



Microlabs on CFG Purpose and Coach's Role

Adapted by Jay Davis from a Coaches' Clinic led at the 2004 Winter Meeting by Melissa Kagle and Edorah Frazer.

- Read Sally Friendly material (Description and assignment) (10 minutes)
- Microlab: In groups of around six participants
One minute to think, seven minutes discussion per round. (25 minutes)
 1. What are the important issues in Sally's practice?
 2. What is the responsibility of the CFG in regard to these issues?
 3. What is the coach's role in helping the CFG with this responsibility?
- Simulated pre-conference before Sally brings her assignment to the CFG, in small groups with a "Sally" and a "coach," and at least two other group members. There should be time-outs to prepare the coach and process what is said or should be said to Sally during the pre-conference. (20 minutes)
- Share out as large group (10-40 minutes, depending what you have for time and where the group wants to go!)

Profile of Mediocrity: Sally Friendly

From Chapter 3, The Skillful Leader: Confronting Mediocre Teaching, Platt, Tripp, Ogden and Fraser

Each day 26 students enter Mrs. Friendly's 5th grade class at Center Elementary School in Springfield. She greets the students with "Hi, John. You look nice today Bill, and you too Kamisha."

Mediocre performers are not always unpleasant. Sally appears to care about the students.

She is well organized. The schedule for the day is on the board, and the worksheets are arranged in neat folders on the shelf. As she goes over the day she says with some enthusiasm, "Today is science day. You are going to have a fun science experiment activity on batteries and bulbs." Kids like the science program because it provides a change of pace from seat work.

Mediocre performers are often organized. Their classrooms can be repositories of transient enthusiasm. But there is a superficiality to their curriculum planning. Plans may be organized, but tend to be anchored in activities rather than on important student learning.

"OK, I have put the experiment sheet and materials on your desk. I am going to give you 10 minutes to complete Part 1 in pairs. Go to it."

Mediocre classrooms are characterized by missed opportunities and narrow repertoires. It is what is not done that speaks loudly. No context was set. The teacher failed to find out what students already knew about batteries and bulbs. No objectives were communicated; no confusions anticipated; no connections made to the past or the future. There were no reasons given for the activity, perhaps because the activity was the objective.

Mrs. Friendly has been teaching 12 years at grade 5. The children are not unhappy in her class. "She is nice." "She lets us have free time on Friday afternoon." "She is not as tough as Mr. Octane." The parents,

in general, are not displeased. They describe Mrs. Friendly as “OK,” “nice to the kids, not as challenging as the 4th grade teacher, Mr. Octane.” One parent says, “She doesn’t stretch them, but they don’t lose much ground. The kids are occupied.” There are very few parent complaints, perhaps because parents recognize the Mr. Octanes of the world are rare. They can’t expect them every year, and Mrs. Friendly is a nice person. So there is an air of neutral support with occasional complaints.

There is order and on-task behavior by students. But there are no opportunities for high-level thinking, and standards and expectations for students are set at a minimum. “Sally Friendly” teachers expect little and get little from students. She is warm and treats students well. But in terms of instruction, she is performing at a mediocre level in the classroom, and so are most of her students

But Sally does contribute to the school. Sally frequently organizes social events. When staff members are sick she is the first to circulate a card. She makes a genuine contribution to the school. The principal constantly muses, “What would we do without Sally?”

Frequently in cases of mediocre teaching performance, outside the classroom gets magnified, something not central to teaching allows the evaluator to boost the overall appraisal. Measurement people refer to this as an observer error, such as a “leniency effect” or “halo error.” One positive area of performance can become an escape hatch.

As a result, Sally Friendly has received good to excellent evaluations from Principal Smith for the past four years and before that from Mrs. Henry. Before a new evaluation was phased in, on a checklist format she received the highest rating in everything except “very good” in “instructional variety” and “meeting individual needs.”

Mrs. Friendly is typical of teachers who can control their students, keep them generally on task and are generally organized. They are not the regular focus of parent complaint. They do not draw the attention of the administrator even though their instruction is mediocre.