

## Critical Friend Conversation Protocol\*

This modified version of focused conversation (or critical friend conversation) is a process that can help people reflect together about any issue, large or small. *A facilitator leads the conversation, and asks a series of questions that elicit responses that take the group from the surface of a topic to its in-depth implications.*

### **Purpose:**

- The CFC is intended for you to explore in-depth an essential question based on the 10<sup>th</sup> common principle, Democracy and Equity - these are drawn from real dilemmas facing the CES network.
- The conversation is intended to insure clarity of purpose, to question your own assumptions, and to develop a proposed course of action for addressing your question.

### **Process**

1. Introductions (5 min.)
2. Review the central concepts and purpose (3 min.)
3. Review the protocol (5 min.)
4. State your essential question (2 min.)
5. Break into groups of five and facilitate the conversation as described below (80 min.)
6. Summary and Evaluation (10 min.)

### **Step 1:**

**Objective**—questions that surface meaning and external reality.

- **Questions:**

**What is the dilemma stated in the question? What are the assumptions embedded in the question?**

- **Process:**

- Divide participants into groups of five.
- The first person (presenter) in the group will have 3 min. to address the above questions.
- The second person will have 1 min. to respond to the presenter, and then each member has 1 min. to respond to the presenter, until everyone has responded.
- The presenter will have the final word for 1 min.
- Repeat the process with the remaining four group members.  
(Approx. time 40 min.)

### **Step 2:**

**Actionable**—questions to elicit resolution, bring the conversation to a close, and enable the group to identify some next steps.

- **Questions:**

**What are some strategies that we could use to address the question? Based on these conversations, what would you take back to apply in your school?**

- **Process:**

Begin with a whip on the first question above, allowing each participant 2 minutes. Continue with an open conversation to allow participants to build on each others ideas for 20 minutes. Conclude with a whip on the final question with 2 minutes per participant.  
(Approx. time 40 min.)

### **Step 3:**

**Summary:** Conclude with a share-out from the groups; facilitator charts strategies. Facilitator invites small group members to share their contact info if they're interested in keeping the conversation going. (5 min.)

**Evaluation of the protocol-** Ask participants to complete evaluations (5 min.)