

Facilitating Professional Learning

Facilitating Professional Learning- CIRCLE Discussions

As noted in previous blogs, effective professional learning is an essential aspect in the development of collaborative school cultures. Several strategies for facilitating professional learning have been shared over the past few weeks; however, one of the strategies that I have found to be the most challenging to use, but also the most effective is the CIRCLE Discussion strategy. Let us consider some of its key aspects,

Circle Discussions

An interesting but challenging way to encourage informed and lively group discussions is to use the Circle Discussion Process. Usually, three to six people meet in each group. The basic rules of the Circle Discussion process are as follows:

- ✓ Participants reflect on the ideas, issues or topic selected for discussion.
- ✓ People are given some personal “thinking time” to make a few personal notes on their ideas or reactions.
- ✓ Each person, in turn, shares their ideas on the topic – this can be very short or up to no more than two minutes in length, but no one comments, until everyone has had a chance to speak.
- ✓ The discussion is then opened to the whole group.
- ✓ During or at the end of the discussion, if the group or leader wishes, a recorder develops a summary of the group’s reaction, using good flipchart phrases.

Comments: When the above method is initially introduced, it is often very difficult for people to follow the key rule of allowing each person to state their position without providing any comments or feedback. However, experience has shown that once a group understands the purpose of the Circle Discussion method, the quality of the conversation is enhanced immensely. This process allows each person to contribute their own ideas and stimulates greater reflection on the part of all members, which in turn results in even more creative interaction within the group.

References

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