

Becoming a Successful Community of Practice Facilitator



The contents of this document were developed under a Race to the Top grant from the U.S. Department of Education. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

Table of Contents

Overview of Online Course on Formative Assessment	1
Communities of Practice: Transforming Behaviors and Beliefs.....	3
Implications for School and District Structures to Support Learning and Practice	4
What is a Community of Practice?	5
What Core Principles Guide Productive Communities of Practice?.....	6
Promote Broad Participation	7
Ensure Equity	7
Build Trust	7
What Are the Facilitator’s Roles and Responsibilities?	8
Which Facilitation Strategies Safely Engage All Group Members?	8
Provide Time to Get Focused on Learning.....	9
Provide Personal “Think Time”	9
Create Frequent Opportunities for Paired Dialogue.....	9
Provide Structured Small Group Dialogue	9
Whole Group Dialogue	10
How Can Facilitators Promote Meaningful Communication?	10
Pause.....	10
Paraphrase	11
Probe.....	11
Presume positive intention.....	11
Put ideas on and off the table.....	12
Pay attention to self and others	12
Pursuing a spirit of inquiry	12
How Can Facilitators Promote Successful Meetings?	13

Linking Learning and Assessment: Introduction to the Online Course

Overview of Online Course on Formative Assessment

The Rhode Island Department of Education has developed an online course in formative assessment, *Linking Learning and Assessment*, which consists of five modules that introduce several key concepts as described briefly below:

Module 1: Exploring the Foundations of Classroom Formative Assessment

Note: The Rhode Island Department of Education has adopted the Council of Chief State School Officers' definition of formative assessment: Formative assessment is a process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students' achievement of intended instructional outcomes (CCSSO, 2008).

Formative assessment is a **process** that takes place **in the classroom** to **enable learning**. It is not a one-time test, but an ongoing cycle of evidence collection and feedback to help move students' learning forward. To *enable learning*, formative assessment practices are designed so that teachers **and** students use feedback to make ongoing adjustments, as needed, in their learning or instructional practice. Since it takes place *in the classroom*, it is planned for and managed by individual teachers. Formative assessment is grounded in research in the areas of cognition, learning, and student motivation. It is one component of a district's comprehensive assessment system, which may consist of classroom formative assessment (in-the-moment feedback from teachers to students in the classroom), common formative assessments (developed by a team of teachers to assess their students' progress in a unit for the purpose of regrouping, re-teaching, or enrichment), benchmark or interim assessments, and annual assessments.

Module 2: Planning for Classroom Formative Assessment

Planning for formative assessment involves integrating five key elements into existing lesson or unit design. First, teachers identify the unit's big idea—an essential concept or insight at the heart of the discipline. Second, they clarify the learning goals. Third, they determine the success criteria, which describe what success *looks like* when the learning goals are met. Fourth, they outline a learning progression to detail the pathways that students are likely to take as they move from being introduced to a new concept or skill, to applying it successfully, and then to transferring it effectively. Finally, teachers develop learning activities that will elicit evidence of learning matched to the success criteria and the

learning progression. Through these enhanced lesson planning techniques, teachers develop increased clarity about how to gather evidence of learning. More importantly, these planning elements provide teachers with an understanding of the types of in-the-moment feedback that will support students to move forward in their learning wherever they are on the learning progression.

Module 3: Eliciting and Using Evidence of Learning

Teachers decide in their planning what types of learning tasks will be used to elicit evidence of learning. These tasks can take many different forms, from paper and pencil assessments to performance tasks to questioning techniques, e.g., pre-assessment, classroom discussion, analysis of student work, or documenting student progress over time. Simply collecting evidence, however, is not enough. In classroom formative assessment, teachers review evidence immediately to determine any instructional changes needed, or to provide specific feedback to students. Once gathered and analyzed, evidence is considered *formative* if an adjustment is made as a result of the evidence. Through formative assessment, teachers provide ongoing information to students about their status relative to learning goals. Most teachers will adjust and strengthen their existing instructional routines to include formative assessment, but for some, it may mean giving up or un-doing some practices, e.g., less tests and quizzes and more formative assessment.

Module 4: Engaging Students to Take Next Steps in Learning

Assessment that encourages students to learn fosters motivation by focusing on students' progress toward learning goals rather than their failure. Student motivation is enhanced when student work is reviewed against success criteria rather than compared to other students, when students are given tools that will promote self-reflection, and when students are clear about their next steps in learning. Self-assessment helps students reflect on the learning process, act on the feedback they have received, and determine next steps. When students work together to evaluate progress toward learning goals, they are developing skills to engage in self-reflection and to internalize the learning goals. This fosters self-regulation and helps students develop skills to manage their own learning in a culture that encourages risk and promotes collaboration.

Module 5: Developing and Sustaining Formative Assessment Practice

At its core, formative assessment is a planned, evidence-based approach to improving student outcomes. It is a process for instructional planning that includes collecting evidence of learning and using that evidence with students to determine their next steps. Its implementation represents a challenge as it is not a product, program, or system that is easily adopted. Formative assessment implementation requires that school leaders and faculties work together to: 1) clarify where to focus ongoing school-wide learning in formative assessment; 2) review current practices in data use, unit planning, classroom pedagogy, and student engagement to ensure that they are aligned with formative assessment; and 3) incorporate evidence of the school's focus on formative assessment in school or district improvement plans, data use

policies, or grading policies. How well this ongoing dialogue is structured, supported, and led within a school or district is essential to long-term implementation.

Communities of Practice: Transforming Behaviors and Beliefs

The online modules have been designed to be completed by individual educators—building their knowledge and skills in formative assessment. In recognition of the importance of collaborative reflection on participants’ deeper learning and on the implementation of formative assessment in their classrooms, the Rhode Island Department of Education is supporting the creation of Communities of Practice (CoP) in each participating school and the development of these guides that an educator in each building can use to facilitate the CoP meetings.

In a Community of Practice members have an opportunity to share ideas, develop common understanding, and build knowledge around a concern or passion. Strong CoP foster interactions between individuals focused on important elements of practice. CoP are at their best when discussion focuses on tacit knowledge, or the know-how that tells us in any setting how things really get done.

CoP will meet after the completion of each module to deepen participants’ common understanding of formative assessment through dialogue; to provide a space to develop, implement, discuss, and refine formative assessment in their individual classrooms and school; and to enable members to support each other through this learning experience and beyond. During the CoP, 6-12 teachers, who may be from a grade-level, content-area, or vertical team, will:

- Review materials from the online module they have just completed;
- Discuss the module’s key points in light of their instructional practices and local context; and
- Reflect on changing practice in their classrooms and school.

Since formative assessment is essentially a standards-based model, teachers must have a common understanding of the state’s standards¹ and a similar vision of what constitutes rigor and high-quality student work for meaningful formative assessment to occur. When various users in the system have the same interpretation of quality or idea of what proficiency looks like, teachers and students benefit.

Communities of Practice are designed in large part to provide the kind of reflective practice through which participants can come to these common understandings and clarify how their existing practices relate, or not, to formative assessment. Through the course, teachers in a CoP may decide to change or adapt existing practices in favor of an instructional technique that elicits more rigorous and higher-quality work from their students. Decisions of which instructional practices to maintain, revise, or eliminate require reflection and analysis over time. Communities of Practice provide the time and opportunity for that thoughtful deliberation.

¹ Rhode Island expects to fully implement the Common Core State Standards by 2013-14.

Implications for School and District Structures to Support Learning and Practice

School and district structures that support learning play a vital role in the effective implementation of new processes and practices. Research has shown that “the challenge of all professional development efforts is to help teachers transfer new knowledge into practice” (Wylie, Lyon, & Goe, 2009, p. 3). Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos (2009) revealed that 50 hours or more of professional development is needed to effectively change teacher practice.

Given these findings, teachers cannot be expected to incorporate new practices in formative assessment into their teaching without the support of district- and school-level leaders (Wylie et al., 2009) and extensive in-service professional development (Heritage, Kim, Vendlinski, & Herman, 2009; Shepard, 2000). Districts and teachers need to know that when they begin a course of professional development on formative assessment they will be in it “for the long haul” (Heritage & Wylie, 2010, p. 218). Communities of Practice create the kind of contextualized learning that aligns with these findings. They offer the opportunity for teachers to transfer their new knowledge into practice in a supportive environment with a neutral facilitator.

To prepare “for the long haul,” district- and school-level leaders may need to ensure that teachers continue to have concentrated time and support to build their knowledge through further study and experience in implementing formative assessment practices in their classrooms. Communities of Practice, particularly if they are configured within existing team structures, can meet that need. District- and school-level leaders may also wish to review current policies and procedures to ensure that other barriers to implementation of formative assessment in the classroom are removed.

Note: It is important to realize that most districts are not starting from scratch with regard to professional development in formative assessment. Many will have teachers who are more ready to adopt the formative assessment process as they are already using similar elements of it in their practice. For example, teachers who have had professional development in instructional practices that have some of the key features of formative assessment, e.g., “process writing instruction” with its peer assessment and multiple rounds of feedback to the writer (Cowie, 1995), reciprocal teaching (Palincsar & Brown, 1984), or project-based learning (Thomas, Mergendoller, & Michaelson, 1999) find it easier to incorporate formative assessment processes into their instructional repertoire. In addition, teachers with very strong content knowledge and those who are familiar with short-cycle classroom data use (e.g., running records, DIBELS, Measures of Academic Progress) adopt formative assessment processes in their instructional routines more easily.

Linking Learning and Assessment: Becoming a Successful Community of Practice Facilitator

The *Linking Learning and Assessment* initiative recommends the development of Communities of Practice to deepen teachers' learning about and use of formative assessment. These communities benefit from the guidance and support of knowledgeable and skillful facilitators who understand the needs of adult learners.

Cognitive learning theories suggest that adult learners need much the same framework to support their learning as do young students. Adult learners require that new information is made meaningful by showing how it fits in with what they already know. Adult learners need opportunities to connect existing classroom instructional practices with new instructional concepts through practice and reflection. Like students, adult learners benefit from actively testing new ideas, starting small while they incorporate new techniques, and getting feedback on their progress. The facilitator's central responsibility, then, is to support teachers' learning during Community of Practice (CoP) sessions that follow each of the five formative assessment online modules.

To support facilitators' efforts, a CoP agenda has been developed for each session. These detailed agendas focus on the content that is most likely to need further analysis and review. They also provide specific activities and prompts that will generate the kind of dialogue that will deepen and sustain a group's learning. This document outlines some basic information and strategies that will help facilitators use the CoP agendas most effectively.

What is a Community of Practice?

Communities of practice are *groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and who interact regularly to learn how to do it better* (Wenger, 2006).

These communities are intended to provide safe and supportive spaces for teachers to share resources and ideas, explore and question their understandings, solve challenges, and form common commitments for action and improvement.

Communities of practice learn collectively through several types of activities, such as the following:

CoP Activities	Examples
Requesting information	<i>Where can I find examples of effective formative assessment strategies?</i>
Seeking experience	<i>Has anyone started writing their unit plans yet? What suggestions can you share with those of us just starting?</i>
Coordinating efforts	<i>Let's share responsibility for the development of our success criteria for our geometry unit.</i>
Analyzing data	<i>What trends are apparent across our students' work?</i>
Solving problems	<i>Can we generate some ideas for how to integrate these assessment strategies? I'm stuck.</i>
Discussing developments	<i>What are we learning from our use of these assessment strategies so far? Have they been helpful? What do you think?</i>
Documenting efforts	<i>Let's record these assessment modifications so we can refer back to them when we design our units next week.</i>
Planning visits	<i>Could some of us observe how you use that strategy in your lessons? What would be a useful way to discuss what we saw after we visit?</i>
Building agreement for action	<i>What assessment strategies shall we commit to trying in our classrooms before we meet next?</i>
Identifying and addressing gaps	<i>We need to understand how to refine our Student Learning Objectives. Who might we consult with about this?</i>
Reflecting on group processes	<i>How could we improve our meetings? How can we improve our follow-through on our action commitments?</i>

Facilitators must have clear understandings of their roles and responsibilities and need to persist in developing the knowledge and skills to facilitate collegial interaction in this range of learning activities.

Content Adapted from the Following Source:

Wenger, E., (2006). Communities of practice: A brief introduction. www.ewenger.com/theory/

What Core Principles Guide Productive Communities of Practice?

Effective facilitators possess clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They bring knowledge of how groups function, as well as skills in focusing and supporting productive discussions and inquiry that can advance the group's ongoing learning. They are guided by three overarching principles:

Promote Broad Participation

Effective facilitators encourage each person to contribute by giving attention, supporting, validating, and showing curiosity. They convey a belief that each person's contribution is important. These actions elicit more diverse contributions and ensure that a group has shared a sufficient number of perspectives to support the development of new insights on an issue or problem. Broad participation reinforces the importance of pooling knowledge to benefit the group's learning.

When the connection between what a person is saying and the topic at hand is not evident, linking is one way to give the speaker more time to think, to clarify, and to share perspective. A question such as, "What's the connection between your statement and the core topic of our discussion?" can help to reinforce a participant's importance in the group. In so doing, the speaker's confidence is strengthened, which impacts everyone else, some of whom may feel more ready to speak in the future based on the way they saw a colleague treated.

Ensure Equity

Effective facilitators ensure equity within the group by attending to colleagues' varied learning needs and perspectives. This not only allows individuals to learn what they need to learn, but also supports the group in developing strong collective understandings and commitments. Facilitators need to ensure that all group members have opportunities to raise questions and alternative perspectives so that the group's learning pushes beyond simply perpetuating accepted practice. This means that the facilitator needs to establish norms and structure conversations so that dissidence between ideas comes forward. Only when a group understands the range of perspectives of its members can it begin to form shared commitments and actions that will benefit students' learning.

When dominant voices tend to drown out varied perspectives or suppress new members' voices, it can be helpful to intervene by simply stating, "Let's remember to hear from some people who haven't shared their views yet." Group processes, such as think-pair-share, reflective writing prompts, or structured protocols can provide opportunities for all team members to generate ideas or to consider complex issues. Such encouragement reinforces that diverse perspectives are valuable to the group while also signaling those who have been talking more to pause to consider and reflect on others' views.

Build Trust

When communities of practice support learning, members invite risk taking, encourage learning from mistakes, and foster mutual trust. This does not mean that everyone feels "comfortable." In fact, when a community of practice invests in trust building, members are allowed to experience *discomfort* as they wrestle with exposing their practice and understandings to others and encounter the dissonance that comes with questioning established practices and testing out the worth of new practices.

Facilitators can support trust building by acknowledging members' feelings and learning experiences, upholding norms of interaction within the group, and by following through on actions and agreements.

Open and honest relationships are essential and are often built upon interactions that occur not only during group sessions, but also during informal conversations during other parts of the school day.

Content Adapted from the Following Sources:

Kaner, S., & Wright, D. (2009). Working effectively in groups: Developing your collaborative mindset. In Bandrowski, J., *Discover your inner strength*, Ch. 15. Sevierville, TN: Insight Publishing.

McDonald, J. P., Mohr, N., Dichter, A., & McDonald, E. C. (2007). *The power of protocols: An educator's guide to better practice (2nd ed.)*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

What Are the Facilitator's Roles and Responsibilities?

Facilitators have several roles and responsibilities in guiding their communities of practice. In particular, they serve as organizers, guides, supporters, documenters, and historians. Associated responsibilities include tasks such as the following:

Roles	Responsibilities
Organizer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange meeting space and times • Communicate meeting times and agendas to teammates • Prepare materials and activities for each CoP session
Guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customize session plans to meet CoP's learning needs • Guide CoP through activities described in facilitator's guide • Reinforce guiding principles and effective Norms of Collaboration • Facilitate dialogue that enables teachers to link their learning with their instructional practice and the school's context • Foster reflection on formative assessment practices and professional growth and learning
Supporter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage risk taking, learning from mistakes, and group trust • Support individual teacher's learning needs • Provide extended learning opportunities
Documenter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record the group's understandings, experiments, and learning • Document how formative assessment efforts impact students' learning or growth over time
Historian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind participants of their previous learning • Link each new session with the learning from previous sessions • Follow-up on the group's identified action steps

Which Facilitation Strategies Safely Engage All Group Members?

Every group member needs opportunities to reflect, explore, and think through the new ideas that will be part of the online formative assessment course. The simplest strategy for this is to ensure that during each session, every participant has several chances to talk and write about his or her learning. This can be done

through individual and partner reflections, as well as small and large group structured activities, such as the following:

Provide Time to Get Focused on Learning

In schools, educators are so busy, with many tasks and responsibilities on their minds each day. It helps to allow people to settle into a meeting. Facilitators can ask colleagues to reflect on their recent efforts to use formative assessments in the classroom and to identify a focal area for their continued learning. This reflection also helps the facilitator find ways in which participants might be further engaged during the meeting.

Provide Personal “Think Time”

Reflection is at the heart of learning. In order for people to think deeply about cognitively complex material (and formative assessment is just that) there must be time for reflection. Cognitive science literature from the 1970’s referred to this as the “10-2” rule. For every 10 minutes of presentation time, there should be 2 minutes of personal reflection. Individual reflection can be structured as a simple pause in the dialogue, a written reflection, or a “think-pair-share” activity.

Create Frequent Opportunities for Paired Dialogue

One mechanism for facilitators to create a positive environment for learning is to provide opportunities for paired dialogue. Paired dialogue creates a cognitive safety zone, where a person can try things out, hear what something sounds like, or get confirmation about an idea before bringing it the entire group. Many new group facilitators say that having a “pair share” when working in a group of six feels odd or unnecessary. Quite the contrary: paired dialogue is essential, even during small group work.

Provide Structured Small Group Dialogue

Small group dialogue is the primary vehicle through which individuals can receive feedback during a Community of Practice session. Small group dialogue, usually set up in groups of three, four, or five people, offers everyone the opportunity to participate, provides some diversity of opinion that is not typical of paired discussion, and allows teachers to receive feedback on new strategies they are trying in their classrooms.

Small group work is also very effective at addressing problematic group dynamics. Facilitators often worry about group members who dominate discussion time during meetings, group members who seem completely disengaged, or others who go off on a tangent because they have difficulty bringing the whole group back to focus. As a colleague, it can be hard to address these issues in a large group setting. Using structured protocols for small group dialogue can often break the cycle of less functional large group work. It is likely that while the root cause of the issue may not change through this strategy, it is often the case that small group work can significantly change the dynamic and make the entire meeting more productive.

Whole Group Dialogue

During whole group dialogue, the facilitator listens and observes, acknowledges individual contributions, asks probing questions, paraphrases and summarizes, surfaces conflicting ideas or alternative perspectives, and identifies cross-cutting patterns or themes. In these ways, the facilitator shapes discussions and assesses when a group is ready to move on to a new topic.

The facilitator's role is not to have all the answers, but to guide the group toward deeper and extended learning, at both the individual and group levels.

How Can Facilitators Promote Meaningful Communication?

Groups and individuals often move quickly to solve problems or make decisions when they are first thinking about a topic or challenge. However, it is important that groups allow themselves time to communicate freely, without seeking to reach a decision prematurely. Facilitators can guide groups to distinguish work that promotes understanding from work that leads to decision making.

Initially, groups do well to engage in *dialogue*, in which they are sharing viewpoints and exploring deeply-held assumptions. Dialogue supports the group's inquiry stance. Later, *discussion* can engage group members in making decisions and weighing the things they learned through their dialogue. Discussion allows members to advocate for particular ideas or solutions, based on the understandings they gained through their earlier inquiry.

In addition to distinguishing between dialogue and discussion, facilitators can promote the use of the *Seven Norms of Collaboration* as a productive way to interact, either in groups or with individuals. The Norms of Collaboration are: pause; paraphrase; probe; presume positive intentions; put ideas on and off the table; pay attention to self and others; and pursue a spirit of inquiry. While the norms are words or ideas that educators know and practice much of the time, they are more complex than you might initially think if you haven't encountered them before.

Pause is a norm that many teachers try to enact in their classrooms when they provide "wait time" for students' responses in class discussions. It is often just as difficult for teachers to provide wait time for their colleagues during team discussions. This is as much a function of the fast pace of the environments in which educators work as it is of their personal style. When time is limited, people often talk faster, and jump right in if there is a split second of silence in a conversation. People are sometimes hesitant to use this norm because they feel that if they pause before speaking, they will lose their opportunity to get into the conversation. Yet pause, either while one person is listening to another, or after someone has just spoken, is a great way for people to think more about what they are hearing, and perhaps for the speaker to add other important information or clarifications.

There are ways for a person to signal that he or she is pausing and wants to speak in a moment. For example, one can say, “I want to think about what you said for a moment, before I comment.” In a group, one might say, “That was an interesting suggestion. Let’s think for a moment about it before we discuss it.” Becoming comfortable with silence is a challenge for some, but it is worth persevering because using silence, rather than trying to fill it, can be highly effective.

Paraphrase is a very important way to check for understanding, convey that one is listening, and help individuals or groups move the discussion forward. Paraphrasing may have gotten a bad reputation because of the way it was taught years ago. “I hear you saying...” was a phrase that put the focus on the listener instead of the speaker. While there were reasons for paraphrasing that way, it is often much more effective to keep the focus on the speaker by using a starter such as, “So you’re saying/ thinking/ feeling...” People should not worry about paraphrasing incorrectly, as long as it is clear to the speaker that they are seeking to understand. If the person says, “No, that’s not what I meant; I think...” then, as long as the listener is open to hearing the clarification, the communication is enhanced.

Probe, using questions to understand, is a way to learn more and promote another’s reflection. When pause and paraphrase are used well, meaning they are non-inferential and non-judgmental, probing can be done without people feeling interrogated. Instead, they feel that the listener cares about what they are saying and is seeking to learn more. People often relish being asked to speak about what they are doing, thinking, or feeling, and appreciate it when someone takes the time to listen. Rather than asking, “Don’t you think it would be a good idea to...,” a probing question might ask, “What was your thinking when you...” The important thing to remember about probing is that open-ended questions encourage people to talk, and then specific follow-up questions can be asked to gain more specific understanding of key points or ideas that were shared.

The listener needs to feel safe when being asked questions, so is it important to remember that most communication is conveyed non-verbally through body language and syntax. Mehabrian’s (1980) research found that spoken words account for 7% of the message, tonality communicates 38%, and body language accounts of 55%.

Presume positive intention involves working from an assumption that the person or the group cares about what they are doing, wants to do the best for students, and is thinking about ways to do a good job. Sometimes it is difficult to presume positive intention when past experience has led to a different conclusion. However, there is a lot to be said for thinking the best of colleagues and thereby encouraging them to be their highest selves. In addition, there are times when group members may think they know what someone means, only to find that was not the case. Instead, members can be explicit about their positive intentions by prefacing comments with their assumptions, such as, “Assuming that the fifth grade team was trying to respond to our concerns, let’s see if we can generate some additional options.”

Take care not to jump to faulty assumptions, also called “climbing the Ladder of Assumptions,” or the “Ladder of Inference.” To avoid this, it is best to more safely presume that individuals and groups have a reason for what they do, or are acting on what they think is best. When people feel that they are being perceived with this

assumption, their behavior is more likely to meet the expectation. For more about the Ladder, see <http://www.jadcommunications.com/yvonnefbrown/files/The%20Ladder%20of%20Inference.pdf>

Put ideas on and off the table is a way of making explicit when an idea or suggestion is being offered, and when someone is ready to leave that idea or to encourage someone else to let it go and think of something else. Taking things off the table is helpful when a person or group is perseverating on why an idea was not a good one. The person who offered it may be ready to let it go, but without making that explicit, a lot of time may be wasted because reasons for not doing it keep resurfacing. By taking the idea off the table, it signifies, “All right. Maybe it wasn’t a good idea or maybe the time is not right. Since we’ve considered it, let’s move on.”

Pay attention to self and others may seem self-evident. Often, people are aware of what they are doing and how they are thinking and feeling about it. However, when something has triggered an emotional reaction, people need to be careful to separate the feeling from the idea. People must also think about how to support someone who is having a strong, though perhaps largely internal, reaction. For example, someone might ask a group member, “You’ve been quiet for a while. What are you thinking?” Another option would be to paraphrase for someone the emotional reaction that she shared. A paraphrase such as, “That sounds really frustrating!” can be very useful, particularly when the tone of the comment matches the intensity of the emotion that was first expressed. Paying attention to self and others in these ways helps to prevent conversations from being derailed and supports more productive and inclusive dialogue.

Pursuing a spirit of inquiry, formerly called pursuing a balance of advocacy and inquiry, is a norm that conveys, “Seek to understand before seeking to be understood.” (Covey, 2004). Inquiry conveys a genuine interest in understanding and sets aside the tendency to advocate for particular perspectives or solutions until the group has explored a range of perspectives. A spirit of inquiry can be conveyed through prompts such as, “Can you tell us more about...” or “I am wondering about how you....” It is sometimes surprising to realize that the thinking behind someone’s idea is quite different than what the person originally conveyed. Also, once a viewpoint and reasoning are known and understood, advocating a different viewpoint is much more likely to be done in a way that can be received and considered by the group.

Each of these seven norms represents an essential facilitation skill, as well as a tool for effective communication. It is important to note here that modeling the norms of collaboration in a group setting has been shown to create more effective group practice, even when others do not know these skills well.

Content Adapted from the Following Sources:

Covey, S. (2004). *Seven habits of highly effective people*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Garmston, R., & Wellman, B. (2009). *The adaptive school (2nd ed.)*. Norwood, MA: Christopher Gordon Publisher.

Mehabrian, A. (1980). *Silent messages: Implicit communication of emotions and attitudes*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

How Can Facilitators Promote Successful Meetings?

There are five standards for facilitating successful meetings (Garmston & Wellman, 2009):

1. Discuss only one topic at a time
2. Use only one group process at a time
3. Achieve interactive and balanced participation
4. Respect cognitive conflict among ideas by eliciting disagreements and respecting other viewpoints
5. Have all understand and agree to meeting roles and responsibilities

Successful meetings reflect the group's collaborative mindset to follow specific agreements for interaction and use approaches to working together productively. Facilitators can ensure effective meetings by choosing and modeling appropriate structures and protocols that will enable the group's adherence to these standards.

Processes for group work need to attend to participants' different thinking and learning styles. For example, introverts think before they speak, while extroverts think while they are speaking. An extrovert might actually reveal, "I don't know what I think until I hear what I said." There need to be ample opportunities for introverts to process information and ideas and then speak, for if careful attention is not paid to this issue, the conversation may be limited to the thoughts of extroverts. Think-write-pair-share is an example of a process that gives think time to all participants before they are encouraged to speak.

It is the facilitator's role to give careful consideration to the most effective ways that group members can be encouraged to think and engage in dialogue and discussion with others. Further, when facilitative moves are based in the core principles of facilitation and integrate and model the Seven Norms of Collaboration, CoP members will have ample opportunity to participate in the group's dialogue and decision making and meeting outcomes are likely to be addressed. These, in turn, will contribute to members' satisfaction with the group and its continued work.

Content Adapted from the Following Source:

Garmston, R., & Wellman, B. (2009). *The adaptive school (2nd ed.)*. Norwood, MA: Christopher Gordon Publisher.