

Leading Team Discussions



GEORGIA'S LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE
FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

**A Performance-based Learning Module
for Georgia's Educational Leaders**

2006

Team Discussions

Module at a Glance

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Progress Tracker

Before Beginning this Module

Work with your Coach to determine the order in which you will complete the topics, and write in the appropriate numbers in the Order column.

NOTE: The recommendation for this module is that you complete the topics in the order they appear – so, this information has already been filled in for you below.

When You Complete this Module

When you have “passed” your Final Assessment, you will have completed this module. Congratulations! Have your Coach sign off in the space provided below, then include this page in the evidence you submit to your Portfolio.

Order	Topic	Date Completed
1	Asking Questions	
2	Active Listening	
3	Counter-productive Behavior	
4	Leading Team Discussions	

Module Completed – Congratulations on Your Performance!	
Date of Final Assessment Performance:	
Performer's Name:	Performer's Signature:
Coach's Name:	Coach's Signature:

Module Objective

Module Objective

After working through this module and practicing the skills / behaviors it contains, you will be able to perform the objective below.

Given this...	Do This...	To Meet These Criteria...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A topic of importance to your team • A team who needs to discuss the topic 	<p>Lead a team discussion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The detailed task performance criteria listed in the Performance Checklist Practice(s) Final Practice and Final Assessment • GLISI's criteria for how to work effectively as a team leader/facilitator listed in the Performance Feedback Form Practice(s) Final Practice and Final Assessment

Module Overview

Leading Team Discussions

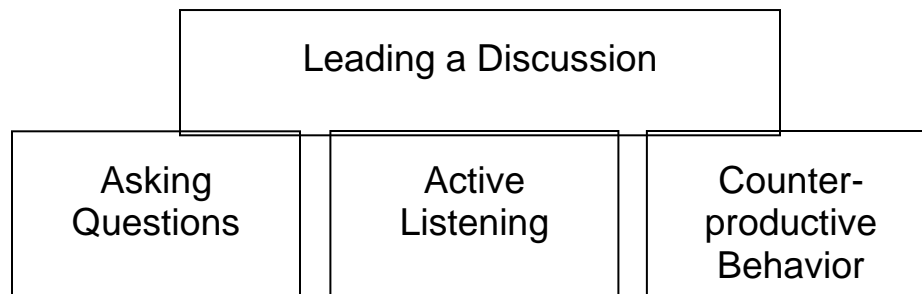
In this module, you will learn to lead your team through the process of discussing issues that are important to the team and its success.

The goal for discussions is to involve all team participants in a natural flow of conversation leading to a common understanding of the issue or problem at hand.

Discussions should be open and honest. Team members should be free to express their thoughts, feelings, and ideas. There should be dialog, where people feel valued, understood and involved.

Three of the topics may be thought of as foundational or supportive, criteria skills that you use throughout the discussion process and elsewhere in your professional life. The final topic is the actual process of leading a discussion. As you will see, there is a recommended set of steps in the process for you to follow.

You will practice two of these foundational skills, Asking Questions and Active Listening, and then, after learning the steps, you will practice leading a discussion. You will then be assessed on leading a discussion. You will not practice handling Counter-productive Behavior, but should be prepared to do so in the Final Practice and Assessment.



Why are Discussions Important?

Your team will spend many hours each year discussing issues that affect the team. You have a major responsibility to assure that these discussions are productive; that they lead to supporting the team's goals and build team cohesiveness. It is your obligation to the team and to your school district to keep these discussions on track and efficient.

Discussions are closely related to decision-making, though less formal. You may want to review the GLISI module, *Facilitating Group Decision-Making*, 2005.

What's In It For Me (WIIFM)?

Group discussions can occur almost every time your group meets, both formally and informally. You want all discussions to be productive and support your team's goals, so you must be prepared to exercise your best discussion leader skills at all times.

Nearly all of the leadership modules assume that the leader can help a team work through issues of concern to the team. All leaders need to be active listeners, ask pertinent and appropriate questions, deal with counter-productive behavior, and bring discussions to an active conclusion.

What are the Results of This Task? (Tangible and Intangible)

When this task is performed, you can expect the following results.

Tangible Results:

- A complete discussion of a topic with all team members sharing their ideas and feelings

Intangible Results:

- Greater possibility of success in addressing a key issue
 - Greater buy-in to future plans and actions
 - Greater team loyalty and cohesiveness as a result of asking team members for their input
-

What is the Leader's Role?

You, as the leader, are there to guide, encourage, clarify, and help focus the efforts of the team. Your ideas and opinions should be shared, but you must be careful not to state your personal preferences too strongly or contribute too many suggestions for consideration. Seek to get the ideas and opinions of others in the group before sharing yours.

Here are some roles that you will fill as you lead your team in discussions*:

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| Guide: | Lead the team through the process. |
| Motivator: | Get the team excited and keep them excited.
Praise the team for its good thinking and progress. |
| Bridge Builder: | Bring divergent thinking among the team members to a common understanding and commitment. |
| Clairvoyant: | Watch for trends in thinking and help to head off problems before they occur. |
| Taskmaster: | Keep the team on track and use time efficiently. |

*Adapted from several sources

Does Educational Context Matter?

Leading teams through the discussion processes is an important skill for all school leaders regardless of their job description or responsibility, and does not vary greatly from school to school, or district to district.

How Will My Performance Be Assessed?

You will complete a Final Assessment to demonstrate your mastery of this module.

Prior to completing the Assessment, you will be given multiple opportunities to practice, get feedback, and gain confidence in your ability to meet the objective of this module. You will practice the foundation skills and then lead a team through the complete discussion process.

What Do I Do Next?

Turn the page to review the Final Assessment for this module.

Final Assessment

About the Final Assessment

Your Coach will observe your Final Assessment and give you feedback on your performance by making notes on a Performance Checklist (which lists the criteria related to content, process, and work products), and a Feedback Form (which includes a rubric for rating your performance in leading a team through the process).

There are 3 differences between this module's Practices and its Final Assessment:

1. In Practices, you will perform independently to learn the process. In the Final Practice and the Final Assessment, you will be leading a team through the process you have learned. The **Feedback Form** is used to evaluate your performance in the Final Practice and Final Assessment only; you will not find one in the Practice sections.
 2. In Practices, we have provided sample **Scenarios** (similar to word problems) for you to work through. For the Final Assessment, no scenarios are provided; based on your knowledge of the process, you should select an issue or problem on which to focus with your team during the Final Assessment. Work with your Coach to make sure you have identified a good scenario to use during your Final Assessment.
 3. In Practices, we have provided **Worksheets** that guide you in working through the process you are learning. However, no Worksheets are provided for the Final Assessment. Based on your knowledge of the process, you should create your own agendas, lists, notes, etc. using whatever media you wish; or you may copy or adapt the Worksheets you used in the Practices.
-

Why Review the Final Assessment?

Reviewing the Final Assessment will ensure that you understand the knowledge, skills and behaviors that are being taught and tested in this module. It will help you gauge your current level of performance against what will be expected of you by the end of the module. This will help you know which areas to concentrate on as you work through the module.

If you feel that you are already proficient in the knowledge, skills and behaviors needed to pass the Final Assessment, you may perform the Final Assessment now. If your performance on the Final Assessment meets all the criteria, you can “test out” of this module.

Or, if you feel you need more learning and practice before trying the Final Assessment, continue working your way through the module.

How to Complete this Final Assessment

1. Gain permission from your supervisor or Coach to complete the Final Assessment in a school setting.
 2. Schedule the date, time and location of your session – one that works for you, your Coach, and the teachers / staff / leaders who will participate.
 3. Invite the participants (or, your Coach may prefer to invite them).
 4. Provide your Coach with a copy of the Final Assessment Performance Checklist and Final Assessment Feedback Form for this activity, as well as the Coach’s Guide (if available).
 5. Work with your Coach to identify or create a plausible scenario on which to work through the process with your participants. Look at the list of potential topics in the Scenario(s) section for ideas. Ideally, you should use a real-life school improvement scenario that your organization is currently facing.
 6. Prepare any other materials or information that you and your participants need to have with you on the day of the activity.
 7. Prepare to perform by reviewing the content, Step-Action Tables, Practice Worksheets, Performance Criteria and Feedback Forms for all of the topics in this module.
 8. When you are ready, perform the Final Assessment in the school setting and with your Coach observing.
 9. Obtain feedback from your Coach about your performance and your next steps.
-

Requirements

This assessment must be:

- Performed in an actual school environment
- Performed with a team of teachers and staff (or other leaders)
- Observed by a Performance Coach

In order to be entered into your Portfolio, your performance / evidence must:

- Meet the criteria listed on the Final Assessment Performance Checklist
 - Earn a rating of 3 or 4 on the Final Assessment Feedback Form
-

When Can I Add to My Portfolio?

If your Coach feels you need more practice, repeat the appropriate Topics and/or Practices in this module until you both are satisfied that you are ready to take the Final Assessment again.

When (1) your performance meets all the listed criteria, and (2) your Coach rates your performance as “3/Proficient” or higher, you may enter the following items into your Portfolio:

- Evidence of performance
- Final Assessment Performance Checklist
- Final Assessment Feedback Form
- Any additional artifacts you wish to include (video or audio tape, participant feedback, etc.)

You are encouraged to continue practicing and performing this task until you achieve a rating of “Distinguished” and then to update your Portfolio with those evidentiary items.

Once you have satisfied the requirements for this module, work with your Coach to update your portfolio and discuss the next steps in your learning path.

What Do I Do Next?

If you are ready, complete the Final Assessment. If you are successful, you will receive credit for this module.

Or, skip to the first Topic in this module.

<p>Final Assessment Scenario</p>	<p>Perform this Final Assessment with a team you lead (or are a member of) in your school / district. The team should include between 5 – 10 people.</p> <p>Select a topic for team discussion, and lead the team through the discussion.</p> <p>You may choose any topic of direct interest to your school environment. Have your Coach review and approve your topic in advance.</p> <p>Turn the page for a list of topics that can guide you and your Coach. These topics reflect the eight major leadership roles identified by GLISI:</p>
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Topic Ideas for Group Discussions

- **Data Analysis topics:**
 - What is the best use of data for student achievement?
 - What is the best method for disaggregating the data?
- **Curriculum, Assessment, Instruction topics:**
 - What is the best reform model?
 - Appropriate use of technology in the classroom?
 - Textbook adoption? Instructional strategies?
- **Performance Management topics:**
 - What is the responsibility of leadership in leading school improvement?
 - Who should develop the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan?
 - How can the district best manage the work of all the different federal, state, and local programs?
- **Operational topics:**
 - Food services.
 - Safety.
 - Emergency situations.
 - Discipline.
 - Alternative School(s).
 - Bus codes of conduct.
- **Relationship topics:**
 - Hiring personnel.
 - How to explain, “highly qualified teachers” to parents.
 - Use of TAPP teachers.
- **Process Improvement topics:**
 - How to best evaluate processes to show improvement in student academic achievement?
- **Change topics:**
 - Adopting Georgia Performance Standards.
 - Block versus traditional scheduling.
 - Accessing Student Records.
 - Contacting parents.
 - What to add to or delete from the cumulative record and student folder.
- **Learning and Performance Development topics:**
 - Who should attend a particular professional learning event?
 - What topics to include in a professional learning session?
 - When to schedule professional learning?
 - Use of on-line courses for professional learning.

Final Assessment Performance Checklist

Performer's Name: _____

Coach's Name: _____

Date of Performance: _____

Performance Evidence	Present?	Meets Criteria?
1. The session was planned	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> The topic was defined, explaining why it was important and an opening question was prepared <input type="checkbox"/> An agenda was prepared if necessary <input type="checkbox"/> The amount of time was determined <input type="checkbox"/> It was confirmed that the room is set up for maximum participation <input type="checkbox"/> The meeting was scheduled and the attendees were invited
2. The discussion was initiated	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Everyone was made comfortable <input type="checkbox"/> The topic was stated, including its importance and the opening question was stated
3. Points were clarified	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Open-ended questions were used that require the respondent to provide more than a one word response <input type="checkbox"/> Closed-end questions were used that could be answered with one word, such as yes or no <input type="checkbox"/> Participants were prompted for further information <input type="checkbox"/> Key ideas were rephrased <input type="checkbox"/> Feedback was provided <input type="checkbox"/> Help was provided to overcome confusion
4. The team was managed	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> It was assured that everyone participated <input type="checkbox"/> Time and digressions were controlled <input type="checkbox"/> Counter-productive behavior was controlled

Leading Team Discussions

Final Assessment

- | | | | |
|-----|---|---|--|
| 5. | Discussion points were integrated and summarized | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Comments regarding common ground were suggested
<input type="checkbox"/> At least one summary was offered
<input type="checkbox"/> Team agreement of the summary was obtained |
| 6. | The session was closed | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> It was confirmed that all key points had been made
<input type="checkbox"/> A plan for action or future activity was made |
| 7. | The listener demonstrated that his/her mind was concentrated on the speaker | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> The speaker was not interrupted
<input type="checkbox"/> disagreeing statements were expressed appropriately
<input type="checkbox"/> Self-talk was not exhibited
<input type="checkbox"/> The speaker's logic and credibility were taken into consideration |
| 8. | Good body language was shown | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Eye contact was maintained
<input type="checkbox"/> The listener was facing the speaker
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-verbal behaviors such as nodding, smiling and gestures were used |
| 9. | The listener stayed involved | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> The listener used phrases such as "uh huh," "I see what you mean," and "Good point."
<input type="checkbox"/> Clarifications were asked for
<input type="checkbox"/> Confirmation comments were expressed |
| 10. | Notes were taken | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Notes were complete enough to capture the essence of the discussion. |
| 11. | Arguing was avoided | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Leader managed discussion to discourage, or correct, participant arguments
<input type="checkbox"/> Leader avoided arguing with participants |

Final Assessment Feedback Form (page 1 of 2)

Performer's Name: _____

Coach's Name: _____

Date of Performance: _____

Performance Levels			
1	2	3	4
Emerging Needs Study and Practice <i>Few or none of the desired behaviors were adequately displayed.</i>	Developing Needs Practice <i>Some but not all of the desired behaviors were adequately displayed.</i>	Proficient Meets criteria and expectations <i>All desired behaviors were displayed and performed correctly.</i>	Distinguished Could be Used as a Model to Teach Others
		Eligible for Portfolio	

How effective was the performer in:	Rating				
1. Facilitating group interaction and managing participation?	1	2	3	4	NA
2. Assisting the group to meet the criteria for the task(s) at hand?	1	2	3	4	NA
3. Modeling appropriate leadership behaviors?	1	2	3	4	NA
4. Teaching others how to perform the task(s) at hand?	1	2	3	4	NA
5. Presenting information clearly, concisely, and professionally?	1	2	3	4	NA
6. Leveraging / integrating technology to increase effectiveness?	1	2	3	4	NA
7. Motivating / encouraging others to achieve success?	1	2	3	4	NA
8. Using group processes to achieve desired session results?	1	2	3	4	NA

Turn the page to provide additional written feedback (required).

Final Assessment Feedback Form (page 2 of 2)

Performer's Name: _____

Coach's Name: _____

Date of Performance: _____

If any element was rated less than 3, what needs to be done to score a 3? To score a 4?

What greatest strengths did the leader exhibit through this performance?

What could be done to improve this leader's performance? (Including any criteria on the Performance Checklist that were missed.) Be specific.

Were there any significant leadership issues that must be rectified (by additional practice and assessment) before entering this evidence into the Portfolio?

Topic #1: Asking Questions

Asking Questions

One of the key skills for helping your team discuss any issue is to ask questions. Questions encourage your team members to respond and continue to share their insights and ideas—valuable information that will help them and you to progress more rapidly towards completion of your team’s goals.

But there are different kinds of questions and they are used for different reasons. You need to become proficient at asking the right question at the right time.

The two major categories of questions are referred to as **closed-ended** and **open-ended** questions.

Closed-Ended Questions

Closed-ended questions can usually be answered by “yes” or “no*.” They can also be used for an “either/or” situation. They are useful in pinning down details. Examples:

- Do you think you can get that done by Friday?
- Should we schedule that for Monday or Tuesday afternoon?
- Who is responsible for that activity in your school?

**Of course, you may have someone on your team who likes to give a five-minute “no” but that’s a different issue altogether!*

Open-Ended Questions

Open-ended questions encourage the respondent to give a more complete answer. Open-ended questions tend to allow more information to be communicated. You usually begin these questions with words like “what,” “how” and “why.” Examples:

- What can we do to improve?
 - How do you think the project is going?
 - How could we implement that suggestion?
 - Why are the students reacting the way they are?
-

When do You Use Which Type of Question?

Any conversation or discussion will use a mix of open- and closed-ended questions.

Generally, you will need open-ended questions to get a discussion started or to move to another step in the discussion.

You will tend to use closed-ended questions to focus on details that need to be covered so you can bring the discussion to a close.

Confirming and Clarifying

You will use questions and statements to gain additional information or to better understand how someone on your team feels about something. You need to confirm that you understand. Usually these will be open-ended:

- Jim, why do you think this change in the curriculum will not be received well by the parents?

At other points in the discussion, you simply need to clarify what your team member means:

- So, do I understand correctly, Sue, that you want our school to add metal detectors at all major entrances?

It is important that you understand your team, so ask plenty of clarifying and confirming questions throughout a discussion.

Prompting and Probing

Prompting is a short phrase that tells your team member to continue and shows that you are listening. The purpose is to expand on ideas, probe for deeper understanding, clarify meaning, find assumptions, and explore applications. Examples:

- Tell me more. Go on!
 - Could you explain that?
 - Help me understand what you just said.
-

What Do I Do Next?

There is not a Step-Action Table for this topic, but there is a practice for open- and closed-ended questions. Turn the page to begin the practice.

Practice #1: Asking Questions

About this Practice

- This is a “partial practice” that helps you build one of the skills that you will use when you perform the Module Objective in the Final Assessment.
- Practice writing open- and closed-ended questions.
- If you need to, choose a different issue or topic and practice as many additional times as desired before moving on to Active Listening.

How To Complete the Practice

1. Feel free to refer back to the Topic items as needed during this practice.
 2. Before you begin, review these items on the next few pages:
 - **How to Check Your Work** – this describes how you will know when you’ve completed the practice successfully and are ready to move on.
 - **Practice Worksheet** – this is where you will record your work.
 - **Performance Checklist** – this lists the criteria used to evaluate your work.
 3. When you are ready, perform the Practice and record your work on the Worksheet.
 4. When you have finished, return to **How to Check Your Work** to evaluate your performance and decide what to do next.
-

How to Check Your Work

- Review your results against the Performance Checklist to make sure you have produced all of the required evidence of performance and that all evidence meets the criteria.
 - If your results did not meet all the criteria, you need more practice. Do one or more of the following:
 - Choose another type of school problem you have experienced in the past (or ask your Coach to suggest one).
 - Write another set of questions on a similar topic.
 - Consult with your Coach for additional information, resources, feedback and suggestions, and practice ideas.
 - Once you have met all the Performance Criteria, work with your Coach to move on to the next Topic.
-

Practice Scenario

Select a topic for which you would like to lead a team discussion during your Final Practice. Refer to the list on page 13, or select a topic of your own. You should select a topic related to the field of public education.

Practice preparing questions that you will use when you lead the team through discussion of this topic.

Practice Worksheet – Asking Questions

List the topic you have selected for the team discussion you will lead.

Write at least two open-ended questions you can use in your discussion:

1.

2.

3.

4.

Write at least two closed-ended questions you can use in your discussion:

1.

2.

3.

4.

Write at least two confirming questions you can use in your discussion:

1.

2.

3.

Write at least two clarifying questions you can use in your discussion:

1.

2.

3.

Write at least two prompting and probing questions or phrases you can use in your discussion:

1.

2.

3.

Performance Checklist – Asking Questions

Performance Evidence	Present?	Meets Criteria?
1. Open-ended questions were written	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> The questions required that the respondent provide more than a one-word response. <input type="checkbox"/> At least 2 open-ended questions were prepared
2. Closed-ended questions were written	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> The questions could be answered with one word, such as yes or no. <input type="checkbox"/> At least 2 closed-ended questions were prepared
3. Confirming questions are written	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> The questions could be used to confirm that the leader understands participants' comments <input type="checkbox"/> At least 2 confirming questions were prepared
4. Clarifying questions were written	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> The questions could be used to clarify what participants' comments mean <input type="checkbox"/> At least 2 clarifying questions were prepared
5. Prompting and probing questions were written	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> The questions could be used to prompt participants to continue contributing, or to probe for more information <input type="checkbox"/> At least 2 prompting and probing questions were prepared

If the evidence of your performance meets all of the listed criteria, you are ready to move on to Active Listening. If not, continue studying, practicing and/or working with your Coach then try it again.

Topic #2: Active Listening

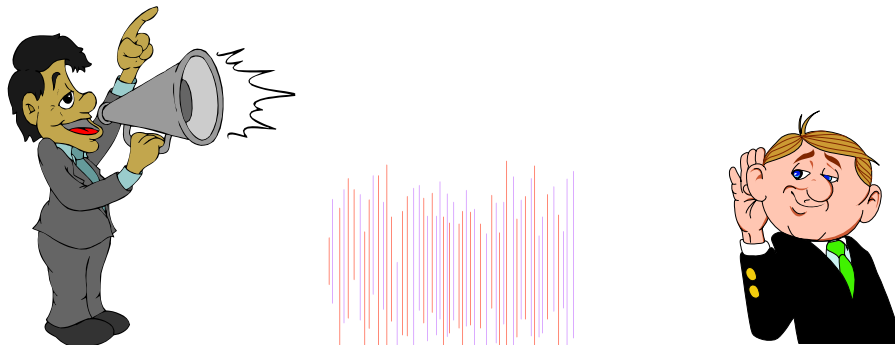
Active Listening Listening is a skill absolutely essential for leading a team. This is true not only for leading discussions, but for every aspect of your interaction with your team. Most people are NOT good listeners. Most of what we hear is immediately forgotten; usually because of poor listening.

Hearing is not listening. Hearing just means you are receiving the sound. Listening means that you strive to understand what the speaker is saying, or trying to say. Your goal as an excellent team leader is to hear exactly what your team members are saying and understand them.

Stephen Covey, in his best selling book, The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, sums up the point:

“Seek first to understand, then to be understood.”

The Communication Process



Communication has to progress from the speaker through a wide range of barriers and filters before it reaches the receiver. Some of the more common barriers to listening are:

(continued next page)

- Stress
- Emotions
- Preoccupation
- Bias
- Physical state
- Closed mind
- How we feel about the speaker
- Lack of interest in the topic

You cannot control all of these problems, but you can control your listening.

Levels of Listening

- Active** Using appropriate body language and verbal responses, and understanding the meaning of what is being said.
- Passive** Hearing, but not really listening with full attention. May give some indications that you are listening, but are really drifting in and out of the conversation.
- Inactive** Not responsive to the speaker. Your mind is elsewhere and it is apparent by your inappropriate behaviors and lack of understanding of what is being said.

Why use Active Listening?

By listening at the active level, you overcome the barriers and interference. You focus on what your team is saying and can therefore channel their thinking into a successful team activity.

How Do I Do It?

Use the Step-Action Table (starting on the next page) to help you learn to be a good active listener.

Step-Action Table – Active Listening	
Step	Action
Control your mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let the other person continue to speak until you thoroughly know his/her position (or until s/he stops). • Keep an open mind and stay in control. Recognize and understand your own biases, and prevent them from judging what the speaker is saying. Often, when we hear something with which we disagree, we have an urge to declare and defend our position. This reduces the chance to understand the other’s point of view. • Eliminate self-talk. Good listeners have learned to control the internal discussions we tend to have with ourselves. Thinking about things not related to the conversation or thinking how you will “overcome” their position are not characteristics of effective listeners. • Listen for ideas and underlying feelings. Make sure before answering that you’ve taken in the other person’s point of view. Make a conscious effort to evaluate the logic and credibility of what you hear.
Body language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use good eye contact. Watch the speaker as well as listen. • Face the speaker and make sure you can hear. • Non-verbal behaviors are very important to listening. Nodding, smiling, sitting straight and gestures all contribute to how attentive someone thinks you are.

Stay involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay actively involved in the conversation. • Acknowledge—Say, “uh huh,” “I see what you mean,” “Good point.” • Clarify—Say, “I am not quite clear on what you just said.” • Confirm—Say, “If I understand correctly, the sound you hear only happens when the car is going at faster speeds?”
Take notes	It’s hard for anyone to remember everything and your team will appreciate that you want to get it right.
Don’t argue	Arguing is a barrier that makes it harder for both the speaker and the receiver to sort through and find the real message.
Prove it	The proof that you have listened well is that the speaker should be able to ask you to confirm that you understood. This may be a simple question like, “What color did I say I prefer?” to a request for a more detailed summary of what was said. Sometimes the speaker will be satisfied by the clarifying questions and confirming comments made by you.

Practice #2: Active Listening

About this Practice

- This is a “partial practice” that helps you build one of the skills that you will use when you perform the Module Objective in the Final Assessment.
- Practice active listening by asking a colleague you know to explain something to you.
- Ask a third person to use the Practice Worksheet and Performance Checklist to evaluate how well you demonstrated active listening skills.
- If you need to, choose a different person (and topic) and practice as many additional times as desired before moving on to the next Topic.

How To Complete the Practice

1. Feel free to refer back to the Topic items including the Step-Action Table as needed during this practice.
 2. Before you begin, review these items on the next few pages:
 - **How to Check Your Work** – this describes how you will know when you’ve completed the practice successfully and are ready to move on.
 - **Practice Worksheet** – this is where you will record your work.
 - **Performance Checklist** – this lists the criteria used to evaluate your work.
 3. When you are ready, perform the Practice and record your work on the Worksheet.
 4. When you have finished, return to **How to Check Your Work** to evaluate your performance and decide what to do next.
-

How to Check Your Work

- Review your results against the Performance Checklist to make sure you have produced all of the required evidence of performance, and that all evidence meets the criteria.
 - If your results did not meet all the criteria, you need more practice. Do one or more of the following:
 - Choose a different person and topic.
 - You may use the same evaluator, or you may choose a different person.
 - Consult with your Coach for additional information, resources, feedback and suggestions, and practice ideas.
 - Once your results meet all of the Performance Criteria, move on to the next Topic.
-

Practice Scenario

Recruit one volunteer to help you with this practice. Explain that his or her role is to help you practice active listening skills.

Ask your volunteer to think of a topic that he or she can discuss for 5 minutes or so. The topic does not need to be a school-related topic; it can be anything your volunteer is interested in.

Apply active listening skills while your volunteer talks for 5 minutes.

After the practice, share the criteria for active listening, and ask your volunteer for feedback about how well you met the criteria, including areas for improvement.

Discuss your performance with your Coach to determine whether you are ready to continue to the next Topic.

NOTE: There is no Practice Worksheet for this Practice.

Performance Checklist – Active Listening

Performance Evidence	Present?	Meets Criteria?
1. The listener demonstrated that his/her mind was concentrated on the speaker	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> The speaker was not interrupted <input type="checkbox"/> Statements defending a different position were not expressed <input type="checkbox"/> Self-talk was not exhibited <input type="checkbox"/> The speaker’s logic and credibility were taken into consideration
2. Good body language was shown	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Eye contact was maintained <input type="checkbox"/> The listener was facing the speaker <input type="checkbox"/> Non-verbal behaviors such as nodding, smiling and gestures were used
3. The listener stayed involved	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> The listener used phrases such as “uh huh,” “I see what you mean,” and “Good point.” <input type="checkbox"/> Clarifications were asked for <input type="checkbox"/> Confirmation comments were expressed
4. Notes were taken	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Notes were complete enough to capture the essence of the discussion.
5. Arguing was avoided	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> The listener refrained from making argumentative comments <input type="checkbox"/> The listener refrained from engaging in argumentative comments from the speaker (if any)

If the evidence of your performance meets all of the listed criteria, you are ready to move on to Handling Counter-productive Behavior. If not, continue studying, practicing and/or working with your Coach then try it again.

Topic #3: Counter-productive Behavior

Counter-productive Behavior

You've probably had plenty of practice in the classroom handling discipline. After all, it's a rare group of students who do not eventually "test" the teacher's authority or some other behavior that needs to be corrected.

But now you are leading a team of adults. They are intelligent, educated and experienced. They are also unique individuals with their own thoughts and feelings.

Some amount of conflict is normal and healthy and teams must be able to deal with it appropriately. It's OK to have disagreements, but when it prevents you and your team from being productive then it becomes a problem.

Your goal is to recognize counter-productive behavior during discussions and deal with it.

Different Types of Counter-productive Behavior

Here are some definitions of different types of counter-productive behavior: (adapted from Continuous Improvement, Teams and Tools, Qualteam, Inc, 1992)

Hogging	Talking too much.
Bogging	Forcing more discussion or detail on a topic already dealt with.
Fogging	Avoiding a topic. Being vague or defensive.
Frogging	Jumping from one subject to another.
Flogging	Attacking a person rather than an idea.
Blocking	Interrupting or preventing someone from contributing.

Symptoms and Impact of Counter-productive Behavior

Counter-productive behavior is often a symptom that:

- The discussion is not going to the person's liking, or
- There are other, underlying frustrations or tensions in the team.

Counter-productive behavior tends to get worse over time as the team member's level of impatience increases.

Sometimes, even you, the leader, exhibit counter-productive behavior. When that happens, you need to be accountable, take responsibility, and apologize for your actions. This is a good way to model the desired behavior you would like to see from your team.

How Do I Do It?

Use the Step-Action Table (starting on the next page) to help deal with counter-productive behavior.

Step-Action Table – Counter-productive Behavior	
Step	Action
Determine what kind of counter-productive behavior is being shown	In most cases, it will be pretty obvious what the person is trying to do. You may not readily determine why, but at least you can focus on the current behavior and address it.
Strategies to handle counter-productive behavior	<p>Hogging. As quickly as possible, redirect the discussion to someone else on the team. Ask them to give their opinion or to expand on what the person has been saying.</p> <p>Bogging. Ask the team if this point has been sufficiently covered. If everyone else agrees, suggest the team move on to the next point.</p> <p>Fogging. Ask for clarification—prompt for further details and examples.</p> <p>Frogging. Remind the team of what topic or point is being discussed. Summarize what has been said so far and what still needs to be discussed.</p> <p>Flogging. This needs to be stopped immediately. Remind the team that this is a discussion of ideas and that all team members have equal rights to contribute.</p> <p>Blocking. Stop the person who has interrupted and ask the person to complete the point that was being made.</p>

Practice #3: Counter-productive Behavior

About this Practice

This is a “partial practice” that helps you build one of the skills that you will use when you perform the Module Objective in the Final Assessment.

How To Complete the Practice

1. Feel free to refer back to the Topic items including the Step-Action Table as needed during this practice.
 2. Before you begin, review these items on the next few pages:
 - **How to Check Your Work** – this describes how you will know when you’ve completed the practice successfully and are ready to move on.
 - **Practice Worksheet** – this is where you will record your work.
 - **Performance Checklist** – this lists the criteria used to evaluate your work.
 3. When you are ready, perform the Practice and record your work on the Worksheet.
 4. When you have finished, return to **How to Check Your Work** to evaluate your performance and decide what to do next.
-

How to Check Your Work

- Review your results against the Performance Checklist to make sure you have produced all of the required evidence of performance, and that all evidence meets the criteria.

- If your results did not meet all the criteria, you need more practice. Do one or more of the following:
 - Choose a different situation.

 - Describe the behavior, determine the type of behavior, and describe how you would deal with it.

 - Consult with your Coach for additional information, resources, feedback and suggestions, and practice ideas.

- Once your results meet all of the Performance Criteria, move on to the next Topic, Leading a Discussion.

Practice Scenario

Complete the Practice Worksheet to reflect on counter-productive behaviors you have observed and encountered, and to premeditate how you would handle counter-productive behavior in a group discussion situation.

Now, think about the topic you intend to lead during the Final Practice. What are some ways that your participants might demonstrate counter-productive behavior? And how will you manage such occurrences?

	How might be displayed?	How will I manage?
Hogging		
Bogging		
Fogging		
Frogging		
Flogging		
Blocking		

Performance Checklist – Counter-productive Behavior

Performance Evidence	Present?	Meets Criteria?
<p>1. Two previous instances of counter-productive behavior were identified and analyzed</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> The situation was identified <input type="checkbox"/> The form of counter-productive behavior was identified <input type="checkbox"/> The leader’s actual handling of the behavior was described <input type="checkbox"/> The leader’s handling of the behavior was evaluated <input type="checkbox"/> Alternate ideas for handling the situation were offered</p>
<p>2. The leader premeditated how to handle possible future instances of counter-productive behavior</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> One possible situation for each type of counter-productive behavior is described <input type="checkbox"/> At least one method for handling each counter-productive behavior is described</p>

Topic #4: Leading a Discussion

Leading a Discussion

You can let discussions be a free for all. That could be fun, but may not be as productive as you, the excellent team leader, would like for your team. Instead, you will want to follow a process; one that is proven to help you and your team.

The Goal of Discussions

As was presented in the overview, the goal for discussions is to involve all team participants in a natural flow of conversation leading to a common understanding of the issue or problem at hand.

Discussions are an opportunities for your team to share ideas and feelings about topics that are important to the success of the team. Someone on the team may have important information that is unknown or overlooked.

Tip(s)

Many of the rules for decision-making apply here. (Refer to the GLISI module, Leading Teams through Group Decision-Making Processes, 2005).

1. Avoid linking ideas to personalities. Focus on the value of the ideas, not the person(s) who expressed them.
 2. Listen carefully and actively. Seek out the assumptions behind statements.
 3. Ask questions and probe frequently.
 4. Balance power! Don't let those with greater authority dominate the discussion.
 5. Spot counter-productive behavior and deal with it quickly.
 6. Make sure there is enough time and that everyone in the group knows any time limits.
-

How Do I Do It?

Use the Step-Action Table (starting on the next page) to work through the process.

Step-Action Table – Leading a Discussion	
Step	Action
Prepare in Advance	<p>Take time in advance to prepare an opening for the discussion. Define what is to be discussed and why. Write out one or more opening questions that will perk the interest of the team and get them excited.</p> <p>In most cases you will not need a formal agenda, but be prepared to create one if the topic is relatively large or multifaceted.</p> <p>Determine how much time the team can spend in this discussion.</p> <p>Arrange the room for maximum participation.</p>
Initiate the Discussion	<p>Make sure everyone is comfortable and has set aside the time you scheduled.</p> <p>Open the discussion by stating clearly what is going to be discussed and why. Ask an opening question designed to elicit excitement from the participants.</p> <p>You may also need to “restart” the discussion from time-to-time by re-stating the issue, rephrasing or introducing a different aspect of the topic.</p>
Clarify	<p>Use your best questioning, prompting, active listening, and responding techniques to help move the discussion along.</p> <p>Provide feedback. Rephrase what has been said. Offer agreement and disagreement. Make suggestions, without being patronizing or sarcastic.</p> <p>Identify when there is confusion. Sometimes it helps to ask for examples, pictures, diagrams, data or other information.</p> <p>Provide new ideas—push the group to think “outside the box.”</p>

<p>Manage the Team</p>	<p>You have several important tasks here:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure everyone participates. Ask questions to draw in those who are less assertive. Use the participant’s name to prompt a response. Ask them to respond to previous statements. • Control time, especially through controlling digressions. • Control counter-productive behavior of all sorts.
<p>Integrate and Summarize</p>	<p>From time to time, you need to summarize what has been said so far and check that the team agrees with your summary.</p> <p>Example: “I hear the group saying that we need to look at how many projects each person is working on.”</p> <p>Although the goal of a discussion is not necessarily to reach a decision or agreement, it is often important for you, the leader, to suggest common ideas and how the various points might fit together.</p> <p>You need to help merge disparate conversations and concepts and to show how they can all lead to the team’s success.</p>
<p>Close</p>	<p>Depending on the topic of the discussion, this may be a simple declaration that we, the team, have covered all the points. In other cases, it may require some form of action plan such as collecting more information. It may mean planning to meet again to discuss more aspects of the topic.</p> <p>Example: What needs to be done to implement this?</p> <p>Who’s going to do what, and by when?</p> <p>What do our next steps need to be?</p>

Final Practice

What is Final Practice?

In the previous topics, you practiced two of the “foundational skills” – subsets of skills related to the objective of this module. In the Final Practice, you will “put it all together” by practicing all the skills, just as you will use them when you complete your Final Assessment.

About this Practice

- Complete the Final Practice at least once, and as many additional times as necessary until you are confident you are prepared for the Final Assessment. Work with your Coach to get feedback about your performance and your readiness for Final Practice.
- If you feel ready to take the Final Assessment without doing the Final Practice first, talk to your Coach to make arrangements to do so.

How To Complete the Practice

1. Feel free to refer back to any of the previous content as needed during this practice.
 2. Before you begin, review these items on the next few pages:
 - **How to Check Your Work** – this describes how you will know when you’ve completed the practice successfully and are ready to move on to the Assessment
 - **Practice Topics** – this is a list of suggested or recommended topics for you to choose from. You need a topic about which you have some familiarity
 - **Practice Worksheet** – this is where you will record your work
 - **Performance Checklist** – this lists the criteria used to evaluate your work
 - **Feedback Form** – this lists the leadership- and people-skills you will be expected to demonstrate while leading a team through the Final Practice
 3. When you are ready, perform the Final Practice and record your work on the Worksheet.
 4. When you have finished, return to **How to Check Your Work** to evaluate your performance and decide what to do next.
-

How to Check Your Work

- Review your results against the Performance Checklist to make sure you have produced all of the required evidence of performance, and that all evidence meets the criteria.
- If your results did not meet all the criteria, you need more practice. Do one or more of the following:
 - Choose another topic from the list.
 - Assemble a group of peers to work through the new topic with you, and to help check your work and give you feedback on your performance.
 - Consult with your Coach for additional information, resources, feedback and suggestions, and practice ideas.
- Once your results meet all of the Performance Criteria, work with your Coach to schedule your Final Assessment.

Final Practice Scenario

Assemble a small group of volunteers (3-5) to assist you with this Final Practice.

Using the topic you selected in Practice #1, lead your team of volunteers through a group discussion.

Feel free to use your Practice Worksheets as a resource during this activity. And, fill in this Practice Worksheet during and after the discussion as a record of your work.

After the discussion, share the performance criteria with your volunteer team and solicit their feedback about your performance as discussion leader.

Discuss your performance with your Coach to determine when you are ready to move on to the Final Assessment.

Final Practice Worksheet – Leading a Discussion

What was the topic or issue selected? Why is it important? What was your opening question? Did you need an agenda? Did you prepare one? Attach it.

When did you schedule the meeting? How much time did you set aside? Who was invited?

What questions did you use to clarify the discussion? What prompts, rephrasing and feedback did you use?

What types of counter-productive behaviors were displayed during the meeting?

How did you deal with the counter-productive behavior?

Did everyone participate? Note the number of times each participant added to the discussion.

Participant name:

Number of comments:

1.

2.

3.

4.

How long did the discussion meeting last? How does that compare to what you had planned?

Note the summary and any integration items you presented.

What were the action items and future plans?

Final Practice Checklist – Leading a Discussion

Performance Evidence	Present?	Meets Criteria?
1. The session was planned	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> The topic was defined, explaining why it was important and an opening question was prepared <input type="checkbox"/> An agenda was prepared if necessary <input type="checkbox"/> The amount of time was determined <input type="checkbox"/> It was confirmed that the room is set up for maximum participation <input type="checkbox"/> The meeting was scheduled and the attendees were invited
2. The discussion was initiated	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Everyone was made comfortable <input type="checkbox"/> The topic was stated, including its importance and the opening question was stated
3. Points were clarified	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Open-ended questions were used that require the respondent to provide more than a one word response <input type="checkbox"/> Closed-end questions were used that could be answered with one word, such as yes or no <input type="checkbox"/> Participants were prompted for further information <input type="checkbox"/> Key ideas were rephrased <input type="checkbox"/> Feedback was provided <input type="checkbox"/> Help was provided to overcome confusion
4. The team was managed	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> It was assured that everyone participated <input type="checkbox"/> Time and digressions were controlled <input type="checkbox"/> The form of counter-productive behavior was identified <input type="checkbox"/> Measures were taken to control or end counter-productive behavior

5. Discussion points were integrated and summarized Yes No
- Comments regarding common ground was suggested
- At least one summary was offered
- Team agreement of the summary was obtained
6. The session was closed Yes No
- It was confirmed that all key points had been made
- A plan for action or future activity was made
7. The leader demonstrated that his/her mind was concentrated on the participants as they spoke Yes No
- The speaker was not interrupted
- Disagreeing statements were expressed appropriately
- Self-talk was not exhibited
- The speaker's logic and credibility were taken into consideration
8. Good body language was shown Yes No
- Eye contact was maintained
- The listener was facing the speaker
- Non-verbal behaviors such as nodding, smiling and gestures were used
9. The listener stayed involved Yes No
- The listener used phrases such as "uh huh," "I see what you mean," and "Good point."
- Clarifications were asked for
- Confirmation comments were expressed
10. Notes were taken Yes No
- Notes were complete enough to capture the essence of the discussion.
11. Arguing was avoided Yes No
- The leader refrained from making argumentative comments
- The leader refrained from engaging in argumentative comments from the participants (if any)

Final Assessment Feedback Form (page 1 of 2)

Performer's Name: _____

Coach's Name: _____

Date of Performance: _____

Performance Levels			
1	2	3	4
<p>Emerging Needs Study and Practice</p> <p><i>Few or none of the desired behaviors were adequately displayed.</i></p>	<p>Developing Needs Practice</p> <p><i>Some but not all of the desired behaviors were adequately displayed.</i></p>	<p>Proficient Meets criteria and expectations</p> <p><i>All desired behaviors were displayed and performed correctly.</i></p>	<p>Distinguished Could be Used as a Model to Teach Others</p>
		Eligible for Portfolio	

How effective was the performer in:	Rating				
1. Facilitating group interaction and managing participation?	1	2	3	4	NA
2. Assisting the group to meet the criteria for the task(s) at hand?	1	2	3	4	NA
3. Modeling appropriate leadership behaviors?	1	2	3	4	NA
4. Teaching others how to perform the task(s) at hand?	1	2	3	4	NA
5. Presenting information clearly, concisely, and professionally?	1	2	3	4	NA
6. Leveraging / integrating technology to increase effectiveness?	1	2	3	4	NA
7. Motivating / encouraging others to achieve success?	1	2	3	4	NA
8. Using group processes to achieve desired session results?	1	2	3	4	NA

Turn the page to provide additional written feedback (required).

Final Assessment Feedback Form (page 2 of 2)

Performer's Name: _____

Coach's Name: _____

Date of Performance: _____

If any element was rated less than 3, what needs to be done to score a 3? To score a 4?

What greatest strengths did the leader exhibit through this performance?

What could be done to improve this leader's performance? (Including any criteria on the Performance Checklist that were missed.) Be specific.

Were there any significant leadership issues that must be rectified (by additional practice and assessment) before entering this evidence into the Portfolio?

Recommended Reading & Resources

Conzemius, Anne & O'Neill, Jan. (2002). The Handbook for SMART School Teams.
Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.

Lynch, Robert & Werner, Thomas. (1992). Continuous Improvement: Teams & Tools. Littleton,
CO: Qualteam, Inc.

Scholtes, P., Joiner, B. & Streibel, B. (1996). The Team Handbook, Second Edition. Madison,
WI: Joiner Associates.

(2005). Facilitating Group Decision-Making. Atlanta, GA., GLIS

(2005). Using Quality Tools To Analyze & Display Data. Atlanta, GA., GLIS

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