

CRITICAL FRIENDS GROUP: THE EFFECTS IN AN ELEMENTARY  
SCHOOL SETTING

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the effects of a Critical Friends Group on classroom practices and collaboration when implemented within an elementary school setting. Nine certified elementary school teachers in a southeastern North Carolina elementary school were taught the Critical Friends Group process in order to participate in focused observations of fellow group members and discussed findings with peers. Participants were led by a coach every two weeks to discuss a topic in education and other related findings. Video taped meetings, written reflection questions, and raw data from teacher observations were collected, and analyzed, and examined for themes relevant to the collaboration process. Major themes were support and trust, creating professional growth through the Critical Friends Group, elaborate foci of observations, and relevant strategies shared to improve the teaching practice. Data analysis revealed that when teachers voluntarily collaborate on focused areas of observation, production level of strategies to implement within the classroom increased. Data also revealed that collaboration amongst peers of different grade levels created trust that allowed teachers to discuss issues in a more comfortable level. Recommendations for implementing a Critical Friends Group within an elementary school are provided.

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## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to the students that I have taught and my colleagues within the education field. My students and colleagues have provided me with valuable insight and educated me on lessons in life. I will continue to reflect upon these past experiences and the future to grow and continue to develop throughout my professional career.