Empowering Educators with Effective Facilitation Skills and Structures for PLCs

Participant Workbook

Learning Forward 2018 Annual Conference
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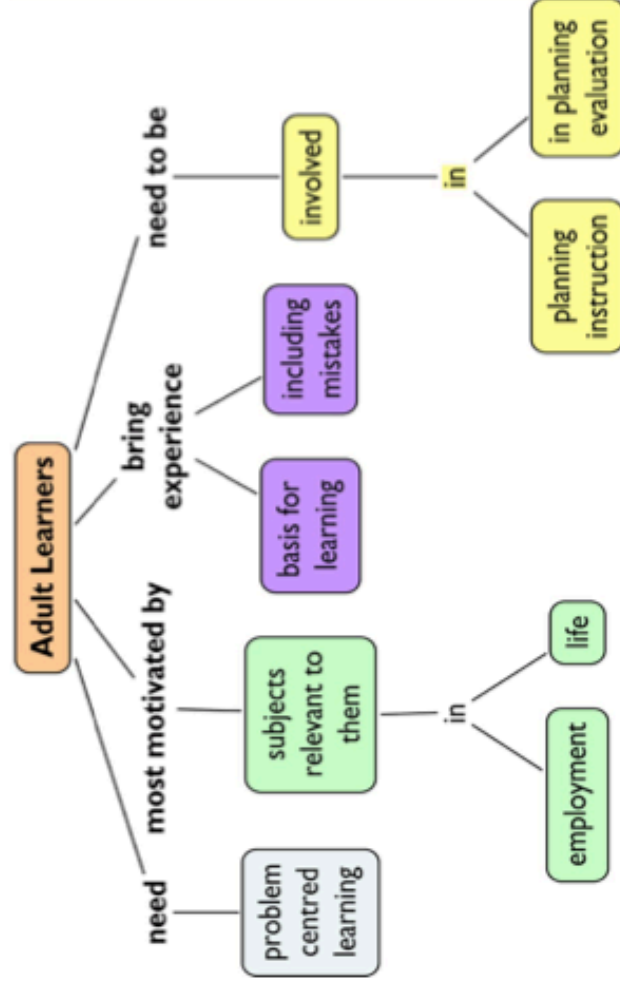9:30-11:30am

Presenters:
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Professional Development Standards and Support
Browardschools.com/pdss

Adult Learning Principles

Broward County Public Schools

1. Adults are autonomous and self directed.
2. Adults bring knowledge and experience to each learning activity.
3. Adults need learning to be relevant and practical.
4. Adults are goal-oriented.
5. Adults are problem-oriented and want to apply what they've learned.
6. Adults like to feel respected.

Adult Learners

- need → problem centred learning
- most motivated by → subjects relevant to them → in → life / employment
- bring experience → basis for learning / including mistakes
- need to be → involved → in → planning instruction / in planning evaluation

A Big Picture Look at Professional Learning Communities

What is a PLC?

"A Professional Learning Community (PLC) is educators committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve. PLCs operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous, job-embedded learning for educators."

—adapted from *Learning by Doing*

3 Big Ideas of a PLC

Focus on Learning
The fundamental purpose of the school is to ensure high levels of learning for all students. This focus on learning translates into four critical questions that drive the daily work of the school. In PLCs, educators demonstrate their commitment to helping all students learn by working collaboratively to address the following critical questions:

1) What do we want students to learn? What should each student know and be able to do as a result of each unit, grade level, and/or course?
2) How will we know if they have learned? Are we monitoring each student's learning on a timely basis?
3) What will we do if they don't learn? What systematic process is in place to provide additional time and support for students who are experiencing difficulty?
4) What will we do if they already know it?

Build a COLLABORATIVE CULTURE
- No school can help all students achieve at high levels if teachers work in isolation.
- Schools improve when teachers are given the time and support to work together to clarify essential student learning, develop common assessments for learning, analyze evidence of student learning, and use that evidence to learn from one another.

Focus on Results
- PLCs measure their effectiveness on the basis of results rather than intentions.
- All programs, policies, and practices are continually assessed on the basis of their impact on student learning.
- All staff members receive relevant and timely information on their effectiveness in achieving intended results.

6 Essential Characteristics of a PLC

Shared mission, vision, values, goals
Educators in a PLC benefit from clarity regarding their shared purpose, a common understanding of the school they are trying to create, collective communities to help move the school in the desired direction, and specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and time-bound (SMART) goals to mark their progress.

Collaborative teams focused on learning
In a PLC, educators work together interdependently in collaborative teams to achieve common goals for which they are mutually accountable. The structure of the school is aligned to ensure teams are provided the time and support essential to adult learning.

"Collaboration is a systematic process in which we work together, interdependently, to analyze and impact professional practice in order to improve our individual and collective results."

—adapted from *Learning by Doing*

Collective inquiry
Teams in a PLC relentlessly question the status quo, seek new methods of teaching and learning, test the methods, and then reflect on the results. Building shared knowledge of both current reality and best practice is an essential part of each team's decision-making process.

Action orientation and experimentation
Members of a PLC constantly turn their learning and insights into action. They recognize the importance of engagement and experience in learning and in testing new ideas. They learn by doing.

Commitment to Continuous improvement
Not content with the status quo, members of a PLC constantly seek better ways to achieve mutual goals and accomplish their fundamental purpose of learning for all.
All teams engage in an ongoing cycle of:
• Gathering evidence of current levels of student learning
• Developing strategies and ideas to build on strengths and address weaknesses in that learning
• Implementing the strategies and ideas
• Analyzing the impact of the changes to discover what was effective and what was not
• Applying the new knowledge in the next cycle of continuous improvement

Results orientation
Educators in a PLC assess their efforts on the basis of tangible results. They are hungry for evidence of student learning and use that evidence to inform and improve their practice.

The success of the PLC concept depends not on the merits of the concept itself, but on the most important element in the improvement of any school—the commitment and persistence of the educators within it.

—Richard DuFour

Adapted from the work of Richard DuFour, Rebecca DuFour, and Robert Eaker.

7 Norms of Collaboration

1. Promoting a spirit of inquiry

"I would like to know more about your idea/ position."   "Tell me more about…"
(Seek first to understand before advocating for your own idea.)

2. Pausing . . .

"I am waiting a minute to allow time to think first."
(Pausing before responding and/or asking a question allows for think time for yourself and others.)

3. Paraphrasing

"So…" "As you are…" "You're thinking…" "You're wondering…" "The intention seems to be…"
(Efficient paraphrases help all members hear and understand the ideas being presented.)

4. Probing for specificity

"Please say more…"   "I'm curious about…"   "I'd like to hear more about…"
"Then, you are saying…"   "Do you mean everyone?"   "Specifically what…"
(Asking questions to increase clarity and understanding as well as the precision of the group's thinking.)

5. Putting ideas on the table

Label the intention of your comments: "Here is one idea…" "One thought I have is…" "Here is a possible approach…" "Here is one idea…" "Another consideration might be…"

6. Paying attention to self & others

How am I reacting to what is being said? How am I feeling? How are others reacting to what I am saying?
Have I used possible charged language unintentionally?
(Watch for body language and check perceptions by paraphrasing and probing for specificity.)

7. Presuming positive intentions

"I know we are trying to learn more about all angles so let me share…"   "Knowing that we would like to make a decision that works for all of us, let's…"
(Thinking in your head thoughts like: "I am sure she didn't mean to sound charged when she said that.")

Adapted from www.adaptiveschools.org

PL Facilitator Reflection Questions

1. How did my participants respond?

2. Describe the level of meaningful engagement?

3. What aspects of the session were positive? Negative?

4. Were my participants willing to take risks? Explain.

5. What evidence is there of learning/growth?

6. How did the participants work collaboratively?

7. Was I giving enough wait time? How do I know?

8. What should I do differently next time?

PLC Agenda

Team:_____ Date:_____

Materials to bring to meeting: _____

Recorder: _____

Members Present		
1.	5.	9.
2.	6.	10.
3.	7.	11.
4.	8.	12.

Start Time:

End Time:

SMART Goal for the year: By the end of the year...

Action Items	Who?	Est. Time	Minutes/Notes
Curriculum Planning Snapshot Data Dig: What data is guiding this meeting? **Questions to guide our planning** 1. What are current trends across the grade level? in each classroom? 2. What are 2 strengths of the grade level? in each classroom? 3. Which students require double dose or re-teaching? 4. Which students require acceleration? 5. Others?			
Unpacking the Curriculum Objective:			
Unfinished Instructional Business			
New Instructional Business			
Open Agenda (if time allows)			

Homework/ things to do before our next meeting –

PLC Guiding Questions
- ✓ C-What do we want our students to learn?
- ✓ A-How will we know they have learned it?
- ✓ R-How will we respond when a student does not meet mastery?
- ✓ E-How will we respond when a student exceeds mastery/expectation?

PLC Norms Planning Sheet

adapted from *SRI: School Reform Initiative*

Name:_____Team:_____Date:_____

Norms exist whether or not you acknowledge them.

Tips to Consider

- Develop norms by consensus
- Review norms at each session
- Periodically assess effectiveness of their use
- Add, delete, or renegotiate norms as the need arises
- Refer to norms during the session to prompt members
  Failure to abide by the norms, establishes unwritten norms

Protocol

- **Negotiation with Self:**
  - What do you expect of yourself as a member of this group? What do you expect of others?
  - Write down your three **personal** norms
- **Negotiation with a Partner:**
  - Renegotiate your proposed norms
  - Determine three shared, **partner** norms
- **Negotiation among 4 colleagues/quads**:
  - Each pair brings their proposed norms to the quad.
  - Take the two sets of proposed norms to create a total of three shared, **quad** norms
  - Read the norms aloud "into" the community
- **Negotiations to Achieve Consensus**:
  - For the next meet, the PLC Facilitator re-organized and represents the set of proposed norms for feedback
  - Once norms are decided upon, routinely re-visit them for renegotiation

Examples of Group Norms

- Start on time
- End on time
- Express genuine feelings
- Productively address conflict during meetings
- Keep individual comments confidential
- Each person will have opportunity to be heard
- Listen to and hear one another's viewpoints
- Address issues not personalities
- Publicly support decisions made by the group
- Arrive prepared
- Turn off cell phones
- No 'outside' business during sessions
- Make decisions by consensus
- Limit 'air' time
- Celebrate accomplishments
- Share promising practices

My Personal Norms	Partner Norms	Quad Norms
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.

SMART Goal Template

Broward County Public Schools

The percentage of [student group] scoring proficient or higher in [content area] will increase from [current reality percentage] to [goal percentage] by the end of [month and year] as measured by [assessment tool].

Establishing PLC Team Roles

All team members are responsible for the success of the PLC team. Team members must work collaboratively to achieve their goals, but each individual's official role describes ways in which he/she will contribute and relate to the the overall team. Roles may be assigned and rotated to allow for fair and equitable responsibility. As a team, determine who will be assigned each of the roles listed below.

Team Role	Responsibilities	Person Assigned	Length of Service
Facilitator	• Develop the agenda and distribute it to all team members • Facilitate the meeting • Keep team focused on the SMART goal • Make sure all voices are heard		☐ Month ☐ Quarter ☐ Other:
Recorder	• Record minutes • Post minutes in PLC Shared Folder (i.e. One Drive) • Maintain PLC team Shared Data folder that contains team information and resources		☐ Month ☐ Quarter ☐ Other:
Timekeeper	• Monitor agenda times and topics • Keep the group focused and moving • Monitor start and end times • Call for tabling the subject or making a decision		☐ Month ☐ Quarter ☐ Other:
Reporter	• Review norms at the start of the meeting • Assess the team's use of norms at the end of the meeting • Review minutes from previous meeting • Act as a liaison to school personnel outside of the team		☐ Month ☐ Quarter ☐ Other:
			☐ Month ☐ Quarter ☐ Other:

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Protocols

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Supportive Structures Are Critical

When it comes to supporting high-leverage collaborative work, structures are critical. Various structures have the potential to profoundly enrich the work of the teacher teams. Dufour (2007) advised that if principals promote a learning communities approach, then they are obligated to create structures to facilitate meaningful teacher collaboration. Dufour (2007) suggested the following guidelines for administrators looking to embed facilitative structures:

- Schedule collaborative teacher time during the contractual day.
- Establish specific priorities for collaborative work of teachers.
- Ensure that teams have the appropriate knowledge base available to make decisions.
- Provide differentiated training for teams.
- Make templates and models accessible to teams to support their work.
- Provide clear expectations for teams to use to assess the quality of their work.

Embedding facilitative structures to support the work of learning communities has been repeatedly linked to positive teacher outcomes and PLC experiences (Mitchell & Castle, 2005; Stegall, 2011). Learning communities have the potential to thrive when administrators devote attention to ongoing, sustained support by focusing on structural elements. School principals studied by Mitchell and Castle (2005) identified that these enabling structures helped to focus "teacher talk" and as a result raised the level of academic discourse in the school (p. 472). Tylus (2009) pointed out that in addition to structures at the organizational level, "critical to the successful implementation of a professional learning community was the understanding and establishment of group structures" (p. 40). Stegall (2011) pointed out that the very "structure of the meeting is important" (p. 93). One powerful approach is to structure segments of meetings through the use of discussion protocols to guide teachers in rich dialogue, for instance, when teachers are discussing the implications of a research-based article on their instructional practices. Protocols are powerful designs that allow teachers to move into deeper levels of reflection compelling them to engage in higher levels of thinking and learning than would naturally arise from a typical conversation between professionals (Easton, 2009). Structures such as these enable teachers to have the opportunities to collaborate and to delve into their collective learning.

References:

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About This Resource

This resource is designed to support facilitators who wish to engage teams in meaningful learning based in teachers' daily practices. Facilitators can use this resource to employ strategies and structures to move teams to deeper levels of thinking and reflection. Meetings that are structured with the support of protocols tend to be more productive and efficient. Using protocols assists teams to build a trusting culture for collaborative work. Protocols, when used consistently, have the power to shape a team's culture since they promote behaviours and habits that eventually become adopted as norms. When appropriate protocols are selected to guide teacher talk, the resulting dialogue is more likely to inspire teacher action and to impact change in teaching practices.

Facilitators must plan intentionally when designing teacher meetings. This resource is perfect for teams whose members share facilitative leadership. Shared tools provide a scaffold that helps team members to develop their capacities as facilitative leaders. The protocols in this resource are clear, concise, and easy for busy professionals to apply.

What's Inside

This resource contains a collection of protocols to support the work of teacher teams. Each protocol is accompanied by a brief introductory article. In order to best support the professional inquiry of teacher teams, the organization of this resource aligns with both the stages of *Collaborative Inquiry* and the stages of implementing a *Teaching Learning Critical Pathway* (TLCP), current structures that are being employed by practitioners. Protocols could be embedded into various stages of professional inquiry to enrich the dialogue and the learning (see page 6). In addition, varying professional learning goals are identified and matched with protocols that would likely facilitate movement towards those goals.

While this resource suggests protocols for specific purposes, many of them can be employed or modified to fulfill alternative purposes. For instance, a strategy may be suggested to primarily support teachers in the beginning stages of inquiry, when developing the problem, but it might also be useful when brainstorming new strategies. In many cases, some secondary uses for the strategies have been identified in the accompanying matrix (see page 9). These protocols are flexible and can be adapted to fit numerous scenarios. In addition, as facilitators become more comfortable and experienced, they might consider borrowing elements or pieces of protocols and embedding these throughout the meeting, when appropriate. For instance, a facilitator might consider asking participants to use Step 5 in the Consultancy/Tuning Protocol which asks participants to "write around the problem" before collecting feedback when a team member asks a complex question related to the student work that was produced.

How To Choose A Protocol

There are many factors to consider when selecting protocols. A facilitator must carefully consider the group that is meeting together and note its characteristics before selecting a protocol. Some characteristics that might be factored into the planning include:

- the group dynamic
- the level of collective thinking the group is accustomed to
- the group's frequency of interaction
- the common elements that participants share (grade, subject, interest, etc.)
- the group's level of comfort in implementing change
- whether the group will have an opportunity to revisit their learning and the application of that learning
- the required follow-up support

This information provides the facilitator with important clues pertaining to the level of comfort of the participants and their willingness to take risks with one another. In addition, it cues the facilitator in making informed decisions regarding whether a tight or loose approach should be used. This influences planning for instance when determining which thinking or conversation prompts to employ, whether to include more wait time, whether to ask participants to share their learning with a partner or with the whole group and so on. When a group has the opportunity to reunite, the reflection prompts and follow-up supports will look much different than they would if the team was having an isolated conversation during a staff meeting.

Facilitator's Tool Kit (Tight and Loose)

The terms tight and loose refer to how much choice a facilitator provides for participants. It is important to think about the types of choices being offered. A protocol can have a tight overall structure like the Consultancy/Tuning Protocol. This structure would be considered tight because the protocol is divided into different parts, the time is very specifically laid out, and at some points it becomes so 'tight' that certain participants are not permitted to speak. This protocol is much tighter than a protocol such as the World Café which provides a prompt and individuals join a group of their choosing and engage in free flowing discussion. This structure is considered loose because participants have the freedom to choose their group, choose the extent of their participation, and they have control over the conversation, which means it might stray from the topic the facilitator had prompted.

The size of the group can also significantly influence the success of any protocol. In more intimate settings, there is additional accountability and it is particularly important to ensure that trust is fostered in the group by providing safe and loose protocols at the beginning. In larger groups, it is important to consider whether the group needs to be sub-divided and methods of ensuring accountability to support the learning of the professionals. Along with the size of the group, it is equally important to consider the nature and depth of participants' relationships with one another. While it may seem as though the participants know each other well, my advice is to tread carefully. Just because team members get along or spend time together outside of school does not mean that they have established relationships as colleagues and co-learners. I have learned that those situations can sometimes be the most challenging since pre-existing dynamics that are not focused on teaching and learning are at play.

Determining how much guidance the facilitator wishes to provide is based on a variety of factors, such as: purpose of the meeting, level of knowledge of the team, level of knowledge of the individual members, required scaffolds to push thinking and learning to the next level, etc. The structure of certain protocols are more loose and tight in nature, however facilitators can tailor most protocols to meet the needs of the participants. Structures can be "tightened up" or "loosened up", for instance, by massaging the number of questions or the nature of the prompts as well as the amount of time that is allocated.

Main Purposes of Protocols

Protocols can be used across many situations. In some circumstances, specific protocols are selected because a facilitator wishes to discuss student work products that are available. In other situations, a teacher wishes to ask for group feedback on his classroom practices. These are valid entry points for introducing protocols. In situations in which a team is collaborating regularly and involved in ongoing learning, there may be better options. It seems that the most effective method of implementing protocols is by aligning the learning goals of the team with the anticipated outcome of the protocol. Facilitators have a myriad of reasons for implementing and utilizing a protocol. The protocols within this resource have been organized alphabetically to help facilitators to find protocols in an efficient manner. This resource contains powerful planning tools to support facilitators who are using the following methods of strategically selecting a protocol:

- Embedding a protocol into *Collaborative Inquiry* or the *Teaching Learning Critical Pathway*
- Aligning protocols with the professional learning goals of the team.

Embedding a Protocol into Collaborative Inquiry or the Teaching Learning Critical Pathway

During the various stages of professional inquiry, specific protocols are suitable to enhance teacher learning and the level of teacher talk. Embedding these protocols throughout the entire process of inquiry has the power to bring about countless new understandings and insights for teachers. A facilitator can elect to utilize some of the suggested structures at the appropriate stages or can decide to apply a protocol when it seems the team requires additional learning or thinking in a specific area. To support your planning needs, refer to the chart that links the stages of *Collaborative Inquiry* and the *Teaching Learning Critical Pathway* to the protocols in this resource.

STAGE	NAME OF PROTOCOL (M) - Modified	PURPOSE AT THIS STAGE
FRAMING THE PROBLEM	Assessment Analysis (M)	To arrive at a question of inquiry or refined question of inquiry.
		To assist in determining a focus or creating a professional learning goal.
	Atlas (M)	To arrive at a place to begin dialogue regarding focus of inquiry.
		To assist in determining area of greatest need.
	Consultancy/Tuning (M)	To help to arrive at a question of inquiry or refined question of inquiry.
		To aid in clarifying the focus and understanding of the areas of inquiry.
	Data Analysis	To arrive at a place to begin dialogue regarding focus of inquiry.
		To assist in determining area of greatest need.
	Describing Student Work: A Slice of Writing (M)	To arrive at a place to begin dialogue regarding focus of inquiry.
		To assist in determining area of greatest need.
	Drilling Down	To assist in determining a focus or crafting a professional learning goal.
		To aid in formulating a theory of action.
		To assist in clarifying the focus and building an understanding of the area of inquiry.
	The Multiple Perspectives (M)	To help to clarify the focus and refine the inquiry question.
	Questioning Circle	To review the questions or concerns that the group developed and use this process to refine the question or focus the inquiry.
	World Café (M)	To generate ideas regarding possible dilemmas and areas of inquiry or concern to explore.
		To dig deeper into some questions that arose from the team and clarify the focus of the inquiry.
COLLECTING EVIDENCE	A Change in Practice (M)	To get at implementing new high yield strategies.
		To prepare for participating in common practices.
	Assessment Analysis (M)	To prepare for participating in common practices.
		To strengthen assessment practices by developing shared understanding regarding the relationship between the success criteria and the task.
	Atlas (M)	To examine pre assessment results and determine students learning goals.
		To develop shared understanding regarding the elements of successful work or success criteria to inform.
	Describing Student Work: A Slice of Writing (M)	To examine pre-assessment results and determine student learning goals.
		To develop shared understanding regarding the elements of successful work or success criteria to inform instructional planning.
	Questioning Circle	To explore current literature and information regarding high-yield strategies.
	Success Analysis	To review current practices and honour the team members' expertise.
	Surfacing Key Ideas	To explore current literature and information regarding new or innovative strategies.
	Text Rendering Experience	To explore current literature and information regarding new or innovative strategies.
	Wagon Wheel: Brainstorm	To generate dialogue and common understandings of ambiguous or complex terms to inform instructional planning.
	World Café (M)	To develop shared understandings.
		To build additional knowledge.
		To review current practices and discuss current literature.
		To determine student learning goals, related strategies and success criteria.
ANALYZING EVIDENCE	Atlas (M)	To support teachers as they make meaning of student data.
		To spark the conversation and provide beginning steps for planning precise instruction based on data.
	Data Analysis	To support teachers as they make meaning of student data.
		To spark the conversation and provide beginning steps for planning precise instruction based on data.
	Describing Student Work: A Slice of Writing (M)	To reflect any student work samples. The rounds can be tailored to the inquiry of the group to facilitate and add variety to traditional teacher moderation processes. Next steps for students and teachers can also be generated from through this process.
DOCUMENTING, SHARING, CELEBRATING	A Change in Practice (M)	To reflect upon positive changes that resulted from the inquiry and extrapolating.
	Consultancy/Tuning (M)	To reflect on actions and identify areas for future study/next steps.
	Drilling Down	To reflect upon the learning through a prompt such as "Through our inquiry, we observed that our students have learned to… but they continue to struggle with…" This may also help in determining a new area of inquiry.
	Success Analysis	To reflect upon a successful practice or experience that arose from the inquiry and apply the learning to new areas/extrapolate.
	World Café (M)	To reflect upon the key learning and big ideas that arose from the inquiry.
		To investigate implications for future practice.

Aligning Protocols with the
Team's Professional Learning Goals

In terms of the learning gains for teachers, protocols are best used when they are outcome-based. For instance, when they are selected to support a team in moving towards an identified professional learning goal. Throughout these processes various professional learning goals will emerge. While it is possible to integrate one or several protocols at every stage of inquiry, it is not necessarily ideal. As an alternative, consider instead selecting protocols that respond to the professional learning needs and goals of the team members and embedding them at the appropriate times.

Teachers' collaborative time is precious and relatively limited. Teacher teams that clearly identify teachers' ideal goals are better equipped to strategically select protocols and to efficiently make use of time to participate in collective learning. It is useful to identify exactly what teachers are hoping to accomplish. For instance, if a team has identified the following learning goal, "We want to develop assessments that are rigorous and/or evoke higher-level thinking skills", then most of the time spent in rich learning through protocols should be focused on achieving this goal. To optimize their learning time the team could consider identifying whether they need additional knowledge, new skills, improved abilities, to change their behaviours or adopt new perspectives and attitudes. Likewise, the protocols that are selected and used would be those that promote the skills associated with the professional learning goal. If, for instance, the focus is on the teachers' skills in developing rigorous assessments, it would be appropriate to choose protocols that relate specifically to the personal assessment practices of the teachers, such as Assessment Analysis. The facilitator would frame the reflective prompts throughout the process would bring participants back to "What are the implications for our team and for you pertaining to developing rigorous assessments that evoke higher-level thinking skills?" Throughout the entire process the facilitator would intentionally plan prompts and questions that revolve around the team's professional learning goal and embed time for the team to reflect on their progress toward this goal.

Co-constructing Professional Learning Goals

A good deal of the current literature highlights the importance of crafting student learning goals to target instruction. In many learning community settings, these student learning goals guide the work of the teachers. While this is a thoughtful way of focusing the work of the teachers, it is arguably more powerful to involve teachers in the actual crafting of their own learning goals. To anchor the thinking of the team, it is suggested that the student learning goals be posted in the meeting room to provide a starting point to enable group to come to a consensus about what the team is interested in learning together. The learning goals of the teachers will likely support the teaching of the students' learning goals. The members can then articulate their needs as they collaboratively draft the team's goal. Posting the professional learning goal in the meeting room helps to remind teachers of the focus of the work and enables other teams to understand how other teams are working towards meeting school goals. To further support facilitators in selecting protocols for PLCs, a list of sample professional learning goals are aligned with useful protocols from this resource on the following page.

Sample Professional Learning Goals

#1 **A Change in Practice Protocol (Modified)**
#2 **Assessment Analysis Protocol (Modified)**
#3 **Atlas Protocol (Modified)**
#4 **Consultancy/Tuning Protocol (Modified)**
#5 **Data Analysis Protocol**
#6 **Describing Student Work: A Slice of Writing Protocol (Modified)**
#7 **Drilling Down Protocol**
#8 **The Multiple Perspectives Protocol (Modified)**
#9 **Questioning Circle Protocol**
#10 **Success Analysis Protocol**
#11 **Surfacing Key Ideas Protocol**
#12 **Text Rendering Experience Protocol**
#13 **Wagon Wheel Brainstorm Protocol**
#14 **World Café Protocol (Modified)**

SAMPLE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING GOALS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
BUILDING KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING														
We are learning to share a common philosophy or set of beliefs about education.								✔			✔	✔	✔	
We are learning to clarify and articulate issues and dilemmas that affect our work.				✔	✔		✔					✔	✔	✔
We are learning to recognize and honour the perspectives of others.							✔	✔	✔	✔				✔
We are learning to improve on our practices to craft professional learning goals.				✔	✔									
We are learning to collaboratively generate ideas to solve problems.				✔			✔		✔			✔	✔	✔
BUILDING SKILLS, ABILITIES AND PRACTICES: PLANNING PRACTICES AND TEACHING PRACTICES														
We want to plan for purposeful instruction that produces results for students.	✔	✔	✔		✔	✔		✔	✔	✔	✔			
We want to improve our skills at using our data set to tell us about what our students know and are able to do.		✔	✔			✔								
We want to plan effective prompts to embed into our instruction to improve student outcomes.														
We are learning to effectively use higher-level questioning during instruction.														
We are learning to plan and create effective lessons.	✔													
We want to develop as a learning community that shares and implements common practices.	✔									✔				
We want to increase the rigor of instructional practices.														
We want to bridge the gap between our knowledge of effective practices and our implementation of these practices.											✔			
We want to use higher-level questioning effectively during instruction.						✔								
We want to sharpen our skills in developing high quality assessments and evaluating student work.		✔	✔		✔									

A Change in Practice Protocol (Modified)

This protocol has the potential to prepare teachers to view themselves as capable of change and to consider the benefits of changes that they have experienced in the past.

Hall and Hord (2011) defined change as

CHANGE

deleting what is not working to support students' learning success and adopting "a new way" that has the promise of increased student learning results.

While this concise and poignant definition captures what most staff developers and school leaders yearn to inspire in schools, the reality is that the road to educational change is often long and difficult. Hall and Hord (2011) acknowledges that there is work involved in this process as she points out that in order for change to be successful, adults must be afforded opportunities to learn these "new ways".

Reflecting upon my own past experiences as an Instructional Coach in many schools, I am reminded of the diverse individuals that make up our learning communities and the spectrum of responses evoked from individual team members when the notion of "change" is even suggested. The solution is not to avoid the topic of change or to end dialogues that may cause discomfort. Instead, staff developers and school leaders must consider the level of safety that is established in any given learning community. These individuals must then reflect upon and plan supports to help build and create an environment that fosters risk-taking. Trusting environments are nurtured and promoted when the team invests time in creating and revisiting norms and when teachers are invited to share personal instructional struggles through protocols that focus on collaboratively generating solutions collaboratively. When a culture of resistance is prevalent in a school or community, it is often a result of well-intentioned staff development efforts that have asked teachers to change their practices or demanded that teachers implement "new ways" without honouring these educators as both professionals and individuals. The focus of school-based learning communities is to improve teaching and learning for students, and we cannot possibly move towards this goal of improvement without also considering instructional change.

When change is suggested, it is often perceived as an attack and a person can quickly become defensive. In order to generate buy-in and create situations in which teachers are motivated or willing to try new strategies, the proper groundwork must be laid to ease the transition into the proposed change. This protocol has the potential to prepare teachers to view themselves as capable of change and to consider the benefits of changes that they have experienced in the past. The steps in this protocol function to validate teachers' experiences and to pave the way for teachers to willingly begin conversations regarding new opportunities for learning and growth.

References:
Hall, G.E. and Hord, S.M. (2011). *Implementing change: Patterns, principles, and potholes* (3rd ed). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

A Change In Practice Protocol (Modified)

The original version of the protocol "A Change in Practice" was developed by Gene Thompson-Grove and was shared on the National School Reform Faculty's website www.nsrfharmony.org.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this protocol is to provide a structure for dissecting the process a participant uses when implementing changes in their practice. Participants will be encouraged to think more systematically about the questions and data they use to make changes. Effective facilitation is particularly crucial in step 4, when the group broadens the presenter's thinking about how s/he generally approaches making changes in his or her practice.

ROLES

• A facilitator (who also participates) should be assigned for each round to lead the conversation and keep time.
• A presenter who shares his or her writing about a change s/he has made in his or her practice.

TIME

Approximately 50 minutes for pairs.

PROCESS

1. **Writing** (7 minutes)
   Each member of the group reflects and writes about the following prompt, "Tell about a change you have made in your practice. Describe it the way you would a snapshot and include relevant details." Think about:
   • What were you teaching/doing?
   • What change did you make?
   • Why did you think you should make a change?
   • How did you decide what to do?
   • How did you know whether the change was successful/was working?
   • Who else played a role?

   The group establishes an order for members to present and facilitate.

2. **Presentation** (3 minutes)
   The presenter either reads the written account of what happened, or tells the story from the writing.

3. **Clarifying Questions** (2 minutes)
   The team members ask clarifying questions.

4. **Discussion** (10 minutes)
   The group talks about what they heard the presenter say. Using a "cycle of inquiry" diagram, the team maps the presenter's story. The members raise questions and add thoughts and insights as they do so. In this conversation the group talks about which parts of the inquiry cycle were evident in the presenter's experience. The goal here is for the presenter to leave with a greater understanding of how s/he approaches making changes in his or her practice, and to link this process to more "formal inquiry." (The presenter listens and takes notes.)

The "cycle of inquiry" from the Professional Learning Cycle DVD, 2011 Facilitator's Guide, SS/L-18ITEB, Student Achievement Division, Ontario Ministry of Education can be found on page 40 of this resource.

5. **Reflection** (5 minutes)
   The presenter reflects on what she heard, then the group engages in conversation about what the implications might be for the presenter's practice. The facilitator then broadens the conversation by asking, "What new insights occurred for all of us?"

6. **Repeat Each Round** (20 minutes)

DEBRIEF THE PROCESS
(3 minutes)
The facilitator leads the group through a discussion of this protocol process using the following prompts:
• What went well? What could be improved?
• Did you change your thinking? If so, in what ways?
• How did this protocol work for you?

Assessment Analysis Protocol (Modified)

This protocol encompasses many cognitively demanding components and its structure has the potential to have significant effects on teacher learning.

The pathway to producing high-yield teacher teams is only through maintaining a watchful eye on the work of students, critically evaluating our work as teachers, planning for rigorous professional learning, and whole-heartedly digging in. Participants in thriving learning communities commit to collaborating, even when that means members may be exposed for what they do not know. Little's (1990) **Four Fold Taxonomy**, designed to assess team collaboration, highlighted four ways in which teams typically work together.

Little (1990) asserted that the lowest level of collaboration is *Storytelling and Scanning for Ideas* which describes a form of collaboration in which participants exchange stories and form friendships but the conversation does not generally lead participants to examine and consider changing their teaching practices. Little suggested *Aid and Assistance* as the next level of collaboration, which involves participants requesting support and the members of the group simply providing advice for the individuals in need. Learning in this scenario is not viewed as a collaborative venture to arrive at a collective understanding on topics revolving around teaching and learning. Instead, an individual seeks advice and opinions from others regarding obstacles or concerns pertaining to issues as they pertain to teaching practices. The third level of collaboration, termed *In Sharing* suggests that team members are collaborating by sharing aspects of their instructional practice and teaching philosophy with peers such as trading teaching methods, ideas, and opinions (Little, 1990).

The highest level of teacher collaboration described by Little bears the name *Joint Work*. This type of collaboration involves participants raising issues for analysis and debate to assist the individuals and the team in arriving at new levels of understanding (Little, 1990). Little's work suggests that effective collaboration that leads to high-quality outcomes requires active participants who are invested in their own learning and the learning of other group members. If high levels of collaboration produce better results and tasks such as debating, analyzing and evaluating work are typical tasks of these high-yield teams, perhaps facilitators who are looking to deepen the team's academic discourse could consider embedding prompts that encourage these sorts of rigorous conversations or tasks that call upon these higher level thinking skills.

This protocol encompasses many cognitively demanding components and this structure has the potential to have significant effects on teacher learning. Remember, if we want to reap the rich rewards that are possible through the work of the PLC, it is necessary for us to participate in this type of meaty learning, even if it pushes us outside the realm of what is comfortable. Consider using the entire protocol at a meeting that affords the team a couple of hours of focused learning. As an alternative, facilitators might determine that their group may not be ready for the entire protocol, but might borrow pieces of this protocol to move teams closer to achieving their professional learning goals.

Reference:
Little, J. W. (1990). *The Persistence of Privacy: Autonomy and Initiative in Teachers' Professional Relations*. Teachers College Record 91, No. 4 (pp. 509-536).

Assessment Analysis Protocol (Modified)

A version of this protocol was originally shared by the National School Reform Faculty in 2010. It was then modified by Jenni Donohoo and Margot Heaton.

PURPOSE

This protocol is particularly useful when a team is learning to:

- effectively plan, create and assess the outcomes of powerful lessons
- increase the rigor of instructional and assessment practices
- strategically craft assessments to target student learning
- improve current student assignments and tasks

PREPARATION

Select an assignment to be analyzed and evaluated for its effectiveness. Keep in mind that the assignment may be under scrutiny. Depending on the level of comfort that is established within the group, it may be helpful to begin this process with an assignment that was not developed by any individual member of the team.

PROCESS

STEP 1: Examine curriculum expectations.

a) Post and collaboratively review the identified expectations from the curriculum that are being targeted through the current instruction.

b) Brainstorm the likely success criteria for the various expectations.

STEP 2: Analyze the task(s).

a) Take a couple of minutes to read and reflect upon the task that is up for discussion.

b) Collaboratively create a chart or organizer first, jotting down which expectations are targeted through the assignment, then linking the related success criteria to the evidence that will be used to determine if students have learned the desired outcomes?

c) On the basis of your own experience, break down the task. List what students have to know and be able to do to complete the task successfully. Be as specific as possible and go as deep as possible.

d) Engage in working on the task while noting the knowledge, skills and abilities required to successfully complete the task.

e) Determine the level of thinking required. What are the levels of Bloom's Taxonomy that apply to this assignment? Justify your selection(s).

f) Assess for desired level of rigor. Using the rigor scale, determine whether the task is appropriately rigorous.

STEP 3: Analyze the lesson.

a) Discuss the following questions:
How did the teaching prepare students for this task? What scaffolds were taught, outlined, or suggested? What could be added to the instruction to better prepare students to successfully demonstrate their knowledge, skills and/or abilities?

b) Provide a copy of the role chart to participants or post the chart for the group to view. Provide 1-2 minutes for the team to reflect on this question: "In this lesson what is the role of the student? Explain your rationale." Consider the following:

Student as Task Completer	Student as Questioner
Student as Collaborator	Student as Investigator
Student as Time Manager	Student as Coordinator
Student as Listener	Student as Evaluator
Student as Critic	Student as Decision Maker
Student as Producer	Student as Deliverer
Student as Observer	Student as Facilitator
Student as Risk Taker	Student as Judge
Student as Researcher	Student as Coach

c) Does the instruction provide students the opportunity to demonstrate what they know and can do based on the curriculum expectations? Explain.

STEP 4: Revise the assignment accordingly.

Revise the assignment, prompt, or task according to your work in steps 1-3.

DEBRIEF THE PROCESS

Debrief the learning and the process with the group by asking "What did you discover?" and "How did this process work for you?"
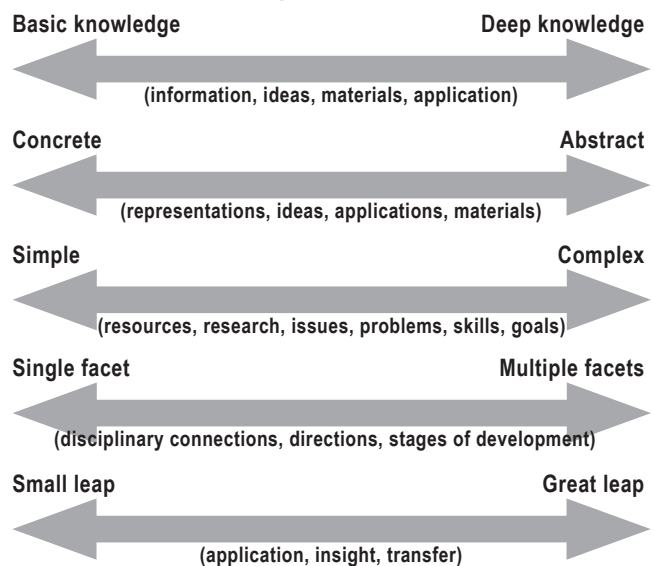
Bloom's Taxonomy

Categories in the cognitive domain of Bloom's Taxonomy

Analyze | Evaluate | Create
Apply
Understand
Remember
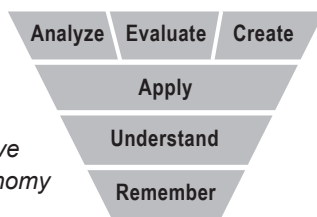
Reference: Anderson, L. & Krathwohl, D. A. (2001). *Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. New York: Longman.

Rigor Scale

Basic knowledge ⟷ Deep knowledge
(information, ideas, materials, application)

Concrete ⟷ Abstract
(representations, ideas, applications, materials)

Simple ⟷ Complex
(resources, research, issues, problems, skills, goals)

Single facet ⟷ Multiple facets
(disciplinary connections, directions, stages of development)

Small leap ⟷ Great leap
(application, insight, transfer)
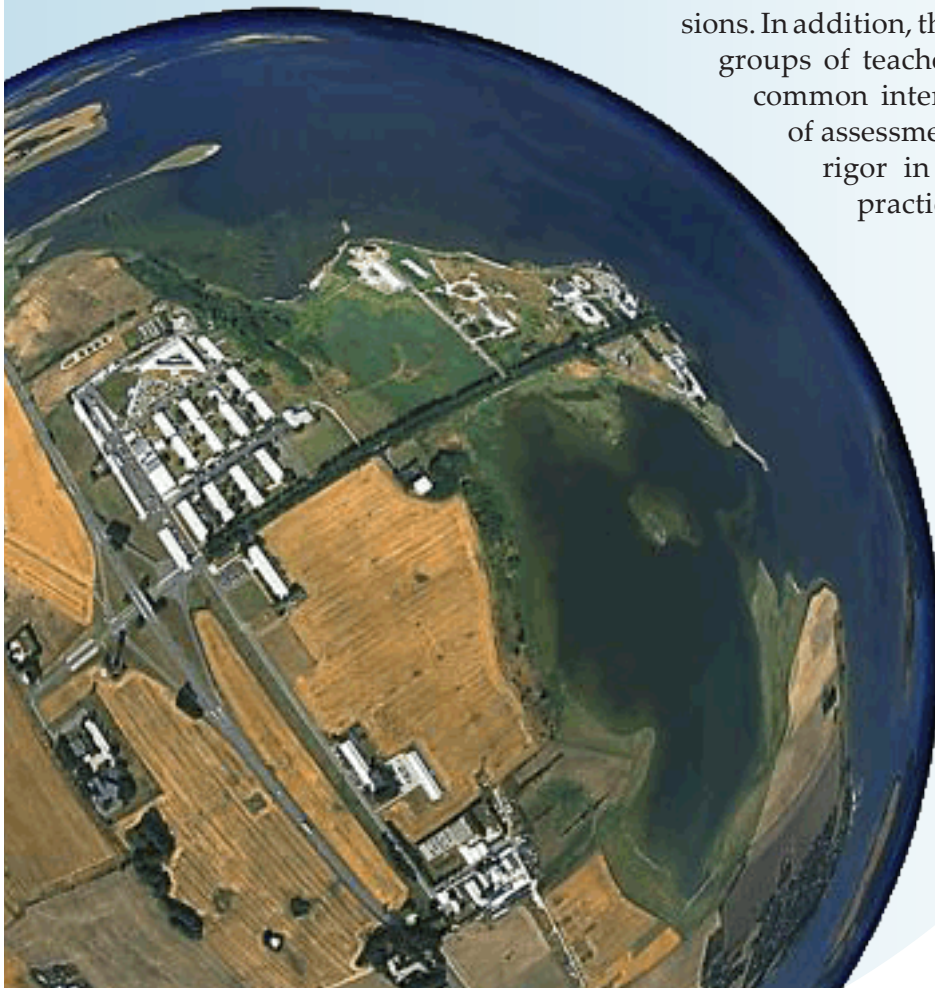
Atlas Protocol (Modified)

This protocol supports teachers in transforming data into insightful knowledge.

Learning community literature consistently highlights the importance of using student data in the work of the PLC. Mitchell (2009) warns that "the mere collection of data is not sufficient for the kind of inquiry that improves professional practice and student learning." (p. 28) In other words, data on its own serves no real purpose. However, when a learning community converts data into knowledge, significant insights emerge that have the power to guide schools towards real transformation and improvement. Mitchell (2009) claims that unless data is converted into meaningful information, improvement is practically impossible. Protocols can be an effective way to host challenging conversations regarding data. These structures can help to pave the way for a systematic process to make meaning of student data to guide school-based decision making and to facilitate ongoing student improvement.

This protocol supports teachers in transforming data into insightful knowledge. It supports teams in analyzing student work in order to inform instructional decisions. In addition, this protocol can be used to guide groups of teachers in collaboratively reaching common interpretations of the many facets of assessment and to help them to develop rigor in instructional and assessment practices.

Reference:
Mitchell, C. & Sackney, L. (2009). *Sustainable Improvement*. Rotterdam: The Netherlands. Sense Publications.

Atlas Protocol (Modified)

The original version of this protocol was developed by Eric Buchovecky. It is based on the work of the Leadership for Urban Mathematics Project and the Assessment Communities of Teachers Project. This protocol draws on the work of Steve Seidel and Evangeline Harris-Stefanakis of Project Zero and Harvard University. A version was further revised by Gene Thompson-Grove for the National School Reform Faculty in 2000. It was shared on the National School Reform Faculty's website www.nsrfharmony.org.

PURPOSE

To support teachers in analyzing student work to guide instructional decisions.

TIME

60 minutes or more.

MATERIALS

A copy of all student work for each participant.

PREPARATION

Before beginning the protocol, collect, copy and number all of the student work samples.

PROCESS

Getting Started (12 minutes)

1. The facilitator reminds the group of the norms.
2. A secretary is appointed to take notes for the meeting.
3. The facilitator then introduces the work to be discussed today.
4. The team takes approximately 10 minutes to review the work silently.

Describing the Student Work (10 minutes)

5. The facilitator asks: "What do you see?"
   The group responds in a round-robin fashion (anyone is allowed to pass when necessary).
   Tip: When offering an observation, it is helpful to identify the work sample by number so that everyone can turn to the same piece of work.
6. During this period, the group gathers as much information as possible from the student work. The secretary takes notes. The full 10 minutes should be allowed for this round.
   Tip: Judgement statements should be avoided if they arise and the facilitator should redirect any such comments.

Interpreting the Student Work (10 minutes)

7. The facilitator asks: "What inferences are you drawing about the work?" During this period the group tries to make sense of what the student was doing and why, as well as think about possible next steps.

Implications for Classroom Practice (10 minutes)

8. The facilitator asks: "What are the implications of this work for teaching and learning?" or "What are the implications of this work for assessment?" Group members share emerging insights and generate additional questions that were raised from examining the work.
9. The group may choose to consider follow-up questions such as:
   - What steps might the teacher take next with students who produce similar work?
   - What teaching strategies seem to be working? What adaptations appear to be needed?
   - What elements of the work seem to indicate specific needs for scaffolding and differentiation?
   - What else would you like to see in the student work? What kinds of assignments or assessments could provide this information?
   - What does this conversation make you think of in terms of your own practice?
   - What professional learning needs appeared to emerge?

DEBRIEF THE PROCESS
(10 minutes)

The facilitator leads the group through a discussion of this protocol process using the following prompts:
- What went well? What could be improved?
- Did you change your thinking? If so, in what ways?
- How did this protocol work for you?

Consultancy/Tuning Protocol (Modified)

**This protocol provides a framework for teacher discussion
and sets parameters that promote professional reflection
and authentic inquiry around issues of teaching and learning.**

As I was thinking about this article, I was reminded of an old book that I loved as a child. If you flipped toward the back of the book, you would find a display of twelve to fifteen photographs all in a row. The photographer intentionally zoomed in, magnifying one aspect of an object until it was no longer recognizable; for example, the tip of a crayon or the knot that traps air in a balloon. The reader's challenge was to attempt to decipher the clues so that she could successfully identify the object. This activity pushed thinking in new ways and caused the reader to question what the mind sometimes assumes as obvious, since the reader was experiencing the photos through a much different perspective. Like the expression 'He can't see the forest for the trees', being too close to a situation (a common issue experienced by PLC teams) requires the support of outside perspectives. This support has the potential to challenge the team's thinking so that they may move beyond an unrelenting dilemma. It is my belief that we are sometimes too close to an issue to consider the alternatives needed to mobilize us to overcome it.

This article features a protocol that was used to engage participants involved in a Protocols and Structures Institute in thinking critically about their PLC practices. Through this vehicle, teams explored some of the challenges that prevent their school-based learning communities from operating at high-capacity and moving forward.

When introduced to this modified version of the Consultancy Protocol, teams were asked to narrow in on one specific issue that they perceived as detrimental to one of their own school-based PLCs. Before beginning this protocol, teams were provided with a template to encourage collaborative reflection and to help them frame their situation in the form of a case study. Teams were informed that they would have the opportunity to later share their case with another team. The groups specified a focus question to guide the feedback that would support their learning. The planning time and template enabled teams to arrive at precise questions that they felt, if answered, might fuel change in these school-based groups.

In this framework, you will notice characteristics of a consultancy protocol and a tuning protocol. However, the case study is also woven into this design as a foundational piece in laying the ground work for this particular structure.

Through the use of this protocol, I have observed teams, who described what seemed like hopeless situations, leave the table feeling motivated and inspired to explore a promising new avenue that they had not previously considered. Learning is experienced by every member who participates and the capacity to think through tough issues is enhanced as a result of this structure.

Due to the time frames and directed dialogue, this modified consultancy protocol provides a 'medium to tight' structure for learning. It is a powerful vehicle to assist teams in seeing the big picture when they are simply too close to the issues at play. It is a protocol that works best when trust is present in the group, however, it is an effective means of building additional buy-in and trust both between teams and amongst a team's members.

FACILITATOR'S TOOLBOX

The facilitator might consider using a personal case to model the process, demonstrate a willingness to learn from the expertise of others, and to create a safe environment. In our session, we used a case study to make visible the thinking that is required to share a school-based dilemma.

The facilitator should intentionally allow sufficient time for participants to generate well-focused questions. Questions that are too broad or too narrow may skew the conversation and the feedback provided, making the suggestions less helpful.

This protocol is also useful when one teacher in the team is experiencing an ongoing issue or dilemma. When a teacher brings a situation that seems baffling to the table and welcomes new perspectives, the process develops relationships and deep thinking that translates into outcomes for both teachers and for students.

Consultancy/Tuning Protocol (Modified)

The Consultancy Protocol was developed by Gene Thompson-Grove as part of the Coalition of Essential Schools' National Re: Learning Faculty Program. It was later modified by the National School Reform Faculty Project. Nancy Mohr created the Descriptive Consultancy, which is another variation of this protocol. The Consultancy Protocol was shared on the National School Reform Faculty's website www.nsrfharmony.org. The Consultancy/Tuning protocol also include elements of the Tuning Protocol which was developed by Joseph McDonald, David Allen and other colleagues at the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES), Brown University, Providence, RI. They are featured in the March 1995 edition of "Horace," a publication of CES.

PURPOSE

Teams that would benefit from reflecting and receiving feedback can use this protocol to:

- investigate alternatives to their current instructional or collaborative practices;
- consider new ways of approaching specific types of students or staff;
- explore persistent problems in team-building;
- investigate methods of creating an environment based on trust;
- generate ideas for possible next steps for teams that seem "stuck".

PREPARATION

Materials: pens, paper, timer, case study template

1. Prior to the meeting, invite a team of teachers to think of an issue that they have tried to solve but still require additional ideas and strategies.
2. Ask the team to collaboratively compile pertinent information on the issue in order to share it with another group, acting as critical friends. A case study template can be found in the Resources section of this document to assist in this process. Consider using this example to guide the work.
3. The team should select a spokesperson and arrive at a focus question that will guide the feedback from their peers.

PROCESS

1. The spokesperson for the presenting group shares their focus question and provides background information regarding their dilemma. (5 minutes)
2. The feedback group asks clarifying questions to better understand the issues and then restates or helps to better articulate the question. The presenting group remains silent and may choose to take notes at this time. (3 minutes)
3. The presenting team responds and restates or clarifies questions. (3 minutes)
4. The feedback group asks probing questions. (5 minutes)
5. Both teams write around the problem – trying to dig deeper into the question and brainstorm possible solutions. (5 minutes)
6. Each feedback member takes a turn to provide feedback to the presenting group. (7 minutes)
7. The presenting group articulates next steps that they are considering. (5 minutes)
8. Debrief the process with the team. (5 minutes)

DEBRIEF THE PROCESS (5 minutes)

Debrief the learning and the process with the group by asking "What did you discover?" and "How did this process work for you?"

CLARIFYING VERSUS PROBING QUESTIONS

Adapted from The Adaptive School: A Sourcebook for Developing Collaborative Groups: Syllabus, 4th Edition. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers. Garmston & Wellman. (2002).

Clarifying Questions

Clarifying questions lead to a clear picture of the events that took place by allowing teams to collect information surrounding a dilemma or situation.

They tend to be:
- factual
- answered quickly
- used to gather information

They often sound like:
- How did you... ?
- What... ?
- How did... ?

Probing Questions

Probing questions lead to surfacing themes and unveiling underlying issues by allowing teams to mine deeply as they explore possible stumbling blocks, assumptions or biases that may be preventing the mobility of a team or individual.

They tend to:
- be thought-provoking
- be open-ended
- begin with a paraphrase
- encourage deeper thinking

They often sound like:
- You said... , have you ever thought about... ?
- Why... ?
- What might the next step be?
- What did you learn from that?
- Are there other strategies that you could use to... ?

Data Analysis Protocol

**This protocol will assist teachers in overcoming
the uneasiness associated with 'data overload'.**

In recent years, Ontario schools have become rich with data. The Managing Information for Student Achievement (MISA) initiative has improved a school board's ability to provide ready access to a wide-range of data and reports for principals, teachers, and board staff. It is not uncommon to see groups of educators collaboratively analyzing data for school improvement. The increased availability of meaningful data and sharper focus on using it for school improvement is causing teachers to make a transition from the role of 'teacher as evaluator' to 'teacher as learner'. Skills in data analysis have not been a focus in the past. As a result, teachers are experiencing an overwhelming sense of 'data overload'.

Holcomb (2004) pointed out that "collaborative work with data is essential to accepting collective responsibility for the learning of students," which often suggests cultural shifts for traditional schools in which staff members work primarily in isolation (p.30). This shift from expert to learner is a risky transition for teachers, placing educators in a vulnerable position. Katz and Earl (2006) suggested that even many expert teachers experience negative feelings that they have referred to as a "fear of evaluation and exposure." (p.4) Although educators experience uneasiness with this shift, they have recognized that the benefits of engaging in conversations about data far outweigh the costs.

Teachers, who are generally not trained to analyze data, require structured steps to delve deeply into the evidence so that they are able to discover trends and patterns, make meaning, and initiate action. Only after they have navigated through the maze of data, are teachers able to use the wealth of information to take the appropriate steps to support students in their learning. This protocol will prove useful in engaging teachers and facilitating conversations centred on student achievement data. By providing a structure for the systematic 'walkthrough' of data, this protocol is likely to assist teachers in overcoming the uneasiness associated with 'data overload'.

References:
Holcomb, E. L. (2004). *Getting Excited About Data*, 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
Katz, S. & Earl, L. M. (2006). *Leading Schools in a Data-Rich World.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Data Analysis Protocol

This protocol was adapted from the Oregon SEC Collaborative and is based on Using Data: Collaborative Inquiry for School Improvement, TERC and the ATLAS protocol, National School Reform Faculty.

PURPOSE

This protocol was developed to guide a group through analysis of student achievement data. Its purpose is to increase student success through alignment of instruction to curriculum and improved classroom practice.

GETTING STARTED

The facilitator reminds the group of the norms, assigns roles, and outlines the time limits for each part of the analysis process. For each step, the individuals will first have time to record personal thinking. The group will then discuss in 'go-arounds'. Dialogue is encouraged. The facilitator will record the ideas.

OVERVIEW OF DATA

(5 minutes)

The facilitator or presenting teacher gives a brief description of the particular report to be discussed and answers clarifying questions as necessary. The group does not see the data report until Step 2.

STEP 1: PREDICTING THE DATA

(5 minutes: 2 minutes silently writing individual predictions; 3 minutes discussing as a group)

a) The facilitator encourages teachers to spend two minutes writing their thoughts based on the following prompts:
   • With what assumptions are we entering?
   • What are some predictions we can make?
   • What are some questions worth asking?
   • What are some possibilities for learning through this experience?
b) The facilitator invites the group to share their predictions and state why they believe their predictions will be substantiated.

STEP 2: OBSERVE THE DATA (LITERAL)

(10 minutes: 3 minutes silently writing individual observations; 7 minutes discussing as a group)

a) The facilitator informs the group that in the observation phase, the intent is to state what is seen (factual information only) without reaching conclusions or making recommendations. Teachers are then asked to reflect on the following in writing for three minutes:
   • What patterns and trends have emerged?
   • What items have we not yet explored?
b) The facilitator has the group share their observations. If judgments or interpretations arise, the facilitator should ask the person to defer that thinking until the next step. The recorder will document the ideas.

STEP 3: INTERPRET DATA/DEVELOP INFERENCES

(10 minutes: 3 minutes silently writing individual inferences; 7 minutes discussing as a group)

a) The facilitator tells the group that this step is to look beyond the obvious for relationships, cause/effect, and to make inferences related to student learning. This is also the step to generate questions about 'what if' and 'why'.
b) Teachers are asked to reflect on the following in writing for three minutes:
   • What inferences are you able to draw? Can you support those inferences?
   • What explanations might shed light on this data?
c) The group share their inferences through a 'go-around' process. The facilitator encourages team members to support their statements with evidence from the data. The recorder will document the ideas from the group.

STEP 4: IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

(10 minutes: 3 minutes silently writing individual ideas for practice; 7 minutes for group discussion)

The facilitator tells the group that this step is designed to help answer the question, "What are the implications for teaching, learning, and increasing student success?" The group will seek to identify connections between what is missing, what needs to change, and what is working.

a) Teachers are asked to reflect on the following for three minutes:
   • What issues have been raised about school-wide practices and classroom practices?
   • What is the first step to increase student success in this area?
   • What are the next steps this group should take?
b) The group discusses what this data implies for their classroom practice.
c) The group designs an action plan that might outline changes in instructional practice, analysis of textbook alignment, or a new unit organization. The team determines what data are appropriate to be discussed at the next meeting to help to monitor the plan. The recorder documents the plan.

DEBRIEF THE PROCESS

(5 minutes)

The facilitator leads the group through a discussion of this protocol process using the following prompts:
• What went well? What could be improved?
• Did you change your thinking? If so, in what ways?
• How did this protocol work for you?

Describing Student Work: A Slice of Writing Protocol (Modified)

This protocol focuses the conversation to help teachers as they examine students' work. By utilizing this guided discussion framework, teachers are able to learn more about their practices to help them ultimately improve outcomes.

Within strong, sustainable learning communities, teachers share a vision and a set of values that guide their work. An unwavering focus on student learning fuels the learning and the dialogue that takes place between colleagues. In order to be effective, Dufour (2004) stated, "collaborative teacher conversations must quickly move beyond "What will we teach?" to "How will we know when each student has learned?"(p. 4). Therefore, it is essential that school-based teams utilize processes or protocols to focus teacher dialogue around actual student work as it is a key source of evidence of student learning.

In the schools within which I work I have implemented protocols to deepen the discussions, create space for teacher reflection, and maximize the use of collaborative time in an effort to support collegial learning. When using a protocol to facilitate a professional learning community meeting, consider following these steps: first, review the group's pre-existing norms; next, share the purpose of the structure; then lay out the guidelines and; finally, allow the structured conversation to unfold.

This protocol focuses the conversation on student learning through a guided discussion framework that supports teachers as they examine students' work to gain an understanding about their practices to help them ultimately improve outcomes.

In order for teachers to benefit most from this work, it is crucial that the team collaboratively determines the focus question and, if possible, co-construct the task in advance. The facilitator must strategically plan for the focus of each round, keeping in mind the framed question. These elements impact the depth of the reflection and the dialogue that transpires in this collaborative session, thus the value and power of this protocol are unleashed mainly as a result of the facilitator's attention to these details.

The structure of Describing Student Work: A Slice of Writing can easily be modified to support learning in any content area. This protocol is fairly structured, however, the tightness helps to ensure that the conversation stays focused and goals are achieved even when working within specific time frames. Facilitators are free to loosen the structure by:

*   removing the time restrictions;
*   moving from a structured round to a 'popcorn' style;
*   sharing some of the responsibilities with participants;
*   shifting the purpose of each round as the need arises; or
*   embedding talk time or other reflective structures.

Often, safe environments are fostered through flexible facilitation, however, to accomplish this a skilled and experienced facilitator must make informed decisions to benefit the group. This protocol supports teachers as they collaboratively explore their beliefs about high quality student work, reflect on their assessment practices, and plan for more intensive supports to improve student learning.

Reference:
Dufour, R. (2004). *What is a Professional Learning Community?* Educational Leadership. 61 (8).

Describing Student Work: A Slice of Writing Protocol (Modified)

The original version of this protocol was developed in the field by educators affiliated with National School Reform Faculty. It was shared on the National School Reform Faculty's website www.nsrfharmony.org.

PURPOSE

Teams that would benefit from planning instructional next steps to support student learning can use this protocol to:
- explore curriculum standards and the rigor of assignments;
- investigate practical methods of improving assessment practices;
- provide students with high quality feedback; and
- uncover their beliefs about the elements of high quality student work.

PREPARATION

1. Prior to meeting with the group, teachers in a learning community should select a common writing prompt or assignment that is administered across all of their classes. While the assignment is common, the process of engaging students in the actual writing does not have to be standard-ized, although teachers may choose to standardize this depending on the group's focus question and purpose. An example of a focus question that the group may use to examine the writing (provided by **nsrf.org**) might be, "What are the characteristics of proficient writing?" This question may not require a timed sample.

2. Classroom teachers should assess the samples before the collaborative session. Teachers are encouraged to select and make copies of: one high, one medium, and one low sample. It is suggested that one of these samples represent the work of an English Language Learner (ELL) and that all names and identifying information be removed from the samples.

3. Distribute a copy of all of the samples to each learning community member. Explain that participants will discuss the question and that they are free to respond orally or in writing (both through words and pictures) to the question or any comment that emerges from the group.

PROCESS

1. The facilitator introduces the protocol by clarifying the following points:

   - Participants are expected to speak each round and sharing occurs in a clockwise manner.
   - All participants speak in turn and describe one observation evidenced in the student work.
   - Each round has a particular focus and participants must honour the parameters of each round.
   - If appropriate, facilitation may include a brief summary of one or more rounds. In addition, the facilitator may ask participants to reflect between some rounds (e.g., a quick write).

2. Participants explore the samples, searching for the examples and evidence to help to answer the focus question. They jot notes and identify examples so that they can easily be retrieved at a later time.

3. The facilitator begins each round by reminding participants that they are strictly listing non-judgmental observations and keeping notes for the group. The purpose of each round is clearly outlined. This example applies to the example about proficient writing:

   Round 1 - General Impressions
   Round 2 - Message
   Round 3 - Sentence structure
   Round 4 - Style
   Round 5 - What common positive elements were present?
   Round 6 - What's missing?

4. After the last round participants are asked to reflect upon the following questions either orally or in writing: What does that mean for our students? What does that mean for our practices? What might we try to improve this work?

5. These reflections are then shared with the group and posted on chart paper for future dialogue.

DEBRIEF THE PROCESS

Debrief the learning and the process with the group by asking: "What did you discover?" "How did this process work for you?"

Drilling Down Protocol

This protocol focuses the school team's thinking on "drilling"

beneath the surface of an issue to begin exploring possible solutions.

As highly effective school teams dialogue about the perplexities of teaching and learning, they employ protocols to maintain a clear focus. In order to tackle the persistent issues that have hindered school improvement, all stakeholders within a professional learning community must be willing to learn by: "questioning, investigating, and seeking solutions" to these issues (Kleine-Kracht, 1993, p.393). Unrelenting obstacles or issues that influence students and teachers require careful examination through multiple lenses and through thoughtful reflection. When teams deconstruct seemingly overwhelming obstacles, they are better prepared to welcome new perspectives and explore new solutions. Thinking deeply about the various dimensions of an issue enables teachers to arrive at creative solutions that hold the potential to significantly impact learning and to ultimately change schools. Teachers who once blamed issues such as "lack of student motivation" on factors beyond their control are now investigating beyond the surface and working to uncover strategies that could impact change. When these obstacles are addressed, they can build staff morale and reverse toxic school cultures.

The beginning of the school year, when staff is filled with energy and hope for the coming year, is an opportune time to highlight one or two of these obstacles for discussion. The Drilling Down Protocol is also useful in opening the door to discuss complex and sometimes sensitive issues at any point in the school year. This protocol focuses the school team's thinking on "drilling" beneath the surface of an issue to begin exploring possible solutions.

MY EXPERIENCE USING DRILLING DOWN

I had the opportunity to engage in a similar protocol with a group of teachers. The topic that the staff identified as a high-stakes problem was increasing staff "buy-in" for professional learning communities. This emotionally-charged topic called for a protocol that would enable the teachers to think from multiple perspectives, reflect upon their own beliefs, and seek solutions that would lead to school improvement.

In my eyes, this protocol laid the necessary groundwork to begin to host conversations about the perceptions and misconceptions about how professional learning communities might play out in this school. From the writing that had occurred around the table, the administrator quickly realized that he needed to clarify his desire to build structures that work for staff, rather than own or control the collaborative work of teachers. Once the staff understood the role the principal wanted to play, they started to explore methods of collaborating and specific learning they might pursue together. Staff walked away from this dialogue with a refined understanding of how they might operate as a professional learning community and the steps they could take to move forward as a team.

This protocol is not meant to be a "silver bullet" solution to the tough issues that pervade schools. Its effects may not even be immediately evident. With thoughtful planning and open facilitation, this protocol could help schools take, in many cases, the long overdue first steps to change.

Reference:
Kleine-Kracht, P.A. (1993). *The principal in a community of learning*. Journal of School Leadership, 3(4), 391-399.

Drilling Down Protocol

Margot Heaton was originally introduced to a version of this protocol while visiting District 125 Adlai Stevenson High School and District 96 Kildeer Countryside Schools in Chicago, Illinois. The administrative team at the Chicago schools lead the observers through a similar protocol.

PURPOSE
Teams that would benefit from engaging in reflection and having tough conversations about issues that impact student learning can use this protocol to:
- dig deeper into a staff issue;
- explore a common obstacle facing students;
- generate ideas to solve dilemmas;
- encourage team members to consider other perspectives.

PREPARATION
1. Prior to meeting with the group, the facilitator must identify one or two issues that significantly hinder the team from working toward the school vision and/or producing desired student outcomes. In order to effectively facilitate this protocol, the facilitator must be prepared to honour the multiple views that will be shared.

2. The most effective physical arrangement for this activity is to have 4 or 5 members seated around each small table. Each table should have a large chart paper or butcher paper in the center.

PROCESS
1. After reviewing the norms, the facilitator introduces the protocol by clarifying the following points:
   - Participants are expected to put all of their thinking down on paper.
   - Participants are asked to only respond to the prompt that is posed by the facilitator.
   - Participants are informed that they will be sharing writing space because the paper will continue to shift clockwise and allow the opportunity for all participants to contribute their ideas to each other's thoughts.
   - Participants are made aware of the signal that cues participants to stop writing.

2. The facilitator clearly states the issue, preferably in a couple of words, and asks a participant in each group to record that at the center of the team's page.

3. Each person draws lines from the center circle to the edge of the page to identify their personal writing space.

4. The facilitator asks the team to describe the problem in writing. Participants will have approximately three minutes to write.

5. Participants are signalled to stop writing. At this point, they must turn the paper clockwise one position so that a participant's writing is now in front of his/her neighbour.

6. The facilitator then asks the neighbour to read and think about the previous person's written message which is now in front of him/her.

7. Without responding directly to that message, the facilitator asks the neighbour to think about, then respond below the previous message to the following prompt: "Why does this problem exist?"

8. Once participants are signalled to stop writing, the team shifts the paper clockwise one position again so that now two participants' writing is in front of each neighbour. The neighbour is encouraged to read the messages and think about what his/her colleagues have written.

9. The facilitator then asks participants to think and then respond below the other messages to the following prompt: "What makes this issue so challenging to overcome?"

10. The facilitator signals participants to stop. The team turns the paper clockwise another position. Participants are given time to read, think, and reflect.

11. Participants respond in writing to the following prompt, "What might it look like if this problem did not exist? How would our school be different if this problem was not present in our school?"

12. The facilitator signals participants to stop writing and turn their paper clockwise one position so that their ideas can be shared with another team member.

13. Once participants have had the opportunity to read, think about, and reflect upon the ideas of their peers, they are asked to respond to this final prompt: "What action, if taken today, has the potential to make the most significant impact on eliminating this problem?" Participants are given time to think and respond.

14. Participants are signalled to stop writing and to shift their page one last time. They should have their original section of the paper in front of them. They are encouraged to read through the contributions of others and reflect upon the issue.

15. Depending on the level of sensitivity or severity of the issue and the stage of maturity of the professional learning community, the team would then share their thinking around the issue or they might commit to action on changing the issue.

DEBRIEF THE PROCESS
The facilitator debriefs the protocol, asking questions like: "How did this protocol help you to think further or differently about this issue?" "What worked well for you?" "What could we try next time to make it even more effective?"

The Multiple Perspectives Protocol (Modified)

This protocol provides a concrete structure to explore ideas that appear, at first glance, elusive, theoretical or philosophical — those topics that are unfortunately sometimes avoided because they require too much time or thinking (and sometimes seem that they don't impact what we're doing during period 3 on Wednesday).

Recently, while at a book talk with colleagues, a classroom teacher began to share new reflections about the incongruence between her perception of students' level of engagement and their actual level of engagement. This intrigued me and caused me to reflect upon 'engagement' and the various ways in which individuals demonstrate and live out engagement. Immediately I was prompted to interrogate my beliefs and investigate the concept. I began to explore my personal understanding by articulating my definition of engagement, hearing my colleagues' ideas and examining engagement through a myriad of lenses in order to grasp the concept more fully. I knew that once the topic emerged, this was the kind of conversation that held the potential to impact my practice and could even have a ripple effect into other aspects of my life. There wasn't enough time to finish the conversation.

When I came across The Multiple Perspectives Protocol it reminded me of the conversation during the book talk. This protocol provides a concrete structure to explore ideas that appear, at first glance, elusive, theoretical or philosophical – those topics that are unfortunately sometimes avoided because they require too much time or thinking (and sometimes seem that they don't impact what we're doing during period 3 on Wednesday). It is important that educators have powerful conversations about topics such as what constitutes engagement because our beliefs around these concepts seep into every moment of every day for students in schools.

For school boards that are concerned with improving schools, the first order of business is to focus on the learning of educators. Carmichael (1982) held the firm belief that students cannot raise their level of achievement until teachers become more effective in their own practice. Professional learning communities have the potential to create a context of collegiality and a structure to support teachers in improving their practice. In strong, sustainable learning communities, teachers accept shared responsibility as they grapple with the daunting questions and mysteries of teaching and learning to ultimately become more effective in their work with students. When nurtured, learning communities can literally transform schools and produce fruitful learning for administrators, teachers and students. Learning communities can become a place for teachers to share their diverse perspectives, reflect upon their beliefs and assumptions, and articulate their practice and learning. This collective work is the true nectar of collaborative learning. By regularly engaging in this type of thinking, we move closer to excellence.

Reference:

Carmichael, L. (1982). Leaders as learners: A possible dream. *Educational Leadership*, 40(1), 58.59.

The Multiple Perspectives Protocol (Modified)

The original version of this protocol was developed in the field by educators affiliated with National School Reform Faculty. It was shared on the National School Reform Faculty's website www.nsrfharmony.org.

PURPOSE

This protocol is useful when the team is looking at differentiating learning opportunities and helping teachers to become aware of their own lens that might shape some aspects of their teaching. It may be a useful structure when the group needs to explore new approaches and solutions to issues affecting teaching and learning. This protocol can be used when certain voices are consistently left unheard. It could be a powerful structure to explore philosophical issues and to help teachers develop or align their ideas in these areas.

TIME
45 minutes

PREPRATION

1. The facilitator identifies the question that has emerged from the group's work that will be investigated.

2. The facilitator gathers writing materials for participants.

3. The facilitator reviews the norms and introduces the protocol by explaining that participants will be introducing themselves and describing themselves so that the group understands the lens through which they are viewing the work. The facilitator points out that point of view can be broadly defined (e.g. "woman" or "African American") or more narrowly, (e.g. "first-year teacher" or "second-year teacher").

PROCESS

1. **Participants introduce themselves by stating their name and their point of view.** Participants are encouraged to select their identifying perspectives according to the group's purpose. Clearly this involves judgment, but no one's self-selected perspective is for the group to dispute. (5 minutes)

2. **The facilitator presents a question which has emerged from the work of the group** or which has emerged as an important one to the group (e.g. "What is rigor, actually?"). (1 minute)

3. **All of the members write their first thoughts regarding the question**. (4 minutes)

4. **Each participant, in turn, gives their preliminary thinking on the question, prefaced with their point of view:** "From the point of view of a student, I think..." (8 minutes)

5. Each member participates in a second round of discussion, **with each person giving their thinking or asking a question *based upon what they heard from the other participants*:** "Having heard all of the other points of view, I now think..." or "When the student said... I wondered if..." (10 minutes)

6. **Each participant journals again with the following prompts in mind:** "What I am thinking or wondering suggests that I need to learn about..." and "Our conversation will impact my practice in this way..." (5 minutes)

7. **A final round to share either what participants think they need to learn next and how their current perspective will impact on their practice.** (10 minutes)

DEBRIEF THE PROCESS

The facilitator leads the group through a discussion of this protocol process using the following prompts:
• What went well? What could be improved?
• Did you change your thinking? If so, in what ways?
• How did this protocol work for you?

Questioning Circle Protocol

**This protocol focuses the learning on developing
high-quality questions and reflecting upon a question
instead of simply providing the first solution available.**

Cultivating an authentic culture of inquiry requires a dedication to asking questions – not spurting out answers and directives. Grimmett (1996) identified focusing teaching talk and helping teachers to frame their inquiry as two of the main roles of school leaders. In a study of Ontario principals, Mitchell and Castle (2005) found that informal daily dialogue and the use of praise and encouragement were the two main strategies used when principals interacted with teaching staff. In order to foster a culture of inquiry and support teachers as they develop the associated habits of mind, it becomes necessary for school principals to move beyond superficial talk so that they may "create conditions that encourage intellectual conversations, stimulate new thinking, and energize teaching and learning" (Mitchell & Castle, 2005, p. 430). This shift will require persistence on the part of school leaders. "The art of asking open-ended questions that mediate meaning must be learned, practiced and refined. How leaders learn to frame questions either limits or enhances the group's ability to construct meaning and act in concert with others." (Zimmerman, 2003, pp. 89-111).

Changing the cognitive climate within the school requires teachers to be involved in this same process through a commitment to questioning. Building teachers' capacity for inquiry-based thinking and professional talk in the school can be supported by school leaders. School leaders can facilitate the development of these skills through both the regular and intentional use of high-quality questions and by engaging teachers in developing their own rich questions through protocols that target these capacities.

This protocol focuses the learning on developing high-quality questions and reflecting upon a question instead of simply providing the first solution available. In addition, it promotes rich dialogue around an article or text pertaining to a topic relevant to the professional learning goals of the group. Participants will likely benefit from repeating this protocol to allow plenty of opportunities to enable individuals to persist in thinking about questions instead of assuming that the best solutions have already been identified. In order to develop and refine the intellectual dialogue in the school, school leaders must demonstrate an ongoing commitment to inquiry by asking the right questions and engaging staff in these types of conversations both informally and through protocols.

Tips For Developing Questioning Skills
- Plan prompts and questions in advance, giving careful consideration to the purpose, audience and process.
- Use wait time after posing questions to allow others time to think it through.
- Use prompts and probes to clarify and really understand others' responses and insights.
- Ask a colleague to record some of the questions that you ask during a meeting and reflect upon the quality of the questions.
- Pose a question and paraphrase others' answers before stating your own view or providing your solution.

References:
Grimmett, P.P. (1996). The struggles of teacher research in a context of education reform: Implications for instructional supervision. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, 12(1), pp. 37-65.
Mitchell, C., & Castle, J. B. (2005). The instructional role of elementary school principals. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 28(3), pp. 409-433.
Zimmerman, D.P. (2003). The linguistics of leadership. In L. Lambert (Ed.), The constructivist leader (pp. 89-111). New York: Teachers College Press.

Questioning Circle Protocol

The original version of this protocol was published in Leading Through Quality Questioning by Walsh and Sattes, p. 103).
Walsh, J. A. & Sattes, B. D. (2010). Leading Through Quality Questioning. Thousand Oaks: California. Corwin Press Ltd.

PURPOSE
This protocol was developed to:
- promote reflection upon a text in order to identify main key ideas and frame related questions.
- build trust and openness. Participants are asked to listen to, consider and learn from different points of view about a shared text.
- enrich participants' understanding of a text and help them to personally connect with the ideas presented.

PREPARATION
Prior to meeting with the group, the facilitator selects and provides either a copy of an article or a video clip to meet the identified learning goals of the team. Participants are encouraged to read the text or view the video in advance and identify three thought-provoking ideas. Participants will be organized into groups (this can be done informally upon their arrival or some pre-planning may be helpful depending on the group).

PROCESS
1. The facilitator reviews the goals for the session.

2. Time is provided for participants to read or review the article or play the video clip. The facilitator asks that individuals identify three ideas that they would like to think about and explore further. Participants are asked to develop an open-ended question for each of the three ideas (a question that begins with "I wonder…" and they are actually interested in exploring it through dialogue). Participants will also highlight the sections in the text that presented these ideas so that they can be easily found during the discussion.

3. Each group should select a facilitator to focus the work of the group and encourage participation.

4. The group facilitator informs the group that this part of the protocol is not a conversation. The facilitator invites a volunteer to pose his or her questions related to the reading. As the question is being asked, the other group members remain quiet and are invited to take notes.

5. The first volunteer selects one of his or her ideas, and guides the other participants to the appropriate section of the text and poses the question related to that section again.

6. The facilitator provides think time.

Quality Questions and Comments to Extend Thinking
Modified from "Questioning Circle", a structured group process published in Leading Through Quality Questioning (Walsh & Sattes, 2010, pp. 26-27).

PURPOSE OF QUESTION:	
To expose and get behind thinking	1. How did you figure that out? 2. What experiences have you had that lead you to this conclusion? 3. How did you know? 4. What do you mean by…? 5. What assumptions are you making when you say that? 6. How does your perspective compare to…?
To elicit extension or expansion of thinking	1. Can you give an example? 2. Can you be more specific? 3. What do you mean by the word…? 4. I follow your logic. What's best to do at this point?
To encourage self-assessment	1. Which part are you sure of? What is still puzzling you? 2. What did you learn when…? 3. How do you feel about…? 4. What can we learn from this? 5. Where are you in relation to this topic?

7. The person to the right of the participant who asked the question addresses the question by using "I wonder…" statements instead of trying to answer the question. All of the participants listen in to the ideas and are invited to jot notes.

8. Each participant takes a turn, wondering and reflecting aloud about the question.

9. After each participant has contributed, the individual who posed the question thinks aloud about the question and some of the new ideas.

10. Each group member goes through the same process. They introduce their questions, select one, direct the other members to the appropriate section, listen to the thoughts of others, and then reflect aloud upon it.

DEBRIEF THE PROCESS
Debrief the learning and the process with the group by asking "What did you discover?" and "How did this process work for you?"

Success Analysis Protocol

Protocols can be used to ignite teacher conversations and help focus discussions on fundamentally important instructional decisions. Protocols are a set of guidelines or processes that provide structure for conversations.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) afford teachers time to share best practices and explore new methods of teaching to support students in their learning. While interactions that occur during PLCs meetings are often fruitful and positive, conversations do not always delve deeply enough to engage educators in meaningful reflection and collaboration that concentrates on how to improve teaching practices. How can we help to create the conditions that foster the kinds of focused conversations that can have a meaningful impact on classroom instruction? Protocols can be used to ignite teacher conversations and help focus discussions on fundamentally important instructional decisions. Protocols are a set of guidelines or processes that provide structure for conversations. These processes for structured dialogues enable participants to use student work, teachers' lessons, professional articles, or other school-based problems as a vehicle to explore ways of improving students' learning opportunities. When interactions are structured in a particular way, professional conversations are focused, insightful, and promote reflection. Protocols can also support the development of relationships through the growth of strong trusting networks of teachers. Darling-Hammond and Easton (2009) suggested that school leaders who are seeking deep, meaningful discussions and hoping to foster a collaborative culture of critical teacher reflection would benefit from introducing protocols to PLCs.

It is always important to honour the expertise of the professionals who make up the learning community. I have found that when teams engage in discussions focusing on the strengths and knowledge teachers bring to the school, communities of teachers are willing to collaborate and a culture of trust is established naturally. Success analysis is an example of a protocol that can be used to deepen discourse and celebrate successes. It becomes a vehicle through which teachers are able to reflect on their most powerful classroom teaching experiences and look for reasons why the practices were so successful. I have witnessed educators who are reluctant to participate, open up and share their successful classroom practices with the group. A natural flow from the discussion develops around teaching practices and philosophies, allowing individuals to explore and articulate their beliefs about education.

Professional learning communities provide the structure; protocols provide the processes that people in PLCs can use for learning. Try introducing a protocol such as Success Analysis to your PLC.

Success Analysis Protocol

This protocol was developed by Daniel Baron, who worked as the co-director of the National School Reform Faculty. Baron wished to recognize Vivian Johnson, who inspired this protocol.

PURPOSE

To analyze what makes the practice so successful and to help teachers identify characteristics that are common to best practices in education. This supports teachers in critically examining their own classroom practices and articulating what elements contribute to successful and unsuccessful lessons.

PREPARATION

The team must select a timekeeper/facilitator.

PROCESS

1. Reflect on and write a short description of one "Best Practice" of your work within the last year. Note what it is about the practice that made it so successful. Be sure to answer the question, "What made this work different from other experiences?" (10 minutes)

2. In groups of 3, the first person shares their "Best Practice" and why it was so successful. (10 minutes)

3. The rest of the triad asks clarifying questions about the details of the "best practice". (5 minutes)

4. The group analyzes what they heard about the presenter's success and offers additional insights about how this practice was different than other practices. Probing questions are appropriate at this time and the presenter's participation in the conversation is encouraged. (10-15 minutes)

5. The presenter responds to the group's analysis of what made this experience so successful. (3 minutes)

6. The group celebrates the success of the presenter.

7. Each of the other members of the group takes turns sharing their "Best Practice" and what made it so successful, followed by clarifying questions and an analysis of how the practice differed from other practices. (Each round takes about 30 minutes for groups of 3)

DEBRIEF THE PROCESS

Debrief the protocol as a whole group by discussing the questions "What worked well for you during this process? and "How might we apply what we learned to other work?" (5 minutes)

Surfacing Key Ideas Protocol

This protocol provides a framework for teacher discussion while at the same time requiring teachers to deconstruct their beliefs, articulate their tacit knowledge, and welcome new perspectives and approaches to teaching and learning.

As an Instructional Coach, I work alongside school-based PLC teams to collaboratively explore methods of improving our instructional practices so that we can, in turn, positively impact student learning. Recently, in our learning community meetings, we focused our work by setting and articulating our collective professional learning goals. In order for learning to occur, we know that it is crucial that the members deconstruct and share their own successful practices. I have observed that this is sometimes where the learning ends. However, exploring current research and literature is also integral in adding to the existing knowledge and strengthening instruction.

I have used this protocol with a book talk group that met over the course of several lunch hours to discuss a professional text. The simplicity of this design invited members to comfortably engage in this loose structure while at the same time requiring teachers to deconstruct their beliefs, articulate their tacit knowledge, and welcome new perspectives and approaches to teaching and learning.

I have found this protocol helpful when working with smaller, more intimate groups. The dialogue remained focused on the text and the learning but our discussion would often weave between theory and classroom practice. As a facilitator, I also found it very easy to refocus the conversation since the sentence strips were prominently displayed in the room to guide our work. In my observations, participants have experienced deep learning and appreciated the process of engaging in the Surfacing Key Ideas Protocol. I have learned that it is essential for the facilitator to provide wait time to encourage participants to expand on the ideas of others and make meaningful connections.

Surfacing Key Ideas Protocol

This protocol was adapted by the Southern Maine Partnership from Camilla Greene's Rule of 3 Protocol in November 2003, however, it contains elements of other protocols as well. It was shared on the National School Reform's website www.nsrfharmony.org.

PURPOSE

This protocol was developed to promote collaborative conversations using research-based texts. It also fosters a shared understanding of the key ideas that the author is trying to communicate related to current professional learning needs. Its purpose is to enrich teacher practices by incorporating professional literature into PLC meetings and fostering dialogue pertaining to the implications for practitioners.

PREPARATION

Prior to meeting with the group, the facilitator provides a copy of an article or a professional book to meet the identified learning goals of the team. The members read the text in advance and select two key passages that they feel are most poignant or represent the most significant ideas. Participants should be prepared to explain their reasoning for their selections.

GETTING STARTED

The facilitator invites a member to act as the timekeeper. The goals of the session are reviewed and the norms are revisited.

PROCESS

1. Each participant writes a short passage and the associated page number in large print on a strip of chart paper. These strips are then taped to the wall (one passage per strip of paper).

2. One at a time the members will share their significant idea from the text, their reasoning for the selection and present some of their thinking. Members add their own ideas only once the presenter finishes speaking.

3. Other participants follow this same process. When the passages seem related, the strips of paper can be moved closer together. This categorization process fosters conversation helps participants to engage more deeply in the learning. The number of ideas that are discussed depends on the need and the amount of time available.

4. The group will summarize what they have learned together.

5. The facilitator then leads a debriefing process by having participants comment on how the protocol supported their learning and how they might improve upon it.

DEBRIEF THE PROCESS

Debrief the learning and the process with the group by asking "What did you discover?" and "How did this process work for you?"
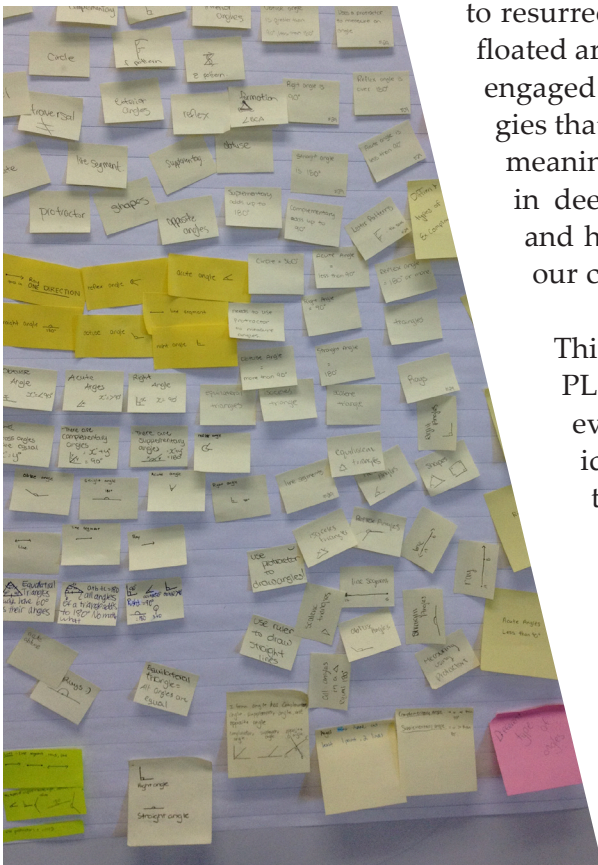
Text Rendering Experience Protocol

This protocol focuses the learning and conversation of the PLC team on making meaning of texts.

The cycle of inquiry that guides the work of sustainable learning communities consists of many components. The cycle usually begins with teachers posing questions based on their daily experiences and the student work that is collected. Collaboratively, teachers then delve more deeply into student work and begin to articulate learning needs for themselves and for their students. Next, teams of teachers examine their collective knowledge base and explore new ways of improving their practices. The members of the Professional Learning Community (PLC) implement strategies to impact teaching and learning, assess the results of these efforts, and reflect upon their actions. Additional questions arise through this process and the experiences of teachers in classrooms fuels future learning and inquiry for PLCs. In theory, this learning cycle should flow smoothly, however, the process is often bumpy and less fluid in actual practice. School teams can implement protocols to guide teams through these phases that can sometimes seem awkward or unnatural.

Recently, while working with the PLC teams at my school, I have noticed that some of our groups are stuck. Our next step is to thoroughly explore additional resources and research-based strategies to better meet the needs of students. While we dabbled in superficial conversations regarding new practices, a couple of our teams continue to resurrect conversations of current practices. Some articles have floated around and a few videos have been viewed, but we are not engaged in discussions regarding implementation of the strategies that we have learned about, nor are we using the material in meaningful ways at this point. It seems that we need to engage in deeper conversations regarding applying these strategies and how the strategies might actually benefit the students in our classrooms.

This protocol focuses the learning and conversation of the PLC team on making meaning of texts. The discussion that evolves through this protocol remains grounded in the ideas highlighted in the text but will likely weave between theory and classroom practices. Making room for teachers to connect current practices to new learning is instrumental in creating a safe environment that celebrates the work of teachers, while promoting additional learning and risk-taking. The key words, phrases and sentences that are identified by participants anchor the conversation of the team so that it can move comfortably into new directions, and focus the learning of the participants.

Text Rendering Experience Protocol

The original version of this protocol was developed in the field by educators affiliated with National School Reform Faculty. It was shared on the National School Reform Faculty's website www.nsrfharmony.org

PURPOSE
To collaboratively construct meaning, clarify and expand our thinking about a text or document.

PREPARATION
Prior to meeting with the group, the facilitator will select a text that is appropriate to the learning needs of the team. Distribute the text or link to the video in advance or provide time for team members to read or view it.

PROCESS

1. Ask participants to take a few moments to review the text or watch the video and write down the strategy or idea in a phrase or sentence form and one word that they deem particularly significant when reflecting on their students and the needs in the classroom. For example, the sentence, strategy or idea might be "Problem solving in Math requires frequent student interaction in the form of collaborative meaning making through rich accountable talk" and the word might be "Accountable"

2. Begin the first round by inviting each participant to share the significant sentence, strategy or idea that he or she selected from the text. As the group shares, a scribe should be recording the information on chart paper.

3. During the second round, each participant is invited to share the significant phrase that he or she selected from the text. The scribe will record these as well.

4. During the third round, each participant is invited to share the significant word that he or she selected from the text. The scribe will continue to record this information.

5. The group will then discuss what they heard, the connections that the teachers can make to their current practices, and the key messages the text was conveying.

6. The group will then discuss which one or two ideas or strategies the teachers would like to keep or try and which ones they would like to discard. Their decisions should be guided by their knowledge of their students and the needs in the classroom.

7. Teachers will finally debrief the protocol.

DEBRIEF THE PROCESS
Debrief the learning and the process with the group by asking
"What did you discover?" and "How did this process work for you?"

Wagon Wheel: Brainstorm Protocol

This protocol will prove useful in enegaging teachers and facilitating conversations centered on developing common understandings of educational terms that have big implications for teachers and students.

In a recent meeting at our school, teachers identified strategies and concepts that they applied in their classrooms that they feel made the greatest impact on student learning. Among the ideas on the list were rich learning tasks, differentiated instruction, accountable talk and small group instruction. While these research-based high-yield strategies have the potential to transform classrooms and support the learning of all students, I wondered if we shared a common understanding of these terms and how they play out in daily learning experiences in our school.

In a follow-up session, my principal and I decided that teachers might benefit from more opportunities to further discuss these strategies and concepts. We posted the structure for Frayer Models[1] and included the main concepts that teachers identified in the center of each graphic organizer. Teachers then worked collaboratively to complete each section of the chart. Together, they questioned, deliberated and drafted a definition of the concept, its characteristics, and examples and non-examples of their concept. Teams then circulated to consider the work of their peers. As the teachers engaged in conversations about the responses of their colleagues, they jotted notes or inserted question marks where they felt an idea was lacking, and underlined or checked if they agreed with the ideas. While the Frayer Model might appear to be such a simple template, providing this structure and the required time allowed teachers to engage in rich dialogue. Even after our meeting came to a close, teachers continued their conversations into the hallways. It was evident that this professional learning would improve the teaching and the learning in our school.

During the debrief, some teachers expressed that they gained insight into terms that they sometimes used rather loosely, others suggested that they clarified misunderstandings that had surfaced, some teachers even confirmed elements simply due to dialogue with their peers and felt more confident going forward in employing the strategies. Creating opportunities for educators to discuss common language enables them to unpack their tacit knowledge so that they can better reflect on their practices and make improvements that can impact teaching, learning and ultimately the culture of the school. In fact, when a school staff holds each other to "the possible contradictions and ambiguities of how they are using language – they learn that the language they use has an important impact on the culture they are creating." (City, E. Elmore, R., Fairman, S. & Teitel, L., p.11)

Educators often have contradictory definitions when defining terms. For instance, "in ordinary discourse in schools, the term student engagement would be allowed to pass through the discussion with no expectation of a common definition." (City, E. Elmore, R., Fairman, S. & Teitel, L., p.11) This experience revealed to me the power of digging deep into the language that we use in schools and teasing out the key pieces to refine instruction and provide the best learning opportunities for students. There are many protocols that can be used as structures to enable educators to pick apart common language. Teachers could benefit from structured steps to delve deeply into terms that have lost their meaning or whose meanings were so ambiguous that they were never fully understood.

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[1] The Frayer Model was designed by Dorothy Frayer and her colleagues at the University of Wisconsin and is available at wdve.state.wv.us/strategybank/FrayerModel.html

This protocol will prove useful in engaging teachers and facilitating conversations centered on developing common understandings of educational terms that have big implications for teachers and students.

By providing a useful structure and carving out time for educators to develop common understanding of language, schools can authentically support learning that is embedded in daily practice.

Reference:
City, E., Elmore, R., Fairman, S., &Teitel, L. (2009). *Instructional Rounds in Education: A Network Approach to Improving Teaching and Learning*. Harvard Education Press. Cambridge, MA.

Wagon Wheel: Brainstorm Protocol

The original version of this protocol was developed in the field by educators affiliated with National School Reform Faculty. It was shared on the National School Reform Faculty's website www.nsrfharmony.org.

PURPOSE
- To stimulate lots of generative thinking in a very short time.
- To create a "vivid image bank" of a new idea in action to inform the planning process.
- To develop a sense of team with a common purpose.

PREPARATION
- Four chairs back to back at the hub of the wheel and four chairs on the outer circle facing the chairs at the hub.
- Four ideas that have been pre-selected for this group to explore.

PROCESS
1. Have participants bring a pen and paper to jot both their ideas and those of their partners. Participants will fill in the seats in the wheel(s).
2. Explain that participants on the outside of the wheel will rotate one seat to the right each rotation and the participants at the hub remain in their seats. Each rotation will last 5 minutes.
3. Explain that a new topic will be posted at each rotation that participants are to discuss with their partner. They must reach a common understanding of what the topic means and then brainstorm what it would look like in action.
4. Have individual participants reflect upon their experiences and skim through their notes. Each participant should choose three to five of their favorite ideas and write them down on post-its.
5. Post chart papers with the topic title on the top around the room and have participants post their favorite ideas on the appropriate sheet.
6. Facilitate a whole group discussion to highlight some of the most salient learning for the participants.

DEBRIEF THE PROCESS
Lead the group through a discussion of the protocol process using the following prompts:
- How did this protocol work for you?
- What went well? What could be improved?

World Café Protocol (Modified)

This protocol is likely to assist participants in developing a safe environment within the community, building a solid platform upon which teachers can collaboratively examine beliefs and reflect on their craft.

NSDC's Standards for Staff Development (2001) clearly highlight ongoing teams that meet on a regular basis, for the purposes of learning, joint lesson planning, and problem-solving as one of the most powerful forms of staff development. Given this information, it becomes increasingly important to inquire into methods of making the most of this collaborative time.

As an instructional coach, I have been introducing protocols to collaborative teams and exploring their use as a means to maximize teacher learning by deepening the dialogue. When a protocol is used, the conversation remains focused on specific questions and topics and teachers have the opportunity to mine deeply into these issues so that they are able to clearly examine their beliefs and reflect on their practices as well as consider alternative instructional avenues to support student learning. When using a protocol to facilitate a professional learning community, it is important to revisit the established norms, state the purpose of the activity, give a brief outline of the process, and launch into the structured dialogue.

Recently, I introduced a modified version of the World Café Protocol to guide a learning team as they explored scaffolded prompts or questions created to challenge their thinking and support their learning.

In my experience, participants have benefited from rich learning and enjoyed the process of engaging in the World Café Protocol. I have learned that it is essential for the facilitator to invest time in developing effective questions or prompts since the success of this protocol hinges upon their quality.

World Café Protocol provides a loose structure for learning. By providing the informal guidelines and strategically creating questions that support participants' learning, this protocol is likely to assist participants in developing a safe environment within the community, building a solid platform upon which teachers can collaboratively examine beliefs and reflect on their craft.

In collaboration with a critical friend, Thomas Van Soelen, I reframed some of the questions that I used for a World Café Protocol. I had planned on using this protocol and these questions with staff that had visited another school for an observation. We used the protocol to guide our debriefing session for this visit. The main purpose was to allow staff to observe the implementation of a successful 100 minute literacy block in a classroom and to support teachers as they critically reflected on their current literacy practices. Thomas suggested that the first question should set the tone for a safe discussion between professional colleagues. Here are the questions that we used:

- Why might professionals recognize observation in classrooms (of students learning and teachers teaching) as a valuable experience?
- What evidence did you see of exemplary literacy practices?
- What do you think about the content of our professional learning together?

Thomas reminded me that some questions should be 'tougher' and possibly invite dialogue around equity.

- What are the characteristics of the students that are not thriving despite our best efforts in literacy? Why might that be?

Reference:
National Staff Development Council, pp. 1-6 (2001). NSDC's Standards for Staff Development. Oxford, OH.: Author.

World Café Protocol (Modified)

A version of this protocol was developed in the field by educators affiliated with National School Reform Faculty. In addition, similar resources were shared at http:// www.theworldcafe.com/articles/aoqp.pdf (no longer active).

PURPOSE

This protocol is useful when teams must examine and articulate assumptions, beliefs and values, sort through new ideas or concepts, as well as brainstorm possible next steps for teachers and students.

PREPARATION

1. The greatest challenge is to develop effective questions that will move participants to engage and reflect in meaningful ways. Develop four or five questions for the participants that will facilitate the desired learning outcomes. Scaffold the questions so that initial questions are relatively safe, while more probing questions should be introduced once comfort is established with this activity. (see *How Can I Frame Better Questions?*)
2. Organize tables and chairs so that there are approximately four participants at each table. A piece of chart paper should be placed atop each table. Review the norms before beginning the activity.
3. Distribute a marker to each participant and invite them to select a seat. Explain that participants will discuss the question and they are free to respond orally or in writing (both through words and pictures) to the question or any comment that emerges from the group.

PROCESS

ROUND 1:

1. Post the first prompt and provide time for participants to respond (5 – 8 minutes). Ask participants to leave one person behind at their table to host the next group. All other participants are invited to select a new seat and groups will now be mixed again.
2. Once participants arrive at their new table, the host will greet them and share some of the learning that emerged from the last dialogue (5 minutes).

ROUND 2:

3. Now the new small group will receive a second prompt and the members will have the opportunity to respond to this second prompt.
4. The same host will remain at the table and the other participants will find new seats.

This process is continued as many times as necessary; however, I would not suggest using any more than four or five questions.

5. On the last move, participants are asked to review their learning with their group and share what they felt was the most important message.
6. Essential understandings are recorded on the chart paper.
7. The essential understandings are then shared with the whole group and posted for future dialogue.

DEBRIEF THE PROCESS

Debrief the learning and the process with the group by asking: "What did you discover?" "How did this process work for you?"

HOW CAN I FRAME BETTER QUESTIONS?

Adapted from Sally Ann Roth Public Conversations Project c.1998

Here are some questions you might ask yourself as you begin to explore the art and architecture of powerful questions. They are based on pioneering work with questions being done by the Public Conversations Project, a group that helps create constructive dialogue on divisive public issues.

- Is this question relevant to the real life and real work of the people who will be exploring it?
- Is this a genuine question – a question to which I/we really don't know the answer?
- What 'work' do I want this question to do? That is, what kind of conversation, meanings and feelings do I imagine this question will evoke in those who will be exploring it?
- Is this question likely to invite fresh thinking/feeling? Is it familiar enough to be recognizable and relevant – and different enough to call forward a new response?
- What assumptions or beliefs are embedded in the way this question is constructed?
- Is this question likely to generate hope, imagination, engagement, creative action, and new possibilities or is it likely to increase a focus on past problems and obstacles?
- Does this question leave room for new and different questions to be raised as the initial question is explored?

Protocols

A Change in Practice Protocol (Modified)

Originally published in the Winter 2013 issue of the Learning Forward Ontario Newsletter.

Assessment Analysis Protocol (Modified)

Originally published in the Spring 2014 issue of the Learning Forward Ontario Newsletter.

Atlas Protocol (Modified)

Originally published in the Winter 2014 issue of of the Learning Forward Ontario Newsletter.

Consultancy/Tuning Protocol (Modified)

Originally published in the Winter 2011 issue of SDCO Connection.

Data Analysis Protocol

Originally published in the Winter 2010 issue of SDCO Connection.

Describing Student Work: A Slice of Writing Protocol (Modified)

Originally published in the Fall 2010 issue of SDCO Connection.

Drilling Down Protocol

Originally published in the Fall 2011 issue of the Learning Forward Ontario Newsletter.

The Multiple Perspectives Protocol (Modified)

Originally published in the Winter 2012 issue of the Learning Forward Ontario Newsletter.

Questioning Circle Protocol

Originally published in the Fall 2013 issue of of the Learning Forward Ontario Newsletter.

Success Analysis Protocol

Originally published in the Fall 2009 issue of SDCO Connection.

Surfacing Key Ideas Protocol

Originally published in the Spring 2011 issue of SDCO Connection.

Text Rendering Experience Protocol

Originally published in the Spring 2013 issue of of the Learning Forward Ontario Newsletter.

Wagon Wheel Brainstorm Protocol

Originally published in the Fall 2012 issue of the Learning Forward Ontario Newsletter.

World Café Protocol (Modified)

Originally published in the Spring 2010 issue of SDCO Connection.

Resources

CASE STUDY TEMPLATE – EXAMPLE	
QUESTION ABOUT THIS GROUP	
What are some next steps for supporting this team so that they might work together to produce more positive outcomes for students?	
GROUP	Jim, Sharon, Todd, Lise and Mary
INFORMATION ABOUT THIS GROUP	This is a grade level team that has worked together for over a year in learning community meetings. It was a challenge to get them to be motivated to meet and to participate at the beginning because their teaching philosophies did not align.
WORK THAT HAS BEEN DONE BY THIS GROUP (SUCCESSES)	This group has successfully moved through three separate pathways and student learning gains were evident in all classrooms. In one classroom the gains were significant (55% of the students improved); in another classroom they were minimal (6% improvement). Teachers have started to bring in some of their own lessons for sharing. They have established norms and moderate student work to determine next steps for learning in their classrooms.
CHALLENGES FOR THIS GROUP	• It appears that some members do not wish to share the workload (inequity) and other members are trying to "take over". • Accountability and support.
HERE IS MY QUESTION FOR THIS GROUP	What are some supports that might help the group to gain more commitment to the work of the learning community and to share the goals in an authentic way?
FEEDBACK AND REFLECTION	• Perhaps the group members could list the items they feel they could share/teach others as well as the items they would like to learn more about from their team members. • Perhaps Lise - who carries the load and tends to help the team keep momentum - should ask members to each take on a task to bring back to the next meeting. • Perhaps the members should confront Mary about her willingness to engage.

CASE STUDY TEMPLATE	
QUESTION ABOUT THIS GROUP	
GROUP	
INFORMATION ABOUT THIS GROUP	
WORK THAT HAS BEEN DONE BY THIS GROUP (SUCCESSES)	
CHALLENGES FOR THIS GROUP	
HERE IS MY QUESTION FOR THIS GROUP	
FEEDBACK AND REFLECTION	

Professional Learning Cycle

Plan   (2 or more team meetings)

1. Examine data/evidence to determine an area of need related to student achievement and/or engagement.

2. Select a learning focus (e.g., for a 2-4 week module/unit) that addresses the area of student need; select curriculum expectations; 'unpack' to acquire a common understanding of expected student learning.

3. Determine educator learning (i.e., what and how) required to address the area of student need (e.g., review current instructional practice and research related to learning goal).

4. Plan 'with the end in mind'
   • Decide what evidence will indicate that the area of student need has been addressed.
   • Develop evaluation task and scoring tool, tracking tool (e.g., mark book, data wall).
   • Design instruction using research-based instructional strategies and a differentiated approach (DI).
   • Acquire required resources.

Act   (1 or more team meetings)

5. Implement evidence-based strategies and actions
   • Implement instruction adjusting as needed based on ongoing assessment and feedback from students.
   • Engage in professional learning (e.g., co-teaching, peer observation, lesson study, coaching/mentoring) to build a collective understanding of the instructional approach.
   • Access professional learning resources (e.g., release time, class coverage, learning materials, subject-specific support and a DI knowledgeable team leader).

Plan · **Act** · **Reflect** · **Observe**

Supporting Implementation
Building Capacity
Leadership
Facilitation

Observe   (1 or more team meetings)

6. Monitor student learning and educator learning
   • Share and analyze evidence of student learning (including student feedback), record on tracking chart/data wall and devise next steps.
   • Share instructional practice, discuss instructional issues, find solutions for challenges, determine next steps for educator learning.

Reflect   (2 or more team meetings)

7. Examine, analyze and evaluate results:
   • co-assess/evaluate student work, share student feedback, display results
   • decide, based on the evidence, the extent to which the area of student need has been addressed
   • reflect on educator learning and decide next steps

Two factors critical to effective job-embedded learning are:

• Shared multi-level (i.e., board, school, classroom) responsibility for leading, supporting and monitoring job-embedded professional learning.
• Knowledgeable learning team facilitators whose training, ongoing learning and support is made possible by board and school leaders.

'How-to' Guide
LESSON STUDY

Practical professional development for teachers

WHAT IS LESSON STUDY?

- a small team of teachers working together in a systematic cycle of planning, teaching, observing, refining and reviewing specific lessons
- focused on addressing an identified student learning need or pedagogical challenge
- aims to provide a process for teachers to examine their practice in order to improve their impact on student learning

WHAT ACTIONS ARE INVOLVED?
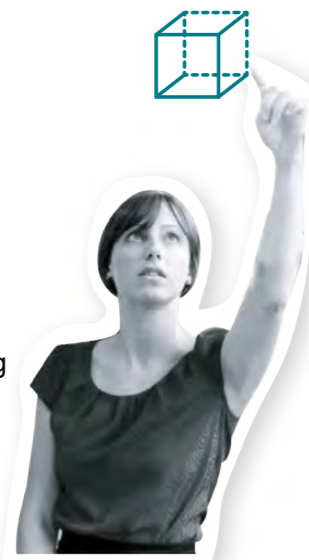
PHASE 1

Scheduling & Planning
- focus of the lesson study is defined using identified student needs or pedagogical challenge
- teachers work collaboratively to draw up a detailed lesson plan

- may use backward design - start with the clarification of the learning goal, then design of instructional experiences that lead to the desired outcome

PHASE 2

Teaching & Observing
- the plan is used by one teacher to teach the lesson
- group members observe the lesson and take notes, with a focus on what the students are doing and understanding

PHASE 3

Debriefing & Improving
- group meets to discuss observations
- discussion is focused on data collected and notes recorded
- lesson plan is revised and amended based on the group discussion

PHASE 4

Re-teaching & Reflecting
- a different group member teaches the revised lesson plan with a different class
- group members observe and take notes, with the focus on what the students are doing and understanding
- group meets again to discuss both observed lessons including differences, similarities, and changes
- a group report is produced outlining teacher learning and achievements in relation to identified student learning needs
- outcomes are shared with other teachers in the school

WHY LESSON STUDY?

- fosters the development of a common understanding of what good teaching practice looks like
- focuses discussion on planning, implementing, observing and reflecting on classroom practice
- enables collaboration with colleagues
- supports teachers to become more attuned to how they structure lessons in their class and the impact of their teaching on students

WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS?

- groups are led by teachers
- groups are unobtrusive observers in the classroom(s)
- an observation of student learning, not an evaluation of the observed teacher
- a commitment to collaborative learning that takes into account the school context and professional learning culture, the experiences of teachers and the needs of students
- can be undertaken as frequently as desired

WHAT DO I NEED TO CONSIDER?

- completion of a single cycle can be time-intensive
  > reviewing and revising school structures may be necessary to provide sufficient professional learning time to complete Lesson Study
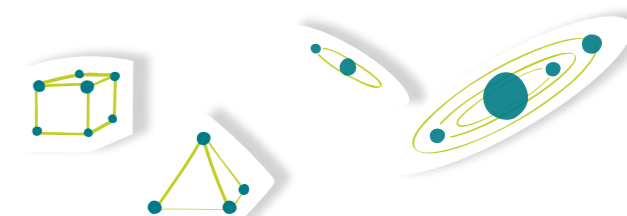
Where can I find out more?

Lesson Study (Lesson Study Research Group, Columbia University)

Lesson study guide (Cerbin and Kopp, 2011)

Lesson Study Debriefing Protocol

Step 1: • Teacher who delivered the lesson ("the observed") starts the discussion by sharing his/her observations.

Step 2: • Other participants ("the observers") begin to raise a point of interest, stating as clearly and fully as possible what occurred for the students based on the evidence collected.

Step 3: • A conversation develops around the point of interest with both observer and observed attempting to sort out, "What was going on here?"

Step 4: • **"The Observed" shares -** "What did you notice about the impact of your responses to students?"

Step 5: • **The Observers respond -** Supply specific evidence, summarize, ask clarifying questions

Step 6: • **Reflect -** How will what I learned impact my classroom practice? What will I do differently next time? What do I need to remember to do again?

Lesson Study Checklist

LESSON STUDY ACTION STEP	RESOURCES NEEDED	DATE TO ACCOMPLISH	NOTES
Meet our PLC team to share an overview of Lesson Study.			
Get administrative team to get support			
Develop our Lesson Study Team norms			
Identify student needs and set goals			
Develop research lesson criteria			
Collaborate to design a research lesson			
Anticipate student responses and barriers to student learning			
Identify data points to measure			
Select appropriate data collection tools			
Teach the research lesson and collect evidence (data) on student learning			
Use a protocol to debrief and draw conclusions from the experience			
Collaborate to modify and improve the lesson			
Teach the modified lesson and collect evidence (data) on student learning			
Reflect and assess student progress toward the identified need			

Data Team Process: Start to Finish

1. **Examine expectations**. Begin with a small time element: a month, unit, chapter, or quarter.
   a. Examine the specific expectations for that specific time period (unit, quarter, month, etc.) by referring to curriculum guide, state framework, and standards documents.
   b. Formulate questions.
      i. What concepts and skills must students master as a result of your teaching during this time period (quarter, month, chapter, etc.)?

2. **Develop curriculum map**.
   a. What does your year-long map look like?
   b. How will you strategically place/schedule content and concepts during the year so that students will have optimal time to understand concepts and apply skills?

3. **Create a common post-assessment**. This will be administered at the conclusion of the teaching time (unit, quarter, month) based on what students must master (Power Standards).

4. **Administer the common post-assessment BEFORE teaching**. At this time it acts as a pre-assessment.
   a. What foundation do students already have?
   b. What knowledge, understanding, and skills do students already have about the topic that they are about to study?
   c. Which students are starting absolutely at square one in terms of understanding the concepts and/or applying the skills?
   d. Send pre-assessment data to Data Team leader.

5. **Go through the five formal and definitive steps of the Data Team process:**
   a. *Step 1—Collect and chart data.*
      This data is generated from the pre-assessment. Data Team leader prepares a simple graph with pre-assessment data, including total number of students, students who are proficient or higher, students who are not proficient, and percentage of students who are proficient or higher.

Teachers' names	# students who took assessment	# students proficient and higher	% students proficient and higher	# students not proficient	# and names of students likely to be proficient at end of instructional time—*students already close*	# and names of students likely to be proficient at end of instructional time—*students who have far to go*	# and names of students not likely to be proficient—*intervention group in need of extensive support*
Manuel	26	7	27%	19			
Marie	29	4	14%	25			
Thomas	32	3	9%	29			
Angela	31	8	26%	23			
Totals	**118**	**22**	**19%**	**96**			

   b. *Step 2—Analyze strengths and obstacles.*
      With actual student papers in hand, examine papers for what students are able to do, as well as for what is missing. What is present becomes strengths. What is missing becomes obstacles or challenges, which then become the priority—the FOCUS—for the teaching unit.

Strengths of student work (evidence)	Obstacles/challenges (content/skills in which students have little or no foundation)
[This information becomes the basis of your celebration.]	[This information determines your priorities or focus.]

c. *Step 3—Establish goals: set, review, revise.*

Use an exact form of goal statement to include all parts of the information needed in a SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timely) goal.

Example:
% of **Grade 7 students** scoring proficient and higher in **Mathematics** will increase from **28%** to **73%** by the **end of October** as measured by a **team-created assessment** administered on **October 30 (31 make-up date)**.

d. *Step 4—Select instructional strategies (what will you do for YOUR students?)*
   i. What concepts are the focus of the specific time period (unit, quarter, month, etc.)?
   ii. What are student intervention needs? Drastic measures requiring drastic action?
   iii. What strategies will you implement that will have greater impact student achievement?
   iv. Keeping in mind the effective teaching strategies, which techniques will you select to focus on? Which strategies will help the most students and maximize learning?

   Techniques:

Comparing	*Cooperative Groups*
Classifying	*Setting Objectives*
Creating Metaphors	*Providing Feedback*
Creating Analogies	*Generating Hypotheses*
Summarizing	*Testing Hypotheses*
Note-Taking	*Cueing*
Effort	*Questioning*
Recognition	*Advance Organizers (graphic organizers)*
Homework	*Writing*
Practice	
Nonlinguistic Representation	

e. *Step 5—Determine results indicators.*
   i. "When WE implement the strategies/techniques identified in step 4, then WE expect the following in terms of what students will demonstrate":

   Students will demonstrate:
   - Understanding of concepts and skills (e.g., math)
   - *Increased confidence*
   - Increased application when using the comparing strategy in all subjects
   - Improved ability to think in more complex ways

Teach and then assess (using formative assessment techniques; part or all of the pre-/post-assessment is appropriate to see students' learning in relation to proficiency of expected outcomes). Using a variety of instructional techniques and learning activities for students, begin the instructional cycle again.

1. **Administer and score post-assessment** created before instruction took place.

2. **Submit data to Data Team leader** to prepare for Data Team meeting.

3. **Meet as a team/department** to determine if goal was met, and next steps.

4. **Examine curriculum map** for next unit, month, quarter, etc. Begin cycle again; see step 1 and repeat steps.

Questions to Consider:		PLC Action Planning		
How will you organize PLC teams? How will teams develop a collaborative culture? What concerns will your SMART goal address? How frequently will PLCs meet? How will norms be developed? How will team roles be determined? What format will be used for agendas/minutes? Which protocols will you use? How will CFAs be utilized?		**NOTES:**		
Action Step	**Responsible Team Member(s)**	**Implementation Date**	**Materials & Resources**	**Protocol**
		WEEK ONE		
		WEEK TWO		
		WEEK THREE		

———————————————————
Principal Signature