Year 1 Inquiry Brief (AR)Template

Kelly Boersma, April 2025
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Resources for inquiry brief development:
- ❖ Seeing People Through by Nate Regier, PhD.
- ❖ Crucial Conversations by Kerry Patterson (Author), Joseph Grenny (Author), Ron McMillan (Author), Al Switzler (Author)

Purpose:

Effective leadership requires the ability to uphold high standards while also acknowledging and responding to the humanity of others. This balance is especially important during crucial conversations—those high-stakes moments that have the power to build or break trust. In my experience, I often feel uncomfortable entering these conversations, as reflected in my early-year journal entries. As a Thinker/Persister, I naturally seek structure, logic, and consistency, which conflicts with my internal Harmonizer, who desires peace, connection, and emotional safety. This inner conflict creates tension: I want a clear, effective formula for communication, yet I also want everyone involved to feel content and respected. These dual desires make initiating and navigating difficult conversations challenging. The purpose of this inquiry is to explore how I can engage in crucial conversations more confidently and effectively while honoring both my logical and emotional tendencies as a leader.

Question (Wondering):

If I prepare for a crucial conversation and I consider my base/phases, do I approach a crucial conversation differently?
　　 Sub-questions:
1. Do I also communicate effectively to others and at which level?
2. How often do I maintain crucial conversations versus ignoring or shying away from said conversation?

Method (What will I be doing?)

1. Pre-plan each crucial conversation meeting- thoughtful consideration
   a. Question #1 THINKER - How do I communicate clearly and concisely?
   b. Question #2 PERSISTER- How do I resist pushing my beliefs on others? Have I made a positive difference?
   c. Question #3 (When strengths become liabilities) HARMONIZER- Do I understand how the other side feels? How do I respect their thoughts and feelings?
2. Anecdotal notes after meetings and rating scales for feelings afterwards
3. Reflection on meetings regarding my actions and the way I handled topics

needing to be addressed

Data Collection:
1. Google Form- Percent of meetings and crucial conversations that upon reflection, were successful.
2. 80% satisfaction rates? After 15 meetings.
3. Percent of meetings that required a crucial conversation with a + outcome/result

The data collected through a Google Form and personal reflection highlights the effectiveness of crucial conversations and the impact of intentional preparation. Out of 15 total meetings, 8 involved crucial conversations, with an overall satisfaction rate of 80%. Of the meetings that required a crucial conversation, 50% resulted in a clearly positive outcome. Notably, the first meeting was unsuccessful, leaving unresolved conflict and a sense of frustration, likely due to a lack of awareness around my base and phase behaviors. However, in 7 out of 8 crucial conversations, I engaged in intentional preparation by using reflective questions aligned with my Thinker, Persister, and Harmonizer traits. These questions helped guide my communication: ensuring clarity (Thinker), checking my beliefs and impact (Persister), and considering emotional perspectives (Harmonizer). This pattern suggests that thoughtful preparation rooted in self-awareness significantly increases the chances of a successful and productive dialogue.

Calendar (timeline):

October 2024 - February 2025

Data Analysis:

Engaging in this action research project revealed a transformative journey in my leadership practice, particularly around communication and interpersonal awareness. Initially, I approached crucial conversations with discomfort, often rooted in the internal conflict between my Harmonizer base and the expectations of my Thinker and Persister phases. This emotional dissonance made initiating direct conversations feel uneasy and sometimes avoidant.

Through intentional preparation—pre-meeting reflections grounded in PCM (Process Communication Model) and guided by strategies from *Crucial Conversations* by Patterson et al.—I began to shift. Of the 15 meetings I conducted over the cycle, 8 required direct, high-stakes conversations. The data shows a clear progression: while the first two conversations were only partially successful, the remaining six resulted in resolution and mutual understanding. This improvement demonstrates the power of preparation, emotional regulation, and empathy—central tenets also supported by Nate Regier's *Seeing People Through*, which helped me frame conflict not as confrontation but as an opportunity for deeper connection.

What I've learned about my school is that culture shifts when leaders model vulnerability, accountability, and clarity. Teachers responded to the openness with increased trust—they began bringing issues forward, seeking shared resolution rather than avoiding or burying

conflict. This underscores that communication is not merely about delivery, but about relationship—trust built through consistency and emotional intelligence.

Moving forward, I intend to formalize my preparation process for crucial conversations using the PCM lens. Considering my base and phases in advance has allowed me to de-personalize the issue while maintaining empathy—what I now see as a crucial leadership skill. This will become a regular part of how I prepare for one-on-one and team-based interactions.

One new wondering I have is: *How can we build PCM and Crucial Conversation strategies into team dynamics so that it's not just a leadership tool, but a shared staff culture?* I am curious how teams might benefit from shared language and self-awareness when navigating difficult conversations, particularly in moments of stress or decision-making tension.

Bibliography
Regier, Nate, PhD. (2020) *Seeing People Through: Unleash Your Potential With the Process COmmunication Model.* Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers

Dr. Taibi Kahler (1982). *The Process Communication Model.* Kahler Communications. Retrieved from https://processcommunicationmodel.com/

Patterson, Kerry et al. (2012) *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill

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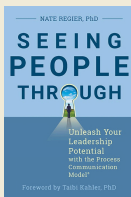
Tackling Crucial Conversations... When your PCM Base and Phases Conflict

welcome

Can a THINKER base with a PERSISTER phase care deeply about others AND create a culture of positive communication... even in tough conversations???

04.09.2025

TACKLING CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS

INTRO

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Kelly Boersma

Mother of 3
In education for 34 years- Illinois and Indiana
Forever a teacher
Currently in administration
8 years Principal
4 years Asst. Principal

Kelly Boersma
Principal
Frank H. Hammond Elementary School

Crucial conversations are the pivotal change-agent for effective leaders. Through the PCM Model I've learned about how I think, respond, and see others. I now look at interactions through a different lens. When we know better, we should do better.

We've all had to conduct crucial conversations, and I now wonder if I can improve the quality and outcome of those conversations.

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background

... Leading to My Inquiry

My mission is to create a culture where teachers are free to teach, talk and share ideas to maximize student learning.

Your Personality Structure

IMAGINER	27%
Calm, Reflective, Imaginative	
REBEL	44%
Spontaneous, Creative, Playful	
PROMOTER	61%
Adaptable, Persuasive, Charming	
HARMONIZER	64%
Compassionate, Sensitive, Warm	
PERSISTER	82% Phase
Dedicated, Observant, Conscientious	
THINKER	Base 100%
Logical, Responsible, Organized	

context

THINKER BASE- Persister Phase- Harmonizer and Promoter high

the issue

My base data shows me feeling uneasy relating to others in the midst of tough conversations when your operating systems are not the same.

leading to action research

75 personalities in one building lead to differences in how we all communicate most effectively.

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purpose ... of My Inquiry

1
understand self
Know your own self! Including strengths and opportunities to grow- PCM Model

2
better meetings
Maximize the impact of crucial conversations understanding all sides coming together

3
positive culture
Create culture where all people feel comfortable, confident in their strengths and cooperative towards supporting each other

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wondering

If I prepare for a crucial conversation and I consider my phases, do I approach a crucial conversation differently?

Seeing People Through
Chapters 4-6

_____

Dr. Nate Regier, PhD.

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My Actions

read

Crucial Conversations by Kerry Patterson et al

Seeing People Through by Dr. Nate Regier

PCM

Leadership Profile
Thinker Base
Persister Phase
Harmonizer/Promoter strong

journa

4 months
15 meetings with 6 different people
8 crucial conversations-
5 pre-thought questions based on my PCM
Anecdotal notes based on pre-thinking

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data collection

Thinker... create a FORM!

Persister... use a SPREADSHEET for more explanation!

Harmonizer... share the SMILEYS or STARS!

https://forms.gle/iAkdrx5jB9rYRtjU9

Tackling Crucial Conversations...
When your PCM Base and Phases Conflict

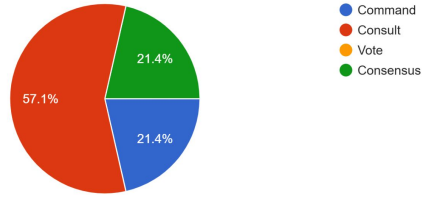IPLI Action Research Project -April 2025 - KELLY BOERSMA

DATE *
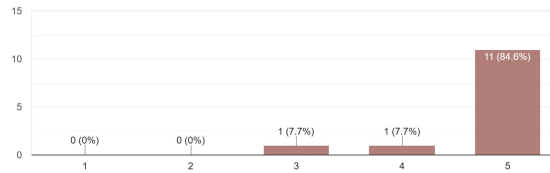Month, day, year

PARTICIPANTS IN CONVERSATION *
ASST PRINCIPAL

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1gp50Hv1K-POxR13Qy9jpEqfzgHm4-u38eb7mdqV3u6Y/edit?usp=sharing

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Results from Google Form

my

Decide How to Decide   p.187CC
14 responses

- Command
- Consult
- Vote
- Consensus

57.1%
21.4%
21.4%

PERSISTER
13 responses

1 (7.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (15.4%)	10 (76.9%)
1	2	3	4	5

10.0
7.5
5.0
2.5
0.0

THINKER
13 responses

0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (7.7%)	1 (7.7%)	11 (84.6%)
1	2	3	4	5

15
10
5
0
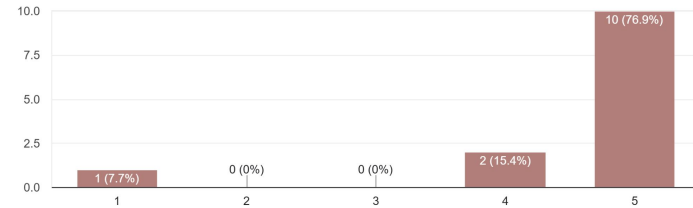
HARMONIZER
13 responses

2 (15.4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (7.7%)	10 (76.9%)
1	2	3	4	5

10.0
7.5
5.0
2.5
0.0

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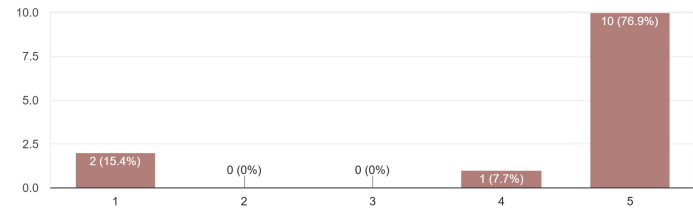
my

Results from Google Form

LISTENING... START WITH HEART (p162 CC)
11 responses

- ● ASK
- ● MIRROR
- ● PARAPHRASE
- ● PRIME

36.4%
18.2%
18.2%
27.3%
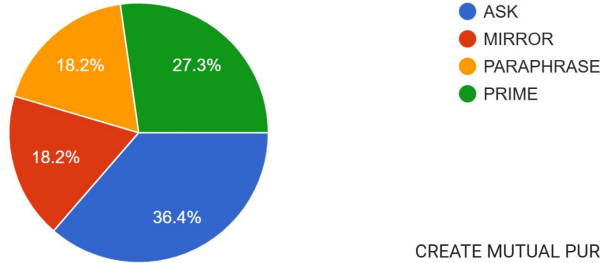
CREATE MUTUAL PURPOSE MOVING FORWARD
11 responses

Commit to seek understanding	6 (54.5%)
Recognize the problem	8 (72.7%)
Invent mutual purpose	6 (54.5%)
Brainstorm new strategies	6 (54.5%)

0　2　4　6　8

my
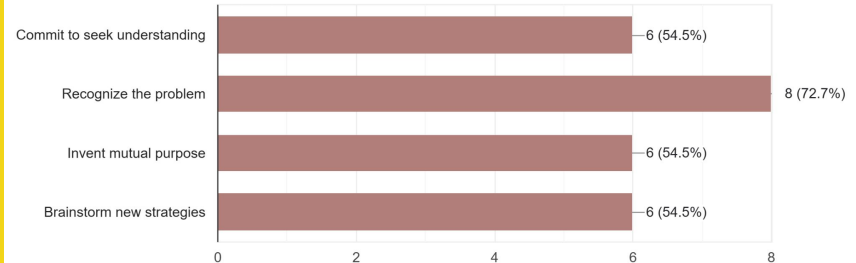
1 My THINKER base overshadows my desire to harmonize and directly affects conversations.

2 If I plan intentionally for crucial conversations, the outcomes are far more positive for everyone.

3 I can appreciate other personality types and their ways of thinking and learn to appreciate my own too!

TACKLING CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS INTRO

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Next...   **Where I Am Headed**

Can a THINKER base with a PERSISTER phase care deeply about others AND create a culture of positive communication... even in the tough conversations??? ==YES!==

What have I learned about my school and my team? Implications?
- Growth was evident over time—I felt *more confident and composed*.
- Supported by Nate Regier's *Seeing People Through*: conflict can deepen connection when approached with authenticity.

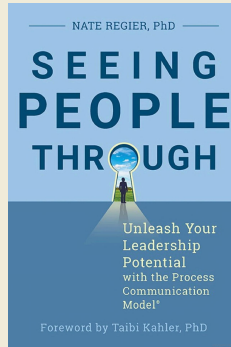What changes have I made in your practice? New wonderings?
- Key turning point: learning to **leave emotion out of the issue** but keep **empathy in the conversation**.
- Positive shift: staff began bringing concerns to me—indicating increased **trust and openness**.

Tackling Crucial Conversations…
When your PCM Base and Phases Conflict

bibliography

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