

Using the Demands of Change Activity for “active” learning

By Terry Daugherty, NSRF National Facilitator

Attendees in our Critical Friends Group Coaches’ Training consistently write glowing recommendations of the work, but we do hear one request a lot: “Please add more activities that get us out of our chairs!” For that matter, sometimes a CFG meeting comes at a time when participants could be more energized on their feet.

We hear you! Our training agenda is focused and we get a LOT done in our limited hours together. And we do understand that sometimes it’s important to get up and get the blood moving!

Obviously the Internet offers hundreds of icebreakers and games, but since any addition to our agenda means we have to cut something else out, every activity during CFG Coaches’ Training must add meaning to the whole of the training. No matter how “fun” an activity is, we won’t be adding it just for the sake of movement.

Ideally, we want to add something in which a lot can be accomplished in a little time, and the length of time

can be adjustable to fit whatever opening that arises (while waiting for a lunch break or just returning from lunch, for instance).

Educators working within The NSRF created an activity years ago that we have Tuned and improved over the last few years. The new  [Demands of Change Activity](#) can run as quickly as 10 or 20 minutes and, with a thoughtful group of people interested in debriefing deeply, can meaningfully last three quarters of an hour. Let’s talk about the reasons this activity is so powerful for groups.

Change in schools

Throughout my teaching career, there has been an endless parade of new philosophies, programming, and edicts for teachers to adopt and implement in our schools. I’m sure it also happened before our time, but now that pace has become faster than ever. Many of us struggle to cope with the newest, latest thing, and what makes it even more taxing is the fact that we’re instructed to incorporate these new mandates without dropping initiatives added from last year and the year before, as well as standard good teaching practice we learned in school.

New initiatives are always cropping up around instructional pedagogies, classroom management, technology use, student evaluation, professional collaboration, instructional design, and more. Yet we cannot forget that our lessons must also be rigorous, authentic, real



world, flexible, and fun! Many modern educators feel like they're under siege, and there's plenty of evidence to support that feeling of stress!

When I interact with educators throughout the country, I hear how they have been sent to an endless stream of trainings, while being expected to keep up with the older initiatives. They are concerned about how many ideas they can juggle at the same time and which strategies can be "moved to the back burner," paused momentarily or indefinitely. At the same time, many administrators and classroom coaches seem sometimes perplexed about why staff members have a difficult time keeping track and being faithful to the new initiatives.

Using the Demands of Change Activity

In response to both sides of this common story, I started consistently using the NSRF Demands of Change Activity in trainings. It begins with an experience of honing one's observation of others, giving a nod to the variety of Observation Protocols available from NSRF. Rapidly and intentionally, the activity becomes more challenging. By providing trainees with a visceral experience of the demands of rapid change, the resulting reflection delves far more deeply than a simple conversation around "change in schools."

In debriefing their frustrations, educators and administrators can brainstorm how to make changes easier to accept and to carry out. Administrators are encouraged to consider how they ask staff to adopt new initiatives, and teachers to think about how their students respond to rapid change requests. Self-reflection may also give participants insights as to why older initiatives get pushed aside during the school year.

At the start of the debrief, participants tend to focus on themselves and their struggles with rapid change. But the debrief reminds us to "turn it around" to consider how our own requests for change can feel. Classroom teachers typically feel pressure toward changes they did not invite, but which are "inflicted upon them" by higher administration, but is not the same thing often true for students? Considerations for our requests' effect on others is powerful learning!



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Insanity: (n) doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.

~ Unknown

