Critical Friend Conversation Protocol

Adapted by Daniel Baron CES the Small Schools adapted from the Institute of Cultural Affairs.

The Critical Friend Conversation Protocol is a process that can help people reflect together about any issue, large or small. *A facilitator leads the conversation, and asks a series of questions that elicit responses that take the group from the surface of a topic to its in-depth implications.*

Purpose

- The Critical Friend Conversation is intended for you to explore in-depth an essential question based on your experience
- The conversation is intended to insure clarity of purpose, to question your own assumptions, and to develop a proposed course of action for addressing the questions.

Process

1. Introductions in small groups (2 minutes)
2. Review the protocol (2 minutes)
3. State the essential question (1 minute)
4. Break into groups of four and facilitate the conversation as described below (50 minutes)
5. Summary and Reflection (5 minutes)

Step 1: Objective — questions that surface meaning and external reality. (30 minutes)

- Questions: What is the dilemma stated in the question? What are the assumptions embedded in the question?
  - Divide participants into groups of four. Identify the timekeeper.
  - The first person (presenter) in the group will have 2 minutes to address the above questions.
  - The second person will have 1 minute to respond to the presenter, and then each member has 1 minute to respond to the presenter, until everyone has responded.
  - The presenter will have the final word for 1 minute
  - Repeat the process with the remaining four group members.
  - Each participant journals his/her own response to the question for a few minutes.

Step 2: Actionable — questions to elicit resolution, bring the conversation to a close, and enable the group to identify some next steps. (20 minutes)

- Questions: What are some strategies that we could use to address the question? Based on these conversations, what would you take back to apply in your school?
  - Begin with a go round on the first question above, allowing each participant 1 minute. Continue with an open conversation to allow participants to build on each other's ideas for 10 minutes.
  - Each participant journals his/her own response to the question for a few minutes.

Step 3: Summary (5 minutes)

Conclude with a share-out from the groups; Facilitator invites small group members to share their contact info if they're interested in keeping the conversation going.