categories of Defensive and Supportive Behaviors

Defensive Behaviors

Evaluation
Control
Indifference
Superiority
Certainty
Strategy
Ignore

Supportive Behaviors

Description
Share problem
Empathy
Equality
Openness
Spontaneity
Acknowledge

Judging, evaluating, or criticizing the person, rather than their ideas or actions.

Evaluation

“That was a dumb thing to say!”

Description

“When you point your finger and speak to me I have a hard hard time listening to your criticism.”

Telling others what to do or how to do it, rather than working to find a shared solution to the problem.

Control

“June, have this report typed by noon.”

Problem Sharing

“This report is a priority item. What does the rest of your workload look like this morning?”

An attitude of detachment, neutrality, or lack of concern for the other, rather than making an effort to see from the other’s perspective and accept (not necessarily agree with) the other’s feelings.

Indifference

A neutral, clinical, cool approach

Conveying an attitude of being better (smarter, richer, prettier, more important than the other person rather than affirming the intrinsic and special worth of each person).

Empathy

A warm and caring approach

Superiority

An arrogant posture

Dogmatically knowing “the one right way to do things,” rather than considering other possible ways to do something.

Equality

A respectful stance

Certainty

“You have nothing to offer.”

Manipulating someone into doing something for you, rather than being honest about what you want to communicate.

Openness

“I’m interested in your ideas too”.

Strategy

“Wouldn’t you like to go out shopping tonight?”

Disregarding another’s contributions or responding in a seemingly unrelated way, rather than reacting directly to them and responding relevantly.

Spontaneity

“I’m looking for a ride to the store. Can you help me out tonight?”

Ignore

Switching topics, talking over another.

Acknowledge

Building on one another’s comments.

Team Building Activities

Techniques that assist CFG's to increase collegiality and trust.

PERSONAL ARTIFACT

Have each member in the CFG select one personal artifact from his/her purse, wallet, briefcase, body (jewelry, tattoo!, etc.) - whatever they may have with them. Group members take turns explaining why they chose this particular artifact to share - why the artifact is meaningful to them. The activity should be spontaneous and completed quickly. A debriefing conversation about insights gained is optional. A variation on this activity is to assign it in advance so that members may have time to choose a particularly significant artifact to share, not necessarily one they carry with them.

NAME PLATES

Provide CFG members with construction paper (or have members fold an 8 1/2" x 11" piece of blank paper) and a set of colored felt pens to create a name plate. Allow members to decorate their name plates using these three guidelines (or others you conceive):

1. boldly write your name
2. create a symbol for how you learn best and illustrate it
3. illustrate three passions you have in life

Allow members to interpret these guidelines any way they wish. When completed, have all members of the small group display and share their nameplates. You may wish to continue to use the name plates until it is felt that they no longer serve a purpose.

SCAVENGER HUNT

Ask each CFG member to write three remarkable facts about themselves - e.g. family history, exotic travels, accomplishments, hobbies/interests, incidents, on an index card and submit the facts to a facilitator. Depending on the size of the group, compile a jigsawed master list of the most remarkable, outlandish, and/or out-of-character-type facts and distribute it to the whole group at the next meeting (or later in the same meeting, if the agenda allows). Tell the members to mingle and try to discover who submitted each remarkable fact on the list. This should be done by allowing members to question each other until all scavenger lists are completed, but only to inquire about specific facts - "Jerry, are you the one who climbed Mt. Everest?", rather than an open-ended question - Jerry, which facts on this list belong to you?" A general debriefing on the list or a group vote on the most remarkable fact from the entire list may be beneficial as follow-up.

COMMONALITY FLOWERS

Ask the CFG members to identify two personal characteristics that they feel make them unique. Provide oblong colored paper (in the shape of petals on a giant flower) and distribute to each member. Have members write their unique characteristic on their "petal." Have all members share with the group why they included each characteristic. Using a larger piece of poster paper, have members then secure their petals in a circle - in the form of petals that surround the center of a flower. Once each petal has been placed around the flower, facilitate a conversation with the group to generate 6-8 commonalities that the members share. Write each commonality in the center of the flower on that background and create a flower - stems and leaves are optional! Discuss uniqueness and commonalities and how each contributes to an effective group. Display your flower.

TRUTH, TRUTH, LIE

Ask CFG members to share three statements with the group. Tell them to make two true statements and one false statement - it is best if the lie is as believable or realistic as possible. It also works best if the three statements are from a similar category - e.g. people i've met, things I've done, places I've been. Or create statements worded conversely: "Here are three things I have never done", (only one you have never done), "three places I have never been". The group members then discuss what they think is true and what is not about each member sharing. The goal is to dig out the lie from among the truths - the more startling the truths, obviously, the better. Proceed around the circle. A silly prize for stumping the group or a vote on the most outlandish lie is optional - but fun!

GREAT TEAMS

Define what a team is: “Any group of people who need each other to accomplish a result.” Select a timekeeper, whose job is to keep the group on schedule.

Instruct CFG members that they have 5 minutes to describe (on a piece of paper you provide) as fully as they can a great team experience they have had. Ask them to describe the event or purpose for the team and why the experience was so satisfying for them. Take 15 minutes to go around the circle and allow each person to describe his/her great team experience. Instruct the listeners to jot down commonalities as they listen. Finally, take 5 more minutes to allow each member to share the commonalities they wrote down.

Connections Activity

A great way to get off to a good start in CFG meetings is to begin with the Connections Activity. This “whip” activity should take no longer than 10 minutes. Each CFG member is given the opportunity to tell the group “where he/she is coming from.” Often we bring baggage from the days events and that can interfere with our concentration, making it difficult to engage in meaningful dialog. By telling the group, in a minute or less, what is on their mind as they enter the meeting, CFG members are more likely to understand their colleagues emotional state at that particular moment. If a participant expresses him/herself as having a bad day, members of the group should extend a degree of empathy that is appropriate - especially if that person is presenting and will be the recipient of cool or hard feedback. If a CFG member shares a negative experience that he/she is dealing with, the message is “go easy on me, I’m having a rough day.”

Beliefs and Structures for Beginning CFG's

The Beliefs and Structures exercise facilitates CFG members to write a "Pod Charter" (following exercise).

1. Choose a timekeeper and a recorder; both will participate in the discussion.
2. (10 minutes) The question is: "If structured teacher collaboration is so successful and important in schools, why hasn't it become a key part of school culture?" Brainstorm answers using the "whip" method (each CFG member making a comment as the flow of the conversation moves from one person to the next). Going around the table as many times as necessary before the 10 minutes are up, each person offers one answer to the question at a time. The recorder notes each offering in summary form.
3. (20 minutes) Based on the answers to the question that has been recorded (and using what the group has learned from the "Great Teams" activity), develop a poster which lists the beliefs and structures that would enable formal collaborative teaming, becoming an integral part of the school culture.

A suggested organization of the poster:

Title: A school culture which sustains CFG's

BELIEFS OF STAFF, STUDENTS

SCHOOL STRUCTURES WHICH

& PARENTS TO SUPPORT CFG'S

SUPPORT CFG'S

1.

1.

2.

2.

3.

3.

4.

4.

5.

5.

Pod Charter

The Pod Charter is a document written by the newly formed CFG which identifies a set of beliefs shared by its members. The intent of the document is to facilitate a safe, supportive, and productive environment in which CFG members nurture their professional growth. The document serves as a creed to be followed and a visual reminder of what it is that the members wish to accomplish in the CFG.

There are several approaches to producing the Pod Charter. The CFG members may utilize the previously mentioned Beliefs and Structures activity. In this approach, participants discuss and identify (verbally) those beliefs that are shared and which characterize their charter. Another approach is to gather two beliefs from each member in written form. Members simply write down two separate beliefs on two index cards. The cards are gathered and paired with other cards stating a similar belief or ideal. Once the cards have been mutually “categorized” by the CFG, a designated member writes them down in such a way that everyone is in agreement with the wording of each belief. CFG’s may also create a name for their pod and charter at this time.

Sample of a Pod Charter

Plateau Pod Charter

We have agreed to belong to a learning pod for the purpose of nurturing friendships and professional growth. In order to facilitate a safe, supportive and productive environment we have agreed:

1. to regular, purposeful meeting times and structures (to follow norms)
2. to visiting each others' classes on a regular basis for professional improvement
3. to never consciously violate the trust by word or deed
4. to never initiate any form of critique without invitation and then only in the areas requested
5. to focus and challenge ourselves and each other
6. to bring our energy to the group and schedule time for assignments
7. to begin each meeting with the "connections" activity without engaging in conversations
8. To begin to create a process portfolio of our professional work
9. to collect data to show that our work has improved student learning

Signatures of pod members:

Critical Assumptions Underlying School Improvement

1. The fundamental unit of change is the whole school.
2. The focus of the school should be on improving learning for every student; the success of any school comes down to the efficacy of the transaction between the teacher, his/her student and the knowledge/skill being studied.
3. Decisions on program improvement to raise student achievement should be driven by data and documentation in a variety of forms.
4. Professional development must be viewed as on-going, sustained and taking place most often at the school site; that is, schools need to build capacity for improving their work and their school.
5. Networks in the school and among schools help every school improve.
6. The change process is nonlinear/nonsequential.

The following are “implementation themes,” all of which need to be restructured at the same time, as suggested by MacMullen’s research of 149 CES or like-minded school studies:

- a. ESTABLISH AN INTELLECTUAL FOCUS - habits of mind, heart and work
- b. GIVE DUAL EMPHASIS ON CLASSROOM PRACTICE AND WHOLE SCHOOL ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE
- c. ESTABLISH A COMMUNITY FOCUS - personalization, collaboration of all stakeholders; bias-free school
- d. DEFINE AND MAINTAIN THE VISION
(guided by the 10 Common Principles)

e. ESTABLISH A STRONG PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATIVE
COMMUNITY

- INTERACTIVE WORK STRUCTURES
- HABITS OF CRITICAL REFLECTION - informed by data
- COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY - teachers must believe in their own

efficacy. In good schools, teachers truly believe that what they do for students changes outcomes (student achievement, ethos of caring, etc.)

f. EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT - focused on
improving student learning

g. NECESSARY SUPPORTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND
GROWTH

- effective school, district, board leadership
- parental involvement
- school networks (critical friendships)

h. CURRICULUM/INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENTS - link
authentic instruction (documented) to increase intellectual capacity of
students (1995 Nels 88 study, Lee et. al.)

- a. Authentic instruction
- b. A narrow, common curriculum, offering little variability
in academic courses
- c. Collective responsibility of the staff for student learning
- d. Steady pressure on students to pursue academic
excellence

CONSULTANCY PROTOCOL

Time: At least 60 minutes

Role: Presenter (whose work is being discussed by the group)

Facilitator (who also participates)

Specifics:

1. (10 minutes) The presenters give a quick overview of their work. They highlight the major issues or problems with which they are struggling, and frame a question for the consultancy group to consider. The framing of this question, as well as the quality of the presenters' reflection on the work and/or issues being discussed, are key features of this protocol.
2. (5 minutes) The consultancy group asks clarifying questions of the presenters - that is, questions that have brief, factual answers.
3. (10 minutes) The group then asks probing questions of the presenters - these questions should be worded so that they help the presenters clarify and expand their thinking about the issues and questions they raised for the consultancy group. The goal here is for the presenters to learn more about the question they framed and to do some analysis of the issues they presented. The presenters respond to the group's questions, but there is no discussion by the larger group of the presenter's responses.
4. (20 minutes) The group then talks with each other about the work and issues presented. What did we hear? What didn't we hear that we needed to know more about? What do we think about the questions and issues presented? The

conversation should include both “warm” and “cool” comments. The presenters are not allowed to speak during this discussion, but instead listen and take notes.

5. (10-15 minutes) The presenters then respond to what they heard. A whole group discussion might then take place, depending on the time allotted.

6. (5-10 minutes) The facilitator leads a brief conversation about the group’s observations of the process.

Some Helpful Hints:

Step 1: The success of the consultancy often depends on the quality of the presenters’ reflection in Step 1, as well as on the quality and authenticity of the question framed for the consultancy group. However, it is not uncommon for presenters, at the end of a consultancy, to say, “now I know what my real question is.” That is OK, too. It is sometimes helpful for the presenters to prepare ahead of time a brief (one-two page) written description of the issues for the consultancy group to read as part of Step 1.

Steps 2 & 3: Clarifying questions are for the person asking them. They ask the presenters “who, what, where, when and how.” These are not “why” questions. They can be answered quickly and succinctly, often with a phrase or two.

Step 4: When the group talks while the presenters listen, it is helpful for the presenters to pull their chairs back slightly away from the group. It is OK for the consultancy group to talk about the presenters in the third person, almost as if they are not there. As awkward as this may feel at first, it often opens up a richer conversation, and it is only for 15 minutes! Remember that it is the group’s job to

offer an analysis of the issues presented. It is not necessary to solve the problem or to offer a definitive answer.

It is important for the presenters to listen in a non-defensive manner.

Listen for new ideas, perspectives, and approaches. Listen to the group's analysis of your question/issues. Listen for assumptions - both your own and the group's - implicit in the conversation. Don't listen for the judgement of you by the group.

This is not supposed to be about you, but about a question you have raised.

Remember that you asked the group to help you with this question or set of issues.

Step 5: The point of this time period is not for the presenters to give a "blow by blow" response to the group's conversation, nor is it to defend or further explain themselves. Rather, this is a time for the presenters to talk about what were, for them, the most significant comments, ideas and questions they heard. They can also share any new thoughts or questions they had while listening to the consultancy group.

Step 6: Debriefing the process is key. Don't short change this step!

DESCRIPTIVE REVIEW PROTOCOL

Time: At least 40 minutes

Roles: Presenter (brings a piece of work for review by the group)

Facilitator (leads rounds with leading questions about the work).

Specifics:

1. (5 minutes) The presenter gives a quick introduction to the piece of work, perhaps highlighting the major questions or problems with which they are struggling. They then ask the group members to tell them what each of them sees. They might be quite specific in telling the group what they want them to look for in the work (i.e. the underlying values and principles, the habits of the mind that are demonstrated, the bias or assumptions).
2. (5 minutes) The group asks clarifying questions of the presenters.
3. The facilitator begins the first round of description by posing the question: What do you see? or Describe the work physically. Or Describe what you read as literally as possible.
4. The facilitator then frames each subsequent round with a question, calling at first for a fairly literal retelling of the work. Subsequent rounds are less literal and are more likely to move into assumptions, values, compromises, patterns, images, etc. The purpose for each round is built on the results or feedback from the previous round. A round may be repeated to obtain substantive responses.
5. Following the final restatement, participants are invited to offer suggestions or make recommendations to the presenter, and the presenter is invited to share with

participants any new insights or thoughts they have had as a result of listening to the participants' "descriptions."

6. The facilitator leads a brief reflection on the process.

Descriptive Review of Student Work Through Some Guiding Questions:

The questions selected to guide the Descriptive Review are critical to its success.

When people are learning to do this type of review they seem to do best with questions that elicit literal description. Literal description questions are also important to use to set the stage for any Descriptive Review. Questions that include assumptions, identification of patterns, images, values, come later in the process. It is important that questions serve what is intended in reviewing the work. Questions that work well when reviewing student work may not work so well when reviewing curriculum design for example. The following are some suggested questions to help facilitators frame each round. It is a partial list and meant only as a starting point.

1. What do you see before you?
2. What do you see in this work?
3. What is being communicated by the student? Content? Process?
4. What skills/knowledge do you see in evidence?
5. What skills did the student use in order to do this work?
6. What did the teacher seem to expect the students to know or understand?
7. What did the teacher appear to value? The student?
8. What were the teacher's expectations?

9. What is in the work that connects to the students' real life?
10. What do we know about the student's thought process? The teacher's?
11. What about the work seems "finished?" (somewhat evaluative)
12. Would you think this piece was a beginning or culminating piece of work?

What evidence do you see for one or the other?

13. What evidence of authenticity do you see in this work?
14. What emotions are being communicated by the student?

Time: Varies according to need, 15-60 minutes

Materials: Chalk board and chalk or paper roll on the wall and markers.

Specifics:

A Chalk Talk can be an uncomplicated silent reflection or a spirited, but silent, exchange of ideas. It has been known to solve vexing problems, surprise everyone with how much is collectively known about something, get an entire project planned, or give a committee everything it needs to know with no verbal sparring.

1. The facilitator explains VERY BRIEFLY that chalk talk is a silent activity.

No one may talk at all and anyone may add to the chalk talk as they please. You can comment on other people's ideas simply by drawing a connecting line to the comment. *It can also be very effective to say nothing at all except to put finger to lips in a gesture of silence and simply begin with #2.*

2. The facilitator writes a relevant question in a circle on the board. Sample

Questions:

What do you think about social responsibility and schooling?

How can we keep the noise level down in your room?

What do your students know about Croatia?

How can we improve the learning community here at school?

etc.

3. The facilitator either hands a piece of chalk to everyone, or places many pieces of chalk at the board and hands several pieces to people at random.

4. People write as they feel moved. There is likely to be long silences - that is natural, so allow plenty of wait time before deciding it is over.

5. How the facilitator chooses to interact with the Chalk Talk influences its outcome. The facilitator can stand back and let it unfold or expand thinking by:

- circling other interesting ideas, thereby inviting comments to broaden

- writing questions about a participant comment

- adding his/her own reflections or ideas

- connecting two comments together with a line and adding a question mark

6. When it is done, it is done.

CASE STORY PROTOCOL

Time: 30-45 minutes

Roles: Presenter (must do a case story write-up)

Facilitator (who also participates)

Specifics:

1. (5-10 minutes) The presenter reads his/her story aloud, then elaborates on the written story identifying the heart or essence of the story. The presenter explains what she would like advice about. During this part of the process the rest of the group listens without responding.

2. (5-10 minutes) The group asks the presenter clarifying questions. These are questions about details of the story that may be unclear or about information that may be missing.

3. (10-20 minutes) The group discusses the case story while the presenter listens without responding. The purpose of the discussion is to frame and interpret the issues presented in the case and explore as many alternative approaches to the dilemma or decision as possible. The purpose should not be to find “the” best solution - instead the group should try to offer the presenter new ways to look at the situation. The following questions may help frame the discussion:

- What is the central issue?
- What are the factors contributing to the dilemma or influencing the decision?
- Which factors are within the main character’s control? Which are not?
- What are the alternatives and the consequences for the main character?

·What larger issues for the school does this case raise?

4. (5 minutes) The presenter comments on the group's discussion of the problem.

The presenter should identify some of the useful ideas she heard and possibly consider some next steps.

5. (5 minutes) The group and the presenter comments on the new learnings and the process.

Writing Your Case Story:

A case story is a short written account of a situation that the writer finds puzzling or troubling. Teachers can use case stories as a means to clarify and get input on problems or decisions they face. Sharing case stories in CFG meetings gives the writer an opportunity to hear a variety of viewpoints on the issues the story raises. In addition, the case stories provide a subject for group discussion and inquiry into classroom practice.

Why write?

Why not just tell your story to the study group? There are several reasons. First, the process of writing about a situation that is puzzling or troublesome helps you get more clear about the nature of the problem you are describing. Just finding the right words to describe the situation involves a significant amount of reflection. Second, a written story gives you and the other CFG members something concrete on which to base your discussion and refer your comments. Through your story, you can focus the group's attention on the things you most want input. Finally, a written story allows the group to talk about the story itself, and the characters and events in it, rather than making comments directly to the

writer. This last point may seem like a fine distinction, but it can make a big difference in the comfort level of the person getting input.

What should you write about?

The subject of your case story should be real events from your classroom. For example, your story could be about a specific class, about a particular aspect of a unit you taught, or about a student. Whatever you choose to write about should have personal meaning and should present you with a genuine dilemma or critical decision. This last part is important. By writing about an unresolved issue you face, you invite the rest of the group into meaningful dialogue. You will probably find that many of your colleagues face similar dilemmas, as well.

How should you write the story?

Simply put, your case story should sound like a story. Be descriptive, use details to create the scene, try to capture the feeling and flavor of the events, bring the characters in the story to life. Try to make your story intriguing and thought-provoking. Your story shouldn't explain the dilemma you face, but instead let the reader experience it. Keep in mind that you need to provide enough information through your description for the reader to really understand the problem. You should be able to write your case in about an hour, and as for the length, one or two pages should suffice.

TEXT-BASED SEMINAR PROTOCOL

Time: Varies according to need, 30-60 minutes

Purpose: Enlargement of understanding of a text, not the achievement of some particular understanding.

Specifics:

- Listen actively
- Build on what others say.
- Don't step on the other's talk. Silences and pauses are OK.
- Converse directly - there is no need to go through the facilitator.
- Let the conversation flow as much as possible without raising hands or using a speaker's list.
- Expose/suspend your assumptions.
- Emphasize clarification, amplification, implications of ideas.
- Refer to the text; challenge others to go to the text.
- Watch your own air time - both in terms of how often you speak, and in terms of how much you say when you speak.

Notes to Text-Based Seminar Facilitators:

Text-Based Seminars can be remarkably engaging and productive for both students and adults. A Text-Based Seminar facilitator has two primary tasks:

1. Posing the framing question.
2. Keeping the group focused without pushing any particular agenda.

Some Helpful Tips:

1. Invest time in creating the framing question. It needs to be substantive, clear, relevant to the participants' experience, and likely to push their thinking in new directions. Above all, constructing a response to the question should require close reading of the text. It is recommended that the framing question be genuine for everyone, including the facilitator, so that the entire group is engaged in the inquiry. Framing questions are often based on a quote from the text, which begins to establish a pattern of using the document as a basis for the conversation.
2. In addition to the framing question, create a few follow-up questions that seem likely to raise the level of participants' thinking. If the group takes off, you may never use them (or you may create new ones that come from the conversation itself), but it's a good idea to have something to draw from, especially if you are not very experienced at this kind of facilitation.
3. Unless the entire group does Text-Based Seminars routinely, it is useful to go over the purpose and ground rules before you begin. Because so many conversations are based more on opinion than evidence and aim toward winning the argument rather than constructing new knowledge, it is often important to remind the group of the basics: **work from the text** and **strive to enlarge your understanding**.
4. It is sometimes useful (especially if you are nervous) to have a "plant" among the participants, someone who will model ideal participant behavior at an early point in the seminar.

5. As is always the case when facilitating, try to keep the conversation balanced.

Don't let one or two people dominate. If there are several quiet people, asking them to speak in pairs for a few minutes on a particular point can sometimes give them an entry into the conversation when you come back to the large group.

Sometimes you just have to say, "let's have someone who hasn't said much yet speak," and then use a lot of wait time, even though it may feel somewhat uncomfortable to do so.

STICKY ISSUES PROTOCOL

Time: 20-30 minutes

The sticky issues protocol is NOT about advice. It is meant to help expand our thinking about the issue. Unless you are presenting, you should NOT address the issue in terms of your own school or your own situation. The listeners should concentrate on making comments that will broaden the perspective or insight of the presenter around the sticky issue.

Specifics:

Group of 3: 20 minutes

1. (5 minutes) A presents. B & C are silent except to ask questions to keep A talking.
2. (3 minutes) B & C ask clarifying questions.
3. (8 minutes) B & C discuss what they have heard. A is silent.
 - What seems to be the primary issues?
 - What questions does the sticky situation raise for you?
 - What didn't you hear that you wonder about?
4. A, B, & C debrief on the new insights.

Group of 4: 30 minutes

1. (8 minutes) A presents. B, C & D are silent except to ask questions to keep A talking the entire time.
2. (5 minutes) B, C & D ask clarifying questions.
3. (10 minutes) B, C & D discuss what they have heard. A is silent.
 - What seems to be the primary issues?

What questions does the sticky situation raise for you?

- What didn't you hear that you wonder about?

4. A, B, C & D debrief on the new insights.

TUNING PROTOCOL

Time: At least 30 minutes

The tuning protocol is a formalized way to get feedback on work in progress to examine student work as a means to refine curriculum or practice. As with music this is a rehearsal where the tuning of the instrument is vital to the quality of the music. The process can be as short as 30-40 minutes.

Specifics:

1. A person (the Tunee) brings any work in progress to a group of peers (the Tuners) for “tuning.” It can be, for example, student work in progress, finished student work that a teacher wishes to examine, a faculty committee bring in a first draft of a proposal, etc..
2. (10 minutes) Tuners read, or view the presented work. The Tunee presents the work to the Tuners, elaborating on what has been given to the Tuners. No interruptions or questions are allowed, just listening and note taking by the Tuners. The Tunee may ask for specific feedback (framed feedback) or may leave it open (unframed feedback).
3. (5 minutes) Tuners may ask clarifying questions, but no discussion is allowed.
4. (10-20 minutes) Tuners discuss the work together, giving three kinds of feedback each in separate intervals. The Tunee may only listen and take notes while the Tuners talk. Feedback is directly related to the work at hand and does not refer to the Tunee.

- Warm Feedback - Positive points associated with the work.
- Cool Feedback - Questions that arise, doubts, gaps in the work.

- Hard Feedback - Challenges related to the work.

Hard Feedback is often not used until people are accustomed to this as a way to learn rather than a personal matter or a judgement.

5. The Tunee responds to the feedback given by the Tuners. Responses should be about changes that might be made, new insights, clarifications. Response is not an opportunity to defend the work.

COLLABORATIVE ASSESSMENT PROTOCOL

Time: 30-40 minutes.

This protocol provides a structure for groups of teachers to look collaboratively and closely at a piece of student work in order to learn what it reveals about the student, his/her interests, and the issues and problems he/she finds most compelling.

Specifics:

1. (5 minutes) The presenter puts the selected work in a place where everyone can see it or provides copies for the other participants. The presenter says nothing about the work, the context in which it was created, or the students until step 5. The lack of comments from the presenter helps eliminate bias of the viewers about the student work.
2. (5-10 minutes) The facilitator asks the group, "What do you see?" Group members provide answers without making judgements about the quality of the work. If judgements emerge, the facilitator asks for the person to describe the evidence on which the judgement is based.
3. (5-10 minutes) The facilitator asks the group, "What questions does this work raise for you?" Group members state any questions they have about the work, the student, the assignment, or the circumstances under which the work was carried out. The presenter takes notes about these questions but may not comment.
4. (5-10 minutes) The facilitator asks the group, "What do you think the student is working on?" Group members, based on their reading and observation of the

work, make suggestions about the problems or issues that the student focused on in carrying out the assignment.

5. (10 minutes) Now it is the presenter's turn to speak. The presenter provides his/her perspective on the student's work, responding to the questions raised and adding any other information that he/she feels important. Most importantly, the presenter also comments on any surprising or unexpected things that he/she heard during the describing, questioning and speculating phases.

6. (5 minutes) Everyone debriefs the process and the new insights generated by the collaborative assessment.

THE FINAL WORD TEXT-BASED PROTOCOL

Time: 11 minutes for each round

The purpose of this protocol is to expand a group's understanding of a text in a focused way and in a limited amount of time

Specifics: Groups of four are organized:

- A facilitator and time keeper are chosen for each round.
- Time is organized into four rounds of discussion.
- Each round is 11 minutes.

Preparation: After reading and reflecting on a common text, each person in the group of four selects one significant quote or section of the text to discuss.

1. (3 minutes) One person begins by explaining the significance of his/her selection to the group.
2. (2 minutes each; 6 minutes total) Each person in the group then comments on that same selection from the text.
 - in response to what the first person said
 - in any other way that extends the understanding of that section
3. (2 minutes) The person who started has the "Final Word" to add any insights or to comment on what has been raised by other members of the group.

PEER COACHING OBSERVATION

Receiving real feedback can be a threatening to the receiver, therefore an important principle in this process is that at all times the person who is being observed is the one who is in control of the situation.

Rules:

1. Each person should choose the person with whom they will work. In a CFG, each members agrees to take turns being the observer and the observed.
2. The pair should review the ground rules for giving and receiving feedback that have been established in the CFG.

For example: “our observation data will remain confidential; we will meet to follow up on the observation within 24 hours of the observation.”

3. The person asking for feedback specifies the areas in which they want feedback.

For Example: “Track the kinds of questions I ask: Are they memory questions, or do they require evaluation? Do I give enough time for students to answer? Do I ask boys more questions than girls? How did the small groups work together when I wasn’t there?”

4. The observer, armed with a short list of what to look for from the person being observed, comes and watches the class or meeting for a short time (15-20 minutes at first, longer as the CFG members become more comfortable with both observation and feedback).

5. The two people meet afterwards - undisturbed - for 10 minutes (this debriefing time needs to be short at first).

During this meeting:

- The partners should sit with the data between them.
- The observed should refocus on the questions she asked. That is, reflect on the questions in light of the data brought back by the observer.

· The observer should share the things they said, heard, and tracked rather than what he thought about them. Allowing the observer to evaluate or judge the observed will poison the process quickly.

THE PEER COACHING PROTOCOL

This protocol is used for giving and getting feedback when visiting multiple classrooms or when visiting individual classrooms (i.e. teacher inter-visitations).

The objective of these visits is to be helpful without hurting; to critique without being too critical. The emphasis here is on descriptive feedback, but the understanding is that all feedback has an element of judgment embedded in it.

The goal is to push one another into a zone which can be sometimes uncomfortable, but always safe.

Specifics:

Phase I: Pre-Visit Conversation

The teacher (observed) meets with the visitor (observer) and outlines the focus for the feedback. The focus should be sufficiently narrow to allow the feedback to be specific.

For Example: "Please look for evidence of how I'm fostering critical thinking in my students."

Phase II: The Visit

The visit takes place - the amount of time to be determined mutually.

Phase III: Debriefing the Visit

The teacher meets with the visitor and listens to the feedback, taking notes but not talking. The feedback is divided between warm, cool and hard feedback. In all cases, the emphasis is on description:

For Example:

"I noticed

There was evidence of

Three times I saw

I did not see"

The teacher gets to respond to the feedback while the visitor listens and does not respond. When the response is complete, the teacher can open up the conversation with the visitor.

Phase IV; Debriefing

At the end of the process, five minutes is set aside to debrief the visit. The teacher goes first: "How did this visit go for you? Was it useful for you? How did it feel giving feedback?" Then the visitor: "Did this work for you? How did it feel getting feedback? Was it useful?"

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL #1: Video Camera

The purpose of this protocol is to develop observational reliability between the observer and the observed. An underlying assumption is that no two people observing the same event will see the same thing, since the perceptions and prior experiences of each act as a filter. This protocol provides a way for the observed and the observer to discover what the other “sees” during the observation, and to help each learn to see as much as possible.

1. Pre-Observation Conference:

The person to be observed outlines what will be occurring during the observation.

2. Observation:

To the greatest extent possible the observer maintains a “video camera” stance, scripting and making note of as many events as possible. Care should be taken to not attempt to interpret or question during the observation.

3. Debriefing:

During the first part of the debriefing, the observer reconstructs the observation from her notes. The observed should listen carefully, taking note of any details that escaped her notice and jotting down anything remembered that is not mentioned by the observer. The observed speaks during the second phase of the debriefing, naming those details of which she was not aware and adding her own.

Helpful Hint:

It is important that both parties refrain from interpretation. To say that the student was bored is very different from saying that the student doodle, yawned, and

gazed out the window. Value statements, such as “that was a great lesson”, should also be avoided.

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL #2: Focus Point

This protocol is designed to help deepen the observee's understanding of his practice. The observer's role is to note those events that relate to a particular aspect of the observee's practice and to then act as an active listener as the observee attempts to make sense of those events.

1. Pre-Observation Conference:

In addition to outlining what will be occurring during the observation, the person to be observed asks the observer to focus on a particular aspect of his practice.

For Example: "Would you look at how I respond to student questions?"

2. Observation:

The observer focuses on that aspect of practice raised during the pre-observation conference. Field notes include both descriptions of "focus" events and related questions that the observer may wish to raise during the debriefing (the observer may also wish to note events and questions outside the focus of the observation, but these may not be discussed during the debriefing).

3. Debriefing:

The observer begins by restating the focus and asking the observee to share her thoughts.

For Example: "How do you feel about the lesson? What did you notice about how you responded to student questions?"

As the observee talks, the observer may:

1) supply specific events that either corroborate or contrast with the observee's statements,

2) summarize what the observee is saying,

3) ask clarifying questions,

4) raise questions related to the focus that were noted during the observation.

Helpful Hint:

Events and questions not directly related to the focus of the observation should only be raised after asking for permission of the observee. The observer should refrain from stating her ideas and perspective on the issues unless specifically invited to do so.

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL #3: Interesting

Moments

The underlying assumption for this protocol is that the observer and the observed will work together to create some new knowledge - they are in it together. The observation is a shared experience, and so is the debriefing. One outsider, after listening to such a debriefing, stated that it was a seamless conversation. The two of you were discovering something about the events you had seen.”

1. Pre-Observation Conference:

Because this form of observation is more open-ended, it is not strictly necessary to have a pre-conference, although it may help to orient the observer as to what will be happening.

2. Observation:

The observer maintains an open field of vision, noting anything that strikes her as particularly interesting - anything that may lead to ‘deep’ questions.

3. Debriefing:

Either participant begins by raising a point of interest, stating as clearly and as fully as possible what occurred. A conversation develops around the incident with both observer and observed attempting to sort out “what was going on there.” As the ideas build, both are responsible for keeping the conversation on track while maintaining the flexibility necessary to create new understandings.

Helpful Hint:

A prerequisite for this protocol is a high level of trust between the two participants: Trust that the debriefing is not about evaluation; trust that each will be thoughtful, will listen and respond to the other; trust that whatever knowledge is created will be shared knowledge.

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL #4: Teaming

In the “Interesting Moments” protocol, the debriefing process became more of a shared activity; both participants searching for some understanding, trying to create meaning. In this version, the participants also share the planning and implementation of the lesson(s) that is to be taught. Utilizing either a form of parallel teaching or a more seamless co-teaching, the participants are both “on” with the students. Both are observers and observees.

1. Pre-Observation Conference:

This takes the form of a planning session. Issues of outcomes, goals, objectives, assessment are discussed and the activity is planned. If the two participants will be co-teaching and one or both are unfamiliar with the art of teaching with a partner, special attention should be paid to the issue of who will do what, and how they will interact when working with the students.

2. Observation:

It is important that some form of observational notes are taken. In a co-teaching situation, some people carry a clipboard or notebook as they move around the classroom, taking time to note anything of interest. Others feel this distracts them (or the students) and prefer to write as soon as possible after the event. A third method would be to videotape the session and use the playback during the debriefing. (Warning: the use of video needs to be considered carefully. Among other considerations, it creates the need for a longer debriefing period.)

3. Debriefing:

As with the “Interesting Moments” protocol, either participant begins by raising a point of interest, stating as clearly and as fully as possible what occurred. A conversation develops around the incident with both observer and observed attempting to sort out, “What was going on there?”

Helpful Hint:

In spite of research that extols the benefits of team teaching (as opposed to team planning), this pedagogy is a break with the cultural norm of isolation that exists in most schools. Many who participate in long-term team teaching find it exhilarating and the best form of staff development.

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL #5: Observer-Learner

The primary “learner” in this protocol is the observer. The observer’s only purpose is to learn how to improve her own practice. Since the observer has little responsibility to the observee, the duration of the observation and even the level of attention to what’s going on is determined by the observer, as long as this is ok with the observee. This protocol may significantly increase the frequency of visits to each other’s classrooms since observers may be able to do some quiet paperwork during their stay, and therefore are more likely to use a “prep” period to visit another teacher’s classroom. The time involved may also be reduced if neither party desires a pre-observation conference.

1. Pre-Observation Conference:

It is not necessary to have a pre-observation conference unless either party would like to have one. A pre-conference would help to orient the observer as to what will be happening.

2. Observation:

The observer focuses on whatever she wishes.

3. Debriefing:

The observer often asks the observee questions that might help him better understand the choices made by the observee.

Helpful Hint:

Given the potential feeling of vulnerability on the part of the observee in any situation, and especially in a situation such as this where the observee may have little idea of what the observer is focusing on, it is important that the observer try to ask questions during the debriefing in a way that does not put the observee on the defensive.

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL #6: Self-

Observation

This protocol reduces the amount of time even further in that there is no observation by a second person; the observation is self-observation. “Self-Observation” also addresses the fact that often the most interesting lessons, the ones that seem to have much potential for learning, just happen and aren’t necessarily planned for an observer.

1. Pre-Observation Conference:

There is no pre-observation conference in this protocol. Instead, the “observee” lets the debriefer know that a debriefing session is needed, that something interesting has come up that might benefit from a debriefing.

2. Observation:

We all are observing all of the time. Usually most of what we observe is placed in short-term memory and is soon lost to us. Telling the story of our observations both helps us retain the memories and gives us a chance to make sense of what we have seen. What is important is that we recognize when an event feels important and find someone with whom we can debrief.

3. Debriefing:

Since the debriefer is not present at the event, the debriefing needs to start with the story. The debriefer asks the kinds of questions that will help the teacher to pull out the details of the event. Other questions, the kind that will help search for meaning, should be jotted down. It is important that the story is told first. Then

the teacher and the debriefer can decide how to proceed. The “Focus Point” and “Interesting Moment” protocols provide two models for the kinds of questioning that could come next, or the Consultancy protocol could be used.

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL #7: Observer-Learner with No Debriefing

The only difference between this protocol and “Observer-learner” is that there is no debriefing, which further decreases the time involved and thus may increase the frequency of observations.

1. Pre-Observation Conference:

It is not necessary to have a pre-conference unless one party would like to have one. A pre-conference would help to orient the observer as to what is happening.

2. Observation:

The observer focuses on whatever she wishes.

3. Debriefing:

There is no debriefing conversation between the observe and the observee other than, “thanks for letting me visit!” Both observer and observee debrief on the observation by themselves.

Helpful Hint:

It is tempting to not stick to the “no debriefing” rule afterwards, but this can cause problems in the long-run for the use of this protocol in a building. For example, if teacher A observes teacher B without debriefing according to plan, and then teacher A observes teacher C but they violate their agreement to not debrief, teacher B may feel slighted and withdraw from further involvement in future observations. This potential problem can be avoided by simply sticking with the

protocol that is agreed upon; the same protocol with debriefing can be used the next time desired.

For the Individual Teacher

1. The Question Log. Among the most exciting things about engaging in action research is the opportunity to investigate questions of real importance to you and your work, and to allow those questions to evolve over time. In fact, a key finding of your research will be the way your questions change as you collect data and experiment with your teaching. For this reason, it is recommended that you keep a Question Log. It doesn't need to be elaborate, but should include the following:

- Your original research question or questions, with notes on why the questions are important to you.
- A list of data sources you think you could use to answer the questions.
- A note about how examining student work and peer observations might help you answer the questions.

Along the way, you should make a record of any changes or refinements you make to your question, and why. Because you are working with a CFG on the same question, it will be important to work on revising the question together.

Deciding to change or refine your question is an expected, important part of the process - you just need to track clearly when and why you change your question, so that you can remember and share with others your research journey. As you refine your question, you will probably also refine your selection of data sources and the ways you use examining student work and peer observations to help you answer your question.

2. Journals. Your Question Log can be included in your journal. But the journal provides room to take notes in a more expansive way, to write about unexpected events in the classroom, to think through strategies for change, to take note of successes, to take the time just to reflect on the day. **While a journal might seem quite informal, it is important to understand that your thoughts and reflections on your work are actually essential parts of the action research cycle. Your reflections, in themselves, are data to be analyzed, and can help you make decisions about how to improve your instruction.** At each CFG meeting, teachers should have time to share pieces from their journals and to talk through possible instructional implications of the reflections.

3. Peer Observation Records. When your colleagues observe you, they will record both observations and reflections on your teaching. As you discuss these with them, keep track of your own thoughts - including new questions that arise for you about your teaching strategies, changes you might make to your teaching based on their observations, and your reactions to the process.

4. Notes on Student Work. In your CFG, you will participate in protocols such as descriptive reviews of student work. During these protocols, the facilitator may summarize each phase, the teacher presenting his/her work writes comments on other teachers' observations, and the whole group debriefs the process. The facilitator's summary notes, your written comments, and notes on the debriefing are rich sources of data and important pieces of documentation of the action research cycle.

Action Research Documentation Strategies

For the CFG

CFG's provide an opportunity to think deeply about what each teacher is discovering as he/she pursues research in the classroom. It also provides a chance to put those learnings together, to try to come to some broader, CFG-wide or school-wide findings. Finally, the CFG will learn together about the process of inquiry itself, and seek to gain insight into that process as you go.

1. The Group Log. As a CFG you will want to brainstorm, discuss, and investigate possible questions as part of your cycle of inquiry. How these discussions evolve and change over time is in itself an important part of your findings. They will show how your CFG's thinking has evolved over time. Your log should include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Your brainstormed "thinking on paper" about possible questions
- A brainstormed list of sources to help answer each of the questions
- Changes you make to your questions, and the reasons why

2. Notes from the Examination of Student Work. Here's an opportunity to examine both the "process" and the "products" of your work. For the process, record your reactions to the process (protocol) of examining student work together, any changes you decide to make in your protocols, and any new tools your CFG creates or discovers for help in this work. For the products, record the observations you make about the student work you examine, as well as any instructional implications you derive.

3. Peer Observation Records. Again, your CFG should take note of both process and products. The coach should keep a copy of the schedule of who observed whom, when. How did your CFG make this happen? What was the peer observation schedule? What obstacles did you overcome? How were you able to use time you had creatively or make time in your day for this work? How did the school and CFG support you in this work? What process did you use to make these decisions?

4. Annotated Bibliography. Your CFG may want to keep an annotated bibliography of sources you come across that help you with your work and that push your collective thinking about this work. You may want to react in writing as a group to the article, videotape, etc., and how specifically it helped you.

5. Group Writing. You might choose to write an article together about your learnings, with an audience of whomever you choose - strictly "in house," for colleagues at school, for a wider CES audience, for educators more generally.

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SECTION V

A Beginning CFG Scenario

Section V will present one possible scenario for the first five meetings of a beginning CFG. As discussed earlier in Section II of this chapter, the beginning CFG must be patient in developing trust amongst it's members. Team Building (trust building practiced), Collegial Support Group Developed, Protocols Understood and Practiced, and Educational Issues Discussed will be the four specific tasks utilized in this proposed agenda. Pacing is very important so that beginning CFG members receive a sufficient amount of information, but not so much that the significance of the CFG tasks cannot be fully understood and appreciated. Team building and collegial support should dominate the agenda for the first two months. The secondary tasks, Protocols and educational issues, will supply the substance and rationale for the emphasis placed on trust building activities.

First CFG Meeting Agenda

Time: Approximately 100 minutes

- (10 minutes) Refreshments provided by the CFG coach
- (20 minutes) Name Plate Activity

- (30 minutes) Distribute CFG notebooks (the contents of the notebook resemble Section IV of this chapter) and debrief it's contents
- (20 minutes) Debrief Connections Activity and rehearse
- (10 minutes) CFG coach "testimonial" (the coach shares an experience from their CFG coach training which reaffirms the value of the program)
- (10 minutes) Distribute journals and ask members to reflect on three questions
 - What worked?
 - What didn't?
 - What do you need?

Second CFG Meeting Agenda

Time: Approximately 105 minutes

- (10 minutes) Refreshments provided by the CFG coach
- (10 minutes) Connections Activity

- (30 minutes) Personal Artifact Activity
- (40 minutes) Text-Based Protocol
 - Text: CES 10 Common Principles
- (10 minutes) Journal Reflection
 - What worked?
 - What didn't?
 - What do you need?
- (5 minutes) Assignments for the next meeting
 - Refreshments
 - Concluding comments

Third CFG Meeting Agenda

Time: Approximately 110 minutes

- (10 minutes) Refreshments provided by assigned member
- (10 minutes) Connections Activity

- (30 minutes) Great Teams Activity
- (30 minutes) Beliefs and Structures Activity
- (25 minutes) Journal Share - “whip” activity
 - Each member shares an item from their journal
 - CFG coach notes any “needs” that are shared
 - Debriefing
- (5 minutes) Assignments for the next meeting
 - Refreshments
 - Concluding comments

Fourth CFG Meeting Agenda

Time: Approximately 105 minutes

- (10 minutes) Refreshments provided by assigned member
- (10 minutes) Connections Activity

- (25 minutes) Truth, Truth, Lie Activity
- (45 minutes) Write Pod Charter
 - Utilize Beliefs and Structures document from last meeting
 - Debrief
- (10 minutes) Journal Reflections
- (5 minutes) Assignments for the next meeting
 - Refreshments
 - Presenter for Text-Based Seminar protocol

Fifth CFG Meeting Agenda

Time: Approximately 105-115 minutes

- (10 minutes) Refreshments
- (10 minutes) Connections Activity
- (25 minutes) Scavenger Hunt Activity
- (5 minutes) Revisit Pod Charter - coach reads charter aloud
- (40-50 minutes) Text-Based Seminar protocol
- (10 minutes) Journal Reflections
- (5 minutes) Assignments for the next meeting

CHAPTER 5

Summary

The intent of this project was to develop a peer coaching model for implementation at Eastlake High School in the Lake Washington School District. The purpose of the model was to focus on inter-departmental involvement in peer coaching, mentoring, and assisting teachers and administrators in their formative assessment duties. The Critical Friends Group (CFG) peer coaching model, conceived by the Coalition of Essential Schools, was utilized to accomplish the goals of this project;

- 1) to increase collaboration, collegiality, and trust amongst the staff,
- 2) to improve instructional techniques, curriculum content, and teacher/student assessment,
- 3) to establish a lasting staff development program through the financial support and active participation of the administration,
- 4) to promote professional growth for all staff and academic growth for all students.

Conclusions

The conclusions reached as a result of this project are:

- 1) The issues of peer coaching, teacher evaluation, staff development, curriculum, and improved student learning are interrelated.
- 2) The Critical Friends Group peer coaching model provides a structure for the integration of these issues to insure balance and sustain long-term instructional development.

3) A Critical Friends Group program reciprocates the professional needs of teachers and administrators. Teachers are provided with a meaningful professional development program while benefiting administrators in their teacher and program evaluation responsibilities.

4) Commitment to a Critical Friends Group program by administrators and participating teachers is the most significant determinant of the program's success.

5) The benefits of a CFG are proportional to an individual member's input, but the full benefits of the program are not realized until whole school change is embraced by the entire staff.

Recommendations

As a result of this project, the following recommendations for administrators and teachers who are establishing a Critical Friends Group peer coaching program are:

Leadership Role of the Administrator

- 1) Establish the Critical Friends Group program as a high priority goal of the school.
- 2) Solicit the support of school district administrators.
- 3) Identify and recruit members of the staff for leadership roles (peer coaches).
- 4) Encourage the support and participation of the staff.
- 5) Develop a formative teacher evaluation plan within the CFG structure.

- 6) Establish operating principles and leadership roles and responsibilities for CFG coaches.
- 7) Clearly identify participation expectations for all CFG members.

Financial Role of the Administrator

- 1) Solicit funding from the district office.
- 2) Establish a line item for the CFG program within the existing staff development budget.
- 3) Appropriate funds for CFG peer coach training.
- 4) Assist peer coaches in establishing a budget for individual CFG pods.

Leadership Role of CFG Coaches

- 1) Place a high premium on trust development within the CFG pod.
- 2) Allow sufficient time for CFG pod development - resisting the tendency of doing too much too quick.
- 3) Serve as a liaison between the supervising administrator(s) and CFG members in the development of Professional Development Plans (PDP).
- 4) Develop an accurate documentation strategy to assist building administrators with program evaluations.
- 5) Model collaborative behavior as a facilitator in CFG meetings.
- 6) Participate in networking activities with regional CFG coaches.

Participation Role of CFG Members

- 1) Place a high priority on CFG meeting attendance.
- 2) Honor the importance of trust and collegiality.
- 3) Follow the norms and pod charter established in your CFG.

- 4) Create and maintain a Professional Development Plan (PDP).
 - 5) Model active participation within the CFG and collaborative behavior with other members of the staff.
-

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

PROGRAM EVALUATION

(Provide a number 1-10, 10 is the highest)

APPENDICES

Appendix A

PROGRAM EVALUATION

(Provide a number 1-10, 10 is the highest)

1. To what degree have your relationships/collaboration with your CFG colleagues been a benefit to you personally? Comments:

2. To what degree have your relationships/collaboration with your CFG colleagues been a benefit to you professionally? Comments:

3. To what degree have you seen your instructional strategies improve as a result of your work with your CFG? Comments:

4. To what degree have you seen your curriculum improve as a result of your work with your CFG? Comments:

5. To what degree have you seen your student learning assessments improve as a result of your work with your CFG? Comments:

6. To what degree do you see evidence of improved student achievement because of your work with CFG's? Comments:

Appendix B

COACH EVALUATION

Your coaches would like to know to what degree you believe they are effective in the role of coach and facilitator. Please write in the name of your coach and using a scale of 1-10 (10 as highest), evaluate his/her effectiveness in the following categories.

Name of Coach: _____

1. Time management during meetings. Comments:

2. Organization of the meeting agenda. Comments:

3. Facilitating discussions. Comments:

4. Communicating information. Comments:

5. Focusing on your CFG's goals. Comments:

6. Maintaining operating norms. Comments: