



How to Become A Skillful “Teacher of Teachers”

By RBT Director of Professional Development DeNelle West

When I first entered the complex world of teaching, I had minimal preparation, no textbook, no standards, and a classroom full of eager children who thought I knew it all. I participated in professional development and learned from very skilled trainers how to navigate email, how to request leave, and how to provide support for secondary students who could not read. I was trained well.

As I transitioned to central office leadership roles and my responsibility was to train teachers how to implement workshop model, how to integrate technology, how to develop assessments, how to work as a team, I realized that being a good teacher wasn't enough to be a good trainer. What we've learned about **Skillful Teaching** is there are many ways to develop and navigate the nuances of truly feeling like an effective teacher. That awareness doesn't happen overnight, it happens over time with deliberate research, practice, and feedback. To help our teachers become skillful, the individuals training them must be dually skilled.

What Are the Areas of Performance for Skillful Facilitators?

There is certainly a range of skills (areas of performance) required to become a skillful facilitator. Depending on your professional responsibilities, different skills are required to effectively execute the demands of the job. I have outlined below a framework of those skills. Skillful facilitation happens in phases that allow participants to engage in a meaningful learning experience that allows needed shifts in knowledge, skills, and beliefs to happen to transfer to practice.

Skillful Facilitators **believe** in:

- Delivering training which recognizes and addresses race, **culture**, and social justice as critical issues that impact teaching and learning.
- Engaging in deliberate behaviors that garner **trust** from the audience.
- Being **vulnerable** to acknowledging errors, modeling reflection, and sharing personal stories as an educator
- Recognizing the unique needs of each educator and where he or she may be on the journey of **professional growth**.

Skillful Facilitators **plan** for each learning opportunity by:

- Studying **content** to appropriately shape experiences to lead to increasing participant knowledge and skills
- Identifying the degree of **change** in participant knowledge, skill, and behavior and defining specific learning objectives
- Utilizing the **standards for professional learning** and designing effective learning opportunities
- Reviewing the most current **research** on adult learning and the content to be delivered
- Understanding the shifting **roles to play** in effectively engaging an audience and guiding them through learning



Skillful Facilitators know how to **deliver** content through:

- Creating **norms** to gain commitment from participants on expectations for engagement
- Transitioning appropriately from trainer to **facilitator** to meet the needs of the audience
- **Building relationships** with participants by understanding **emotional intelligence** and moves that enlist support
- Applying appropriate **protocols** and **experientials** to deeply engage participants
- Navigating issues that emerge when cognitive dissonance shows up as **challenging behaviors**

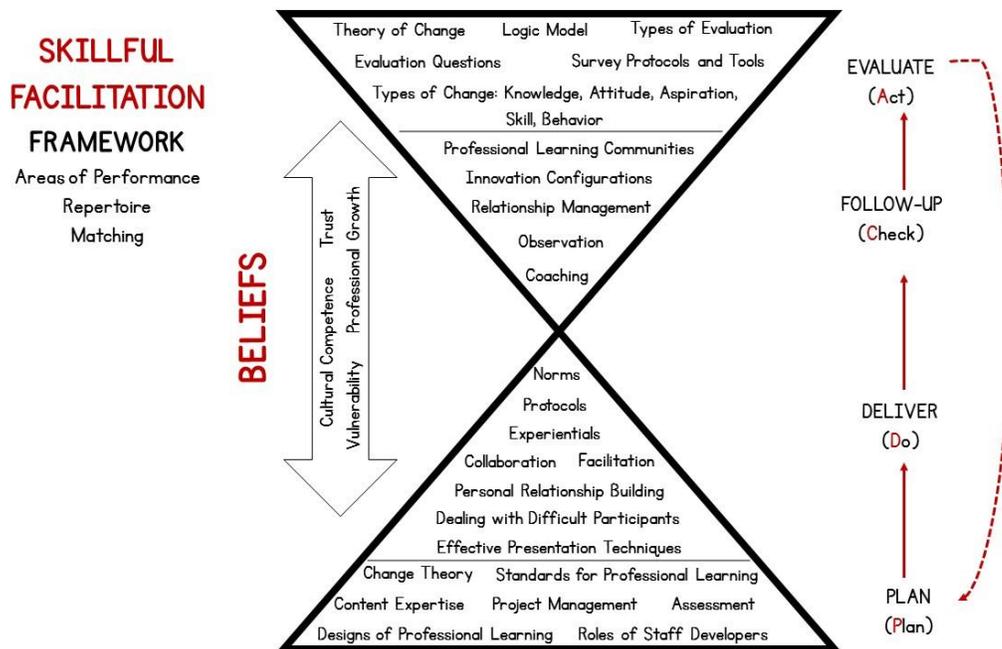
Skillful Facilitators understand how to support professional learning through implementing appropriate learning designs and **follow up** by:

- Applying **innovation configurations** to outline a path for growth
- Employing effective **coaching** practices to promote self-directed learning and reflection
- Leading teams or **professional learning communities** in applying what was learned through collaborative analysis and planning
- **Observing** practice to identify a starting point and next steps for participants

Skillful Facilitators utilize **evaluation** practices:

- **Measuring** the participants learning experience by collecting relevant data
- Identifying the **type of evaluation** to best match the outcomes of the learning experience
- Designing **evaluation questions** to guide and inform the data required

Although the range of skills is expansive, these skills are developed over time with careful attention to planning, practice, and reflection.



What Are The Implications For My Work?

School systems are consistently challenged with identifying ways to do more and achieve better results with less time and resources. In order to accomplish this, there must be an equally committed drive for improving practice. By dedicating resources towards professional learning, organizational goals can be accomplished. With the recent rumblings regarding budget cuts to education -- specifically targeted mechanisms to promote and support educator growth, it is a critical time to invest in developing internal capacity to lead instructional change. By investing in your administrators, central office leaders, coaches, coordinators, and teacher leaders who are tasked each day with leading and organizing learning for adults in districts across the country, you can achieve comfort in knowing every educator has a skilled facilitator ushering their growth as professional educators.

