



Colorado
Teaching Conditions
School Improvement Guide

Facilitator's Addendum



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Introductory Letter

Dear Facilitator:

Thank you for agreeing to lead this process. You will be playing a crucial role in your school's improvement process, and you will be impacting not only the lives of your fellow teachers and co-workers, but you will also be affecting the life of every child who comes into contact with your school community. Although this responsibility may prove challenging at times, we know that it can also be a gratifying position.

You may want to consider recruiting a Co-Facilitator to present this information in tandem, taking turns with each segment of the training, and to help answer participant questions. This is especially important if presenting to a large group and if you are presenting this training in its entirety. A second presenter can also help with the time responsibility and pressure of being the sole expert on your faculty.

Teaching conditions are in place in every school. Some teaching conditions are overtly recognized and engendered, while others are less explicit and deal with more subtle sub-cultures. Some teaching conditions are positive and enhance teaching and learning, while others detract from the hard work of educators and students. Some conditions are team, grade level, department, district or community dependent, yet others are contingent upon specific leadership personalities or styles.

We have given you six documents to use during facilitation and to enhance your facilitation:

- 1. The Facilitator's Guide** has the entire workshop written in script format. This was designed as a scaffold for those who need more support. Please do not feel that you must follow the script word for word. We have provided objectives at the top of each section to ensure fidelity to the work, and we have tried to provide opportunity for multiple learning styles and for everyone to have a voice in the process. That being said, you know your faculty. Please modify the script to meet their needs.
- 2. The Facilitator's Addendum** provides additional directions, resources and clarity for the research data and activities included in the Facilitator's Guide. This and the Facilitator's Guide are only for you and the leadership team. Participants do not need a copy. We recommend that you read this guide at least a week before you begin the process.
- 3. The Teaching Conditions School Improvement Worksheet** packet should be given to every participant. This is where they will be working with the data, recording their thoughts and processing the activities.

4. **The Teaching Conditions School Improvement Notes** packet is a copy of the slides from the power point presentation. This should also be given to every participant.
5. **The Construct Items Worksheets** packet is a graphic organizer to help participants understand the data for each separate Construct.
6. **The Individual Item Prompts Packet** houses reflective activities and questions to help groups begin to have conversations about the teaching conditions in their school as related to one specific item (question) within a Construct.

As facilitator, you are agreeing to lead a long term process of improving your school's conditions that will make for a better workplace for educators and a stronger learning environment for all students.

We hope that these documents meet your needs and prepare you for your experience. Please remember that this is not a one-shot workshop. You do not need to create the ultimate action plan to solve every issue during one meeting. Instead, we recommend that you take time to analyze your data and create a realistic, workable plan that will improve your teaching conditions over time.

We appreciate your dedication,

The TELL work team

Statement of Critical Buy-In for a Continual Process

Continual Process

Improving teaching conditions is a continual process of self-examination, goal-setting and assessment of progress. Please be aware that this course of action takes time to effect change. It is not a “one shot deal” and does NOT take place in one single faculty meeting. Newer studies by Linda Darling-Hammond have proven that the best, most effective professional development must have from 30 to 100 contact hours spread over a 6- to 12-month time period with continual coaching and follow-through in order to realize true change in the classroom. Consider this as you plan your meetings.

Critical Buy-In

Additionally, everyone in the building must be involved in the change. If only the district personnel or school leadership are invested in improving teaching conditions, the process is destined to fail. The way to effect change is to get buy-in from as many faculty members as possible. You can probably predict who your influential members will be, as well as who your nay-sayers might be. Use your facilitative skills to make everyone feel included and important. The manner in which the process is presented, in conjunction with the facilitator and the school leadership team, can directly influence how these changes are received. A positive approach which lets everyone in the building know they are working for the benefit of each individual, as well as the whole, shows that this isn't “just another thing” they have to do.

Meeting Time and Size

Other important factors that contribute to a successful process involve looking at the time allotted for meetings and group meeting size. You want to think carefully about when and how you schedule these meetings. There are benefits to both whole group and small group facilitations; and there are pro's and con's to whole day versus hour long meeting chunks. Think of your faculty, when they are most available, most willing to meet, and how they respond best when meeting in groups.

Some schools like to kick things off with a whole faculty, multi-hour meeting, while others schools have been successful working with multiple grade levels or departments in small sessions throughout the day. Remember that the larger the group, generally, the more time you will need to get consensus and to debrief activities, and it is harder to include everyone in the conversation. Breaking into small groups within a large group can mitigate some of these issues.

Who Should Facilitate the Meetings?

Many administrators, upon seeing their result, want to jump right in and begin facilitating meetings about their teaching conditions. Although principals may be the most enthusiastic proponents of the work, they may not make the best facilitator for these staff meetings. We have found that some faculty members will not be completely honest in front of an administrator because they feel judged, intimidated, stifled, or merely that they do not want to hurt an administrator's feeling by bringing up negative issues.

Having a more neutral party to lead discussions is helpful. Most schools have a person, or several people, who are perceived as being in many corners, or who can see things objectively and non-judgmentally. Guidance counselors, mentors, academic coaches, testing coordinators and media coordinators, among others, may have specific interpersonal skill sets that lend themselves well to facilitation. Note, we are not saying that it cannot be the Principal, instead, we caution you to think carefully about who can get the most out of your staff to come to a productive conclusion.

Time Restrictions

The training, as written, will take 6.5 hours, which includes an hour for lunch and two 15-minute breaks. It was designed to build staff relationships, to address the needs of adult learners, and to meet multiple learning styles. If this time range is not feasible for your situation, think carefully how to break the time into smaller, more critical segments and still maintain the integrity of the work.

Ideas to Aid Facilitation

Using Attention Signals

Attention Signals are critical for smooth, timely transitions between segments of training. It can be tricky to find an attention signal to use with adults that doesn't seem childish or demeaning, yet is catchy enough to grab participant's interest. If you already have an established, effective signal you use in your regular meetings, please continue to use it. If not, below are some recommendations and things to consider when planning to use an attention signal.

Examples of Attention Signals that work well for adult learners:

- Chimes
- Bells
- V for victory
- Raise hand
- Notes played on a xylophone

Things to consider when choosing an attention signal:

- Personality and needs and development of your students/ learners
- Your personality and style
- Your physical area

Things to remember when using an attention signal:

- TEACH and REINFORCE the response you want after using the attention signal.
- That means:
 - o Show the signal, explain that this is your attention signal and model the expected response.
 - o Explicitly spell out the behaviors you want to see.
 - o Give positive reinforcement for those who respond correctly.
 - o Have a redirection ready for those who continually fail to respond to the attention signal.
- If someone continually ignores the signal, it may require a personal conversation to find out what need is not being met for this person. One effective strategy is to ask the "offender" to be in charge of performing the attention signal. This can give them some positive attention and a feeling of power or acknowledgment that they may need to perform effectively.

Grouping Strategies

One of the most strategic moves you can make is to think carefully about how to group your participants. You know your co-workers better than anyone, this means you have the ability to proactively create a setting where every voice is heard, and where everyone feels comfortable sharing.

Below are a few questions you may want to consider when creating groups. Remember to ask yourself, “How will these factors affect the decision making process?”:

- Do you want participants seated with friends, teammates, grade levels or by departments?
- Do you want groups with mixed ages and/or races?
- Do you want administrators to co-mingle with participants as equals?
- Do you want formal or informal leadership represented in each group?
- Do you want core teachers mixed with elective teachers?
- What size groups are you looking for?
- What does our meeting space look like? Can we move and change groups?

TELL Background Information

What Is the Teaching Conditions Survey?

The TELL Survey is an online, anonymous survey of all public school educators in Colorado about their perception of their school environment.

The TELL Colorado Survey is a unique opportunity to gather information about school conditions from those whose views matter most—practicing educators. The purpose of the survey is to support sound educational policies and practices based on the views of teachers, principals and other certificated educators in Colorado's public schools. The respondents will be asked for their perceptions on a variety of issues related to student achievement and teacher retention, including time, facilities and resources, community support and involvement, managing student conduct, teacher leadership, school leadership, professional development, instructional practices and support, and new teacher and principal support.

The results of this survey will provide local school and district educators and state policymakers with guidance on what is working well, and what could be working better, in Colorado schools.

Who Will Take the Survey?

All public school-based licensed educators should take the survey. The survey has two sets of questions: Educator Questions and Administrator Questions.

Educator Questions will be answered by certificated teachers and other educators, including:

- All PreK-12 classroom teachers, vocational-technical teachers, and special-area teachers.
- All licensed personnel, including guidance counselors, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, school nurses, special education educators, and assistant principals.
- A limited number of questions specifically related to new teacher and principal support and mentoring will be addressed to our newer colleagues.

Administrator Questions: Each principal will answer questions related to teaching conditions in his/her schools and questions related to his/her teaching conditions in the district. These questions are designed to gauge principal perception of district support to create positive school conditions. Data related to district questions will only be reported at the state level in order to protect the anonymity of principals.

Who Authorizes the Survey?

The 2011 TELL Colorado Survey is funded by the Colorado General Assembly and is supported by the Coalition of Partners, each of whom believe it is critically important to understand and improve the teaching conditions of those educators who are closest to our students every day. Please visit www.tellcolorado.org for more information.

Who Administers the Survey?

The New Teacher Center administers the survey for the Colorado Department of Education. NTC also provides survey analysis, reports, and tools for schools and districts to understand and utilize the data for school improvement planning. The New Teacher Center (NTC) is a national organization dedicated to supporting the development of a high-quality teaching force. NTC has conducted similar surveys in other states and provides induction and professional development for teachers and principals across the country. Since 2008, NTC has collected more than 500,000 surveys in 12 states, providing critical information to the faculty in more than 11,000 schools about issues such as planning time, facilities and resources, professional development, school and teacher leadership and other aspects of the school environment that can influence teacher effectiveness.

Why Is this Survey Important?

It is important for all licensed educators in the state to respond to the survey because research from previous surveys indicates that teaching conditions do impact student achievement and teacher retention, and that school leadership is important to the success of teachers and students. Data from the results of the survey helps to improve teaching and learning conditions in a school or district in order to be able to recruit and retain the most accomplished teachers in Colorado classrooms. It also informs educators, parents, and the community about what is happening in their schools.

Online Resources

Having Difficult Conversations

***We Have to Talk:
A Step-By-Step Checklist for Difficult Conversations
by Judy Ringer***

<http://www.hodu.com/checklist.shtml>

Think of a conversation you've been putting off. Got it? Great. Then let's go.

There are dozens of books on the topic of difficult, crucial, challenging, important (you get the idea) kinds of conversations. Those times when you know you should talk to someone, but you don't. Maybe you've tried before and it went badly. Or maybe you fear that talking will only make the situation worse. Still, there's a feeling of being stuck, and you'd like to free up that stuck energy for more useful purposes.

Conflict Resources

The Magic of Conflict, by Thomas F. Crum (<http://www.aikiworks.com>).

Difficult Conversations, by Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen

Crucial Conversations, by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, Al Switzler (<http://www.crucialconversations.com>.)

FAQs about Conflict, by Judy Ringer. This article can be found on the Free Articles page at <http://www.judyringer.com>.

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Judy Ringer is a conflict and communication skills trainer, black belt in aikido, and sole owner of Power & Presence Training. For ideas and inspiration on conflict, communication, and creating the life you want, visit her online at: <http://www.JudyRinger.com>.

Consensus

Consensus Decision-Making

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consensus_decision-making

Consensus decision-making is a [group decision making](#) process that not only seeks the agreement of most participants, but also the resolution or mitigation of minority objections. [Consensus](#) is usually defined as meaning both general agreement and the process of getting to such agreement. Consensus decision-making is thus concerned primarily with that process.

Retrieved from “http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consensus_decision-making”

Sample Posters for Facilitation

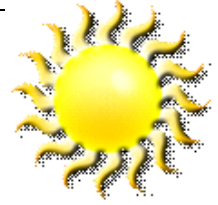
COLLABORATIVE NORMS

- Equity of Voice
- Active Listening
- Safety to Share ALL

Perspectives

- Confidentiality
- Other? _____

What's Working



Concerns /Suggestions

????? Questions ?????

Presenter Notes: How to Use a Consensogram

What Is a Consensogram?

A consensogram is a presentation tool that facilitates a group to poll their opinions on a specific question or task. It allows each participant equal say in a decision making process which produces equity of voice in the group. In the case of teaching conditions, it can quickly and easily identify areas a school faculty would most prefer to examine in greater detail. The instructional tool allows the participants to experience the decision making process on TWC in a transparent and democratic way. Additionally, it is a tool that does not require advanced presentation or facilitation skills.

Materials Needed:

Poster paper to make charts

Colored Markers

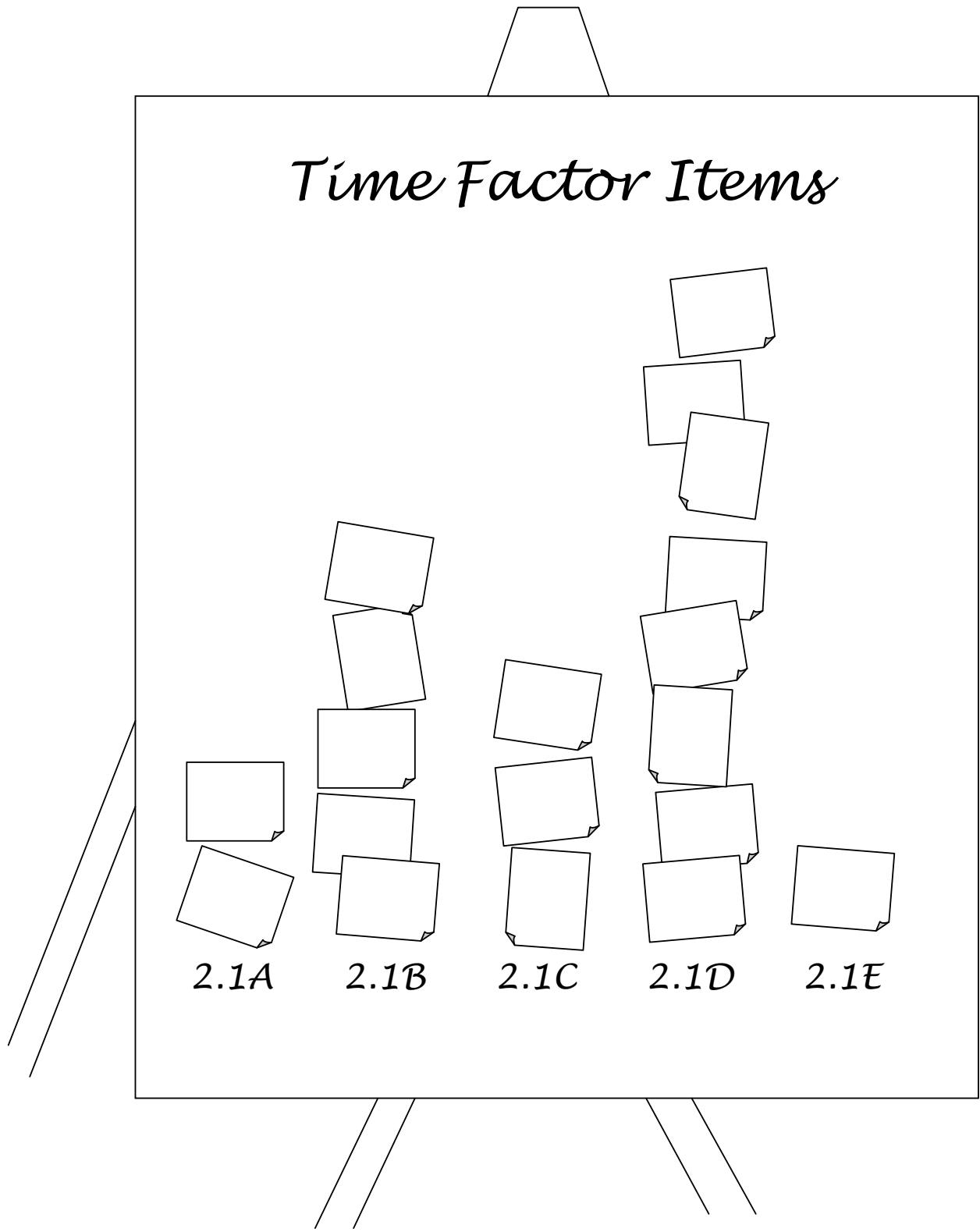
Packets of small sticky notes for participants

Procedure:

- The facilitator will make a graph on the poster paper of the topic being reflected on by the participants. In this drill down process, it can be used in two places (a visual example is provided on the following sheet).
 1. To determine which factor of TWC to examine in greater detail
 2. To determine which item(s) within a factor to examine in greater detail.
- The facilitator invites participants to reflect on descriptors of the various items being considered for consensus.
- After a few minutes to reflect on their options, the facilitator will invite participants up to the chart to place a stickie(s) above the item they would prefer to examine in greater detail.
- Once all participants have placed their stickies on the chart, the facilitator can use the results to determine which areas to target for the next level of reflection in the TWC process.
- The completed chart can stay up in the room for the remainder of the meeting to use as a reference and continued reflection.

Example:

- The example on the following page shows a consensogram examining the factor of time. Participants have placed a stickie above the specific time item they would prefer to examine in greater detail.
- At this point the facilitator would move to a discussion around item 2.1D



Meeting Evaluation

Your feedback is important to continuously improve our dialogue and address teaching and learning conditions.

Please rate the following from Strongly Disagree to Neutral to Strongly Agree:

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| 1. The presentation was clear and easy to understand. | SA A N D SD |
| 2. The presenters were prepared. | SA A N D SD |
| 3. We utilized the Teaching Conditions Survey data to engage in data driven dialogue. | SA A N D SD |
| 4. All educators were engaged in the dialogue and activities. | SA A N D SD |
| 5. Presenter/participant interaction was sufficient. | SA A N D SD |
| 6. The materials provided were easy to understand. | SA A N D SD |
| 7. I was given enough time to do the activities. | SA A N D SD |

Some things I thought were very helpful:

Some things I thought could use improvement:

Additional Comments or Additional Support We Could Provide:

About the New Teacher Center

The New Teacher Center is a national organization dedicated to improving student learning by accelerating the effectiveness of teachers and school leaders. NTC strengthens school communities through proven mentoring and professional development programs, online learning environments, policy advocacy, and research. Since 1998, the NTC has served over 49,000 teachers, 5,000 mentors, and touched millions of students across America.



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