

Faculty Meetings that Build Learning Focused , Collaborative Cultures Part I

with
Dr. Pam Robbins

West Coast

21 North Newport
Napa, California 94559
(707) 255-3648

East Coast

1251 Windsor Lane
Mt. Crawford, VA 22841
(540) 828-0107

FAX: (540) 828-2326
e-mail: probbins@shentel.net
<http://user.shentel.net/probbins>

“Ultimately there are two kinds of schools: learning-enriched schools and learning-impooverished schools. I’ve yet to see a school where the learning curves of the youngsters are off the chart upward while the learning curves of the adults are off the chart downward, or a school where the learning curves of the adults were steep upward and those of the students were not. Teachers and students go hand in hand as learners – or they don’t go at all.”

(Barth, R, 2001, p. 23)

A G E N D A

Welcome, Introductions, Overview, The Role of Meaning

Agenda, Outcomes

A Conceptual Framework: Building Relationships, Creating Learning-Focused Schools ... Getting to the Heart of the Matter

Beliefs, Assumptions and Guiding Principles That Drive and Sustain Faculty Meetings That Foster Collaborative, Learning-Focused Cultures

“Risk Tolerance” and Faculty Meetings: A Menu of Options

Sample Meeting Ideas

Reflections, Personal Next Steps, Feedback

Outcomes

Participants will have the opportunity to:

- Examine how faculty meetings can develop or enhance high performance learning cultures
- Discuss strategies to assess and promote genuine trust among professional colleagues
- Explore approaches to creating a “spirit of inquiry” within a school
- Analyze a variety of ways to explore, model and apply best practice
- Review strategies to build norms of continuous improvement, essential to a “relentless pursuit of excellence”
- Experience a variety of job embedded learning structures that build individual, collegial and organizational capacity to produce learning
- Network with professional colleagues

My personal learning outcomes for this session:

Faculty meetings can:

1. Generate data about the quality of teaching and learning in the school.
2. Promote a more collaborative, student focused learning culture.
3. Enhance problem solving capacity.
4. Examine the research on best practice.
5. Highlight practices that foster student success.
6. Expand staff members' repertoire of teaching skills.

7 R's of Getting Ready: Essential Understandings for Successful Meetings



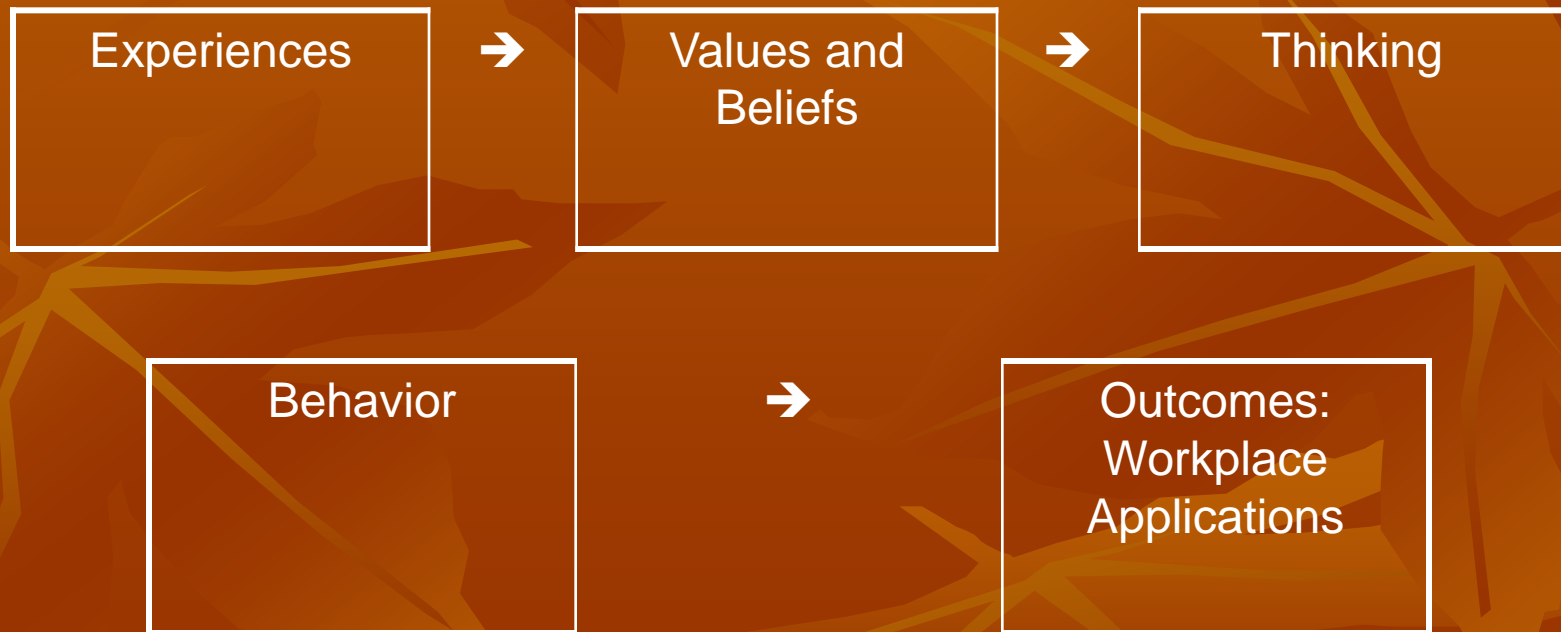
- Relationships among colleagues



- Risk tolerance
- Readiness matters: “Go slow to go fast.”
- Results focus should drive actions: “Begin with the end in mind” (S. Covey).
- Relevance matters. Link meeting ideas/activities to classroom challenges and school-wide initiatives.

Andy Hargreaves

- Reflect and model those practices you wish to see reflected in classrooms.
- Respect individuals' time commitments: make every minute count.



Assumptions: Faculty Meetings ...

- are professional growth opportunities.
- should be devoted primarily to teaching, learning and assessment issues.
- provide all school leaders (administrators and teachers) with opportunities to model effective instructional practice.
- can function as forums for problem solving.
- create opportunities to analyze student work, showcase successful practices, and put student performance on display.
- provide opportunities to build trust, collaboration and individual and organizational capacity to serve students.
- serve as a context for culture building/busting.
- should be planned with the notion that each teacher can gain valuable information from the meeting that can fuel action.
- are not times to review content that can be delivered via email.
- should be designed to be responsive to student data, staff need, contextual events.
- serve as a forum for job embedded learning.
- can create a meaningful context for celebration.
- can INSPIRE!

A Framework for Understanding Culture



Celebration ...

- enhances school climate
- reinforces norms, values and beliefs
- sustains momentum towards treasured school-wide goals

Examples:

- Coke[®] and a compliment
- bucket of roses
- star-studded parking
- “let them eat cake”
- sofa seat award
- pat on the back
- tiger eyes

Using Meetings as Transformational Tools

Beginning



- energize
- create an “advance organizer” (mental set) of what the session will be about
- develop a forum for sharing; build a valuing of collaboration

Middle



- instruct
- model
- provide opportunities for practice and feedback
- establish opportunities for professional dialogue, sharing and reflection

End



- create opportunities for participants to summarize learnings
- invite participants to identify and commit to “next steps”
- inspire action to make a difference for students
- close with a compelling quote, anecdote, video clip, or story

Sample Faculty/Department Meeting Ideas

Forums for professional learning and dialogue need to address school level data and the results must deepen and enhance the staff's capacity to foster student learning.

A series of meetings on “closing the gap” might include a focus on “teaching to student strengths.”

Open the meeting by presenting the following problem to table groups of faculty members:

When Eddie runs to collect the ptarmigan that he's just shot, he notices that its front pouch (balloon) is full of food. This is a sign that:

- a. There's a storm on the way.
- b. Winter is almost over.
- c. It's hard to find food this season.
- d. It hasn't snowed in a long time.

The "test question" is from Robert J. Sternberg's September 2006 article in *Educational Leadership* entitled "Recognizing Neglected Strengths."

After debriefing table group responses, lead a discussion about:

- What expectations do schools have about the abilities students need to possess in order to experience school success?
- What kinds of knowledge and skills do students from non mainstream cultures bring to the classroom/school?
- How can we honor students' strengths in the teaching/learning process?

Select four articles from the September 2006 *Educational Leadership* magazine. Ask staff members to form groups of four. Each member of the group reads a different article. After group members have completed their readings, each shares the essence of what they read.

The closing activity of the meeting might be to ask staff members to complete the following reflection:

~ Reflections on Our Session ~

Something I learned:

Something that my learnings inspired me to think about:

Something I plan to do as a consequence of my learnings:

By (when): _____.

Follow Through Action Plan

- Why?

Opportunities for teachers to practice are essential if newly introduced skills are to become a routine practice in the classroom.

- Action Planning

At the end of the meeting, invite participants to jot down notes about how they intend to use newly introduced/learned strategies in their classrooms. Suggest that for the next meeting, they bring samples of how they've used the strategies to share with colleagues.

- Monitoring and Celebrating Effort

During classroom walk throughs, the administrator or teacher leader can leave celebratory post-it notes when they observe teachers using the strategies introduced in the faculty meeting. The note should describe what the teacher did and the student behavior that followed. For example, "When you began class with the challenging math problem, I noticed that 100% of the students were on task. Awesome!"

During the next faculty meeting the leader can share information about the walk throughs. For instance, "This week I visited 17 classrooms. Let me tell you some of the incredible ways staff members are fostering student learning in our school." (Then, the leader describes these activities without divulging teachers' names.) Staff members will feel validated for making the effort. This action will foster the development of schoolwide norms of practice that foster student learning.

Personal Action Plan

The background of the slide features a pattern of stylized, overlapping leaves in various shades of orange, brown, and tan. The leaves are rendered in a flat, graphic style, creating a textured, autumnal feel. The overall color palette is warm and monochromatic.