**Critical Friends/Tuning Protocol**

**Observation Discussion**

**Introduction**

The Critical Friends process focuses on developing collegial relationships, encouraging reflective practice, and rethinking leadership. This process is based in cooperative adult learning, which is often contrary to patterns established in work environments. It also addresses a situation in which many leaders find themselves – trained to work as independent units; certified as knowing all that is needed to know; feeling like the continuation of professional learning is not essential to the creation of an exciting, rich, learning environment; and that they are simply supervisors in the leadership role.

The Critical Friends process provides an opportunity both to solicit and provide feedback in a manner that promotes reflective learning.

# **Group Member Roles**

**Facilitator:**

Reviews the process at the outset, even if everyone is familiar with it. Sets time limits and keeps time carefully. Participates in discussions but is on the lookout for others who want to get in conversations. Adjusts time slightly depending on participation. May end one part early or extend another, but is aware of the need to keep time. Reminds discussants of roles, warm and cool feedback, and keeping on topic that the presenter designated. Leads debriefing process and is careful about not “shorting” this part. Is careful during the debriefing not to slip back into discussion.

**Presenter:**

Discusses the facts about the class, setting, and lesson. Unlike most discussions of this nature, the presenter does not participate in the group discussion (during warm and cool feedback). Sits outside the group and does not maintain eye contact during the discussion but rather takes notes and gauges what is helpful and what is not. Later, is specific about the feedback that was helpful.

**Observers/Discussion Participants:**

Address the issue brought by the presenter OR addresses the observation topic and give feedback that is both warm (positive) and cool (critical). The feedback should be given in a supportive tone and discussants should provide practical suggestions.

STEP ONE: **Introduction of Process and Roles by Facilitator (3 Minutes)**

\*The facilitator will briefly explain the Critical Friends process, guidelines for discussion, and will select a time keeper (personal preference only).

STEP TWO: **Teacher** **Presentation** **(3-5 Minutes)**\*The observed teacher will summarize the class demographics and the typical demeanor of the students.

\*The teacher will then describe the lesson (including objectives and outcomes), any instruction that has led up to the lesson, and the assignment and activities that followed (if not observed). Teacher should explain explicitly the Disciplinary Literacy Method, text read, and how learning was assessed.

\*Observers listen.

STEP THREE: **Clarifying Questions (3 Minutes)**  
\*Observers ask “matter of fact” questions about the Disciplinary Literacy Method, lesson, assignment, and activities. Questions should be nonjudgmental and surface only.

🡪Questions should not start with “Why”, just clarification questions (think Police Report). It is not a time to give advice or get into a discussion.

\*Teacher answers questions.

STEP FOUR: **Examination of the Work** (5-8 minutes)

\*Observers examine student notes, assignments, or projects that were created or completed from the lesson.

STEP FIVE: **Pause to Reflect on Feedback** **(1 Minute)**

\*Observers reflect silently on the information received.

\*Each observer should write, at least, one piece of warm and once piece of cool feedback regarding the implementation of the Disciplinary Literacy Method on a sticky note or scratch piece of paper.

STEP SIX: **Warm and Cool Feedback (8 Minutes)**

**\*\*\*Teacher removes himself/herself from the group.\*\*\***

\*Observers give “WARM” feedback about the lesson, its components, and the implementation of the Disciplinary Literacy Method in the third person (as if the teacher wasn’t in the room).

**- “Students were engaged when…” - “Students learned the most when…”**

\*Observers share “COOL” Feedback, which may include confusions, lesson ideas, and possible solutions for gaps in instruction.

**- “I was confused by…” -“What if Mr./Mrs. Smith tried…”**

STEP SEVEN: **Teacher Reflection (3 Minutes)**Teacher reflects aloud about what she/he is now thinking after hearing the presenters’ feedback. **Note**: This is not a time to defend oneself, but a time to think out loud about interesting ideas that came out of the feedback section.

STEP EIGHT: **Debrief, Thank Yous, etc. (3 Minutes)**

Facilitator leads a discussion about the experience, more specifically the Critical Friends process, what observers learned, and what they may try next.

STEP NINE: Four Square Feedback

All teachers involved fill out at least one sticky note for three corners of the Four Square Feedback Poster. Teachers may contribute positives(+) or suggestions for change ( ):

-Content of the Lesson

-Questions for Teacher Observed

-Critical Friends Process

-Affirmations/Thank You’s