

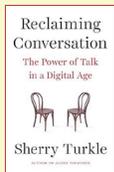
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Time for a refresher, anyone?

“That is what learning is. You suddenly understand something you’ve understood all your life, but in a new way.”

— Doris Lessing (1919–2013)

British author

Maybe you’re an experienced CFG coach or a school administrator wondering how to make your CFG work more effective after it’s been in place for more than a year. So, let’s talk.

I’d like to draw your attention to our [Experienced Coaches’ Trainings](#), and other links related to the many [training](#) and [facilitation](#) options we offer beyond our standard five-day Critical Friends Group® New Coaches’ Training.

Many years ago, when I first became a National Facilitator for NSRF, we began to offer Experienced Coaches’ trainings. These offerings are really training and refresher courses wrapped up into one neat package. Depending on the goals and desires of the organization hosting the training, there are many options for how new material can be modeled. Experienced Coaches Trainings can provide a three-day, deep-dive into areas such as Peer Observation, Facilitation Skills, Leadership, Equity, Inquiry, or Strategic Planning. Or, if your schedule is tighter and/or this training needs to tie into a larger professional development event, we can arrange for a one- or two-day refresher, obviously

with a narrower scope.

In planning for any Experienced Coaches’ Training, we ask the organizer planning the training: “What’s working well? What challenges are being encountered with this work? What strategies might be helpful in dealing with these challenges?”

Often, one of the biggest challenges schools and districts face a year or more after having a group of CFG coaches trained is flagging interest from their faculty: without care, CFG meetings and protocol use can begin to feel repetitive, over-used and lacking in the dynamic group energy it once had. Experienced Coaches’ Trainings or Refreshers provide certified coaches the ongoing support they need to extend their skills, add to their tool belt and recharge their batteries.

Some of the options include:

1. **Learning new protocols or activities.** Since several standard protocols work very reliably, many coaches find themselves using a few over and over again. After a year or two, members of the group may feel inclined to sigh at seeing yet another [Tuning Protocol](#)   or [Dilemma Consultancy Protocol](#)   on the agenda. You may be feeling a bit like a “one-trick pony.”

Sometimes, a group member wants to present a project or situation that

What’s working well?

*What challenges are being encountered with this work?
What strategies might be helpful
in dealing with these challenges?*

doesn't seem to be a good fit for any of a coach's "go to" protocols. Experienced Coaches' Training can specifically address the needs of that particular coach (or school) so that the coaches leave with a variety of new activities and protocols to try. Or maybe your school is considering working on specific issues like equity or inquiry. Learning new activities and protocols with an eye to how your coaches can support a larger agenda can go a long way to nurture these kinds of initiatives. (See related story about the American Community Schools of Athens, and references to focusing on curriculum mapping on pages 12-15.)

2. Reconnect with colleagues in your CFG coaches' group. Immediately after an on-site CFG Coaches' Training, some schools and districts create one or more CFG groups just for their coaches, to keep the new cohort of coaches supported, or to integrate the new coaches with ones who'd been trained previously. Ideally, everyone who has been trained as CFG coaches meet monthly to help each other with facilitation or coaching challenges, to try new protocols and activities, and sometimes to plan protocol use for non-CFG meetings.

If your school has such a group, has it met recently, or regularly? And if not, an Experienced Coaches' training can allow the coaches to dive once again into meaningful professional work over the course of a few days.

3. Get expert help with your specific challenges. NSRF's National and International Facilitators are people who have actually "been there," with years of CFG coaching experience under their belts. Part of their training includes maintaining one or more CFG groups, as well as training people from other schools to do the work. Many of them have experience in other geographic areas (even other countries!) as well as very different types of school settings. Any of these National Facilitators can offer suggestions that have helped other schools dealing with similar situations. And using our protocols, these National Facilitators can also help your group itself discover solutions that would fit your unique circumstances.



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4. Provide clarity around "Where do we go from here?" Most schools who ask for Experienced Coaches' Training have been doing CFG work within active communities for three to five years and are uncertain how to keep them productive as their school changes over time. They also might be struggling with questions like, "How can we best train others to fill vacating coaches' positions?" or "Should we now require everyone on staff to be in a CFG community?"

NSRF-certified National Facilitators can provide neutral expertise to give you options based on your particular school's wants and needs.

5. Tighten up sloppy behavior. Let's face it, it's easy to backslide into old habits of breaking protocol by interrupting one another, not being careful with timing, not doing the steps in their proper order, or allowing certain individuals to overpower others in the group (just a few examples). Having a facilitator correctly model activities and protocols reminds others of the importance of following protocols with fidelity. (See related article on page 3.)

6. Showing ongoing support of your CFG communities and your Coaches. It cannot be emphasized enough how important it is for the rest of the school to see their administrators visibly supporting CFG groups and coaches. If administrators demonstrate support of CFG work on a public level, the message received by your faculty, staff, and school community is that CFG work is a vital part of the school's intention to continually improve.

Remember, NSRF has over two hundred protocols and activities already on our website and we continue to add to that number routinely. If your school hasn't had formal CFG coaches' training in the past couple of years, chances are that you have not yet worked with any of our new materials. What better way to become familiar with our new offerings than to once again submerge yourself in the work you love, and know to be so effective?



SEE PAGES 12-15 FROM THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL OF ATHENS FOR MORE!



"Developing the skill of writing probing questions has been crucial to my classroom instruction. They help identify 'root causes' or encourage different perspectives, which serves my students well."
-Hrisi, MS English

"My training as a coach has been one of, if not the most, valuable professional experiences in the 23 years that I have been teaching." - Irini, Elementary/MS Greek



"It's such a productive use of time!"
-Stavi, 3rd Grade Teacher