

New website, new protocols/activities redesign, and new protocols for summer open training!

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I hope by this point you haven't equated our mentions of the upcoming website and materials redesign with that famous boy who cried wolf. It turns out that completely overhauling, rewriting, redesigning, and re-architecting a complex website, incorporating a substantial membership and emailing database behind it, while simultaneously rewriting and redesigning a boatload of printed materials, along with all the everyday work that continues to grow and multiply ... let's just say that, like natural childbirth, the process can take *much* longer than one anticipates. One can easily confuse Braxton-Hicks contractions with actual labor, and once labor starts, there's no turning back, no matter how many hours (months, in our case) it takes to birth this baby! Plus, doing all of this with a shifting team of university student informatics interns, one that shuffles members at each semester break, adds another layer of complexity we didn't imagine. (Is that like giving birth at a

teaching hospital? Maybe.)

I'd like to think that within a few days of your reading this newsletter, the website will be launched, but I'm knocking on wood for luck even as I type that line. If you received a strange email in the last week or so, forgive us, and please ignore it: the website testing process has also been a bit bumpy.

That said, we're also preparing for this autumn's Open Training of New Critical Friends Group® Coaches (see below), and we'll definitely be incorporating fresh new materials in that cohort. By then, we may have published our new CFG™ Starter's Manual. So if you've been looking for a good excuse to sign up for training, consider this the sign you've been waiting for. Click the link below or call us to enroll, and you'll get your hands on protocols and activities that look like this (but life-size!)



National School Reform Faculty

Facilitation Difficulty: [Icons]

Varies by need: 15-30 min.

Any size, with modifications for large groups

No prerequisite

Chalk Talk Protocol

NSRF®, Spring 2014

Purpose – To silently reflect, generate ideas, check on learning, develop projects or solve problems. It can be used productively with any group. Because Chalk Talk is done in silence, it gives groups a change of pace, encourages thoughtful contemplation, and reduces the risk often felt in verbal conversations. A Chalk Talk can be an unaccompanied silent reflection or a spirited, but silent, exchange of ideas. It can solve vexing problems, reveal how much a group knows about a topic, get an entire project planned, or give a committee lots of information without any verbal sparring. It can be an unforgettable experience. Students love it – it's the quietest they'll ever be!

Group size – See note after protocol for recommendations for large groups
Preparation – Large chalk board and chalk, or whiteboard and markers, or many pieces of chart paper taped together on the wall and markers. Ideally, write your question or topic in the center of the space but do not reveal it until after the setup.

Facilitation tips – During the protocol, your job is to remind everyone to stay silent and active. Do not allow them to return to their seats until the debrief (excepting those who are physically unable to stand). You may also write your own comments to push participants' thinking in new directions.

- Steps:**
- Setup** – Explain that Chalk Talk is a silent activity that gets everyone out their seats for the duration of the protocol. No one may talk at all, nobody should go sit down until prompted, and all "comments" should be written on the board/papers instead of being spoken. When not writing, participants should be standing back from the wall, reading each other's comments and allowing others space to write. (5 min.) They may respond to comments by:
 - Adding related or contrasting thoughts alongside an existing comment
 - Drawing a line connecting two similar comments
 - Adding exclamations, stars, smiley faces, +1s, or other pictographs to a comment
 - Drawing a picture that symbolizes what they are thinking or feeling
 - Question** – If you were unable to prep the room and pre-write the question(s), do so now, in the center of the board, and draw a large circle around it for emphasis. (1 min.) Sample questions:
 - What did you learn today?
 - So What? Or How What?
 - What do you think about social responsibility and schooling?
 - How can we involve the community in the school, and the school in the community?
 - How can we keep the noise level down in this room?
 - What does the scheduling committee need to know?

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Is it time for you to put these ideas into action?

NSRF® Critical Friends Group® Coaches Open Training Oct. 10-13

Bloomington, Indiana, \$795 for five* days' training
 (On Oct. 13, the group will decide when to return for the last two days.)

Visit the [NSRF website](http://www.nsrffharmony.org) or call 812-330-2702 to enroll.

Look what CFG™ work can do for your school:

- Help students succeed
- Model and build 21st Century Skills
- Build trust
- Reduce teacher and administrator isolation
- Transform school culture

- Build diversity of thought
- Extend and share leadership
- Facilitate participation from all members
- Provide healthy challenges
- Foster equity
- Honor and prioritize time for deep reflection

- Support strategic planning
- Reveal solutions to complex dilemmas
- Develop critical problem-solving
- Encourage creative, new thinking (sometimes around old problems)
- Carefully analyze work, and support everyone in receiving and giving focused, actionable feedback

“After a week of this training I feel we now have more tools to improve meetings, communication and the community at [my] school. Thank you so much.” -- A new CFG coach from Wisconsin