Facilitating Leadership to Improve Student Achievement

Five Essential Facilitation Skills Needed for Effective Data Talks

- Clearly Understanding the Problem
- Finding the Purpose of the Organization, Group, and Meeting
- The Power of Using Working Agreements
- Effective Decision Making Strategies
- Making Sure Every Voice is Heard

Clearly Understanding the Problem

- Agree on the data you will use. Simpler is better!
- Get as specific as you can about the problem. For example, not just Reading Comprehension, rather inferential comprehension and even more specifically understanding poetry.
- Examine the data as dispassionately and objectively as possible. Avoid statements such as, “He must have had a bad day, I know he does better than this.”
- Each subsequent decision you make depends on clearly understanding the data!

Knowing the purpose of the group

- Provides important context for you and group members
- Ensures that the group will work within the context set by the organization.
- Determines the parameters for the group “The Rules of the Sandbox” (phrase coined by Robert Garmston and Bruce Wellman)
- Helps members focus on the issues at hand.
- Knowing the purpose of each meeting helps members know what to expect.
- Helps people achieve stated goals.
- The ultimate purpose of each Data Talk is to target instruction so that all students are learning at high levels!
- Specific information about the achievement of students will lead to the development of effective strategies.
- Clearly understanding the problem will help to move the conversation quickly from the identification and understanding of the data to the setting of target goals and finally to the discussion of effective instructional strategies
Examples of Effective Purpose Statements

- At the meeting today we will identify all of the students who already meet the objective, those who are in progress, and those students who do not meet the objective at all.
- During this meeting we will brainstorm strategies to help students understand the concept of photosynthesis completely and decide on which three we will implement.
- Now it’s time for you to develop your own purpose statement!

The Power of Working Agreements

- Ensure a safe environment for all members
- Make covert agreements overt
- Set up the conditions for positively addressing behavior issues should they arise
- Ensure that every person in the group is on the same wavelength

There are 2 ways to determine Working Agreements

- Method one, develop the Working Agreements with the group:
  - Ask the question of the group: “What conditions do you need to ensure a safe working environment?”
  - Have each person write their answers on a 3 by 5 card
  - Share the responses one at a time with a small group.
  - Record each response.
  - Instruct the group to decide on the working agreements that they have in common.
  - Report to the large group
  - Determine commonalities
  - Find group consensus on the Working Agreements.

Determining Working Agreements Method 2

- Bring your version of the Working Agreements to the group
- Read the Working Agreements to the group
- Ask if any of the Working Agreements need further explanation of clarification.
- Once the Working Agreements are clear to everyone, ask if there are working agreements that should be added
- Find consensus about the added agreements
- Ask the final question, ” Is there anyone who disagrees with these working agreements?”
Steve’s Working Agreements

- Honor Our Diversity
- Work for the Common Good
- Presume Good Intentions
- Participate Fully
- Take Care of Your Needs
- Treat One Another With Respect
- Solve problems face to face
- Have fun!

**Identify a decision-making strategy at the beginning**

- Identifying a decision-making strategy with the group at the beginning of the process will help you avoid unnecessary conflict.
- There are 3 types of decision-making strategies:
  - Voting
  - Consensus
  - Hybrid of consensus and voting
- Regardless of the decision-making strategy the group must gather, analyze, and understand the pertinent data.
- A facilitator’s job is to structure the process for analyzing the data.
- It is the responsibility of each group member to identify, gather, and analyze the appropriate data.

**Voting**

Step 1 – Clearly state the choices for the group.
Step 2 – Ask clarifying questions
Step 3 – Group members advocate for choices.
Step 4 – Conduct the vote. This is done either publicly or privately.
Step 5 – Restate the results saying, “The majority of the group chose...”

**Consensus**

**Three tests must be met to achieve consensus**

1. Every person has had his or her voice heard in the discussion about the decision.
2. Every person can live with the decision.
3. Every person can support the decision publicly.

Two important conditions:

1. To determine if there is consensus, ask the following question, “Is there anyone who disagrees with this decision?”
2. The person who disagrees MUST suggest an alternative solution.
Process for Consensus

Step 1 – Clearly state the choices for the group.
Step 2 – Ask clarifying questions
Step 3 – Group members advocate for choices.
Step 4 – Group members discuss the choices
Step 5 – Each member states his or her choice
Step 6 – The facilitator recognizes consensus and asks the question, “Does anyone disagree with the decision?”

Hybrid

- The hybrid decision-making plan employs a combination of voting and consensus.
- Typically, group members vote on small decisions while using consensus for the larger more complex decisions.
- To use this approach successfully, the facilitator must be very clear about when each strategy will be used.

Elements to Ensure Every Voice is Heard

1. The work is conducted in small groups with a facilitator and recorder.
2. A process is used to ensure that each person can express his or her ideas without interruption or discussion.
3. Responses are recorded on chart paper or by electronic means.
4. Participants write their responses first before sharing them with the group.

Tips

- It is important to go slowly at first. Deliberately take time to hear the responses of each person one by one.
- Some people think as they talk. Others must consider the answer and even write their response before sharing their opinion. **Always give people time to write their answers.**
- Share leadership of the group.
- Have someone watch your group work and provide feedback about the group dynamics.

Information about Data Analysis

Mike Schmoker in his 1993 book, **Results**, sets out a process for analyzing data.

- Goals need to be:
  - Measurable
  - Clear
Doable

- For example: The percentage of our team’s students who will be at or above the standard in __________ will increase from ______ % now to________ % at the end unit/term/month/week.

Data Analysis Process Using the Current State/Preferred Future Template

Current State

- In this part of the template, have teachers write all of the pertinent information about the achievement of students based on student assessment data.

- List individual students that exceed the goal, meet the goal, do not meet the goal in this space.

- The more information included here, the better!

Preferred Future

In this section, have the teachers list the goal that they want all students to achieve. (See the section on writing goals above.)

Next Steps

In this section, have the teachers list 2 or 3 doable, manageable, clear strategies that they think will help students move from the Current State to the Preferred Future.

The agreed upon strategies, see decision making strategy above, are then implemented by all teachers.

The Circle continues

After the teachers implement the agreed upon strategies above, they examine the student data to determine which students exceed the goal, meet the goal, do not meet the goal.

If all students meet the goal, choose a different area of focus.

If not all students meet the goal; the teachers decide on new strategies to implement and then implement them.

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