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Notes to the Facilitator

The purpose of this workshop is to provide of professional learning communities (PLCs) with specific strategies and skills to manage conflict productively. The workshop is intended to help school and district leaders move beyond fight-or-flight strategies when confronted with opposition to the principles and practices of the PLC culture. It is based on the work of Richard DuFour, Rebecca DuFour, and Robert Eaker and influenced by the writings of Kerry Patterson, author of *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When the Stakes Are High* and *Influencer: The Power to Change Anything*, as well as Howard Gardner's *Changing Minds: The Art and Science of Changing Our Own and Other People's Minds*.

This workshop presents an example of conflict in a PLC culture, outlines and illustrates strategies to lead difficult but crucial conversations related to this conflict, and provides participants with opportunities to practice leading conversations dealing with conflict using the five key elements of a crucial conversation explained and portrayed in the video:

1. Assume good intentions.
2. Ask the other person to share assumptions and thoughts.
3. Find common ground.
4. Build shared knowledge.
5. Share your own assumptions and thoughts.

This workshop is divided into eight components:

1. **Welcome and Opening**—This segment identifies the context in which conflict is likely to occur as a traditional school is transformed into a PLC. It also explores the consequences of not handling conflict.
2. **Strategies for Dealing With Conflict**—This segment introduces strategies that PLC leaders can use to address conflict productively. Some of these strategies encourage an honest and respectful dialogue, while others are designed to change people's minds. They are designed for use within the framework of a difficult but crucial conversation.
3. **PLC Culture Is Loose and Tight**—The PLC culture is both loose and tight; that is, it encourages individual autonomy and creativity (loose) within well-defined parameters and priorities that must be honored (tight). When individuals fail to honor the parameters and priorities, effective leaders address the issue rather than ignore it. They recognize that the culture of their school is determined to a large extent by the worst behavior they are willing to tolerate, because failing to confront the behavior sends the message to the rest of the staff that the behavior is acceptable. It is impossible to foster the simultaneous loose and tight culture of a professional learning community

if leaders are unwilling to engage in difficult conversations with staff who consistently ignore what is intended to be tight.

4. **A Conflict About Grading**—This segment introduces a conflict scenario related to grading practices as an example of the conflict that is likely to arise in a PLC culture.
5. **A Difficult Conversation**—In this segment, participants view and analyze a simulated difficult but crucial conversation. The simulation involves a teacher, played by Rebecca DuFour, who defends her traditional grading practices and a principal, played by Richard DuFour, who hopes to persuade her to reflect on and ultimately change these practices.
6. **Analyzing a Difficult Conversation**—This segment presents a preliminary analysis of the simulated conversation and gives participants an opportunity to share their analyses of the conversation.
7. **Practicing Difficult Conversations**—In this segment, participants work in a large group and in small groups to practice and observe difficult but crucial conversations.
8. **Closing**—In this segment, participants reflect on what they have learned in the workshop and plan for next steps.

Conducting the Workshop

This workshop is designed to last about eight hours. It can be scheduled for a single day consisting of two sessions or be scheduled over two days. All the professional development materials you need to conduct this workshop—the facilitator’s guide with detailed teaching suggestions, and the video resources—are provided in this package.

To conduct a successful learning event, please consider the important issues that follow:

- **Preparation**—Please view the entire video program, read all materials, and complete all activities yourself before leading the workshop.
- **Location**—The workshop should take place in an area that is large enough for individual, team, and whole-group work.
- **Equipment**—You will need a DVD player, a projector, and one or more monitors. You will also need an overhead projector or computer projector to show transparencies.
- **Masters**—Reproducible masters are included with this guide (starting on page 12, and on the CD). The handouts should be duplicated before the workshop begins and be distributed to participants according to the workshop instructions. A master for the overhead transparency is also included in this guide (on page 10 and on the CD). They should be duplicated before the workshop begins, or you may project the page from your computer onto the screen.
- **Additional Equipment**—You will also need flip charts, chalkboards, or whiteboards with appropriate writing materials to conduct the workshop.

Workshop Overview at a Glance

Time (in minutes)	Section	Handouts and Overheads
45–60	Welcome and Opening	The Importance of Confronting Behavior That Violates PLC Purpose and Priorities David Roth's Decision
45–60	Strategies for Dealing With Conflict	Elements of Difficult but Crucial Conversations Strategies for Changing Minds
20–30	PLC Culture is Loose and Tight	Loose/Tight
10–15	A Conflict About Grading	
60–90	A Difficult Conversation	
45–60	Analyzing a Difficult Conversation	
90–120	Practicing Difficult Conversations	Conflict Scenarios Feedback
30–45	Closing	

- How does using this grading practice impact student learning, in your opinion?
- Do you think that grading based on promptness is inconsistent with the three big ideas of PLCs? Why or why not?
- Do you think a school leader should initiate a dialogue with a teacher who routinely assigns zeros to students who fail to complete their work on time? Why or why not?
- If you believe the leader should initiate a dialogue in this instance, how should the leader prepare for this difficult conversation?

A Difficult Conversation

1. Indicate that participants are about to see a simulated conversation between a principal, played by Richard DuFour, and a teacher, played by Rebecca DuFour. The principal will lead a difficult but crucial conversation with the teacher about her grading practice of giving students a zero for not handing in assignments. This practice, he feels, is not consistent with PLC principles. Ask participants to:
 - Identify what the principal wants to accomplish from the conversation
 - Use the five strategies for honest and respectful dialogue that appear in Elements of Difficult but Crucial Conversation handout together with the seven strategies from the Strategies for Changing Minds handout as a guide for watching the segment
 Have them keep track of the strategies that the principal uses as they watch.
2. Play the A Difficult Conversation chapter of the DVD. (It is about 30 minutes in length.) Note: You may need to stop the video or show portions of the chapter again to give participants time to identify the strategies being used.

Analyzing a Difficult Conversation

1. Indicate to participants that they will soon have an opportunity to share their analyses of the simulated conversation. But first, they will have a chance to see a preliminary analysis of the conversation. Show the first segment of the Analyzing a Difficult Conversation chapter of the DVD. Pause the DVD when the question “What are some other examples of strategies that the principal used to engage in honest and respectful dialogue with the teacher?” appears on the screen.
2. After showing the video segment, ask the participants to respond to the following questions, as a group: “Do you agree that the segments of dialogue selected from the simulated conversation were, in fact, good examples of the strategies identified in the segment? Why or why not?” Then have participants answer the question posed on the screen: “What are some other examples of strategies that the principal used to engage in honest and respectful dialogue with the teacher?” Encourage them to not only identify strategies used to engage in honest and respectful dialogue (for example, assume good intentions, ask the person to articulate assumptions and thoughts, find common ground, build shared understanding, share your own assumptions), but to also identify the dialogue in the conversation that demonstrated the use of these