Tool nr. 20 - material

Developed by: Catholic Education Flanders

Name of the material

Protocols, purpose roles and how they work

Sources

Linpilcare & School Reform Initiative: http://www.schoolreforminitiative.org/

Purpose of the material

You learn to know:

- What a protocol is;
- What the roles are in a protocol;
- Why you can use a protocol;
- How you can use a protocol.

Material

What is a protocol:

Protocols consist of agreed upon guidelines for conversation. It is the existence of this structure, which everyone understands and has agreed to, that permits a certain kind of conversation to occur – often a kind of conversation that people are not in the habit of having.

Protocols are vehicles for building the skills – and culture – necessary for collaborative work. Thus, using protocols often allows groups to build trust by actually doing substantive work together.

Protocols are tools for building the skills and culture and creating the space and time necessary for reflective dialogue and collaboration. They allow participants to build trust as we engage in meaningful and authentic work.

Protocols are used to explore a piece of text, examine student work artifacts, structure more effective meetings, engage parents and community stakeholders in meaningful dialogue, as well as in classrooms to support student and adult learning.

In all cases **protocols** are designed to guide conversations, raise assumptions, reflect on our work and to collaborate in order to beter serve students learning.

Protocols are most powerful and effective when used within an ongoing professional learning community and supported by a skilled facilitator.

A **protocol** is a set of step-by-step guidelines - usually in the form of a simple one- or two-page document - that is used by educators to structure professional conversations or learning experiences to ensure that meeting, planning, or group-collaboration time is used efficiently, purposefully, and productively.

What are the general purposes to use protocols:

While the specific purpose, process, and goals of a protocol may vary widely, educators

commonly use protocols to structure professional discussions about instructional techniques,

student work, student-performance data, or research studies and articles. The use of protocols serves several general purposes:

- Ensuring that educators remain focused on the specific, agreed-upon objectives and goals for a professional conversation;

- Building the foundational communication and facilitation skills essential to effective professional collaboration;

- Helping to nurture a culture of collegiality, trust, and mutual appreciation;

- Ensuring everyone in the group has an opportunity to contribute and be heard during a discussion;

- Reducing the tendency toward subjective, digressive, or one-sided conversations;

- Promoting focused, substantive, in-depth conversations about a specific topic;

- Encouraging active, respectful listening among all participants;

- Providing a "safe space" for teachers to share their work with colleagues without being concerned about negative criticism;

- Allowing difficult questions or issues to be raised in constructive ways;

- Eliminating unhelpful excuses, complaints, or comments about student behavior from professional discussion;

- Keeping conversations focused on goals, solutions, and results;

- Ensuring that the voice of every participant is heard and respected;

- Respecting the time and coming to conclusions that participants can use in their daily practice.

What are protocols designed for:

- Protocols are specifically designed to encourage all participants in a discussion to listen actively and respectfully and to contribute constructive comments and feedback while refraining from less productive forms of conversation, such as digressions, complaints, excuses, or disparaging comments.

- Protocols may be used to structure discussions or group activities and, once completed, they are often followed by some form of debriefing process during which participants discuss what they learned from the experience and/or how the process worked well and how it could be improved.

- Protocols are most commonly used in professional learning communities—groups of educators, usually teachers, who meet regularly, share expertise, and work

collaboratively to improve their teaching skills and the academic performance of their students.

What are the possible roles in protocols:

Facilitator: In most cases, an assigned facilitator leads a group of teachers through a protocol to make sure that the conversation follows the established process and that everyone has an opportunity to contribute to the discussion.

Presenter: In a protocol a presenter shares the context and details about some aspects of her/his work with the group. Mostly a presenter offers a focusing question that will guide the protocol to follow.

Recorder: Protocols also commonly suggest that educators select a "recorder" who takes notes on the group discussion.

Time keeper: During a protocol, there is mostly a time keeper who monitors time and keeps the group on schedule.

Process observer/reporter: Is the person who monitors the discussion and points out problems that arose or positive outcomes that resulted.

How do protocols work:

Introduction:

Protocols set boundaries for our conversations. Protocols set aside time specifically for listening, noticing, thinking and speaking. The following are basic elements or stages of many protocols that are designed to provide the members of the group time to listen, notice, think, and speak.

Presentation:

At the beginning of most protocols, the presenter shares context and details about some aspects of her/his work with the group. This may include written documents, data, or a sampling of student produced work. At the end of the presentation the presenter offers a focusing question that will guide the protocol to follow. Group members are silent during the presentation.

Clarifying questions:

Clarifying questions have brief, factual answers. They ask the presenter "who, what, where, when and how." These are not "why" or "what other approaches have you considered" questions. They can be answered quickly and succintly, often with a phrase or two. The purpose of clarifying questions is to help the questioner better understand the presenter's situation, and as such, are not likely to offer any "food for thought" to the presenter. The facilitator of the protocol will ask group members to pose clarifying questions and the presenter responds.

Group discussion:

The group talks (structured) with one another while the presenter listens silently and takes notes. It is helpful for the presenter to pull her/his chair back slightly from the group where she/he can more easily "listen in" and take notes without feeling the need to give eye contact or any other kind of response to the speakers. The group talks about the presenter in the third person, almost as if she/he were not there. Another tactic is to focus the discussion on the work that the presenter has brought. So the conversation is not about the presenter but about the work. As awkward as this may feel at first, it often opens up a richer conversation, and it is only for fifteen minutes or even less! It is the group's job to offer an analysis of the situation; it is not necessary to solve the problem or offer a definitive answer.

Presenter response:

During this time the presenter thinks out loud about what were, for her or him, the most significant comments, ideas, or questions she/he heard during the group discussion. She/he might also share any new thoughts or questions that emerged for them while listening to the group.

Reflection/debrief

It's important to give everyone a chance to talk about the process and how it went – both as a way to learn what works for the group, as well as to reflect individually on the skills necessary for engaging in reflective dialogue. Often hearing other perspectives on the process helps people see the value of using a structured protocol.

In some protocols, you will find additional features or modifications of the above steps that have been designed for a specific purpose.

How you can use this material in your practice

- After having used some protocols, it might be interesting to delve deeper into what a protocol is, what the purpose of a protocol is and how protocols work.

Linpilcare proposes to use several protocols to discover the content of this material.

- To discover 'what protocols are', you can use the **block party** protocol.
    o The facilitator writes quotes on 'what protocols are' on index cards prior to the session. You may choose one quote per participant, or repeat some quotes;
    o Participants randomly select quotes/cards and spend a few minutes reflecting upon their quote's meaning for them and their work; (3 min.)
    o Participants mingle and share quotes in pairs. Participants are encouraged to share with 3 other participants in 5 minute segments; (12 – 15 min.)
    o (Optional) Form triads or quads and share quotes and insights about the text and its implications for our work. (12 – 15 min.)
    o As a whole group, share ideas and questions raised by the experience. This can be done popcorn style or as a round, but is usually not a conversation. (10 min.)
    o The facilitator shares the source of the quotes, posting the link, distributing the article etc. for future work. (1 min.)
- To discover the 'purposes' of protocols, you can use the **final word**. Work in groups of 4 with a timekeeper, a facilitator. Everybody is presenter.
    o Each person needs to choose one most significant purpose. It can be helpful to identify a back-up purpose as well.
    o The first person begins by reading the most significant purpose to him. Then in less then 3 minutes, this person describes why he/she has choosen this purpose.
    o Continuing around the circle, each person briefly responds to the choosen purpose and what the presenter said, in less than a minute.
- To discover 'what are protocols for' and the 'roles in protocols' you can work in pairs with the **jigsaw** protocol.

- o One participant of the pair reads 'what are protocols for' and one participant reads 'roles in protocols'
  - o After reading their part, they share what they read;
- To discover 'how protocols work' you can also work in groups of four with the jigsaw protocol.
  - o Participant 1 reads: introduction & presentation;
  - o Participant 2 reads: clarifying questions;
  - o Participant 3 reads: group discussion;
  - o Participant 4 reads: presenter response & debrief

Debrief – reflection and metacognition

Feedback on the use of the tool