Briefing for Critical Friends

2007 Performance & Development Review:
Review Focus: Professional Growth-Learning Together

The role of the Critical Friend

As critical friends in the P&D Review you play a most important role assisting teachers in their professional growth and development. Encourage teachers to reflect upon their practices, facilitate their awareness and thinking and give constructive feedback, both warm and cool.

- Teachers will be at different stages of readiness and you will need to adopt a coaching role to encourage the teacher to take a positive approach. It is hoped that informal discussions as well as formal meetings will take place.
- You should encourage teachers to develop improvement strategies linked to the AIP priorities and/or an improvement focus in their area of responsibility.
- You will need to be skilled in giving accurate and meaningful feedback both warm and cool.
- You should have some samples of student surveys, action research projects etc. to assist teachers with the use of data.
- A critical issue is the level of documentation required to ensure that the teacher has completed the process satisfactorily. This is particularly important as the P&D focus is on professional growth rather than judging performance against standards. Brief reports from working groups, samples of data, survey results & a documented PD plan and reflective journal should suffice.

References:

- Influencing with integrity: Staff Review: A two session model- Muffy Hand 2005
- Advice on being a Critical Friend SCOPE –Supporting Workplace Learning 1996 The Reflective Teacher
- Warm and Cool Feedback- from ANSN The Heart of Teaching
- Norms for a PLT from ANSN The Heart of Teaching
Priorities for Performance and Development:
To sustain a P&D Culture

- As critical friends your task will be to encourage professional growth in teachers who may regard some of the suggested strategies as threatening. Participation in the process itself rather than specific results from surveys, indicates a high level of professionalism.
- Encourage teachers to collect data and reflect upon it.
- Give teachers constructive rich feedback
- PD should directly relate to professional growth, be linked to AIP priorities and should be strategic.
- PD should have a classroom outcome

Multiple sources of data make for a richer discussion and also provide a broader context for performance review. A list of types of data that may be used is included in the Staff handout.

Priorities for Performance and Development:
To enhance student learning and improve student achievement.

- There is a professional expectation that teachers will be actively involved in curriculum development. This can be demonstrated in a number of ways beyond attending KLA meetings eg involvement in some of the following:-
  - a Professional Learning Team
  - the Literacy Team
  - a curriculum writing team
  - City Centre Team
  - a team linked to the SIE Cluster
  - protocol fine tuning of units of work
  - curriculum review

- Teachers should actively work with colleagues to improve curriculum delivery
- Encourage teachers to embrace new ideas and pedagogies
- Encourage teachers to seek feedback from students- assist them with formulating feedback questions. Suggest they work with a trusted colleague to develop and analyse feedback surveys.
- Encourage teachers to expand wide repertoire of teaching methods.
- Encourage teachers to engage in a collegiate activity
- Encourage teachers to participate in transforming learning and share their reflections with you.
Priorities for Performance and Development

3. To continue to improve student-teacher relationships

Student feedback is central. Some areas that may be of interest to the classroom teacher seeking to develop a survey:

- Ambitions and motivations of students, interests, impediments to learning (e.g., sleep issues, part-time employment, family issues, sport commitments...)
- Curriculum—engagement factors, use of text, ICT, methods of instruction, assessment tools, presentation...
- Student expectations of class, role of teacher, topics studied

Use of student feedback to effect improvement

- Problem solving—use feedback to address classroom management issues e.g., the survey indicates that a few students disrupt classes and the rest are unhappy about it and expect the teacher to deal with it.
- A group of teachers might work together to develop an action research approach with a challenging class to identify successful and unsuccessful management techniques.

- Teacher effectiveness is the single most important factor in determining successful outcomes for students. Teachers can only be effective if they establish positive relationships with students. Quality relationships are based upon mutual respect.
- As a critical friend, you will need to discuss the range of strategies used to deal with classroom management. You may need to assist them to widen their repertoire.
- Teachers struggling with classroom management are always a challenge to critical friends. It is important to encourage them to recognize that there is a problem; otherwise, no change will occur. Rather than provide solutions, encourage them to think about the problem and take responsibility for it.
- Some teachers have effective classroom control but do not necessarily form positive relationships with students. In this context, a student survey may result in reflection on the part of the teacher which may lead to improved relationships.
- Time out— if you are the critical friend of a teacher who uses time out frequently, talk to them about how they manage the post time out conversation. What restorative practices do they employ to reestablish a relationship with the student?
- Teachers should be encouraged use a student survey as one of the three data sets required. As critical friends, you need to stress that teachers own the results of surveys and are not obliged to divulge them. However, you will want to encourage them to reflect upon the results and will need to build up their trust in you as a critical friend so that they feel comfortable talking to you about student feedback.
Contents of Critical Friends Folder

- Briefing notes for Critical Friends
- Briefing Notes for Staff (For your reference)
- List of Critical Friends and Colleagues
- East Keilor PLT groups 2007
- PD Priorities of Critical Friends 2007
- Reference: Staff review: A Two Session Model Muffy Hand
- Reference: Advice on being a Critical Friend SCOPE – Supporting Workplace Learning 1996 The Reflective Teacher
- Reference: Warm and Cool Feedback- from ANSN The Heart of Teaching
- Reference: Norms for PLTs- from ANSN The Heart of Teaching
- Samples of student surveys