

Snapshot: Examples of Research Fellowship Process in Action

Example #1: Semi-Public Roundtable, New York City Fellowship, April 25, 2014: Bowne Research Fellows share their research with an invited public as they refine their questions and methodologies.

Program Facilitator from the New York City Writing Project: *New York City chapter of the National Afterschool Matters Fellowship offers a unique experience in learning. Experienced OST [out-of-school-time] practitioners participate in a year-long reflective learning process, during which they assess, study, and write about their work in order to continually improve their programs. This unique model recognizes the expertise of the field.*

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Co-Facilitator from the OST field: *The purpose of the meeting today is -- at the mid-point of our process -- to share where we are and to get feedback from our friends. [During this Roundtable, two participant presenters at each table will be sharing their inquiry into a question they have defined around their work as practitioners in the OST field]. We have a protocol we will be following. . . This is not a finished product, but we want your ideas at this midpoint to continue this inquiry.*

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Participant Presentation to a small group: *My inquiry question: 'Is professional development critical to increasing staff motivation?'*

I identified many themes throughout the interview process: Staff members feeling there are no benefits; Activity Specialist leaving because they've outgrown the job and there is no room for professional growth; Staff feeling their job is not respected by school personnel.

Finding these common issues, how does this limit the staff from providing the best afterschool for youth?

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Question from Roundtable participant: *What professional development do you currently offer?*

Presenter: *I took the Site Director position in January. The existing structure included 3-hour monthly meetings to discuss what is occurring in the program. I thought it was a waste of time with a lot of redundancy. So I generated activities with staff who had different strengths and weaknesses and paired them up. Topics like time management, professionalism, teamwork, understanding change, generating lesson plans.*

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The first [meeting I conducted as a professional development session] was in January. I did it on leadership because we are all leading, we are leading the children. I came up with a Power Point presentation on what leadership should look like in an afterschool. After that, everyone had an hour to present their own PD. ...

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Anne Lawrence: *It sounds like you were giving them opportunities to present and learn from each other.*

Presenter: *I found from the interviews that people felt they would learn best from someone here who knew the situation and the children. I had thought of bringing in someone from outside, but they said not outside. We know our staff. They were training each other.*

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Table Facilitator: *Do your staff have any opportunity to interact with school personnel?*

Presenter: *No, I just met with the principal before break... The problem is that they see us as an army intruding. Teachers have to vacate their classrooms for us. There is a boundary/wall that needs to be broken down.*

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Table Facilitator: *This is a large issue in the work as a whole. I wonder if there isn't a way to begin to reach into that school. Make the outreach about the children, to try to identify your staff as stakeholders as are the teachers. In talking about where students are and trying to begin that professional conversation.*

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Presenter: *I was expressing with [Fellowship Facilitator] that I had too much to share. She told me to share what I was having the most difficulty with, because you're going to get such a lot of good feedback.*

Example #2: Philadelphia Round Table, November 16, 2011

During welcoming speeches, several individuals – including Ellen Gannett from NIOST (National Institute on Out-Of-School Time), Lena Townsend from the Robert Bowne Foundation, and Vanessa Brown from Philadelphia Writing Project – emphasized the goal of getting practitioner voices into the *Afterschool Matters* journal and encouraged Fellows to write up and submit their research.

Facilitators explained the roundtable format as not so much a reporting out, but a continuation of the inquiry discussion. The roundtable process is designed to elicit responses so Fellows can learn what others are doing, take in what they find relevant and interesting for their own work, and then incorporate ideas and perspective into their own work.

Snippets from the Round Table Presentation

The Presenter, who works at the After School Activities Partnerships (ASAP) in Philadelphia, has been investigating the quality of training and support provided by staff to chess club volunteers. The mission of the ASAP organization, he explained, focuses on providing enriching afterschool activities through the recruitment of volunteers with particular interests or skills and then placing them in existing afterschool programs with matching foci. He also discussed his previous and current roles within ASAP.

Presenter: *Chess club leaders are recruited from the community, and include teachers, OST and library staff, OST professionals, volunteers, and semi-professionals. The program is increasing the number of events (e.g., tournaments) -- and the way we "ran our ship" didn't accommodate the new situation. The questions were there, but I hadn't spent time thinking about them. The Fellowship gave me support and time to think about this.*

I first wanted to find out who our volunteers were – their chess skill, their experience with teaching and with youth, what they wanted in terms of training and support. I did interviews, site visits, observations at trainings and events, feedback form, survey of leaders.

The Presenter then shared data results from the completed surveys of 338 chess club leaders.

The volunteers have very different skill sets and needs. One may be an experienced teacher with little chess skills, and another may be a volunteer skilled at chess but with no classroom experience.

The answers to what they wanted were surprising. What club leaders wanted most was chess skills (e.g., how to teach an endgame, etc.) and materials to take with them. They did not request classroom management information or information about tournaments, for example.

This has led to a new training plan – The first session continued to be required, but we then offered a series of trainings for club leaders in defined cohorts, with materials as incentive. You come to this session and you get the materials.

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They wanted three types of support – material support, professional support, appreciation. There was the most demand for material support (receiving a weekly e-mail with suggested exercises, visits, etc.), so we have a lot of new things to try this year. I did all this inquiry work from my old position, and I have been promoted this year. I'm now overseeing the person in my old role. I want to open up a space for him to make changes as well as to pass on what I've learned. This year will be a year of implementation. I'm seeing the difficulties putting things into practice. My new question is how to keep the inquiry stance going, building, proceeding.