

## **Developing Effective Conferencing Skills with Teachers**

**Thursday, April 19, 2007**

### **1. Purpose of the workshop:**

Build a database of questions. It's important to have a database of questions to ask, but also to know when and how to ask the right questions

Emphasis in sharing information in this workshop was on thinking, writing, talking paradigm; it one that works in conferencing. Writing is a necessary step for an idea to be implemented.

### **2. A mock self evaluation.**

Things that I am good at.

Areas where I could improve.

Things I could do in order to facilitate improvement.

Advice for a person who is taking over my job.

Ask teachers to answer these questions themselves.

Avoid the word weakness.

Most administrators do not get training in the conversation that is a part of the evaluation.

Observation often seems like a negative thing because it is required. It becomes routine.

It becomes a task.

### **3. Reflecting on the evaluation process**

Do you remember your first conference? What were you feeling? How effective was the conference?

Often a rating may not really mean anything. Is the conferencing useful?  
How overwhelming is the task?

Do you recall your first teacher conference?

There is often confusion about what needs to said. There can be many comments without any real sense of how to improve. Helping students who may not know what to do next.

Administrators should do about 30% of the talking if they are trying to develop reflection. In the evaluation part of the process should involve more administrator talking.

Some things we already know about the teacher conferencing process

Teachers feel intimidated or threatened.

(There is an ASCD video on developing the walk though)

Faculty often automatically assume they have done something wrong.

Environment can often have a lot to do with the quality of the conference.  
Conferencing can be tedious; it is one of the many things they already have to do. They may not feel comfortable doing it.

It can be a pleasant experience.

Most teachers probably value the things that the administrator has to say.

Younger teachers don't listen very well. Older teachers pay attention to every word.

Teacher may approach the conference in survival mode.

The longer the leadership has been in place the more resistant the faculty is to the administrator.

The example of State Farm: They always promoted from the inside. Leadership turned around very quickly.

#### **4. A Perspective on Teacher Evaluation (pp5):**

What can be done to make this experience more positive?

If you can not make it to the conference you need to do something to make sure teachers know you value their time and the process.

The evaluation tool: should it be a checklist or open ended?

The evaluation seems like a dog and pony show.

#### **5. Skills Principals / Evaluators will have in the coming years (pp6)**

Add technology, conducting effective meetings (book: death by meeting, energizing meetings, [www.effective meetings.com](http://www.effective meetings.com)), developing teamwork.

What are the top three

Roles of the administrator: fixer. Mediator.

#### **6. Describing yourself as an administrator (Stiggins)**

Can the administrators do something like this? Should our evaluation look more like this based on Stiggins? Should there be some element of self reflection?

One of the dangers of self evaluation might be that it could be a weapon used against an administrator. This should not be an evaluation. Should the evaluation of the administrator not be similar to the work done in the process? The teacher is held accountable for the assessment of the student teacher, but the student teacher is not held accountable for their evaluations.

There is a similar process for teachers evaluating the administrator; but this is not regularly added to the administrator's file.

Stiggins/Duke: top attributes: Credibility (knowledge, familiarity, years of experience), Persuasiveness (accuracy, relivence), Patience, Trust, Track Record (follow through), Modeling.

#### **7. Trust**

What actions are likely to inspire trust:

Group: Praise. Open dialogue. Taking the process seriously. Clear expectations and objectives. Consistent. Invite suggestions. Go to their room. Walk the walls. Active listening. Follow-up.

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Stiggins: Establish intentions. Maintain confidentiality. Dealing with evidence of performance. Consistency. Treating conference as an opportunity for partnership. Honesty. Opportunity for teacher to review evaluation data. Teacher participates in the selection of performance goals.

## **8. Conferencing Skills Overview (pp 11)**

### **9. Trust Building (12)**

Paraphrasing content: Paraphrasing has three levels. 1. Repetition of what is said. 2. Summarizing or organizing. 3. Shifting the level of abstraction: summarizing in order to move the teacher in a direction. Describing with theory or language what the teacher is trying to say. There may be some interpretation: I think what I hear you saying is...

Paraphrasing tone and rate of speech (5 qualities of paralanguage): rate, rhythm, resonance, pitch, volume.

Match posture and gesture.

Use of the word "we." Asking questions. Giving options.

Be aware of the problems that can be developed in conveying **presuppositions**. Use these to your advantage. Avoid negative words and pejorative questions.

### **10. Questioning Skills (pp7, 15)**

Is the administrator trying to be the fixer or the mediator?

There is a need to understand the teacher's thinking; Bruce Joyce.

### **11. Pre conference/post conference guides**

How do you use open ended questions in these sessions?

### **12. Empowering Skills**

Teachers are the variables. Help them generate alternatives. Help them understand the student's perspective. Help them understand some of the consequences of their actions.

### **13. Teacher Conferencing Strategies**

Think of it as a lesson plan. What is the opener? What are the objectives? How is learning assessed? Teachers need to have a plan. So does the administrator. A sequence makes things work better.

14.

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## **REFLECTION:**

One of the major realizations is how much the clinical experience forces teachers to act like administrators. This is true of the conferencing situation; how much should each experience with a C&I student imitate a real student teaching experience?

Should the TSAF/Summative be reflective of student teacher / teacher evaluations?

Should teachers be responsible for collecting their own experience reflections / evaluations? Do these tools reduce the chance of an open-ended conversation?

Conferencing location: where are the best places to conference? Library? Lounge? Teacher's lounge?

What is our database of questions at UHS?

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Fitz

Cal

Jeff

Steve

Dixie

Suzie

Terry

Chris C.

Andrea

Brian

Mike S.

Jim Potter

Linda

Nikki