**Skillful Discussion**

Senge, P., Kleiner, A., Roberts, C., Ross, R., and Smith, B. (1994). The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook:

Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization. Pp. 385-391. New York, NY: Currency and

Doubleday.

Skillful Discussion Guidelines:

* Pay attention to intentions
  + What do I want from this conversation?
  + Am I willing to be influenced?
* Balance advocacy with inquiry
  + What led you to that view?
  + What do you mean by that view?
* Build shared meaning
  + When we use the term \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, what are we really saying?
* Use self-awareness as a resource
  + What am I thinking?
  + What am I feeling?
  + What do I want at this moment?
* Explore impasses
  + What do we agree on?
  + What do we disagree on?
  + Consider each person’s perspective
  + What do we need to do to move forward?
  + Consider facts, methods, goals, values

How to Listen

* Stop talking – to others and yourself
* Imagine the other person’s point of view, stand in their shoes
* Look, act, and be interested
* Observe non-verbal behavior to glean meanings beyond what is being said
* Don’t interrupt
* Listen between the lines for implicit and explicit meanings – look for omissions
* Speak only affirmatively when listening, no judgments
* Use active listening by rephrasing what you heard to check for understanding
* Stop talking!

Process for Skillful Discussion at Meetings

* Create a safe space where every one agrees to treat each other as colleagues, with curiosity, respect of and support for each other’s opinions and feelings
* Make openness and trust a rule rather then the exception – speak freely without fear of criticism, ridicule or retribution – keep remarks in the room
* Encourage and reward new perspectives
* Plan the agenda, time, and content of the meeting to allow for concentrated deliberation – every participant talks about the same subject – use an agenda developed and agreed upon in advance – need at least 2 hours for a creative discussion to take place with no obstacles or interruptions