Handout

**End of Year Reflection Collaborative Discussion Guide Tool: Guidelines for Use**

The Collaborative Discussion Guide is a tool used to guide reflective, learning focused conversations. These conversations are based on models of *Cognitive Coaching* from Costa and Garmston, *Collaborative Coaching* from West Ed, and *Appreciative Inquiry* from [AI Commons](https://appreciativeinquiry.champlain.edu/) as adapted by TeachOntario Canada in Mentoring for All.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is an “attributes-based” approach that can be used to facilitate reflective conversations either during formal professional learning sessions or as part of the ongoing dialogue between mentors and colleagues. At the core of AI is the belief that all participants come to mentoring relationships possessing many strengths and that by building on these assets, the answers to the issues and challenges they face can be collaboratively constructed.

This thinking is why the CDG Tool always begins with an examination of what is working well in current practice (themes of success). Many of these themes can then be applied as actual strategies to collaboratively address specific challenges and issues.

**Before the Conversation**

Remember that the mentor should be the one using the tool, filling it out while the beginning teacher has the freedom to think and share. Be sure you are listening well as you document the beginning teacher’s thoughts, ideas, questions, needs in each of the 4 boxes. Remember to use your Mentor Language Stems to help guide your conversation.

**Beginning the Conversation: Themes of Success**

**Successes:** **What’s already working well?**

Often in our practice we can focus on what is not working –creating time for paired conversations about what is working well can help bring to the fore the strengths and attributes of both new colleagues and mentors as well as highlighting the successes they’ve experienced in the year. Following this segment of the conversation, mentors may note common threads or themes that ran through their beginning teacher’s stories of success. Some of these “themes of success” may actually provide useful strategies for the challenges and issues they encounter.

*Always start with the positives and think about what went well during the school year. Think about these overall areas while still being specific about what aspect of that area went well. Here are some examples of areas to reflect on when thinking about the year’s successes:*

* *Classroom Management*
* *Subject Areas Taught*
* *Meeting the Needs of Each Specific Subset of Students*
* *Parent Communication*
* *Relationship Building with Students, Colleagues, Parents*
* *Curriculum and Instructional planning*
* *Using Assessments to Guide Instruction*
* *Also reflect on any other specific areas that were a school or personal focus.*

*By reflecting on the successes first, Beginning Teachers can then start thinking about the areas they want to change or modify.*

**Example learning focused language:**

As you think about your commitment to making a difference for students, tell me about what went well in your work this year?

**Here are some more detailed reflection questions to guide the conversation for each of the above areas**:

Reflect on your classroom routines and procedures.

* Ask yourself: Which procedures will I keep? Which will I change? What new ones do I need?
* Also, think about which times of the day or transitions were the most frustrating and challenging. Think about a way to create a procedure to avoid problems or minimize the problems.
* Once you have reflected, make a list of procedures you want to make sure you implement the following year. Save the list so you can refer to it at the beginning of the year.

Reflect on your classroom management.

* Did I introduce my rules effectively?
* Was I consistent with ensuring my rules were being followed?
* What rules do I need to change/add/or remove?
* Did I effectively revisit my rules as needed throughout the year?
* Was I consistent at issuing consequences for rules not being followed? If not, what can I change to be more consistent?
* Were the consequences effective? In other words, did they work? Did the students care enough about the consequence to follow the rules?
* What new (and logical) consequences do I need to implement next year to ensure my students are following the rules?
* What positive reinforcements worked well? What did my students respond to the most that I can continue?

 Reflect on your organization.

* What areas or parts of the classroom were the most organized?
* What areas or parts do I need to improve?
* What part of my classroom did I feel was the most unorganized? How can I fix it to make it more organized?
* Did I do a good enough job involving the students in keeping the room organized? How can I better involve them?
* What, if any, new organizational supplies do I need to purchase to help me stay organized?.

Reflect on your curriculum and instruction.:

* Which area of my instruction was the weakest?
* Did I provide enough student choice in my instruction?
* Which areas of instruction and curriculum were not engaging for me and which were not engaging for my students?
* Did I get all of my curriculum taught? It not, what can I combine, cut out, or speed up to get through it the next year?
* In which areas of my curriculum was I lacking in engaging and meaningful resources?
* What areas of my instruction needed to be more rigorous?
* What type of instruction (whole group read aloud, experiments, centers, small group teaching, etc.) went really well this year? Why did it go so well?
* What type of instruction do I want to try out next year?

Reflect on your relationship with students, parents, and colleagues.

* What did I do that helped build relationships with my students? What else could I do?
* What did I do that helped build community among my students? What else could I do?
* Was I effective at communicating positives and concerns regularly with my parents? If not, how can I improve on this?
* Which colleagues did I interact with the most? Which colleagues do I want to interact with more next year? Your colleagues can definitely be your best asset when teaching, so choose the ones you want to interact with carefully. Choose colleagues whose philosophy and attitude toward teaching aligns closely to yours. Also, choose colleagues who will push your learning and growth as a teacher.

**Continuing the Conversation: Issues and Challenges**

**Focus: What did not go so well and will be your focus area(s) for the following year?**

Acknowledging the “real world” challenges both new and experienced colleagues encounter in their work brings authenticity to the AI process. As the listener in the conversation, it is important for mentors to remember their role is non-evaluative and supportive.

Once you have some positives reflected on, start thinking about what did not go so well in each area. From that reflection, choose 2-3 areas to focus on the next school year. Try to only choose a couple of focus areas and really perfect those areas. If the teacher chooses too many areas, they may easily get overwhelmed and wind up not doing any of them well.

**Example learning focused language:**

As you think about your students, their learning, and your teaching this year, what have been your biggest issues/challenges?

**Concluding the Conversation: Practical Ideas, Next Steps, and Goals for Next Year**

**Mentee’s Goals for Next Year and Support needed from Mentor or others: collaborative harvesting of ideas**

Often when someone expresses a challenge, they have already given the issue a great deal of prior thought.

For mentors, awareness of flexibility of stance and role is critical at this point of the process.

Based on what they are hearing, mentors may decide to:

• Consult (offer support and resources)

• Collaborate (create challenge and encourage growth)

• Coach (facilitate professional vision)

Choose 2-3 goals to work on next year, and include at least one goal that continues a successful practice from Success Box reflections. Brainstorm some ideas to make positive changes for the next school year. For example:

* Start curating and compiling blog posts ideas, free resources, and even paid resources that will help you. All summer long, add to your collection as you find things that you want to try.
* Ask for help. Reach out to your colleagues or teachers in collaborative (Facebook, Twitter?) teaching groups and ask them for suggestions on how to improve specific areas.
* Find some summer professional learning opportunities that align with your goals.
* Seek out a professional development book. If your focus for next year is to tighten up writing instruction, specifically in the area of writing conferences and revising and editing, purchase or check out a few books with that in mind.

**Example learning focused language:**

What specific strategies worked well this year that you will continue to use next year? What areas of challenge do you plan to work on and strengthen next year? So What / Now What – work together to design an individual action plan of possible goals/next steps for the next school year.

After the Conversation

**What was the emphasis of the conversation?**

The CDG Tool is confidential between the mentor and beginning teacher. It serves to document and organize your work together, and provides a toll to reflect on progress during the year. The tool is NOT evaluative. However, many mentors, coaches, and beginning teachers find it helpful to note how their work aligns with and supports the district’s professional teaching standards. It can identify areas of focus for mentor-beginning teacher work, or for teachers’ formal goal setting and reflection.

**Set a next meeting date or plan to Use this document in the Fall.**

At the conclusion of the discussion, be sure to give the teacher a copy (or email) of the completed End of Year CDG for their records/reflection. If you have time before the end of the year, set a meeting date. If the teacher will be continuing in the mentor program next year, remind them to keep this handy for the beginning of the year goal setting and planning.

