RHODE ISLAND LEAGUE OF INNOVATIVE SCHOOLS MEETING

Friday May 27, 2016; 8:30 AM – 2:30 PM

Coventry High School

Outcomes

1. Engage in an in-depth Learning Walk and follow-up problem of practice in a host school to better understand how it is personalizing learning (including classroom observations, examination of data, discussion with faculty, etc.) and provide ideas, suggestions, questions, and perspectives for consideration as its work continues;
2. Engage in Professional Learning Group conversations specifically focused on providing presenters from different schools with feedback, ideas, and resources as they continue to implement and refine their own personalized learning efforts.

Agenda

8:15 AM	Arrival, sign in, and refreshments
8:30 AM	Welcome, introductions, and overview of the day
9 AM	Coventry High School's journey toward personalized- and proficiency-based learning (brief presentation, review of key materials, and classroom observations) Coventry's Leadership Team is seeking our feedback on this particular day around their schoolwide use of their 1:1 Chromebook initiative. Specifically, as we visit classrooms, to what degree are we seeing blended learning activities? When we regroup following our observations, we will share our warm feedback as well as ideas and food for thought for Coventry to consider as they continue their work in this area.
11:30 AM	Lunch
12 PM	Overview of problems or practice (PLG protocols)
12:15 PM	PLG Round I (two or three small groups)
1:30 PM	PLG Round I (two or three small groups)
2:15 PM	Closure
2:30 PM	Adjourn

NESSC meeting & communication norms

In order to undertake the highly complex work of collaboratively transforming secondary learning across all five states, we are committed to:

- Building on and supporting one another's efforts
- Acknowledging and encouraging different approaches as we collaborate
- Trusting in the integrity of NESSC colleagues
- Monitoring our air time in group gatherings
- Communicating openly, clearly, and directly
- Acknowledging and honoring different perspectives
- Assuming positive intentions of all members

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SCHOOL REFORM INITIATIVE
A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS

Feedback Principles

Developed in the field by educators.

Giving Feedback

Constructive feedback is indispensable to productive collaboration. Positive feedback is easy to give and receive; when the response highlights a need to improve, it is harder to say and much harder to hear. When it is done properly, feedback is a very specific kind of communication: it focuses on sharing with another person the impact of their behavior, and its purpose is to help that person become more effective. Feedback is most useful when it is *audible, credible,* and *actionable*. Following the guidelines below will help you achieve that goal.

- **Give it with care.** To be useful, feedback requires the giver to want to help, not hurt, the other person.
- **Let the recipient invite it.** Feedback is most effective when the receiver has invited the comments. Doing so indicates that the receiver is ready to hear the feedback and gives that person an opportunity to specify areas of interest and concern.
- **Be specific.** Good feedback deals clearly with particular incidents and behavior. Making vague or woolly statements is of little value. The most helpful feedback is concrete and covers the area of interest specified by the receiver.
- **Include feelings.** Effective feedback requires more than a simple statement of observed behaviors. It is important to express how you felt so that the receiver can judge the full impact of the behavior being discussed.
- **Avoid evaluative judgments.** The most useful feedback describes behaviors without value labels such as “irresponsible”, “unprofessional”, or even “good” and “bad”. If the recipient asks you to make a judgment, be sure to state clearly that this is *your* opinion.
- **Speak for yourself.** When giving feedback, be sure to discuss only things you have witnessed. Do not refer to absent or anonymous people (e.g. “A lot of people didn’t like it”).
- **Pick an appropriate time and place.** The most useful feedback is given at a time and in a place that make it easy for the receiver to hear it (e.g., away from other people and distractions). It should also be given sufficiently close to the particular event being discussed for the event to be fresh in the mind.
- **Make the feedback readily actionable.** To be most useful, feedback should concern behavior that can be changed by the receiver. Feedback concerning matters outside the control of the receiver is less useful and often causes resentment.

Giving Feedback: Summary

1. Find out and respond to the receiver's concerns.
2. Be specific about the behavior and your reactions.
3. Speak for yourself only.
4. Don't evaluate.
5. Help the receiver figure out how to act on your feedback.

Receiving Feedback

- **Breathe.** This may seem overly simple, but remembering to do it can make a difference. Our bodies are conditioned to react to stressful situations as if they were physical assaults (e.g., muscles tense, breathing becomes shallow and rapid, etc.). Taking full breaths will help your body to relax and your brain to focus.

- **Specify the behavior about which you want feedback.** The more specific you can be about the feedback you want, the more likely you are to be able to act upon it. For example, if you want to know how students reacted to an assignment, ask, "What did the students in the small group you observed do after I finished answering their questions?" rather than, "How did it go?"

- **Listen carefully.** Don't interrupt or discourage the person giving feedback. Don't defend yourself ("It wasn't my fault … ") and don't justify ("I only did that because … ").

- **Clarify your understanding of the feedback.** You need to get clear feedback in order for it to be helpful. Ask for specific examples (e.g. "Can you describe what I did or said that made me appear aggressive to you?").

- **Summarize your understanding of the feedback.** Paraphrase the message in your own words to be sure you have heard and understood what was said.

- **Take time to sort out what you heard.** You may need time to think about what was said and how you feel about it or to check with others before responding to the feedback. This is a normal response but should not be used as an excuse to avoid the issue.

- **Check out possible responses with the person who gave you feedback.** A good way to pre-test an alternative approach to a situation that has caused problems for you in the past is to ask the person who gave the feedback if she/he thinks it will be more effective. That provides a first screen, and makes the feedback-giver feel heard.

Receiving Feedback: Summary

1. Be specific about the feedback that you want.
2. Be open to the feedback:
   a) Don't ask for it if you don't want to know
   b) Avoid defensiveness
   c) Don't justify
3. Clarify/check your understanding of the feedback.
4. Summarize your understanding of the feedback.
5. Share your reaction to the feedback.

Tuning Protocol

Developed by Joseph McDonald, Coalition of Essential Schools; Revised by David Allen.

Description

The Tuning Protocol was originally developed as a means for the 5 high schools in the Coalition of Essential School's Exhibitions Project to receive feedback and fine-tune their developing student assessment systems, including exhibitions, portfolios, and design projects. Recognizing the complexities involved in developing new forms of assessment, the project staff developed a facilitated process to support educators in sharing their students' work (sometimes students brought their own work) and, with colleagues, reflect upon the lessons that are embedded there. This collaborative reflection helps educators design and refine their assessment systems, and supports higher quality student performance. Since its trial run in 1992, the Tuning Protocol has been widely used and adapted for looking at both student and adult work in and among schools across the country.

Note: If adult work (such as an adult developed document like a lesson plan, rubric, newsletter, etc.) is the focus and there are no student work samples, you may want to consider the Tuning Protocol: Examining Adult Work.

Process

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

Facilitator briefly introduces protocol goals, guidelines, and schedule

2. Presentation (10-15 minutes)

The presenter has the opportunity to share both the context for her work and any supporting documents as warranted, while participants are silent.

- Information about the students and/or the class — what the students tend to be like, where they are in school, where they are in the year.
- Assignment or prompt that generated the student work
- Student learning goals or standards that inform the work
- Samples of student work — photocopies of work, video clips, etc. — with student names removed
- Evaluation format — scoring rubric and or assessment criteria, etc.
- Focusing question for feedback (ex: To what extent does the student work reflect the learning standards? Or, How might the rubric be in closer alignment to the skills and knowledge present in the student work?) is shared and posted for all to see.

3. Clarifying Questions (3-5 minutes)

- Participants have an opportunity to ask clarifying questions in order to get information that may have been omitted during the presentation and would help them to better understand the work.
- Clarifying questions are matters of fact.
- The facilitator is responsible for making sure that clarifying questions are really clarifying and not warm/cool feedback or suggestions.

4. Examining the Work (10-15 minutes)

Participants look closely at the work, making notes on where it seems to be "in tune" or aligned with the stated goals and, guided by the presenter's focusing question and goals, where there might be a potential disconnect.

Note: It's possible that participants could have an additional clarifying question or 2 during this time. If so, the facilitator might offer an additional moment for these to be asked by participants and answered by the presenter.

5. Pause to Silently Reflect on Warm and Cool Feedback (2-3 minutes)

- Participants individually review their notes and decide what they would like to contribute to the feedback session.
- Presenter is silent.
- Participants do this work silently.

6. Warm and Cool Feedback (10-15 minutes)

- Participants share feedback with each other while the presenter is silent and takes notes. The feedback generally begins with a few minutes of warm feedback, moves on to a few minutes of cool feedback (sometimes phrased in the form of reflective questions), and then moves back and forth between warm and cool feedback.
- Warm feedback may include comments about how the work presented seems to align with the desired goals; cool feedback may include possible disconnects, gaps, or problems. Often participants offer ideas or suggestions for strengthening the work presented, so long as the suggestions are guided by the presenter's goals and question.
- It might be helpful for the facilitator to offer prompts for the feedback, such as:

  <u>Warm feedback</u>
  "It seems important …"
  "Considering the goal, I appreciate…"
  "I want to make sure to keep…"
  <u>Cool feedback</u>
  "I wonder if …"
  "One way to more closely align the goal/purpose is …"
- The facilitator may need to remind participants of the presenter's focusing question.
- Presenter is silent, listening in on the conversation and taking notes.

7. Reflection (3-5 minutes)

- Presenter rejoins the group and shares her/his new thinking about what she/he learned from the participants' feedback.
- This is not a time for the presenter to defend her/himself, but is instead a time for the presenter to reflect aloud on anything that seemed particularly interesting.
- Facilitator may need to remind participants that once the work has been returned to the presenter, there will be no more feedback offered.

8. Debrief (3-5 minutes)

Facilitator leads discussion about this tuning experience.

Note: See Tuning Protocol Guidelines for information on effective participation in a Tuning.

Consultancy Protocol

Developed by Faith Dunne, Paula Evans, and Gene Thompson-Grove as part of their work at the Coalition of Essential Schools and the Annenberg Institute for School Reform.

Purpose
The structure of the Consultancy helps presenters think more expansively about a particular, concrete dilemma. The Consultancy protocol has 2 main purposes – to develop participants' capacity to see and describe the dilemmas that are the essential material of their work, and to help each other understand and deal with them.

Time
Approximately 50 minutes

Roles
Presenter (whose work is being discussed by the group)
Facilitator (who sometimes participates, depending on the size of the group)
Consultants

Outside perspective is critical to the effectiveness of this protocol; therefore, some of the participants in the group should be people who do not share the presenter's specific dilemma at that time. The Consultancy group is typically a small and intimate one – from 4-7 people. Larger groups can easily subdivide into consultancy groups.

Process
1. The presenter gives an overview of the dilemma with which she/he is struggling, and frames a question for the consultancy group to consider. The framing of this question, as well as the quality of the presenter's reflection on the dilemma being discussed, are key features of this protocol. If the presenter has brought student work, educator work, or other "artifacts," there is a pause here to silently examine the work/documents. The focus of the group's conversation is on the dilemma. (10-15 minutes if there are artifacts to examine)

2. The consultancy group asks clarifying questions of the presenter — that is, questions that have brief, factual answers. (5 minutes)

3. The group asks probing questions of the presenter (See Pocket Guide to Probing Questions). These questions should be worded so that they help the presenter clarify and expand her/his thinking about the dilemma presented to the consultancy group. The goal here is for the presenter to learn more about the question she/he framed and to do some analysis of the dilemma presented. The presenter responds to the group's questions, although sometimes a probing question might ask the presenter to see the dilemma in such a novel way that the response is simply, "I never thought about it that way." There is no discussion by the consultancy group of the presenter's responses. At the end of the 10 minutes, the facilitator asks the presenter to re-state her/his question for the group. (10 minutes)

4. The group talks with each other about the dilemma presented. In this step, the group works to define the issues more thoroughly and objectively. Sometimes members of the group suggest actions the presenter might consider taking; if they do, these should be framed as "open suggestions," and should be made only after the group has thoroughly analyzed the dilemma. The presenter doesn't speak during this discussion, but listens in and takes notes. The group talks about the presenter in the third person. (15 minutes)

Possible questions to frame the discussion:
• What did we hear?
• What didn't we hear that might be relevant?
• What assumptions seem to be operating?
• What questions does the dilemma raise for us?
• What do we think about the dilemma?
• What might we do or try if faced with a similar dilemma? What have we done in similar situations?

5. The presenter reflects on what she/he heard and on what she/he is now thinking, sharing with the group anything that particularly resonated for him or her during any part of the Consultancy. (5 minutes)

6. The facilitator leads a brief conversation about the group's observation of the Consultancy process. (5 minutes)

Note: See Consultancy Dilemmas to craft dilemmas for use with the Consultancy Protocol and Facilitation Tips for process advice.

Pocket Guide to Probing Questions

Developed by Gene Thompson-Grove (adapted from Thompson-Grove and Edorah Frazer).

CLARIFYING QUESTIONS are simple questions of fact. They clarify the dilemma and provide the nuts and bolts so that participants can ask good probing questions and provide useful feedback later in the protocol. Clarifying questions are for the participants, and should not go beyond the boundaries of the presenter's dilemma. They have brief, factual answers, and don't provide any new "food for thought" for the presenter. The litmus test for a clarifying question is: Does the presenter have to think before she/he answers? If so, it's almost certainly a probing question.

Some examples of clarifying questions:
- How much time does the project take?
- How were the students grouped?
- What resources did the students have available for this project?

PROBING (or POWERFUL, OPEN) QUESTIONS are intended to help the presenter think more deeply about the issue at hand. If a probing question doesn't have that effect, it is either a clarifying question or a recommendation with an upward inflection at the end. If you find yourself asking *"Don't you think you should …?" or "What would happen if …?"* you've gone beyond a probing question to giving advice. The presenter often doesn't have a ready answer to a genuine probing question.

A good probing question:
- Allows for multiple responses
- Avoids yes/no responses
- Empowers the person being asked the question to solve the problem or manage the dilemma (rather than deferring to someone with greater or different expertise)
- Stimulates reflective thinking by moving thinking from reaction to reflection
- Encourages perspective taking
- Challenges assumptions
- Channels inquiry
- Promises insight
- Touches a deeper meaning
- Creates a paradigm shift
- Evokes more questions
- Is concise
- Prompts slow response

Since effective probing questions can be difficult to frame, we offer the following suggestions:

- Check to see if you have a "right" answer in mind. If so, delete the judgment from the question, or don't ask it.
- Refer to the presenter's original question/focus point. What did she/he ask for your help with? Check your probing questions for relevance.
- Check to see if you are asserting your own agenda. If so, return to the presenter's agenda.
- Sometimes a simple "why…?" asked as an advocate for the presenter's success can be very effective, as can several why questions asked in a row.
- Try using verbs: What do you fear? Want? Get? Assume? Expect?
- Think about the concentric circles of comfort, risk, and danger. Use these as a barometer. Don't avoid risk, but don't push the presenter into the "danger zone."
- Think of probing questions as being on a continuum, from "recommendation" to "most effective probing question" as a way to distinguish between suggestions, advice giving, and probing questions. Consider these questions from a Consultancy, during which a teacher presented a dilemma about increasing students' commitment to quality work:
  - — Could you have the students use a rubric to assess their work? (recommendation re-stated as a question)
  - — What would happen if students assessed the quality of their work themselves? (recommendation re-stated as a question)
  - — Why should students be invested in doing quality work? (probing question)
  - — What would have to change for students to work more for themselves and less for you? (more effective probing question)

Possible probing question stems:

- Why do you think this is the case?
- What would have to change in order for…?
- What do you feel is right?
- What's another way you might…?
- How is…different from…?
- What sort of an impact do you think…?
- When have you done/experienced something like this before? What does this remind you of?
- How did you decide/determine/conclude…?
- What is your hunch about…?
- What was your intention when…?
- What do you assume to be true about…?
- What is the connection between…and…?
- What if the opposite were true? Then what?
- How might your assumptions about…have influenced how you are thinking about…?
- What surprises you about…? Why are you surprised?
- What is the best thing that could happen?
- What are you most afraid will happen?
- What do you need to ask to better understand?
- How do you feel when…? What might this tell you about…?
- What is the one thing you won't compromise?
- What criteria do you use…?
- Do you think the problem is X, Y, or something else?
- What evidence exists….?
- If you were X, how would you see this situation?
- If time, money were not an issue…?