

Advice for Facilitators of TP School-Year Kickoff Meetings.

(Format for *Standard Kickoff Meetings*)

8.07

A. A day or two before the meeting.

Send participants a brief memo about the meeting along with a copy of the prompts. As you recall, the prompts are some questions to which you will ask them to respond during the second ten minutes of the meeting. You will be supplied with suggested prompts to use.

Especially for the first kickoff meeting, the memo should say something like the following.

To: . . .
From: . . .
Subject: . . .
Date: . . .

At [time] on [date] we will assemble in [place] to spend an hour together as a faculty. We will be sharing ideas with one another about [see ** below].

For the first ten minutes of the meeting, we will watch a short video tape of students and teachers. Then, as one way of sharing ideas, I will ask you to jot down some responses to the written prompts that I have attached to this memo. Your responses will be anonymous. We plan to collect these at the end of the meeting and to harvest some of your responses to share with others here and at other schools. We will make the full set available [in the office? library] if you want to browse through them later. If you decide that you want yours back, please be sure to let me know and that can be arranged, so long as you include your name on the form.

Next, we have arranged to have five students come for ten minutes to talk about their own ideas and experiences. Obviously, it is quite brave of them to speak to us, so we want to show them our appreciation and give them as much support as possible. [Person's name] will moderate their discussion. After about ten minutes, they will take some questions from the audience and then depart.

The final twenty-five minutes are reserved for sharing ideas about the implications of what we have seen and heard for us as a school community and for what we do in our classrooms.

Please try hard to be a few minutes early so that we can be in our seats to start on time. I look forward to a thought-provoking hour with you!

** For stage/target one: "starting the semester successfully."

two: "classroom management."

three: "helping students to be ambitious learners."

four: "maintaining industriousness in our classrooms."

five: "bringing the school year to a positive conclusion."

Running the Meeting

1. Start on time and stay on schedule so that the open discussion portion of the meeting will not be cut short. Remember ten minutes for tapes, ten minutes for prompts, ten minutes for the student panel, five minutes for audience interaction with the students, twenty-five minutes for discussion among the faculty.
2. Take no more than a minute to talk through the structure of the meeting. Let people who did not bring their prompts know that you have extras that they can ask for following the tape.
3. Immediately following the tape, ask people to take a few minutes to “jot down responses to some of the prompts. Don’t worry, this is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers. You don’t have to include your name (unless you want your paper returned to you). We’re just trying to share our thoughts on paper. We’ll report back to you on some of the responses that people offer and we’ll keep the collection in the [office? library?] for folks who want to browse through them. Does anyone still need a copy of the prompts.” Note that saying “jot down” instead of “write” may be important to set some people at ease.
4. Select students for the panel who are likely to be good, thoughtful speakers, but who are not all high achievers. Students who are very shy or who take a long time to warm up might not be the best choices. Remember that teachers can also talk to children outside of the meeting, so the meeting is not the only opportunity to consult with children who might not be good panelists.
5. If at all possible, prepare the students before the meeting. This simply means having them watch the tape and reviewing the student prompt questions with them. Sometimes, if the facilitator has conducted a short session with the students in advance, he or she can remind them of some things from the preparatory session that they might otherwise forget to say during the meeting.
6. At the kickoff meeting, begin the student panel promptly at twenty minutes into the meeting and restrict it to ten minutes. Take at most an additional five minutes for questions from the audience. The moderator for the student panel can be a different person from the facilitator for the overall meeting. If the students are to be in the room while the teachers are answering the prompts, you might ask the students to bring something with them to read for that ten-minute period. Dismiss the students after they are finished answering questions, so that teachers can talk without the students in the room.
7. Protect the final twenty-five minutes for an open discussion. You might introduce it by saying something like the following. “Now, we want to consider the implications of what we have seen and heard for us as a school community.” You want to invite people to ask questions of one another and share ideas concerning how to be even more effective in the classroom with the targets upon which the meeting is focused. As a leader, you should emphasize that everyone can contribute to helping peers feel encouraged to contribute to the conversation.
8. End the meeting with some summary statements about the meeting and about your plans for next the school year. These future plans may simply be a promise to follow up with

other related activities that, for the moment, you do not attempt to specify. It might be a good idea NOT to distribute written materials about future activities at the end of this meeting. Instead, allow people to leave feeling unfettered, and free to savor the ideas and feelings of the hour without focusing on new responsibilities.

9. Enjoy!

Fixed Format for Each One-Hour Kickoff Meeting

First 10 minutes:	Watch the video tape of students and teachers that introduces the target. (Tapes have been produced in Shaker Heights, Ohio, and will be provided to participating schools.)
Second 10 minutes:	Teachers jot down responses to a set of written prompts that solicit their ideas and help them to begin thinking about the target upon which the session is focused. These responses are later summarized and shared back to teachers. The summary is also made available to teachers at other schools.
Third 10 minutes:	A panel of 5 (and <i>only</i> 5) students addresses the faculty, discussing their own experiences and perspectives regarding the target under consideration. There is a set of written prompts to guide this discussion. An adult facilitator of the student discussion helps to ensure that the students address the prompts and stay mainly on the day's topic.
Next 5 minutes:	Faculty members ask questions of the student panel.
Final 25 minutes:	Faculty members discuss what they have seen and heard, with an emphasis on issues that they would like to address together as a faculty or in small working groups.
Conclusion:	The meeting concludes with a brief "next steps" summary by the moderator and/or the principal.