

Teacher Teams 2022-2023

The time devoted to teacher team work is an invaluable opportunity to work and collaborate with peers in a structure that promotes instructional growth and an increase in student achievement. This year, almost all teachers are in teams by grade level. The purpose is to create **immediate instructional shifts in our classes based on current student work and best practices**. The primary goal of teacher teams is to provide a structure where teachers can:

- collaborate on common units
- provide support and feedback in peer groups to strengthen instruction
- discuss and analyze student work to identify strengths and weaknesses
- develop resources based the ever changing needs of the students.

The overall purpose is to increase student achievement. During this year, we will incorporate the consultancy protocol to provide each teacher with the individual opportunity to address immediate needs in his/her classroom. This model will allow for individualized peer support for the area(s) each teacher feels is most important in his/her classroom. This structure will allow us to immediately adapt our teaching methods to ensure success for all students.

Criteria for Highly Effective Teacher Teams:

- a) Teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry based professional collaborations that promote the strengthening of instruction
- b) Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share or on whom they focused to inform instruction

Consultancy Protocol¹

“Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.” by Barack Obama

A consultancy protocol is a structured process for helping an individual or team think more expansively about a particular dilemma or barrier. Instead of listing problems and complaining like at a typical meeting, everyone becomes part of the solution and time is well spent. ² We will adapt this model and use it to discuss current problems of practice in the classroom. Each teacher will have an opportunity to identify an instructional issue they are currently facing in the classroom. Some examples can be facilitating more student to student discussion, students’ inability to write analysis, unsuccessful group work, etc.

At the beginning of the semester, you will create a schedule of who will be the presenter at each teacher team meeting. Ideally, there should be 1-2 people per meeting who will present. The presented will come prepared to share their problem of practice and bring student work as necessary.

There are different roles and responsibilities for each person participating:

- Presenter: Person who brings the “dilemma” or problem of practice to the group and whose work is being discussed by group
- Facilitator: Person who facilitates discussion and moves group through the Consultancy Phases (Team Leader, also responsible for log)
- Consultancy Group: Group of individuals that discuss the problem and provide the Presenter with feedback.

The success of the Consultancy often depends on the quality of the presenter’s reflection in the beginning. Come to the session with a description of a dilemma related to your practice. Write your dilemma with as much contextual description as you feel you need for understanding. One page is generally sufficient; even a half page is often enough. If you prefer not to write it out, you can make notes for yourself and do an oral presentation, but please do some preparation ahead of time.

¹ Modified from REAL Conference Materials, May 2019

² National School Reform Faculty, Harmony Education Center, Bloomington, Indiana Gene Thompson-Grove, Edorah Fraser, Faith Dunne Further Amended by Edorah Fraser, June 2002

Preparing for the Consultancy³

Framing Consultancy “Dilemma” or Problem of Practice (Focus on Lesson Planning)

Your problem of practice should be something you are currently struggling with in the classroom and want to change. It should be something that directly impacts your daily instruction and student engagement/achievement. Sometimes the dilemma will include samples of student or adult work that illustrate it, but often the dilemma crosses over many parts of the educational process.

1. Think About Your Dilemma

Dilemmas deal with issues with which you are struggling or that you are unsure about. Some questions for helping you select a dilemma might include:

- Is it something that is bothering you enough that your thoughts regularly return to it?
- Is it something that you have run out of ideas for or need more input?
- Is it something that does not depend on getting other people to change - in other words, can you affect the dilemma by changing your practice?
- Is it something that is important to you, and is it something you are willing to work on?

2. Reflect on Your Dilemma

Some questions that might help are:

- Why is this a dilemma for you? Why is this dilemma important to you?
- What (or where) is the tension in your dilemma?
- If you could take a snapshot of this dilemma, what would you/we see?
- What have you done already to try to remedy or manage the dilemma?
- What have been the results of those attempts?
- Who needs to change? Who needs to take action to resolve this dilemma? If your answer is not you, you need to change your focus. You will want to present a dilemma that is about your practice, actions, behaviors, beliefs, and assumptions, and not someone else's.
- What do you assume to be true about this dilemma, and how have these assumptions influenced your thinking about the dilemma?
- What is your focus question? A focus question summarizes your dilemma and helps focus the feedback.

3. Frame a Focus Question for Your Teacher Team

- Try to pose a question around the dilemma that seems to you to get to the heart of the matter.
- Remember that the question you pose will guide the team in their discussion of the issue.

4. Critique Your Focus Question

- Is this question important to my practice?
- Is this question important to student learning?
- Is this question important to others in my profession?

³ Consultancy Protocol Framing Consultancy Dilemmas. February 2015). Retrieved from <https://schoolreforminitiative.org>

Timed Consultancy Protocol⁴

Steps:

1. (5 – 10 minutes) The presenter gives an overview of the dilemma with which s/he is struggling, and frames a question for the Consultancy group to consider. 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.
2. (5 minutes) The Consultancy group asks clarifying questions of the presenter – that is, questions that have brief, factual answers. Clarifying questions are for the person asking them. They ask the presenter “who, what, when, where, and how.” These are not “why” questions. They can be answered quickly and succinctly, often in a phrase or two.
3. (10 minutes) The group asks probing questions of the presenter. Probing questions are for the person answering them. They ask the presenter “why” (among other things), and are open-ended. They take longer to answer, and often require deep thought on the part of the presenter before s/he speaks. These questions should be worded so that they help the presenter clarify and expand his/her thinking about the dilemma presented to the Consultancy group. The goal here is for the presenter to learn more about the question s/he framed or to do some analysis of the dilemma presented. The presenter may respond to the group’s questions, but there is no discussion by the Consultancy group of the presenter’s responses. At the end of the ten minutes, the facilitator asks the presenter to restate his/her question for the group.
4. (15 minutes) The group talks with each other about the dilemma presented while the presenter listens. When the group talks, it is helpful for the presenter to pull his/her chair back slightly away from the group. This protocol asks the Consultancy group to talk about the presenter in the third person, almost as if s/he is not there. As awkward as this may feel at first, it often opens up a rich conversation, and it gives the presenter an opportunity to listen and take notes, without having to respond to the group in any way. It is the group’s job to offer an analysis of the dilemma or question presented. It is not necessary to solve the dilemma or to offer a definitive answer. Members of the group sometimes do suggest solutions to the dilemma. Most often, however, they work to define the issues more thoroughly and objectively.

Possible questions to frame the discussion:

- What did we hear?
 - What didn’t we hear that they think 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. (5 minutes) The presenter reflects on what s/he heard and on what s/he is now thinking, sharing with the group anything that particularly resonated for him or her during any part of the Consultancy. The point of this time period is not for the presenter to give a “blow by blow” response to the group’s conversation, nor is it to defend or further explain. Rather, this is a time for the presenter to talk about what were, for him/her, the most significant comments, ideas, and questions s/he had while listening to the Consultancy group.
 6. (5 minutes) The facilitator leads a brief conversation about the group’s observation of the Consultancy process. Debriefing the process is key. Don’t short-change this step. It will make each meeting better.

⁴ National School Reform Faculty, Harmony Education Center, Bloomington, Indiana Gene Thompson-Grove, Edorah Fraser, Faith Dunne Further Amended by Edorah Fraser, June 2002