FROM A FACILITATOR'S PERSPECTIVE:
What To Do When a Participant Misses A Day of Training

By Dave Lehman, Connections Editor, NSRF National Facilitator, CFG Coach in Wisconsin davelehman@mac.com

Occasionally, a participant in CFG Coaches training must miss all or part of a day's training due to an unexpected family emergency, a last minute directive from an administrator, an unforeseen schedule conflict, or illness. Someone absent on the first day or two of a five-day training misses crucial scaffolding activities and the understanding those activities entail, so an absence on those days means that person should reschedule their entire training. On day three or beyond, it's not ideal, but possible to make up the lost interaction. So trainees with a legitimate excuse (within reason and not exceeding one full day's experience), can still become NSRF-certified CFG Coaches, I often have these individuals complete the missed work and email me their assignments. Here are some examples of such assignments, and some responses from those doing the work.

For missed "Inclusion Activities" (warm-ups or ice-breakers or starters to the day)

Completing the "Gingerbread Man" or "Creating a Metaphor" activity: Write a brief reflection about this as an activity and if you would see any use for it in your work.

Reflection from Carmen in Madison regarding "Gingerbread Man" assignment: *"I use several different kinds of professional development in my work and I am always looking for new inclusion activities to do with groups. I like this activity because it can be tweaked to reflect personal or work-related ideas, or ideas specific to the kind of professional development activities we do.*

"Although I don't always like thinking of my responses to these kinds of inclusion activities, I do like this one because I think I'd use it in the beginning of my work with a group and then try to post them where we are working as a reminder to everyone what people are bringing (or trying to let go of) within the conversations and work we are doing."

Reflection from Kathy in Madison regarding "Creating a Metaphor" assignment: *"When I am at my best as a teacher, I am a sponge. A sponge is very absorbent and has the ability to soak up lots of liquid. When I am at my best as a teacher, I am able to absorb what I see and hear. I am able to soak up what my students/colleagues are saying and doing. I can fill myself up and even expand to a greater size. My capacity for absorption is great. A shadow of this sponge metaphor is that I am a very simple organism, perhaps the simplest of all animals. The liquid that is pumped into me has the possibility of passing right out of me through my pores.*

"This activity was a lot harder than I initially thought it would be. Although I came up with the idea of the sponge as my metaphor very quickly, I had trouble thinking about the strengths and shadows of the metaphor. Education and learning are not simple, and it's not just about soaking up ideas and filling up our students or ourselves. People need to do something with the liquid they absorb."

Considering a range of possible inclusion activities: Participants are instructed to visit the appropriate NSRF webpage listing Ice-Breakers and Warm-ups and select some
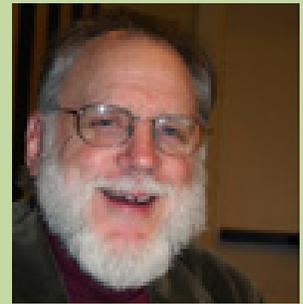
Dave Lehman is the former founding principal/teacher of the Lehman Alternative Community School, a public middle- high school recently named after him and his wife by the Ithaca, New York Board of Education upon their retirement after 30 years. He currently is doing "School Improvement Coaching" with the middle schools and high schools in Madison, Wisconsin.

Contact him with your questions or comments at davelehman@mac.com

from this list to comment on. Consider circumstances in which you might use them with colleagues or students.

Reflection from Cole, a teacher in a private school in Canada: *"Regarding '#3, Draw a picture that describes who you are.' I like this one as it is a change from writing one's thoughts or questions. I might use this for a class on the first day of school or with a group of kids in a camp-like scenario. Regarding '#13, Draw your school.' I like this one but I might consider changing to 'Draw Your Ideal School' and do this with teachers. That way you can get to the bottom of their wants/needs as educators and the conversation stays positive. I'd want to stay clear of negative discussions with questions like 'What don't you like about your current school?'"*

For missed "Learning from Student Work" activities

In the Resource book, read *"Learning from Student Work and Overview"* **(pg. 52),** *"Further Thoughts about Learning from Student Work"* **(pg. 51), and** *"Protocol Matching Activity"* **(pgs. 64-66). Then, working with the** *"Guide for Using 7 of the Student Work/Problem Solving Protocols"* **(pgs. 60-62), select any one of the nine scenarios, choose a protocol that would seem most helpful to use with that scenario, and give your reasoning.**

Reflection from Jenny in Chippewa Falls: *"I chose Scenario 4 where the Special Education Teacher has the assignment of using free-form maps on The Diary of Anne Frank. This teacher does have a dilemma, but since it seemed to center around a single assignment I felt that a protocol that focused on assignment review would be a better fit [than the Consultancy or Issaquah Protocols]. I finally settled on the Tuning Protocol. It seems as though she was generally quite happy with the results of the assignment and wanted to have feedback on how to improve it. For me, the advantage was that the group would have more background from the teacher with the Tuning Protocol on what she was actually looking for in the assignment."*

A variation on the above assignment: from the "Protocol Matching Activity," select any three, and decide which of the "Learning from/Looking at Student Work" Protocols you would use, and why?

Reflection on one of the three selected by Cole from Canada: *"For Scenario #2, I like the Success Analysis Protocol. I would have all of the teachers that teach these three individuals with the behavior concerns come together and share their successes with regards to what works for them in their own classrooms. Perhaps somebody has already come up with a system that allows the rest of the class more freedom, while still providing the structure needed for the kids in question. This way, the science teacher might be able to take a few ideas from the conversation and use them to implement a similar strategy that could work in his/her own classroom."*

Reflection from Kathy in Madison: *"Considering Scenario #3, when a group is looking at student work in order to learn from it, there should be a shared set of group norms that helps the participants act in respectful ways. The feedback for the presenter should be effective. Before beginning each protocol session it would be helpful to go over the norms and review what the group has established as respectful ways for doing business. One other thing to emphasize would be to keep comments evidence-based. Then the statements participants*

make would be more like, 'I notice that…' or 'I wonder about…' which don't sound so judgmental. It's not about giving advice to a presenting teacher; it's about giving them time to be reflective about their own practice. Through warm and cool feedback, participants react to evidence. They don't try to fix the teacher or provide them with the 'right answers.'"

For missed "Text-Based Discussion"

Read the "Connecting the Dots" chapter by Beverly Tatum and briefly answer these questions which were part of our "Text-Based Seminar" (pgs. 43-44 of the Resource Book). #1: Why did the author title the chapter "connecting the dots"? What dots? Why do they need connecting? What's the picture that emerges when they're connected?

Reflection from Carmen in Madison: "'Connecting the Dots' is an appropriate title because the author is trying to connect certain ideas which she didn't think were being made. Her point in this article is that a large majority of people, specifically teachers have 'unexamined racial attitudes' that can negatively impact student performance. These 'unexamined racial attitudes' are just that – unexamined – and therefore, many people are not aware they have such a bias or misperception. The author's point is that until individuals become aware of their perceptions and then can modify them, change will not occur. In this specific instance, teachers must confront their racial attitudes for what they are and then through their awareness and change we can hopefully help improve student achievement (close the achievement gap)."

Read the article "Yes, Black Males Are Different, But Different Is Not Deficient" [from the February 2012 issue of Phi Delta Kappan] and compare any two Text-based Protocols in the Resource Book.

Reflection from Kathy in Madison: "The two protocols, 'The Final Word' and 'Save the Last Word,' are the same in many ways. However, there is one big difference between them. In 'The Final Word,' the presenter shares the passage he/she has selected as the most significant idea from the text and describes why that quote struck him or her. In the protocol 'Save the Last Word for Me,' the presenter shares the part of the text that he/she found to be most significant. The presenter says nothing about why he/she chose that particular passage. Both protocols go on to have each of the other group members share their responses to the chosen passage. Then the presenter in both protocols ends his/her turn by having the final/last word, responding to what has been said by other group members and what he/she now thinks.

"I have always wanted to use culturally responsive practices in my classroom, but haven't really known how to do that. This article actually laid out the 'Five Cs of Reality Pedagogy' to use when acknowledging black males are different and need to experience something different in the classroom. I really like the idea of having 'co-generative dialogues'."

Conclusions

What do you think? Do these examples of assignments for those who missed part of our typical five-day training resonate with you? Have you done anything similar, or do you have a different way of addressing these situations? Please call or email us. ∽