
Jennifer Bryan, Ph.D.
Psychologist and Educational Consultant
Principal, Team Finch Consultants

November 2018

Connect (be kind)

@jsbteamfinch

www.teamfinchconsultants.com

jennifer@teamfinchconsultants.com

Why we are here

- leadership
- effective communication
- feedback
- emotions
- escalation
- tools
- develop a feedback approach
  - racial equity
  - cultural competency
  - personal emotional triggers

…we know full well that however much one might read in advance about throwing a football or painting a portrait or giving a speech, the real learning happens after we have thrown ourselves in the situation and made that first (unsuccessful) attempt.

-James Lang
During this conference, what might it look like for you to “throw yourself into the situation” of learning how to give and receive feedback?

When you think you know the answer, you sincerely believe it’s a waste of time to keep looking for it. It feels like continuing to search for your keys after you’ve found them.

...take your time and don’t be so sure.

CONTENT and PROCESS

- supervision
- evaluation
- feedback
Content

• supervision
  oversee, coordinate, support teacher efforts that contribute to “student achievement” (broadly defined via school mission)

Content

evaluation

• a means of determining efficacy, success, growth in teacher performance;
• measure of how well teacher contributes to student achievement;
• a form of accountability

Content

feedback

• achieve the desired result.
• make changes for the better.
• improve performance.
• mechanism in both supervision and evaluation

Tommy, you sang along very nicely but you didn’t knock it out of the park.
Giving effective feedback does not always mean a happy ending.
Strategic Development Feedback

- Big Picture Focused
- Organizationally Aligned
- Behavior Specific (doing = key word)
- Factual, Not Interpretive
- Both Positive and Negative
- Focused on Patterns
- Linked to Impact
- Prioritized (1-2 things at a time)

CONSOLIDATION of LEARNING

Write a piece of learning from each role on a Sticky:

Giver

Receiver

Consultant

CONSOLIDATION of LEARNING: GIVER

- be prepared, practice, okay to have notes
- express empathy
- be clear and concise
- avoid giving feedback based on someone else’s observations
- name goal and outcome at the beginning
- slow down (turtle) and PAUSE
- scaffold the conversation
- don’t talk too much!
- “What do you need?”
- provide examples and impact
- what do i do when giver gets upset?
- be direct, say what i actually mean
- see receiver as full human, not just a “problem” to be solved
- stay on message
- provide options

CONSOLIDATION of LEARNING: RECEIVER

- my default was to be defensive
- so easy to misunderstand
- hijacked the conversation!
- wanted to be a partner in process instead of passive receiver
- need to listen and ask questions
- specific examples really helped
- hard not to feel attacked
- i preferred open-ended questions
- listening without planning response is really important
- felt myself getting defensive before we even began!
- be prepared to get new/unexpected info
- helped to hear organizational values
- repeat back statements to ensure understanding
- validation was powerful
- you have to talk about feelings
CONSOLIDATION of LEARNING: CONSULTANT

- only give advice if needed
- better to ask questions vs give advice
- forming good questions is useful learning
- asking questions is harder than just giving advice
- challenge to really listen rather than think of how I would do it!
- change related to feedback doesn't have to be immediate
- listen more than speak
- wish real life had pause-buttons & do overs..how to do this in moment
- direct giver toward a specific tool
- learned a lot by observing!
- value of questioning what a person’s intent is
- listening to both sides w big ears
- use consultant model when practicing...get 2 colleagues!

WORDS OF WISDOM

People with incorrect beliefs can become even more entrenched when presented with facts that contradict their beliefs. To change people, you have to reach their hearts, and you can do that only by building relationships.

All feedback lives in the relationship between giver and receiver.
Learning how to receive feedback is not the same as taking feedback.

Patience and Generosity

Shifting our approaches to organizational change, so that we are working with life's change dynamics, is a gradual process that requires high degrees of watchfulness, patience and generosity. No one is able to act in new ways just because they want to. Everyone gets yanked back to old ways of doing things, especially when we feel tense or confused.

PRACTICE INSTRUCTIONS

- Work in a trio *(same division/role)*
- Assign roles
- Each person quickly jots down assumptions about the situation and/or conversation.
- PAUSE/REFLECT  
  *How might your assumptions get in the way of being empathic?*
- GIVER jots down goals, tools.
- Less talk during consulting moments.
Parents of a child who has different learning needs have historically been closed off to conversations about this. It’s another year and you need to have the conversation again.

Parent is upset that their child is not in the “high group” in Math. They think the school is “tracking” students and want their child to be on the “advanced” track. The student is a latina girl.

These parents are frequently questioning the appropriateness of the curriculum for their daughter. Due to their religious beliefs they are highly protective of their child being exposed to anything they deem inappropriate.
Parent is meeting with you for third time about their African American child’s relationship with another (white) student in the class.

*My son is being bullied by this kid and I’m beginning to think the teachers don’t see it because my son is black. Their bias, maybe unconscious, is that the black kid is the aggressor.*

There is a clear policy about parents being charged a late fee for picking up their child late from after school. A white administrator must ask a single parent of color for the late fee.

You must tell parents that their child is not a good fit for the school because of social and emotional concerns…you have tried to support the child and this is no longer sustainable.

Student gets a B on a paper. Parent comes to administrator to complain. “I read that paper. That’s an A paper. I don’t think the teacher is being fair to my kid.”
Parent is upset about teacher telling his students that he identifies as a “gay trans male.”

I can’t see how who he has sex with is appropriate information for children in second grade.

Role Expectations

Administrators expect teachers to
• meet students where they are,
• be transparent about how learning will unfold,
• treat each student as an individual,
• provide growth-producing feedback,
• interact with students on a frequent basis
• improve students’ confidence and comfort level.

Role Expectations

Teachers expect administrators/supervisors to:
• meet teachers where they are,
• be transparent about how supervision and evaluation will unfold,
• treat each teacher as an individual,
• provide growth-producing feedback,
• interact with teachers on a frequent basis
• improve teachers’ confidence and comfort level.

How to use others' feedback to learn and grow | Sheila Heen

• focus on RECEIVING feedback (not necessarily take it)
• scan quickly to determine validity
• 3 kinds of triggered reaction…
  • truth trigger (always going to find something wrong. 90% wrong but need the10%)
  • relationship trigger (the challenge of “we”)
  • identity triggers (what it says about who you are)

https://youtu.be/FQNbaKkYk_Q
Education is always about relationships

- It's impossible to improve education by doing an end run around inherently complicated and messy human relationships
- **Success** is enhanced or diminished by the presence or absence of social trust
- Nobody cares about what you know until they know you care
- In the shadow of the vast “global community”… we make meaningful relationships within small

What Happens In Groups

*The group falls victim to the cascade effect.*

This happens when group members follow the statements and actions of those who speak or act first. “It is no exaggeration to say that herding is a fundamental behavior of human groups… Group members think they know what is right, but they nonetheless go along with the group in order to maintain the good opinion of others… not to seem ignorant, adversarial, or skeptical.”

“Afterward, there will be a short Q and A that will be just long enough for one person to take up too much of it.”
Many people feel vulnerable admitting they don’t know something. They are afraid to offer a window into their inner world by wondering out loud.

Most of us are infected by what learning theorists call *illusions of fluency*, which means that we believe we have obtained mastery of something when we have not.

- James Lang

If fallibility is built into our very name and nature, it is in much the same way the puppet is built into the jack-in-the-box: in theory wholly predictable, in practice always a jarring surprise.

- Kathryn Schultz

Finding sustainable solutions can take time. Community members may need time and space to absorb and adjust to new ideas or changes. The pay value of slowing the pace is a more involved and supportive community.

Faster is slower
The challenges that require you to work together are complex... Lots of people will need to change what they do if you are to succeed. Some are already way ahead of you. You will need to connect all this up, nurture some stuff and weed out things that aren't helping. You will need to help people see how what they're doing contributes towards something meaningful. You will have to constantly improve people's experiences.

This process of inquiring together about the meaning of our work also helps us stop the labeling behavior that is far too prevalent these days. We are quick to assign people to a typology and then dismiss them, as if we really knew who they were. As we frantically try to implement changes we know are crucial to our organization's survival, we tend to hunt for scapegoats. We notice only those who impede our good plans—all those "resistors," those stubborn and scared colleagues who cling to the past. out how to make them work because they realize this is the only path to achieving their aspirations.

People, like all life, only change when they allow an event or information to disturb them into voluntarily letting go of their present beliefs and developing a new interpretation. Nothing living changes until it interprets things differently. Change occurs when we let go of our certainty—our beliefs and assumptions—and willingly create a new understanding of what's going on.

For change to occur, there must be a change in meaning.

A living system forms itself as it recognizes shared interests
• For change to occur, there must be a change in meaning
• Every living system is free to choose whether it will change or not
• To create a healthier system, connect it to more of itself

Principles for how life self-organizes and changes
But this 21st century world of complexity and turbulence is no place for the mechanistic thinking of the past. We are confronted daily by events and outcomes that surprise us. Nothing moves slowly enough for us to make sense of the world using any analytic process we were taught. And the complexity of modern systems cannot be understood by separating issues into neat boxes and diagrams. In a complex system, it is impossible to find simple causes that explain our problems, or to know who to blame. A messy tangle of relationships has given rise to these unending crises.

As our dance partner, life insists that we put ourselves in motion, that we learn to live with instability, chaos, change, and surprise. We can continue to stand immobilized on the shoreline, trying to protect ourselves from life's insistent storms, or we can begin moving. We can watch our plans be washed away, or we can discover something new.

Leaders know the importance of having someone in their lives who will unfailingly and fearlessly tell them the truth.

- Warren Bennis
How To Create a Culture of Candor and Feedback

• Start with yourself. Since the only one you can actually change is you, focus on that first.
  • Demonstrate you are serious enough about shifting the culture to do the hard work to personally improve
  • Commit to being better at candor and feedback and share a plan to get there.
  • Tell your team about your commitment and ask for their help.

Jennifer Porter
Harvard Business Review
October 2017

How To Create a Culture of Candor and Feedback

• Ask for feedback and really listen to what you hear.
  • Request big picture feedback (“How can I be a more effective leader?”) and micro feedback (“What could I have done differently in that meeting so it would have been more productive?”).
  • Listen carefully and openly to what you hear, and be genuinely curious about the other person’s perspective. No matter what you hear, do not resist, explain, defend, or push back. You can process it all later; in the moment just take it all in. And say thank you.

Jennifer Porter
Harvard Business Review
October 2017

How To Create a Culture of Candor and Feedback

• Focus on thoughtful, caring attempts to help a person or situation improve.
  • Increasing candor and feedback does not give any of us license to say whatever we want, however we want, whenever we want. This is not about venting or getting something off our chests.
  • The intention in creating a culture of candor and feedback is to help someone else develop and be more effective or to help a conversation, decision, or group be more productive.

Jennifer Porter
Harvard Business Review
October 2017

How To Create a Culture of Candor and Feedback

• Expect and lean into discomfort and mistakes.
• Clean up your mistakes once you make them.
• Understand when not to be candid or give feedback. (blame, too emotional, personality driven, hearsay, overload)
• Adopt a continuous improvement mindset.
GROUP LIFE!

What is your department group like? How would you describe it?

"Refresh my memory—why do we meet once a week?"

"It's been moved that we adjourn for an afternoon nap. Is there a second?"
We need to rethink our strategy of hoping the Internet will just go away.
**Why Groups?!**

- innovate faster
- see mistakes more quickly
- find better solutions to problems
- people working in teams tend to achieve better results
- people working in teams report higher job satisfaction
- profitability increases when workers collaborate more
- teams are now the fundamental unit of organizations

**Alphabet Brainstorm**

Come up with a word for each letter that describes your department group/meetings.

**The Perfect Team?**

What are the most important characteristics of an effective, functional group?
The Perfect Team?

the “who” (personality, skills, background) doesn’t matter as much as the “how”
the “how” matters most!

What Google Learned From Its Quest to Build the Perfect Team
Charles Duhigg
NYTimes, 2016

Group Basics

• How many members in your group?
• How often do you meet?
• Where do you meet? (describe the space)
• How long are your meetings? Do they begin and end on time?
• Is everyone present at the beginning of the meeting? The end of the meeting?
• Is there typically a formal agenda?
• Is there a leadership structure to the group?
Group Basics

- How does your group FUNCTION?

The Functioning of Groups

Intrapersonal

- each individual:
  - manages affect
  - integrates emotions/ideas
  - deals w/identity stress
  - engaging/withdrawing
  - assumes role(s)

Interpersonal

- communication
- feedback
- trust formation
- giving support
- receiving support