# UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS ON WHICH CFIP IS BASED[1]

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Data analysis using the Classroom-Focused Improvement Process (CFIP) is based upon several underlying assumptions. Among them are:

## PART 1

**Data alone have no meaning.** Data are merely numbers or words. It has been said, "Data do not laugh or cry." Individuals or groups give meaning to data by organizing, analyzing, and interpreting them. Our context and prior experiences influence the meaning we derive from the data we collect.

**Individuals interact with data and with others to shape new understandings.** Knowledge is both a personal and a social construction. Human beings are meaning-making organisms. We sift all our experiences -- including the data we gather -- through our personal and social filters, forming beliefs and ways of knowing. Structuring processes in which faculty members make meaning of data, collaboratively with others as they are exploring new approaches and beginning to implement them, is critical for success. Meaning fuels motivation. Having deeper understandings of ourselves and others, based on data, increases the energy we have to transform the status quo.

**Understanding should precede action.** When confronted with data, individuals and groups sometimes tend to assign causality too soon and to determine possible solutions without clear problem definition. They tend to seek the comfort of action rather than navigating the discomfort of ambiguity. Skilled teams cultivate "purposeful uncertainty" or "intellectual hang time" to achieve greater future understanding.

## PART 2:

**Data-driven dialogue can lead to continuous improvement in student achievement.** <u>That</u> we talk as a school community is vitally important in these "high stakes-high stress" times. <u>How</u> we talk, that is, how we frame problems and identify possible solutions based on ongoing data analysis, is equally important.

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[1]  *Portions adapted from Wellman, B. and Lipton L. (2004). *Data-Driven Dialogue: A Facilitator's Guide to Collaborative Inquiry*. Sherman, CT: MiraVia.

**But data-driven dialogue is hard.**  For the majority of our careers, most of us have worked alone in our classrooms, solving instructional problems by ourselves as best we could.  It has not been a part of the culture of schools for teachers to have *specific* and *concrete* conversations about the levels of student achievement we are observing in our classrooms and to link this achievement to specific instructional activities. We often have difficulty separating the *work* we do (the instructional activities we employ) from the *individuals* doing the work (ourselves and our colleagues on the faculty).

**Established models or protocols can help to structure these difficult conversations.**  A protocol is an established and consistent way to complete a task.  Protocols can help us to navigate difficult and uncomfortable conversations by providing:

- ✓  A logical series of questions for team members to discuss sequentially
- ✓  The opportunity for all team members to become actively involved
- ✓  A comprehensive analysis that will lead to definitive actions
- ✓  A way to begin to separate the work we do from who we are as valued colleagues

## PART 3:

**CFIP (the Classroom-Focused Improvement Process) is a question-based protocol developed by Dr. Ronald Thomas and Dr. Michael Hickey of Towson University.**  It serves as the basis for a collaborative dialogue in which educators use district data reports or classroom assessment results to identify:

- Patterns of class-wide strengths and weaknesses in student proficiency and what the instructional response of the team will be
- Individual students ready for enrichments and interventions and the instructional focus that the differentiations should take
- Instructional upgrades that they will make in the next unit.

CFIP is being used in over 100 schools because it empowers teachers to make data-based decisions that will increase student learning.

**Protocols are hard to stick to at first.**  They may seem strange and stilted.  We tend to want to take the conversation in other, more natural, directions.  But this can be counter-productive and not lead to definitive actions.  For the dialogue to be effective, we should "trust the protocol" and let it work.  In time, the questions will seem much more natural, and we will become more comfortable with them.  In time, too, we may see opportunities to modify the protocol and perhaps eliminate components or combine questions.  But for the first few times we try it, we should strive to be true to the model.