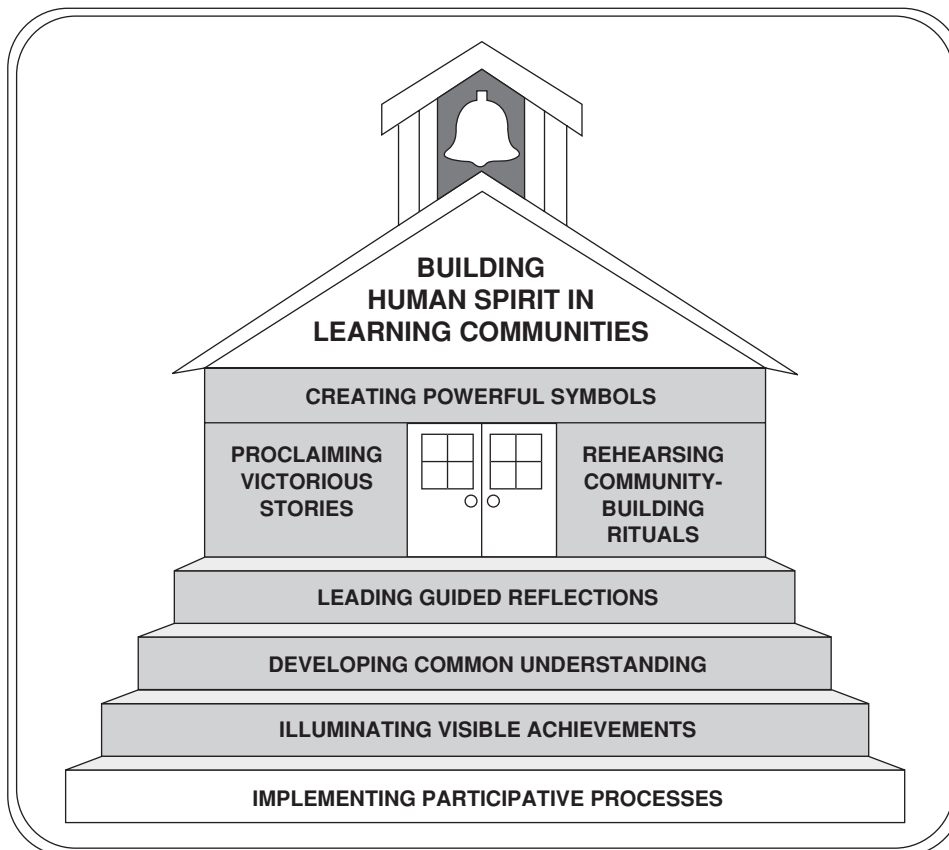


1

Implementing Participative Processes



Participation, though, is not an isolated phenomenon. It is part of a wider circle of factors that define how human beings relate to one another in our times. It is a key component of the new paradigm of living in the 21st century, and as such, finds allies in other kindred disciplines such as conflict mediation, dispute partnering, and facilitative leadership, to name a few.

—James P. Troxel, 1993, *Participation Works: Business Cases from Around the World* (p. 6)

A new principal at a middle school discerned quickly that his faculty was fragmented and in some disarray. He asked a facilitator to help his faculty pull together a practical vision that they could all buy into. This facilitator spent a day with the faculty and left them with a vision of where they wanted to be in three years as well as structured implementation teams to get them there. The workshop methods used drew totally on the full participation of everyone there. All left feeling their voice had been heard.

A couple of years later when he was transferred to another middle school, he called this facilitator back to do a similar workshop with his faculty. And a year later when he took over as a high school principal, once again he wanted to unite his staff with the participatory methods to fashion a vision and implementation plan.

For him the key was the participation and consensus that emerged in each situation. In addition, what encouraged further participation after the workshop were the realistic visible achievements each faculty created and implemented. In every one of these schools, these achievements strengthened the staff's conviction that theirs was a school parents were proud to have their children attend. Furthermore, the principal as leader fostered the kind of atmosphere that called for excellence in achievement.

The paradigm has shifted. A century ago most people were satisfied to follow and to take orders. Top-down decision making worked. In these last decades it has become clear that no one person can hold all the data and embody all the perspectives needed to make clear and wise decisions. Hence we come upon the need for participative processes.

■ THE DRIVE FOR COLLABORATION

Human beings have a very natural capacity for working and thinking together.

[David] Bohm had shared with me in London an explicit mental model of the way he believed the world works and the way he believed human beings learn and think. To Bohm it was clear that humans have an innate capacity for collective intelligence. They can learn and think together, and this collaborative thought can lead to coordinated action. (Jaworski, 1996, p. 109)

As we look around the world, we can see evidence of this capacity even more clearly in certain cultures that seem to operate much more collaboratively than Western cultures. Somehow it got through to human beings that thinking and working together could better solve some problems.

In addition, there are other facts that need to be highlighted here:

In the personal sense, however, a collaborative life is much more satisfying. Synergy is the reason. Our collective energy is greater than the sum of our individual energies. In the professional sense, what we can accomplish is immeasurably greater. (Joyce & Showers, 1995, p. 39)

The first fact mentioned is that collaboration can be much more satisfying. When done well, energy emerges. This is often referred to as *synergy*, and it can be extremely rewarding and motivating. The second fact is that the energy in successful collaboration is much stronger than even the total of the individual energies. Because this energy can feed motivation, there is potential for much greater accomplishment.

The heart of this drive, this capacity for collaboration is a human being's ability to empathize, to see common themes, common struggles in other people. It would seem, then, that this ability for empathy is a natural one in human beings. Kohn (1990, p. 163) summarizes this: "Whether or not empathy is seen as natural—or more natural than its absence—a case can be made that it is a human capacity that will flourish unless some force interferes with its development and actualization."

If all of the above is true, then the implications for education are compelling. So much of an educator's life occurs in relative isolation. The classroom teacher is often isolated from teacher colleagues. Brief encounters in the lunchroom or teachers' lounge do little to counteract the far longer periods of teaching alone or planning alone. "Giving up isolation is probably the area that causes the greatest concern in the process of developing a collaborative school. We find that we *liked* autonomy. Thrashing out collective decisions is much more complicated at first" (Joyce & Showers, 1995, p. 39). Whether teachers have liked autonomy or autonomy has been forced upon them, there will need to be dramatic changes in the traditional ways teachers have related to each other as well as the ways teachers and administrators have related to each other (Joyce & Showers, 1995, p. 38). The bottom line, finally, is that teachers "could improve considerably if they were in a more collaborative environment" (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996, p. 10).

This leads us to the necessity of creating a culture of participation. This leads us to face the reality that today's climate is one of effective participation.

THE EMERGENCE OF A PARTICIPATIVE CULTURE

The 20th century saw the rise of a culture of participation. A century ago, decisions were made by people at the top and filtered down to the people involved. Most people waited to be told what to do and then did it. Almost

anyone in a leadership position today will tell you that the autocratic, top-down mode of organizational management doesn't work today. In varying ways and using a multitude of approaches, organizations are turning more and more to some form of participatory involvement for planning and implementing their goals and tasks.

Participation, though, is not an isolated phenomenon. It is part of a wider circle of factors that define how human beings relate to one another in our times. It is a key component of the new paradigm of living in the 21st century, and as such, finds allies in other kindred disciplines such as conflict mediation, dispute partnering, and facilitative leadership, to name a few. (Troxel, 1993, p. 6)

In other words, there has been a shift in terms of how people relate to each other. Talk to any parent who has discovered children need more than, "Do it because I said so." Talk to any teacher who finds students need to know why they are to do something. This participative culture is part of a lot of other shifts that are marking the age we are living in.

Be it in the poorest village or plush company office, the cry to be part of the solution and not merely a victim of circumstances has become one of the defining characteristics of life in our time. As such, participation is not simply a luxury that only some people can afford. It is much more—a basic right of every citizen of the globe today. (Troxel, 1993, p. 13)

One of the characteristics of our time is that people are moving away from being victims and are demanding to be a part of some solutions. This is a dramatic shift representing a belief that something can be done. Furthermore, it is a belief that collaborative effort can achieve what individual effort may not be able to accomplish.

Another large and growing advocacy group for participation has been educators from around the world who cry for more effective, more relevant, and more holistic education. Almost all reform proposals have included some component of increased participation on the part of parents, teachers, administrators, and students in the total education process. (Troxel, 1993, pp. 11–12)

Education has also been touched by this growing move toward participation. Clearly this is obvious with the trends in the last 15 years toward site-based management and shared decision making. Furthermore, the task of creating effective schools has become far more complex than what one person can manage or get one's mind around.

Also, people support more fervently that which they have helped to fashion and put together. "Simply put, not only do employees not fully implement someone's plans, they support more enthusiastically what they themselves create. This is simply part of the new common sense of organizational life today" (Troxel, 1993, p. 24).

A consultant worked with the faculty of a Midwestern school to create a strategic plan and implementation scheme. After two days of heavy participation, implementation teams had been created. Returning after six months for a half-day check in follow-up, the teams had many successes to report. Several years later this consultant met the principal at a national conference. He reported that teams were still working and implementing projects. Participation blossomed and really became established in this school. Furthermore, the principal supported and encouraged the teams.

Margaret Wheatley (1992) backs this up in the following two statements:

First, I no longer believe that organizations can be changed by imposing a model developed elsewhere. Second, and much more important, the new physics cogently explains that there is no objective reality out there waiting to reveal its secrets. There are no recipes or formulae, no checklists or advice that describe 'reality.' There is only what we create through our engagement with others and with events. (p. 7)

This is both bad news and good news. There are no clear-cut answers and guidelines. Nevertheless, working together, directions and ways to move can be found. Because of this, it is absolutely essential to involve as much wisdom and as many perspectives as possible. "The answer, I believe, is found in the participative nature of the universe. Participation, seriously done, is a way out from the uncertainties and ghostly qualities of this nonobjective world we live in. We need a broad distribution of information, viewpoints, and interpretation if we are to make sense of the world" (Wheatley, 1992, p. 64).

It can't be stressed enough what a change has occurred with this new reality. It means as dramatic a shift as looking at relationships vertically—that is, who is above and below me in society—versus looking at relationships horizontally—that is looking across and around rather than up and down. Because of this, there is no one passing down answers from above. What answers there will be are answers we create. This is the new reality we are now part of. What are the implications of all this? Is this good? How do we operate in this new reality?

THE BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION ■

"The concept of employee participation has taken hold so firmly that it is hard to find a current book about management that doesn't either promote participation or assume it. Given the trends in the marketplace and the workforce, participation is widely acknowledged as the way of the future. The benefits ascribed to it are numerous" (Spencer, 1989, p. 11).

I would like to highlight several of these benefits. Four crucial ones are buy-in, synergy, team accomplishments, and security/satisfaction.

Buy-in points to what happens when people work together to plan or create something. Because their thinking and sweat went into its creation, it belongs to them. Therefore, there is great buy-in. Synergy points to the development of an energy that occurs when people work well together. This energy can drive the accomplishment of whatever the group's goals are. Team accomplishments point to the greater complexity that can be accomplished when a team works on something versus just one person. Finally, security/satisfaction points to the internal response inside people when they have a chance to work well together. There is a sense of safety and security because more than one person has poured energy into the creation of something. That reduces the anxiety that often occurs when one person ventures out alone to suggest or create something. Satisfaction points to the testimonies of how much more satisfying teamwork and genuine participation are. It satisfies our human need to connect to others in significant ways. "The more all professionals feel part of decision making, the greater their morale, participation, and commitment in carrying out the school's goals" (Gideon & Erlandson, 2001, p. 16). Not only that, some would say that healthy participation can be the crucial factor in whatever needs to be accomplished. "Strengthened participation by all organization members—up and down and sideways on the organizational chart—is the factor that can make the difference" (Blake, Moulton, & Allen, 1987, p. 2). The key to all this is that effective participation can release all of the hidden resources locked in the human potential of a well-functioning team.

Buy-In

Very often school administrators ask, "How do I get my staff on board? How do I get them to buy in to what I want to do?" This raises a huge question. If you want your staff to buy into your ideas 100 percent, they won't. After offering them relevant data, concerns, mandates, educational research, and so forth, they all need to work together to create a winning direction. Then there will be buy-in. "It is far more effective to elicit employee participation in the creation of the vision than to impose the vision on the team. Such input gives team membership a proprietary feeling" (Blake et al., 1987, p. 5). Just as in the classroom, where we know content becomes meaningful to students when they have worked with it themselves, when authentic participation occurs, the opportunity for buy-in increases.

From the perspective of business, Troxel (1993) echoes this:

Simply put, not only do employees not fully implement someone's plans, they support more enthusiastically what they themselves create. (p. 24)

In one sense, it is much easier to go the top-down route in the short run. The top person issues the decision, and it filters down. However, in this new reality, people balk at mandates and top-down decisions. What is called for is getting people the necessary data, research, and parameters, so that together a satisfactory direction can be created.

Synergy

The energy of a well-functioning team far surpasses that of each individual. "Our collective energy is greater than the sum of our individual energies" (Joyce & Showers, 1995, p. 39). This mysterious energy, which is often observed and felt by sports teams, is what is called synergy. It is as if individual energies bounce off of the energies of other group members creating something entirely different. Fullan and Hargreaves (1996, p. 7) refer to findings in their experience and research, saying, "Collegial schools are powerful forces for change, yet they are also in the minority."

Another way to grasp this synergy is thinking about power. All of this is suggesting that in authentic participation a certain power is released within the team and through the team's accomplishments. In contrasting participation with autocratic leadership, Bolman and Deal (1995, p. 107) concluded that when leaders hoard power, they really create an organization without power. At that point, people one way or another express their anger. However, when power is shared, people gain a sense of effectiveness that helps them feel that their participation makes a difference. The participative processes become a key energy source, a key reservoir of power.

A related fact has to do with trust. When people are trusted, motivation is increased, synergy abounds, and very often better results occur (Bolman & Deal, 1995, p. 106)

Team Accomplishments

This third benefit of participation is the impact magnitude of accomplishments done by a team versus that of many scattered, individual accomplishments. "The key issue is in how the parts act together—participation. It is the core issue of productivity, creativity, and satisfaction" (Blake et al., p. 126). "In the professional sense, what we can accomplish is immeasurably greater" (Joyce & Showers, 1995, p. 39).

Furthermore, if there is to be any impact on the school culture, this can only be accomplished through teams and collaboration. "The reality is that the school climate is developed through collective action" (Joyce & Showers, 1995, p. 28). The reason is that this task of creating and sustaining alive, dynamic schools is too much for one individual to tackle. The world moves quickly. That which is new surrounds education very quickly. Teams have the potential of responding creatively and comprehensively to these challenges. Healthy participation and well-functioning teams both get the job done and have the potential for uplifting and sustaining spirit.

Security/Satisfaction

Teaching is a demanding and front-line job. Many situations a day call for teacher creativity and ingenuity. This creates daily questions of which direction is helpful, which direction is needed. Consequently, ". . . the most important effect of teacher collaboration is its impact on the *uncertainty* of the job, which, when faced alone, can otherwise undermine a teacher's sense of confidence" (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996, p. 45). The word *security* may be better translated as confidence or assurance in the performing of the

teaching task—confidence or assurance in the midst of the tremendous responsibility of impacting the lives of the students in the care of the teacher.

This second dimension is called *satisfaction*. Countless teachers leave the profession each year. Some leave disappointed; some leave angry; some leave beaten; some leave burnt out. “In the personal sense, however, a collaborative life is much more satisfying” (Joyce & Showers, 1995, p. 39). Another benefit of participation and effective teamwork is the potential for high satisfaction that can occur when teams pull off a magnificent accomplishment. When people work well together, their desires for connecting with other adults are satisfied. The bottom line is unless spirit is fed and kept alive, teachers will continue to leave.

Many teachers would be able to bracket their desires for higher external rewards if some intangible benefits were part of their work life. When inner needs are satisfied, when work is challenging but not overwhelming, many work even harder.

In motivation theory, our attention is shifting from the enticement of external rewards to the intrinsic motivators that spring from the work itself. We are refocusing on the deep longings we have for community, meaning, dignity, and love in our organizational lives. We are beginning to look at the strong emotions that are part of being human, rather than segmenting ourselves. . . . (Wheatley, 1992, p. 12)

■ THE SKILLS FOR PARTICIPATION

Desiring a participative culture does not guarantee it will happen. There are some people who love to be told what to do. There are others who do not want to bear the responsibility of participation. There are people, however, who want their voices heard. There are others who are not satisfied to just hear the orders and do them. No matter what the mixture of people is, participation won't happen unless the leader embodies the skills to encourage participation. Some of these skills are concrete strategies to engender interaction. Others of these skills involve very subtle things like the tone of a voice, the particular use of participation-fostering language.

Approaches that have increased in popularity have had their day and waned. . . . None has aimed at strengthening participation by providing members skills of effective behavior essential for participating in a responsible manner; none offers organization members greater insight into the barriers that arise within their team cultures; none say what to do. (Blake et al., 1987, p. 3)

Most of our teachers were trained to go into the classroom and teach. Most of the time, this is done by an individual teacher in a classroom with students but no other adults. Schools are now using teams for a lot of guidance for grade-level, department-level, and whole-school concerns. Many people who become part of such teams are ignorant of the ground rules for successful teamwork. Many are unaware of effective participation methodologies. If we expect administrators and teachers to work in teams, administrators and teachers need to be taught the skills to do that (Byham, 1992, p. ix).

The model of team participation skills includes the following (Blake et al., 1987, pp. 128–129):

- Decision making
- Objectives
- Coordination
- Communication
- Critique

There are other crucial skills such as listening and paraphrasing. Mirroring the content, the emotions, and the intent of a person's comments can be critical to enabling a team to move forward. Some comment that the use of a flow of individual thinking, team brainstorming, and whole-group discussion has been invaluable. The most important point is that participation does not happen automatically. Participation needs to be nurtured and invited in an open and nonthreatening way.

PEER COACHING ■

Research is indicating that continuing to carry out training in a relationship of structured, effective collegiality is one way of making the training get into the classroom. "People learn new patterns of behavior primarily through their interactions with others, not through front-end training designs. Training builds on and extends momentum" (Fullan, 1993, p. 68). One helpful way to structure this collegial interaction is through peer coaching. This involves peers having an opportunity to observe each other in their respective classrooms and then providing requested feedback to the peer observed. This observation is not to be confused with supervisory and administrative observations. Nor is this peer observation to be confused with the observation that might go on in a mentor-novice relationship in which the *mentor* teacher is considered more of an expert in the art and skill of teaching. In peer coaching, the relationship is between two equals. Teacher A visits Teacher B's class. Soon after, Teacher B visits Teacher A's class. Consequently, a lateral relationship is built rather than a vertical one.

In no way does peer coaching replace administrative evaluations or mentor programs; rather it expands the opportunities for collegial connection in the school environment. "Effective staff development requires cooperative relationships that break down the isolation and increase the collective strength of the community of educators who staff the school" (Joyce & Showers, 1995, p. 10). The environment of isolation is so prevalent in the educational system that many teachers are either unwilling or fearful to have another adult with them in their classrooms. The very structured approach of peer coaching allows this to happen while maintaining a sense of control in the teacher who is being observed. "Giving up isolation is probably the area that causes the greatest concern in the process of developing a collaborative school. We find we *liked* autonomy. Thrashing out our collective decisions is much more complicated at first. Studying teaching together is more aggravating than deciding how to teach one's own classes

with one's best judgment unfettered" (Joyce & Showers, 1995, p. 39). While it is true that a perceived advantage to this isolation is that one gets to run the show on one's own, it is also true that the isolation builds walls among staff that a structure like peer coaching can help to break down. It is one way for the great wisdom of teachers, sometimes developed over a period of years in trying circumstances, can be shared with fellow teachers.

Joyce and Showers (1995) have done substantial research relative to the effectiveness of peer coaching when it is done well. "Designing the workplace so that teachers can work together to implement changes (through peer coaching) is still the key to transferring the content of training into the repertoire of the classroom and school, whether the content is over teaching and curriculum or over processes for collegial action" (p. xv).

Following staff training on peer coaching and a staff decision to proceed with this, staff can pair up into peer coaching teams. The fundamental flow is a preobservation meeting, an observation, and a postobservation meeting. This flow will occur for both of the two peer coaching team members. If team member A is going to visit team member B's class, then the preobservation meeting will offer an opportunity for team member B to state very specifically what team member A will observe during the visit. Team member B will suggest a good time to visit and tell team member A where to sit in the classroom. Team member B may offer some other information on what the curriculum and lesson are focused on and any other material to help team member A to observe. Together they create the data-recording form that team member A will use. Usually the specific item to be observed is something related to a common training each have recently had. Some teachers like their peers to listen carefully to how they give directions and set up an activity. Some teachers want their peers to watch who they call on in class, concerned about gender bias or the well-known T formation (that is, calling exclusively on the front row and the middle row of students). Some teachers want their peers to determine if everyone in cooperative groups is working. The list of things to observe in the classroom is endless. Whatever it is, it is the observed teacher's choice. Finally, the two will decide on a time and place for the postobservation debriefing to occur.

Before the actual observation, teacher B may decide to brief the class on what will occur and to assure them that teacher A is observing her teaching not checking on them. Teacher A then jots down only the data relative to the request. Generally visits can be as short as 20 minutes or so.

During the postobservation debriefing, teacher A may choose to thank teacher B for letting the visit happen. Then teacher A gives the form with the data to teacher B. After teacher B has had a chance to consider the information, teacher A might ask teacher B what the data are indicating. At every point, teacher A is trying to elicit the thinking of teacher B about the data. Then teacher A might ask what some next steps might be. Teacher A makes sure teacher B keeps the data, assuring teacher B that this is all confidential between the two of them. It might now be time to set up the flow for teacher B to visit teacher A's classroom.

The tremendous gift in peer coaching is that it is "a teacher-controlled method for improving instruction that works from within the school and has years of teacher experience to document its success" (Gottesman, 2000, p. 1).

PARTICIPATION DOS AND DON'TS ■

Much can be said about what enables participation and what prevents full participation. The following highlights a few crucial points. If the group cuts across many constituencies, make sure that every constituency is represented. Stated simply, whoever is involved in the issue, concern, or problem needs to participate in creating the solution (Troxel, 1993 p. 24). When participation is the goal, a multitude of perspectives guarantees a rich, comprehensive experience and a product that has a chance to appeal to a broad spectrum within the constituencies. While it may seem simpler to gather only those with similar perspectives, the participation in such a group will be shortchanged. This is especially true if the particular participatory event is a planning process. It is easy to look just within the school walls, at best involving administrators and teachers.

"Planning is a participatory organizational process that involves teachers, parents, students, and administrators in discussing, imagining, and debating desirable alternative states for the immediate and long-term future" (Astuto, Clark, Read, McGree, & Fernandez, 1994, p. 72).

The preceding information emphasizes making sure all the constituencies are involved in participation. A related issue, once the constituencies are there, is using processes that engage and involve everyone who is present. Having excellent representation with diverse perspectives does little good if the processes employed do not fully tap everyone's wisdom in the team or group.

Many of our school communities are becoming more and more diverse as different cultures and different ethnic peoples are living side by side in the same communities. This calls for even more participation skills to make sure that all of the cultural perspectives have a voice in the work of the school.

The vitality of a culture and a country is enhanced by redefining and rediscovering its cultural self. This vitality comes about only through the process of understanding, appreciating, and incorporating the diverse cultural traditions of its people (Astuto et al., 1994, p. 91).

Participation needs to lead to products or decisions or common directions. It is crucial for a group that has participated well to see the fruits of their labors actualized. For the administration to ignore totally the thinking of a group will result in little motivation to participate in the future. This is why the administration meets regularly with teams or team leaders, keeps abreast of all that is going on, and encourages the ideas and implementation efforts of the teams. In addition, it is crucial for the administration to share all the necessary data, mandates, guidelines, and parameters ahead of time so that whatever plans are developed can be affirmed by the administration. The following describes efforts of a principal to do just that:

Crockett developed a process so all teachers and school personnel play a part in the school's leadership. The principal meets often with variously configured groups and relies on teachers'

recommendations to make decisions regarding practice. As they reflect, make decisions, consider challenges, and refine practice gain, teachers own the decision. This way, the school avoids the 'us against them' split between administrative and teaching staff. (Gideon & Erlandson, 2001, p. 16)

Guarding one's use of language is another important aspect. "Language has the potential of inviting or closing off participation. Particular words and phrases can actually enhance the atmosphere of participation" (Williams, 1993, p. 75). Unknowingly, one may cut off participation by the very language one employs. "Some teachers and I came up with this plan; do you all agree it is pretty good?" There is not much leeway for disagreement or even improvement of the plan in that comment. "I really liked that team's presentation. What do you think?" Again, it would appear unwise to contradict the presentation after a comment like that. "Wherever did that idea come from?" or "That's the craziest thing I've ever heard." These responses really stop participation in its tracks, especially if the one leading the group is an administrator.

The following are some alternative ways of expressing the above. "Some teachers and I worked on this plan. What do you notice about it? What are things you like about it? How might we add to this plan or change it to improve it?" Next, "let's thank this team for their presentation. Now, what do you remember particularly from it? How could this presentation be improved? Or, what might this team keep in mind as they continue to work on this project?" Occasionally, someone makes a comment that does seem totally off the wall. In those instances, the facilitator might ask, "Tell me, what values are behind your comment?" Or, "Say a little more about that idea." In some cases, what at first seems like an idea out of left field may actually provide a perspective hitherto not thought about. Furthermore, in other cases, it may be possible to affirm the value behind the comment even though its concretion might be unworkable. "Language is powerful. It is also second nature to us. It is easy to be unaware of what our language does to the people around us" (Williams, 1993, p. 75).

Finally, it is important to guard against using too many phrases like, "That's good" or "I like that" or "Excellent idea." These comments sound like positive affirmation. In reality, they embody judgment. It is far better to say a simple, "Thank you for that." That conveys positive regard for the participation but no judgment as to the value of that comment. In this way, the encouragement of participation has been accomplished without the group sensing the leader has judged some comments as worthy and other comments as unworthy.

■ ACTIVITY ONE—ENSURE PARTICIPATIVE PLANNING

Description

Two practical suggestions can go a long way to ensure effective participative planning. The first sounds simple, but it is crucial: Spend time

formulating the specific question that the planning is to answer. This can be done by the whole group or by a small group ahead of time with opportunity for input or polishing by the whole group. A group can begin with the phrase "How can we?"

The question can either be a very specific focused question or a somewhat general focused question. A specific one might be: "How can we more successfully mainstream all of our special needs students into our regular classrooms?" Or "How can we prepare the entire school community for the schedule changes we are about to initiate?" A more general one might be: "How can we foster more student-centered classrooms?" or "How can we prepare our staff to instruct in ways that speak to many different learning styles?" The gift of questions like these is that they narrow the field; they provide the parameters that help to focus thinking.

The second suggestion when planning is to follow a process: Begin with individual thinking, followed by team brainstorming, and ending with whole-group discussion. It is crucial to allow time for individual thinking. Simplistically, there are two kinds of thinkers. The first are quick thinkers. These are the people that raise their hands with a response before one has even finished the question. The second are careful thinkers. These are people that appreciate looking at several angles before coming up with a clear thought. It is important to capitalize on both kinds of thinkers.

Team brainstorming allows everyone to share their thinking in a relatively nonthreatening environment of two or three colleagues. This step allows thinking to be challenged and clarified. Sometimes the thinking of one is combined with the thinking of another to come up with a more complete or more solid response. It is helpful to follow this step of team brainstorming even if there are only four people around the table. Four people offer three different pairing possibilities.

The final step is whole-group discussion. Teams get to share their brainstorming with the whole group and discern what the whole group is indicating as the answer to the original question.

Methodology

1. Decide the general arena of what the planning needs to be. The whole group can do this or a small group ahead of time can suggest the arena of planning to the whole group.
2. If the whole group is doing this, have each individual write his or her own question (e.g., "How can we . . . ?").
3. Then have each team hear what its team members have created.
4. Suggest that each team build one question out of all the team member's contributions.
5. Have each team share its one question.
6. Build one question for the whole group out of these team questions.

Note that this flow has honored the three steps of individual thinking, team brainstorming, and whole-group discussion. This is a valuable format for any planning that makes sure everyone has input into the process.

Example

Four teams offered the following four questions on the issue or concern of preparing the school community for a school schedule change to year-round schooling.

1. How can we respond to the objections people will have?
2. How can we enlist many constituencies to help us in the planning process?
3. How can we communicate this direction in a way that will make sense to our school constituencies?
4. How can we demonstrate the values of different schedules and why we are suggesting the year-round schedule?

Using these four questions, the final single question might look like: How can we enlist many school constituencies to research the best school schedule and help us communicate the results to the public?

Metacognitive Insights

The structure of individual thinking, team brainstorming, and whole-group discussion is extremely helpful in dealing with the nay-sayers and the contentious staff members. They are allowed to speak their piece within their teams, but the whole team has the final say. This allows the whole-group discussion to be much more productive and positive.

■ ACTIVITY TWO—EMPOWER IMPLEMENTATION TEAMS

Description

In the last two or three decades, it has been very common for school administrations to create advisory teams around various concerns or topics. What they actually need are implementation teams. Implementation teams are part of the entire planning process; when the planning is completed, each team takes responsibility for implementing its segment of the plan. Administrators need help and support. Teachers need to experience the bigger picture beyond the classroom.

Methodology

1. The planning process needs to move toward establishing three to five broad strategies to accomplish the stated vision and goals.
2. At that point strategy implementation teams need to be established. Eliciting volunteers or making assignments can accomplish this.
3. When the teams are defining their desired accomplishments for upcoming quarters, they need to be realistic. They are the ones who

will be carrying them out, and they are already busy. They need to choose accomplishments that are both realistic and motivating.

4. Then, looking at the desired accomplishments of the first quarter, they need to figure out what steps are needed, who will do them, and by when they need to be done.
5. It is crucial for the administration to support the work of the implementation teams. Concerns or parameters need to be communicated before the teams meet to avoid having an administrator indicate that such and such cannot happen because. . . .

Example

The example (Table 1.1) shows a year's plan for accomplishments. The group was composed of school staff and representatives from the business community. They made a plan for the next year of their business-education partnership work. This was their second Partnership Conference.

Down the side of the table are the four broad strategies this group came up with. Across the top are the four quarters with the months designated. The four strategy teams created the desired accomplishments for their particular strategy. They targeted two accomplishments per strategy per quarter. Once their projections were completed, they shared these with the whole group for a whole-group consensus. This allowed the group to pose questions of clarity as well as offer additional information for them to consider as they proceeded toward implementation.

The strategy teams returned to focus on just the first quarter. They worked on the individual steps to bring about the accomplishments they had targeted. Once the steps were clear, they then designated who would accomplish each step and by when each step would be accomplished. This is documented in Table 1.2.

Note that Template 1 is a blank to be used in planning a year's accomplishments through several strategies by four quarters.

Template 2 is a blank to be used in the detailed action planning for a specific accomplishment. There are columns for what the action step is, who will do it, and by when it will be accomplished.

Metacognitive Insights

While there may be a few things in a school administrator's tasks that only an administrator should handle, a majority of tasks can be sent to the implementation teams. Other than dialing 911 in an emergency, an administrator needs to think twice about handling a task, always asking first which one of the implementation teams the task can be directed to.

ACTIVITY THREE—ENCOURAGE PEER COACHING

Description

The research on peer coaching suggests that this is the decisive step in guaranteeing that new instructional strategies and techniques get transferred into the classroom regularly. When peer coaching is initiated with thought

Table 1.1 School Business Partnership Planned Accomplishments by School Quarters

<i>Quarter</i> <i>Strategy</i>	<i>MAR</i> <i>APR</i> <i>MAY</i>	<i>JUN</i> <i>JUL</i> <i>AUG</i>	<i>SEP</i> <i>OCT</i> <i>NOV</i>	<i>DEC</i> <i>JAN</i> <i>FEB</i>
Establishing physical presence	Send letters to business leaders.	Create staff job descriptions.	Hold a fundraiser.	Distribute a report to community.
	Distribute school business partnership logo.	Develop slide show.	Initiate a business-education week.	Establish staff location.
Answering the questions of what business we are in	Form a marketing committee.	Identify funding resources.	Hold a school staff awareness event.	Produce a video.
	Develop budgetary process.	Review past survey results.	Carry out a media blitz.	Implement a speakers bureau.
Creating operational strategies	Set up a stakeholder steering committee.	Hold a business-education conference.	Include industry in curriculum rewrites.	Create incentive programs.
	Negotiate released time for participation.	Have teachers shadow business.	Have students and parents shadow business.	Have classroom presentations by employees.
Identifying the resources	Inventory current resources.	Distribute a resource handbook.	Hold career expo.	Implement a regional product fair.
	Create a designated central clearing house.	Distribute industry videos.	Establish student apprentice program.	Create a career resource center in secondary schools.

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Table 1.2 Implementation Steps

<i>Accomplishment</i>	<i>What</i>	<i>Who</i>	<i>When</i>
Designate a central clearinghouse	Staff person search (contact retirees)	Ken	April
	Staff search (parent volunteers)	Lee	April during citywide PTA meetings
	Space search	Paul	May
	Determine equipment needs	Dick	April
	Follow-up meeting May 28, 4:00 PM	Chris	By May 15

beforehand and is carried out well, it is a nonthreatening way of helping teachers bring new strategies and techniques into their teaching. Often peer coaching is introduced as a follow-up to a specific series of workshops or inservice activities. This way the staff has a common training experience with common language and thus common skills to transfer to the classroom.

Much has been written on peer coaching. The examples here focus on just a few tools to enable peer coaching to happen.

Methodology

Gottesman suggests five steps to incorporate into a peer coaching flow (Gottesman, 2000, p. 33):

1. Request for a peer visit
2. Peer visit
3. Review of notes and consideration of possibilities
4. Conversation after the visit
5. Reflection on the whole process

The request for a peer visit includes asking for a visit, setting up a time for meeting, and then preparing for the visit itself. The peer visit involves the peer spending 15 minutes to an hour in the class observing the specific item that has been requested to be observed. Having taken some kind of notes during the visit, the peer who has visited then reviews those notes and considers what might be three recommendations to offer the peer about the item observed. During the conversation after the visit, the peer who has visited sticks to the focus and uses questions more than personal reflections to engage the peer who has been visited in a process of thinking through the visit and its ramifications. Finally the peer who has visited initiates some questions to help the one who has been visited reflect on the whole coaching process.

Gottesman also distinguishes among three kinds of peer involvement (Gottesman, 2000, p. 31). The first she calls Peer Watching. This involves a peer just sitting in the classroom observing. No follow-up visit is required

because all the peer has done is just being present in the classroom. The second she calls Peer Feedback. During the conversation before the visit, the requesting teacher outlines precisely what the observing peer is to watch for. That peer takes notes only on that specific item. Then during the conversation after the visit, the peer turns over the notes from that observation and initiates reflection on that observation. The third she calls Peer Coaching. This time, in addition to specific notes on the item to be observed, the peer observing can add additional suggestions and recommendations. It is suggested, however, that the peer who has observed keeps the recommendations to no more than three so as not to overwhelm the teacher who has requested the observation.

Example

Items the Teacher Might Ask a Peer to Observe

1. Wait time
2. Equity in calling on both male and female students
3. Context and instruction for an activity
4. Explaining and assigning cooperative roles
5. The use of higher-order questions
6. Monitoring cooperative groups
7. Chunking out a lecture

Guidelines for the Previsit Conversation

1. Identify the focus.
2. Create the observation tool.
3. Settle on the time for the visit.
4. Discuss where to sit.
5. Review specific class data and lesson plan.
6. Decide on the postvisit conversation time.

Guidelines for the Postvisit Conversation

1. Offer thanks for the chance to visit.
2. Share the data observed.
3. Process the data.
4. Turn over the notes.
5. Offer no more than three recommendations (in the third kind of involvement, called Peer Coaching).
6. Reflect on the coaching process.

Table 1.3 offers an example of a form filled out by the observer.

Table 1.3 Peer Observation Form

OBSERVEE:	Marion Jackson	DATE: Oct. 14
SCHOOL:	Boone Elementary School	
LESSON FOCUS:	Change of seasons	
FOCUS OF OBSERVATION:	Instruction for a cooperative group activity	
OBSERVER:	Joshua Miller	
FEEDBACK:	These are the instructions Ms. Jackson gave: "Get into your cooperative groups. If you were the organizer last time, this time you will be the encourager. If you were the encourager last time, this time you will be the recorder. If you were the recorder last time, this time you will be the organizer. Read the paragraph individually. Then discuss the paragraph and find three insights about your season. Draw a picture and write the insights at the bottom of the page."	
COMMENTS FROM OBSERVEE:	"The instructions I gave were okay. What I forgot to say was how much time I would give them to do this. Also I didn't say anything about where the materials were. Consequently, I had a lot of group questions about specifically what materials we were to use. Also, many groups were not anywhere near finished when I had planned for them to be finished because I neglected to give them a time frame."	
PROPOSED STRATEGIES FOR FUTURE LESSONS:	"I will jot down in my planning book these parts of cooperative group instructions: roles, clear definition of the task, time frame, and the specific materials. That will help me remember what to write out ahead of time for the instructions."	

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Templates 3 and 4 offer blank forms that can be used when initiating peer coaching.

Metacognitive Insights

It is important to make clear to participants that peer coaching is totally different from administrative evaluations. The experience of the pair of teachers is totally confidential. In addition, control always rests in the hands of the teacher requesting the peer's visit. That teacher is the one who suggests what will be observed. The observing teacher only offers data relative to the skill being observed. Gradually more trust may develop and the teacher being observed might be willing for other comments. At the beginning, however, it is important to stick to only the skill being observed.

Unlike mentors, each of the peers relates to the other on an equal basis. Each of the pairs will be an observer and will be observed.

Finally, it is important to understand that the whole role of the observer coach is to encourage the thinking processes of the one being observed. Consequently, the greatest skill needed by the "coach" is the ability to ask open-ended and thought-provoking questions.

ACTIVITY FOUR—ESTABLISH A MENTORING PROGRAM

Description

Two factors in schools today emphasize the need for a well-structured mentoring program. The first factor is the imminent retiring of huge numbers of experienced teachers, and the second is the large dropout rate of new teachers. "In the first decade of the 21st century, schools will need approximately 2.5 million new teachers" (Salzman, 2002, p. 1). Many teachers are retiring, leaving a huge gap in the teaching force. Many of these teachers are some of the best, most-qualified teachers in the schools. Somehow, their wisdom needs to be passed on to new teachers.

Furthermore, many teachers do not make it past the first three years or so after they begin to teach (Salzman, 2001, p. 1). The job can seem daunting and overwhelming. An experienced teacher can share some of the practical tools he or she has developed to deal with some of the issues a new teacher faces, which is one valuable outcome of a mentoring program that matches up experienced teachers with newer teachers in a supportive and instructive relationship. This contrasts with the peer coaching model that pairs teachers up on a more or less equal plane. In mentoring, it is clear from the start which one is more experienced and which one is being mentored.

Two sources outline remarkably similar criteria for teaching competencies on which the mentor can focus. Salzman (2001) calls these "Criteria of competent teaching" (p. 24). One source comes from the Pathwise Performance Assessment from the Educational Testing Service (ETS) (Salzman, 2001, pp. 23–24). Another source comes from Charlotte Danielson's book *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching*. Table 1.4 provides the high-level headings used by both Pathwise and Danielson.

Table 1.4 Comparison of Teacher Mentoring Criteria

<i>Pathways Performance Assessment</i>	<i>Danielson's Framework for Teaching</i>
1. Planning	1. Planning
2. Learning environment	2. Classroom environment
3. Teaching	3. Instruction
4. Professionalism	4. Professionalism

SOURCES: Adapted from Salzman, J. (2002). *The promise of mentoring* (p. 24). Chicago: Robin Fogarty & Associates; and Pitton, D. E. (2000). *Mentoring novice teachers* (pp. 72–78). Arlington Heights, IL: SkyLight Professional Development.

Each set of headings in the table has a lot of detail under each category. But perhaps it is better to let the mentor fill in the details with what is most crucial for the mentor of what the mentor observes is most needed by the mentee.

Skills needed by the mentor are very similar to skills needed by any coach. Salzman (2001, p. 30) offers four major skills:

1. The ability to build trust and rapport with the mentee
2. The art of questioning the mentees to promote their own thinking
3. The skill of responding to the mentee in nonjudgmental ways
4. The goal of empowering mentees to be autonomous and self-directed

This calls for a very different approach with the mentee from that used to teach in the classroom. It is tempting in the classroom to assume that as the teacher one has the right answers and needs to impart these to the students. (Today, however, even in the classroom, many teachers are moving toward facilitating students finding the answers themselves rather than giving them the answers.) When working with the mentee, it is even more imperative that the mentor ask questions that will spark the mentee's own thinking. Needless to say it is much more helpful to convey to mentees that the mentees have good answers inside them. This is why it is suggested that the mentor always respond in nonjudgmental ways so that the mentee can gain more and more self-confidence. In other words, the mentor's overall goal is to work out of the job of being the mentor!

Keeping that in mind, notice how the following questions from Pitton (2000, pp. 49–50) help to foster the mentee's own thinking:

1. How do you feel about your lesson today?
2. How did you think it went?
3. How much of what you intended got accomplished today?
4. What in today's lesson would you like to talk about?

5. Why do you think that student did that?
6. What clues in the student's behavior led you to think this?
7. What might be another way to handle that?
8. What might be the result if you did _____?
9. How might (mentee's action) impact (student's behavior or response)?

The nature of the mentor-mentee relationship is different from the peer-to-peer relationship in peer coaching. In the mentor-mentee relationship structure, as mentioned before, it is clear that the mentor has more teaching experience. It is assumed more easily that the mentor will have suggestions. However, it is still crucial that the mentor guide the relationship, build trust, empower the mentee, and learn to respond in nonjudgmental ways. When done well, a mentor program can be the source of great teacher improvement and great energy for the teaching task. "A well-designed mentoring program breaks through the classroom isolation that stifles many teachers' awareness of potentially better ways of teaching and helping students to achieve their potential. These programs also provide mentors with new ways of energizing themselves" (Salzman, 2001, p. 41).

Methodology

1. Begin with the preobservation conversation similar to the conversation used with peer coaching.
2. Following the actual observation visit in the classroom, hold a postobservation conversation.
3. As with the third kind of involvement in peer coaching, keep concrete suggestions to three. Otherwise, the mentee will become overwhelmed.
4. Mentors might find Template 5 helpful for guiding their journey through the preobservation, observation, and postobservation steps.
5. Mentors might find helpful a simple observation form in Template 6, adapted from Pitton (2001, p. 105).

Example

Tables 1.5 and 1.6 are examples of two kinds of forms to use for writing observation notes.

Metacognitive Insights

If a collegial, nonjudgmental relationship is established, this strategy can do a great deal to boost the morale and confidence of both the mentor and the mentee. The mentee grows with both the practical guidance and the support for the mentee's early teaching. The mentor grows in developing the mentor's skills and in having years of experience acknowledged in a very powerful, structured format.

Table 1.5 Mentor Visit Form

Preobservation Visit	
Focus	Gender equity in students called on
Observation tools	Seating chart—check mark next to each person called on
Logistics: Time, where to sit	Wednesday, third period; chair in back of room
Class data	All test in top 20% in standardized tests; ethnically mixed
Lesson plan	10-minute video on ecological issues, partner sharing, questioning of individuals
Postobservation visit time	Thursday, fourth period
Observation Notes	
<p>The teacher set up the video by asking half of the class to look at the details of the situation described. Then she asked the other half of the class to concentrate on suggestions for correcting the situation. The students paid close attention to the video.</p> <p>A couple of pairs did not stay on task but focused during the questioning time. She called on two of the male students and eight of the female students.</p>	
Postobservation Visit	
Offer thanks	Thank you for letting me observe that lesson.
Data sharing	Here is the class seating chart with the check marks beside those you called on.
Data processing	<p>What did you notice?</p> <p><i>I called on far more female students than male students. I was so conscious of making it more equal, I had no idea I had done so poorly.</i></p>
Questioning	<p>What might be some of the reasons for that?</p> <p><i>Well, the female students I called on are always so eager to respond. Usually they are so on target with their answers, I guess I don't like to risk a student giving me the wrong answer.</i></p>
Recommendations	<p>Maybe you could plan ahead of time who to call on. Also, you might alert them that you are going to alternate male and female students to call on.</p>
Reflections on mentor process	<p>What is working for you in our mentoring process?</p> <p><i>At first I was extremely nervous with you being in the classroom. Now I actually look forward to your visits. I really want to become a good teacher.</i></p> <p>How might we improve our process together?</p> <p><i>I would like to visit your class sometime and just see you teach for a while.</i></p>
Next observation focus	<p>What could we work on next?</p> <p><i>I am concerned about how I give instructions for group task. I would like you to script what I say. (etc.)</i></p>

Table 1.6 Observation Notes

Mentor: <u>Ms. Jackson</u>	Date: <u>Feb 3, 2005</u>
Mentee: <u>Mr. Owens</u>	Class/Grade: <u>7th</u>
I saw . . .	<p>The students were amazingly focused and most stayed on task.</p> <p>I noticed that all paired teams but one used good attentive listening skills when their partners were talking.</p> <p>One pair was distracted, but Mr. Owens noticed that and moved closer to them and they got on task.</p>
I heard . . .	<p>Students freely asked a couple of questions to clarify the directions.</p> <p>Mr. Owens then asked again if everyone understood the directions.</p> <p>I walked around and heard excellent discussions about the material.</p> <p>Only one pair had difficulty filling out the graphic organizer.</p>
I thought . . .	<p>Mr. Owens has really created great rapport with his students.</p> <p>The questions the students asked for clarification of the directions were thoughtful questions.</p> <p>I'd like to see Mr. Owens move around more and listen more attentively to the pair conversations going on.</p>