

OPRFHS Steering Committee Critical Friend Role

As we move into the next phase of work, the Steering Committee will serve a new role as a “critical friend” to the task forces, helping enhance, deepen and advance the task forces work.

What is a critical friend?

A critical friend can be defined as “a trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers critiques of a person’s work as a friend. A critical friend takes the time to fully understand the context of the work presented and the outcomes that the person or group is working toward. The friend is an advocate for the success of that work.”

Source: Costa, A & Kallick, B, 1993, Through the Lens of a Critical Friend. Educational Leadership

What does a critical friend do?

A critical friend can support, encourage and stretch you to become more effective at defining the work of the task force by:

- Asking good questions
- Providing examples and perspectives from previous Steering Committee conversations
- Providing the perspective of key constituency groups – e.g. parents, students, community organizations
- Serving as a sounding board for your current ideas and providing feedback
- Highlighting contradictions and/or gaps in your current ideas and suggesting possible ways to complete ideas
- Looking at the “big picture” and making connections among the work of the task forces
- Identifying action steps that are more appropriate as implementation steps and making suggestions to be more strategic
- Making suggestions in a positive, constructive way

What are the limits of the critical friend role?

Critical friends do not:

- Assume a directive role
- Rush to judge
- Impose agendas of their own
- Undermine others by being negative and overly critical