

FREQUENTLY-ASKED QUESTIONS

CLASSROOM-FOCUSED IMPROVEMENT PROCESS (CFIP)

1. What is the Classroom-Focused Improvement Process (CFIP)?

The Classroom-Focused Improvement Process (CFIP) is a team-based, collaborative data analysis protocol designed to: (1) enable teachers to monitor carefully the impact of their delivery of instruction on student performance; and (2) use student performance data to adjust their teaching practice on a real time basis. This data dialogue protocol for instructional planning integrates concepts from the work of Peter Senge, Douglas Reeves, Laura Lipton, Bruce Wellman, Richard DuFour and his colleagues, and Stephen White. The CFIP model seeks to break the isolated culture experienced by many teachers by identifying both collaborative and individual components that help teachers to “make shared meaning” from their data and to use the data as a basis for taking definitive actions to identify and implement:

- Enrichment activities for students succeeding at a high level
- Interventions for students who need additional help
- Instructional modifications for the next unit of study

2. Who created CFIP?

Dr. Michael Hickey and Dr. Ronald Thomas developed CFIP at the Center for Leadership in Education at Towson University. Dr. Hickey and Dr. Thomas’ protocol helps teachers and instructional teams conduct effective data analysis and use data to drive their instruction.

3. What are the major components of CFIP?

The underpinnings of CFIP are based on three major components: dialogue, protocols, and triangulation of data. In order for CFIP to work effectively, teams must develop the capacity to engage in collaborative dialogue, use protocols to guide those discussions, and examine multiple data sources to inform instructional practices. The three components work well together when the following definitions are operationalized in team interactions:

- Dialogue is the “discipline of team learning” and suggests that a “stream of meaning” flows through and among team members during which deeper and richer understandings emerge that are unavailable to individual teachers working in isolation (Senge).

- A protocol provides guidelines for dialogue that everyone understands, permits focused conversation to occur, and builds group trust by helping team members do substantive work together.
- Triangulation involves the use of multiple data sources. Three types of data are generally triangulated in CFIP: external assessment data, course-wide or district benchmark assessment data, and classroom assessment data.

4. What are some of the requirements for CFIP implementation?

The major requirements for implementation of CFIP are often described as preconditions. These preconditions must be in place in order for CFIP to work most effectively. The preconditions include facilitative leadership, clear identification of roles and responsibilities for implementing the process, selection of a prescribed meeting structure, understanding the data analysis process, and clarification of procedures for planning and follow-up based on CFIP results.

- **Facilitative Leadership**—Facilitative leadership should be practiced by teachers as they assume full instructional leadership for session planning and follow up. At the same time, administrators should use a variety of strategies to implement staff participation in professional development in response to CFIP results.
- **Roles and Responsibilities**— All staff members should bring data to CFIP sessions and actively participate in analyzing them. CFIP participants should develop lesson plans, instructional activities, and assessments collaboratively in response to the results of their data analyses.
- **Meeting Structure**— While regular CFIP dialogues should be embedded in the schedule during the school day, at least once every other week, classroom data may be analyzed collaboratively (either formally or informally) on an almost daily basis. Effective teams have established norms and consistently follow an explicit set of both procedural and relationship guidelines that promote collective inquiry and active involvement.
- **Data Analysis Process**—The CFIP template should be completed fully and in detail at each data dialogue session and shared promptly with team members and school administrators. Data from many sources should be triangulated. All appropriate levels of comparison should be considered, such as individual student progress over time, student to class, class to school, school to district, school to school, class to class, and subgroup to subgroup.

- Procedure for Planning and Follow-up Based on CFIP Results—All teams should plan re-teaching, enrichments, interventions, and improvement in future instruction with flexible grouping and modifications for all learners, based on their CFIP results.

5. What type of training is required for CFIP implementation?

Many CFIP users have found that professional development focused on guidelines for effective dialogue, communication and meeting management helps to speed implementation of the protocol. It is also important to determine participants' level of knowledge of formative assessment and the value it holds for changing instruction at the classroom level. Knowledge of the change process and what it takes to lead change initiatives is also a knowledge base needed for successful CFIP leadership and participation.

6. Who should be involved in implementation of the CFIP process?

The school leadership team must decide who needs to be involved in CFIP dialogues. While there is no one right way to begin implementation, many schools start with core academic teams while others include all instructional staff in the initial stages of the process.

7. How is CFIP connected to other current initiatives, such as student learning objectives (SLOs) and the Danielson Framework?

Some schools teams are reporting using CFIP as an organizer that drives the integration and inclusion of several major initiatives. The teams begin by looking for connections between and among CFIP and the implementation of the Common Core Curriculum and the next-generation assessments. For example, the CFIP protocol, when implemented with fidelity, can provide the precise and timely data analysis that allows teacher teams or individual teachers to monitor student performance on SLOs and to respond with the degree of precision necessary to obtain clear evidence of growth over the established instructional interval. Many processes and data sets which have been used in the past—primarily for accountability purposes—are neither sensitive enough, nor timely enough, to provide the level of precision that teachers will need to demonstrate their effectiveness or to respond to the professional practice domains of the Charlotte Danielson Framework. CFIP enables teachers to monitor and report student performance data and enhancements in professional practice with a high-degree of fidelity.

8. How is CFIP connected to instructional planning?

The results of the CFIP analysis help teachers to plan more effectively because instructional decisions are discussed collaboratively, capitalizing on the knowledge of all team members, and decisions are made for the use of strategies and resources that will meet the needs of staff and students. Using CFIP, staff members can differentiate on multiple levels on a regular basis and become flexible in changing their instructional plans as needed. Following a CFIP data analysis session, teachers should be expected to depart from the “Pacing Guide” and re-teach content when results show that a large number of students lack essential skills and knowledge.

9. How can CFIP enhance rigorous instruction at all levels?

One of the major discoveries that many schools teams have made during their analysis of CFIP data is how little time is focused on enrichments. This leads teams to enhance instruction through the development of more challenging work for high-achieving learners. Teams use many resources, such as Bloom’s Taxonomy, Revised, and the Depth of Knowledge Levels, to guide an increase in the rigor in all content areas and at all instructional levels. At the same time, ongoing analysis of instruction in real time provides immediate opportunities for teachers to differentiate instruction for students who show declines in performance.

10. How can a school arrange for training to support implementation?

The Center for Leadership in Education provides training and guidance for the development and implementation of CFIP in schools and school districts throughout the country. The training teams can provide needs assessments, protocols, strategies, and coaching support that help with the individualized implementation of the Classroom-Focused Improvement Process. Contact Dr. Michael Hickey (mehickey@towson.edu) or Dr. Ronald Thomas (rathomas@towson.edu) for further information.