

MADISON/DANE COUNTY COURAGE TO TEACH EXCERPT FROM 2002-2004 RESULTS REPORT FOR CUNA MUTUAL GROUP FOUNDATION

PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The following major outcomes for educators were anticipated:

1. Increased time spent in focused reflection of their teaching practice;
2. Improved connections with students and classroom practices;
3. Strengthened collegial relationships at their school sites;
4. Renewed commitment to their educational practice.

Survey results as well as reflective commentary from teachers indicate steady and impressive improvement in all objectives and are outlined below. Quantitative data are summarized first; selected comments from teachers that most eloquently illustrate the impact of Courage to Teach on their work lives are included under each objective.

1. Increased time spent in focused reflection of teaching practice.

Participants overwhelmingly reported that the series was valuable in "fostering reflective habits in your educational practice" (9.66 average on a scale of 1-10).

The average amount of time reported for individual reflection increased by nearly 50%.

The average amount of time reported for reflection with colleagues increased by 25%.

Average satisfaction with the amount of time spent increased by 33% from "I don't spend nearly enough time" at the beginning of the series to "I spend almost enough" at the end.

Participant Comments:

- "Now, I know I need and must take time to reflect, that the answers I seek are from above and from within myself. I know that I have a set of colleagues who understand the inside reflective work it takes to be a better, stronger, more creative teacher and professional."
- "CTT has given me space to wonder, explore, question, dream, cry laugh, love—and to do it fully, intentionally, and authentically."
- "Teachers, schools, society can really benefit from CTT. We need programs like this. We need reflection. It could bring some sanity to this crazy world. We need more humanism in education, not more testing. The

development of the hearts of teaches will develop precious hearts and minds of students.

2. Improved connections with students and classroom practice.

Participants overwhelmingly reported “tangible benefits to their students” (9.26 on a 1-10 scale) and “improved interactions with students and classroom practice” (9.0 on a 1-10 scale).

They reported steady improvement on several dimensions of student interaction and classroom practice (i.e., establishing personal connections with students, creating a sense of respect, building community, encouraging creativity and self expression). They initially saw themselves as “moderately” effective on these dimensions and reported feeling “very” effective by the end of the series.

Participant Comments:

- “Being grounded again in what really matters to me is all about the kids—they see a healthy, happy, loving educator who wants to be with them. I am so open to what they have to teach me, too. I think there's reciprocity there now that didn't really exist before.”
- “My students were much more listened to. Our sense of community and belonging was very strong. They got to learn life lessons from the real me. It may have been my most successful teaching year ever.
- I think CTT has allowed students to see my compassion and patience more clearly and more personally. I have been able to open up to them more and show them the real me.”
- “The openness, honesty and integrity with which my ideas, musings and struggles are dealt with at CTT has made a great difference with the students. I find myself listening more deeply and responding more genuinely to the concerns. This sense of an open, caring community is apparent in the respectful discussions and sincere questions that are asked during my presentations.”
- The CTT experience has deeply strengthened my faith in my students—my refusal to ‘give up on’ or write anyone off. Perhaps paradoxically, I am also pulling back a bit in terms of what I am willing to do for students. I let them fall and bruise now, know they have the resilience to rise again. I talk their falls through with them—no longer feel sorry for them. I have patience and trust (much of the time) that they are strong enough to overcome even huge obstacles. I find myself slipping now and then into the

old imbalance: doing for rather than guiding a kid to do on his own. But my reflectivity allows me to catch myself, to adjust. My learning process continues—has momentum. What a gift!”

- In making a difference for students, part of my students are college students. CTT has allowed me more space to listen to them, not try to “fix” their concerns but reflect back to them their ideas and believe answers to teaching dilemmas will come from within the heart. In working with elementary students, I listen better to them in the behavior management role I have and seem to get better responses to the questioning.”
- “My students see a happier, more resilient person. I am able to be present for them in ways that better meet their needs. I can really be about my students because nothing is interfering....If I’m the “messenger” (so to speak) the message is finally being delivered. It’s all about the way the “message is delivered and I’m in a space that I believe is genuinely effective in reaching students—creating positive change and being a model of “adulthood” that makes growing up seem a lot less ominous. Perhaps I’m aware that ‘smart’ isn’t something you are. It’s something you become.”

3. Strengthened collegial relationships at school sites.

Participants overwhelmingly reported improvement of collegial relations and/or leadership skills as a result of the series (9.0 on a scale of 1-10).

At the beginning of the series, most indicated that they had “some good collegial relations and I’d like more of them (average of 2.05 on a 1-4 scale).” By the end, most said they were “comfortable with the number and quality of collegial relationships (3.13). They noted an increase in seeking professional support from colleagues at work, doing so “frequently” by the end of the series.

They also reported:

- **Growing confidence in their listening, communication, and problem solving skills with colleagues, initially feeling “somewhat” to “generally” confident (average of 3.64 on a 1-5 scale). By the end of the series, participants reported feeling “generally” to “very” confident (average of 4.40) in these abilities.**
- **Increased expression of their opinions about educational issues in school meetings. At the beginning, most said they did so only “occasionally” (average of 2.33 on a 1-5 scale), compared to doing so “frequently”-“usually” (average of 3.53).**

- Increased time spent in “leadership responsibilities in [your] school, district, or professional organizations.” They initially spent an average of 1-2 hours per week (2.45 on a 1-5 scale), compared to an average of 6-8 hours per week (3.67) at the end of the series.

Participant Comments:

- “Since the CTT experience, I am a hunter of treasure in colleagues. Instead of focusing on what people lack, (skills, attitudes, etc.), I look carefully at what their gifts are, and how those gifts could be brought into the school community. I talk with them about their gifts. I think this has turned me into a sort of quiet, underground leader who nurtures from beneath. There have been tangible results: a redefinition of roles for some colleagues, a change in room or classes taught, a new project or teaching team created...and all of this without me being the initiator—merely the listener and gentle reflective mirror. I have become a healer in a school community that has been suffering from pain and bitterness—and isolation. These are all gifts from my CTT experience.”
- [I am now] “Asking questions of others with desire to open their potential and wisdom versus being the one with the answers. CTT has assisted me in creating a balance between coach/consultant/facilitator. I’ve received feedback from teachers and teams with whom I work that I have brought a sense of renewal, playfulness and unlocked their confidence and depth in the teaching roles they play. Silence has been a great gift that I often did not take—even though it’s so freely given, before CTT. Now, it’s part of my practice with work groups and teams—and has created space for more voices, better ideas and deeper understanding to emerge from educators who are collaborating.”
- “Participating in CTT has reconfirmed, reinvigorated my passion for education, to lifelong learning. I am a teacher and a student of life, and will always be. In this same time period, I have become active in working to remove revenue caps. My goal is to become a leader in school finance reform. I was also elected to the MTI bargaining committee.”

5. Renewed commitment to their educational practice

This dedicated group of educators noted an increased level of personal satisfaction with their experiences as an educator. Most reported being “generally satisfied” at the beginning of the series (average of 3.81 on a 1-5 scale) and “very satisfied” (average of 4.53) at the end.

- While most of them had “actively and seriously consider[ed] quitting” (average 2.29 on a 1-5 scale) at the beginning, they reported doing so only “rarely” (average of 1.53) at the end.
- The reported “likelihood that you will be an educator five years from now” went from 4.00 (76-90%) to 4.40 (>90%).

Participant comments:

- “CTT has affected my life as a major factor in sustaining me in the profession. I now see possibilities and adventures in the profession, where before I felt despair and impossibilities. I now see how I can ask for what I need in order to be the most effective educator possible. CTT has created a major shift in my thinking about balance, nurturing self and what it takes to be the best teacher I can possibly be.”
- “It’s very difficult to express how much CTT has meant to me. When I came here, I was ready to quit teaching. Almost all of the joy had gone out of it. Now my teaching is joyful, authentic, fun and the kids learn so much!...The dread I used to feel as each summer day slipped past is gone. Teaching feels like a normal, joyful part of my life!”
- “CTT is a realistic way of encouraging teachers to stay in the profession. It helps educators discover or re-discover all the reasons they went into the profession. With the increasing lack of respect (either real or perceived) toward teachers, many of our best are leaving the profession. Funding this type of endeavor is essential to stopping this trend.”