

I now know many of my fellow teachers much better than “hi” or “any coffee left?” I have been involved in meaningful conversations where we have built both trust and high expectations for each other. I have colleagues who can challenge my thinking in a supportive way. I can do the same for them.

Can you describe some high points of your CFG experiences? The high point in my CFG experience may not sound like one. We were having a very serious leadership discussion, after looking at our latest test results. These results showed no improvement with our poverty and ethnic gap.

I made the suggestion of looking at our results in a more detailed manner and to do more research on what other schools were doing. One of my fellow CFG colleagues gave a very strong challenge to my thinking. She said I was involved in “totally Discourse I” thinking. She meant I was not looking at this problem in a new way that tested my conventional thinking. I was at first surprised and in denial. I then thought deeper and listened to some better thinking that questioned “what were we doing so that some of our students did not learn?” We came up with more unconventional ideas that looked at what we were doing. I was really proud that one of my fellow teachers could challenge our thinking so openly and that it did change our thinking. There was no big faculty split, no hard feelings, no turf wars. We just knew it was part of our growth process.

What are your goals in terms of your work with NSRF?

I would like to see a repeat of the experience in my school, in other schools, and in other school systems. I can no longer imagine working in a school that does not operate this way. I would like to change professional development from the model of only “experts” can come in to teach us all a new thing, to a model that says the people who are going to change our practice are the trained facilitator and staff sitting around the table.

dave



**Protocols in Practice**  
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The following are three variations on doing “Consultancies” which I have been using with teachers, principals, school change coaches, those currently in a CFG, and/or those yet to be in a CFG:

(1) Partners in a Fish Bowl

After having assigned the reading of the “Consultancy” protocol and reviewing the process for developing framing or focusing questions, I typically introduce the Consultancy protocol by

inviting a volunteer to share a dilemma or concern for the whole group to engage in as a “practice run” in how to use the protocol. With a group of more than ten I do this in a modified “Fish Bowl.” For example, with a group of fifteen, I have seven of the participants sit in a circle with the volunteer presenter, and the other seven sit behind the initial seven in the inner circle of the Fish Bowl. These seven in the outer circle each serve as a consultant to those in the inner circle, listening closely to the conversation occurring in the inner circle, then at specific intervals they will be asked to confer with their partners in the inner circle.

I will do this first after “clarifying questions,” inviting the outer circle Fish Bowl “consultants” to make possible additional clarifying questions, then again after “probing questions,” and again at one or two points of the discussion period in the protocol.

In this way everyone participates more actively than just those in the inner circle of the Fish Bowl, yet it keeps the number of those participating directly with the presenter to a more manageable number rather than having fourteen people all try to participate directly in an initial run through of a Consultancy.

These next two protocols are not in our current list of Protocols and are shorter versions of the Consultancy which I have modified from the originals I learned a number of years ago. I often receive comments from participants that they don’t have enough time to do these kinds of things with their staff. The two shortened versions of Consultancies address that issue as they can both be done in less than an hour. They also have the added advantage of engaging everyone in sharing and working on each others’ dilemmas, concerns, or issues.

#### (2) “Sticky Issues” - Modified, Shortened Consultancy

Read the Protocol below, then write out the particulars of a situation you would like to lay out to a small group of “consultants,” ending with a “focus or framing question” for your issue/concern/problem. The group might offer some suggestions and resources, and also help you see how to strategize on your own.

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#### (3) The “Sticky Issues” Protocol

5 minutes all members of a triad make notes on their own Sticky Issue

15 minutes (3 mins) first person briefly outlines issue to responders

(3 mins) responders ask clarifying questions

(7 mins) responders talk about what they heard or are thinking about, presenter turns around and only listens

(2 mins) presenter talks about what s/he is now thinking

Repeat the 15 minute process for the other two people in the triad

5 minutes debrief the total process

55 minutes total time

#### (4) Two Minute Consultancy

[adapted from “Collaborating for Student Success” of the Ohio Center for Essential Schools]

**Objective – to brainstorm silently, in writing only, several possible solutions or suggestions for individual educators’ own current work challenges, problems, or dilemmas**

**Procedure –**

- 1) groups of no more than 10, no less than 5, around a table**
- 2) each person is given a stack of half-sheets of paper equaling the number of people in this small group (e.g. 10 in the group, 10 sheets)**
- 3) each person is asked to think about a current, job-related challenge, problem or dilemma that is puzzling - for which they do not presently have a solution - and writes it on a half-sheet of paper – e.g. teachers might ask - “How can I get more group involvement out of my students,” or “How can I get my students to be more punctual?”**

**after allowing a few minutes for thinking, each person should write-out his/her issue and pass it to the person to the right; that person then reads the issue just received, has 2 minutes only to jot down on another half-sheet of paper the first thought, idea, suggestion that comes to mind in addressing the issue, and then attaches it behind the problem sheet just read, with a paper clip [Note – monitoring time is crucial with a warning given with 30 seconds to go]**

**4) repeat this process every 2 minutes and keep the process going until each person gets his/her sheet back with the attached suggestions/ideas**

**(5) Possible Discussion Questions**

**What solutions were discovered that you hadn’t previously considered?**

**Can you see any value in trying some of these suggestions/ideas?**

**What suggestions/ideas triggered other ideas or solutions for you?**

**What does this teach about reaching out to others for help?**

**(6) Debrief (total time for a group of 10, approximately 45 minutes)**

**Although this protocol seems very directive, participants have virtually unanimously liked it, noting not only that they get several useful ideas and/or confirmation of what they were thinking, but get thoughtful responses from everyone with it being done totally in silence, with the “conversation” occurring only in writing on each persons’ half-sheet of paper. Thus, my mantra has become – “It’s not how much time you’ve got, it’s how you use the time you’ve got!”**

**What If and Why?—Literacy Invitations for Multilingual Classrooms**

**By Barb Backler**

**Harmony Education Center**

**I read this book, because I have always been intrigued by the K – 6 classroom in Bloomington where the author did her research, and I have always wanted to document what goes on in there. I think it’s exemplary, and I want others to know about**