

Dallas School District

Peer Partner Protocol

“Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success” (Henry Ford)

Partnerships come in as many sizes and shapes as the personalities that make them. There is no one way to form a Peer Partnership, but here we suggest some basic steps in establishing a Peer Partnership and utilizing that partnership to increase your teacher skill, and thereby your students' learning.

Peer Partnerships are based in cooperative learning, reflective practice, and honest, constructive communication. They may be formed to solve a problem, refine a practice, research a question, test a hypothesis, analyze student work, or infinite other purposes. All you need to get started is a collaborative spirit and a partner who shares that spirit.

Identify an area of interest or learning focus (objective)

- All collaborative activities benefit from a clearly defined objective
- These goals can come from your own personal and professional needs or from the needs of your class, your PLC, your building, or your district.

Form a partnership or small group based on shared objective

- Once you have determined your objective, find someone who wants to work toward that objective with you
 - These could be grade-level partners, subject partners, PLC members, cross-school teams, or anyone willing to work towards your shared objective
- Our Professional Learning Specialists (Mickie French and Shannon Ritter) can assist in identifying and inviting potential partners.
- The only requirement for a partner is a commitment to the shared objective

Communicate: reflect, discuss, share

- Once you have established a partnership around a shared objective, help each other to reflect on, discuss, and share ideas about that shared objective
- There are protocols available for reflective conversations, but the level of formality is completely up to you. Be as loose or tight as works for your partnership.

Decide on approach

- Once you have shared communication on the objective, it comes time to plan: How can you and your partner(s) best work to achieve your shared objective?

- Form a discussion group?
- Start a book study?
- Apply some previously experienced Professional Development?
- Observe practices and share feedback?
- Collaborate to create materials or curricula?
- Plan lessons and analyze results?
- Experiment with new (or tried) methods?
- The options are countless...
- The important part here is to decide openly and collectively on a course of action so that everyone is on the same page moving forward.

Set a timeline based on your approach

- Timelines are critical to the success of a project, especially in Education, where your time can be swept away by various meetings, deadlines, and student needs.
- Timelines help you maintain the scope and sequence of your project and help you and your partner(s) stay at the same, collaborative pace.
- Keep in mind that the timeline can be as short or long as your particular objective dictates: maybe it is a single day, a week, a month, or even a year. (If the timeline is longer than one year, it may be best to establish a one-year timeline and then revisit the timeline at the end)

Engage in the learning: Reflect, Plan, Act, Repeat

- This process will be uniquely determined by your objective, your partner(s), your method, and your timeline.
- Regardless of the variables, make sure you schedule time to reflect, plan, act, and repeat.

Reflect on impact of learning and plan next steps

- Reflection should occur throughout any collaborative process; however, the reflection at the end of a process is especially critical.
- Here are some guiding questions for reflection:
 - Summarize impressions: How do you think it went? How are you feeling about the partnership, objective, or results?
 - Analyze causal factors: What effect did your decisions have on the results you achieved? What are your hunches about what caused you to move either toward or away from your objective?
 - Construct new learning: What learning(s) do you want to take with you to future situations? What do you want to stay mindful of from now on?
 - Commit to application: How might you apply your new learning? How might you ensure that you maintain focus?
 - Reflect on experience: As you reflect on this experience, how has it supported your learning? How might you incorporate this process into your own thinking?