Turning Points

TRANSFORMING MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Looking Collaboratively at Student and Teacher Work

Looking Collaboratively at Student and Teacher Work

Turning Points Guides

At the Turning Point: The Young Adolescent Learner

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Preface

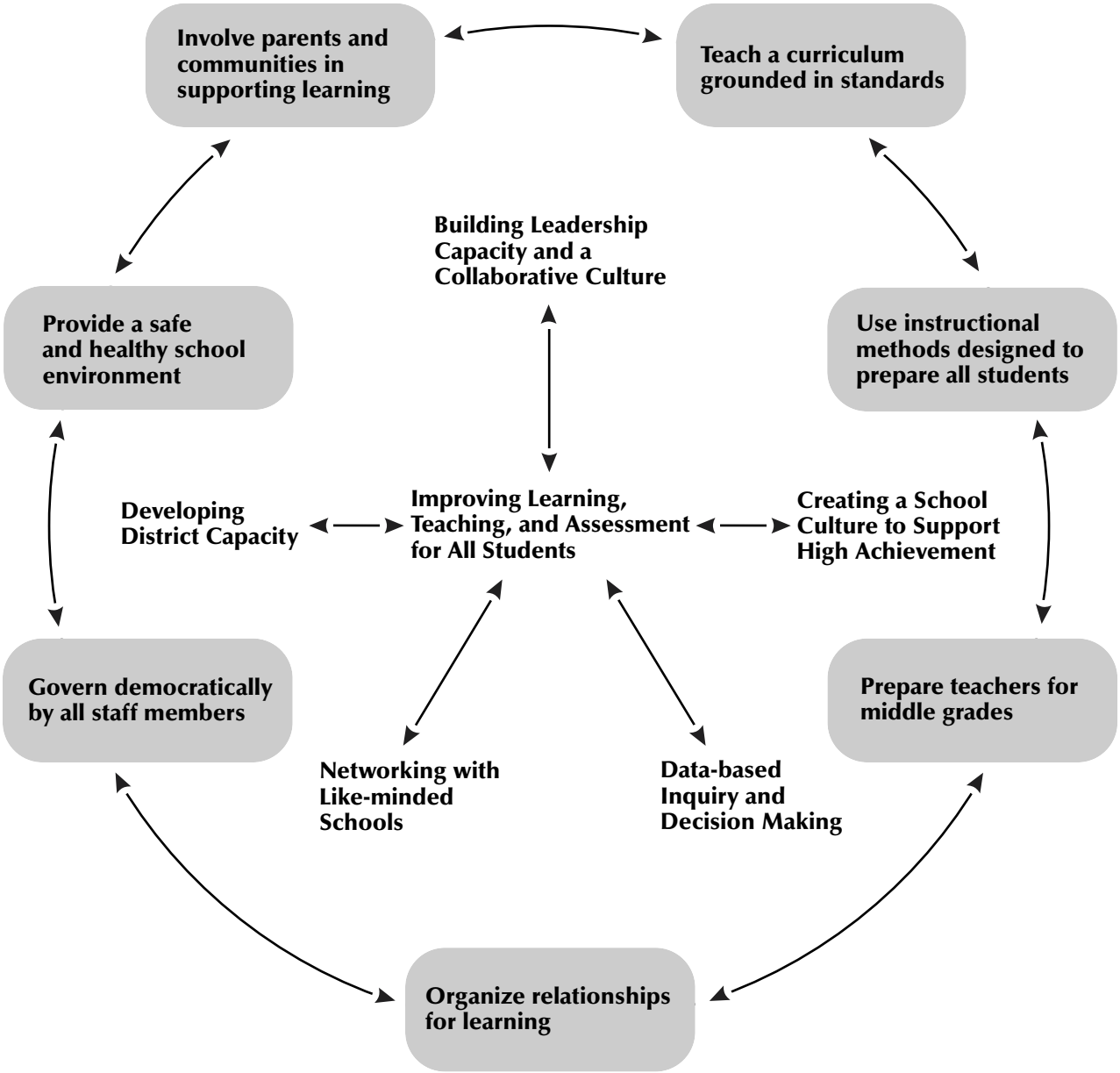
Turning Points is a national design for middle school change, coordinated by the Center for Collaborative Education in Boston, Massachusetts, which serves as the National Turning Points Center. The design focuses on restructuring middle schools to improve learning, teaching, and assessment for all students. It is based on the seminal *Turning Points* report issued by the Carnegie Corporation in 1989, which concentrated on the considerable risks that young adolescents face as they reach the "turning point" between childhood and adulthood.

Looking collaboratively at student and teacher work is a key focus for Turning Points schools as they work to improve student learning. Looking at student work enables schools to:

- understand what students know and are able to do
- align curriculum with the school's learning goals, and district and state standards
- assess academic growth over time
- design instructional practices to reach all students

This guide provides six protocols, structured formats that will help a school community engage in the process of collaboratively analyzing and discussing teacher and student work. The protocols help to create a safe climate for sharing work and looking at it from multiple perspectives. They vary in focus and are suited to different goals.

Turning Points Design Principles and Practices



Turning Points Principles*

- Teach a curriculum grounded in rigorous, public academic standards, relevant to the concerns of adolescents and based on how students learn best
- Use instructional methods designed to prepare all students to achieve high standards and become lifelong learners
- Staff middle grade schools with teachers who are expert at teaching young adolescents, and engage teachers in ongoing professional development
- Organize relationships for learning to create a climate of intellectual development and a caring community of shared educational purpose
- Govern democratically through direct or representative participation by all school staff members, the adults who know students best
- Provide a safe and healthy school environment as part of improving academic performance and developing caring and ethical citizens
- Involve parents and communities in supporting student learning and healthy development

Six practices translate these principles into action in each school and throughout a network of Turning Points schools in a district. Within each area of practice, teacher teams, a school leadership team, and faculty committees, engage in collaborative work.

The Six Turning Points Practices

- **Improving Learning, Teaching, and Assessment for All Students:** working collaboratively to set high standards, close the achievement gap among students, develop curriculum that promotes habits of mind and intellectual inquiry, utilize a wide range of instructional strategies and approaches, emphasize the teaching of literacy and numeracy
- **Building Leadership Capacity and a Professional Collaborative Culture:** creating a democratic school community, fostering skills and practices of strong leadership, establishing regular common planning time, embedding professional development in the daily life of the school
- **Data-based Inquiry and Decision Making:** setting a vision based on the Turning Points principles, collecting and analyzing multiple sources of data to help improve areas that most impact learning, teaching, and assessment, setting annual measurable goals
- **Creating a School Culture to Support High Achievement and Personal Development:** creating structures that promote a culture of high-quality learning and teaching, establishing small learning communities, eliminating tracking, lowering student-teacher ratios, building parent and community partnerships
- **Networking with Like-minded Schools:** participating in network meetings, summer institutes, and forums; visiting other Turning Points schools
- **Developing District Capacity to Support School Change:** building district capacity through collaboration

Introduction

Once a week the seventh grade team at Xavier Middle School gathers for an hour to look at student work. When the Turning Points coach first started using protocols with the team in October, some teachers were reluctant to participate. The process was new to them, and they were unconvinced of its benefits. They felt nervous about sharing their students' work with colleagues.

Four months later, the team has gained confidence in the process. Today, Ms. Waters, the language arts teacher, is taking a turn at facilitating the meeting. Mr. George, the social studies teacher, has brought several pieces of work representing the wide range of student performance from one of his classes. Before beginning the discussion, Ms. Waters reminds the team of the norms for using the protocol. Then she reviews the steps in the protocol that Mr. George wants to use.

After distributing the students' papers and the assignment, Mr. George describes his dilemma to the team. "I give this assignment every year at this time, but this year I feel that I'm not getting the quality of questioning, research, and writing that I'm looking for from my students. Do I need to change the assignment? And if I do, what should I change to help them produce higher quality work?"

Mr. George's question represented a new level of critique for the team. In the first few months, the team had brought mostly their best assignments and the work of their best students. As they became comfortable with the process, they began to delve more deeply into looking at student work, but refrained from critical analysis of teachers' assignments. Mr. George was asking them

to look at his students' papers, together with his assignment for the work, and help him improve the assignment.

As a school implements the Turning Points practice of improving teaching, learning, and assessment for all students, faculty focus on collecting data to document how close students are to meeting the school's learning goals. Student work is one of the most authentic data sources that teachers use to inform their decisions. Teachers already spend an enormous amount of individual time grading student work and using what they learn from the work to plan future lessons. These individual assessments are a vital part of a teacher's job, and the process of looking collaboratively at student work is not designed to replace them. Through sharing different points of view, looking at student work expands how teachers examine what their students know and are able to do, and helps them gain insights into their practice.

Using Protocols for Looking at Student and Teacher Work

A protocol is a structured format with a set schedule and specific guidelines for communication among participants.

Looking collaboratively at student and teacher work is a process in which teachers primarily, but also administrators, parents, students, and members of the community, look at student and/or teacher work with the goal of improving student learning. To structure the process and create a safe, caring environment, teachers use a protocol to facilitate the conversation. A protocol is a structured format with a set schedule and specific guidelines for communication among participants.

This guide presents six protocols that Turning Points schools use for varying purposes.[1] Some are used to analyze what student work demonstrates about student learning while others are used to solve particular instructional dilemmas. As teachers work with the protocols, they may modify them to fit a specific time requirement or to help teachers and administrators examine the work more closely. At first, using protocols may feel artificial and limiting; however, teachers soon find that protocols help them mine the wealth of riches that student work contains. Through the use of protocols, teachers clarify problems, identify evidence to support opinions, share perspectives, and reflect on their practice.

1. The Coalition of Essential Schools, Annenberg Institute for School Reform, the Education Trust, and Harvard University's Project Zero are the primary sources for the protocols that are included in this guide. All protocols are public domain and may be copied and adapted.

Overview of the Protocols

THE SIX PROTOCOLS

Consultancy Protocol — Provides assistance in solving a problem or gaining insight into a dilemma. While useful for looking at student work, the Consultancy Protocol is especially effective for working collaboratively to problem solve around a particular instructional issue or challenge.

Collaborative Assessment Protocol — Provides a systematic way of looking at a piece of student work to see what it reveals about the student's thinking, knowledge, skills, and what matters to him or her. It also shows how the things that matter to the student relate to teachers' learning goals and instructional practices.

Standards Protocol — Provides a format for analyzing student work in relation to specific learning goals and a scoring rubric.

Charrette Protocol — Provides a fresh perspective to a piece of work or a project to move it forward during development, or to improve its quality during revision.

Assignment Protocol — Provides insights into how an assignment, project, unit or other piece of teacher work will enhance student learning.

Vertical Slice Protocol — Provides a snapshot of what students know and are able to do by looking at a cross-section of ordinary work produced in a school over a narrow period of time.

Beginning the Process

Mr. Torini was anxious the first time he brought in a math writing sample. He knew most of the teachers were uncomfortable with math, and he felt unsure about the writing the students had completed. Reluctantly, he distributed copies of three of his best students' responses to a math problem. The students had been asked to solve a problem using ratios, and then to describe how they had solved the problem.

There were immediate benefits for teachers and students from this discussion. The science teacher realized that she could support Mr. Torini's work and help students connect science and math by using ratios in science. The social studies teacher realized that by using ratios the students might develop a better grasp of knowledge about

the population relationships of different countries. Mr. Torini also realized that he could help the students apply the math concept to real world situations, which would provide students with a better sense of the value and purpose of math.

"Looking at student work with my colleagues gave me a professional feeling."
— (A teacher from Texas)

When teachers first begin using protocols as a way of looking at their students' work, assignments, and instructional practices, the process may feel formal or stiff. Because teachers are not accustomed to sharing work publicly with peers, the process can feel intimidating at first. However, with time and practice the protocols create a safe, professional environment for teachers to make public their students' and their own work. As teachers gain experience, their comfort increases, as do the benefits of the process.

In Turning Points schools, everyone in the school community is involved in looking at student and teacher work. Although it is most often a process that teachers practice, students, administrators, parents, and the community at large all need to be engaged in developing a deeper understanding of what students know and are able to do. As the school community sets learning goals, they must look beyond standardized test scores to the daily work and exhibition projects that students produce.

The chosen purpose of looking at student work will dictate the details about the process: how much time it will take, who is involved, and how frequently the process is used. Academic teams who share the same groups of students usually look at student and teacher work on a weekly basis. Throughout the school year it is also important for other teams such as discipline-based teams, study groups, and the leadership team to regularly use the protocols to inform their decisions.

Benefits of Looking at Student and Teacher Work

The many benefits to looking at student and teacher work include:

Gaining a more comprehensive understanding of what students know and are able to do over time: Student work helps teachers "get inside students' heads" and understand what they are thinking and how their thinking is developing over time.

Embedding professional development in teachers' daily practices to improve student achievement: When teachers participate in ongoing conversations about teaching and learning, they engage in the practice of reflective thinking about their beliefs, assumptions, and practices. Collegial feedback and critical analysis of student and teacher work in a safe and structured format creates a culture that supports continuous learning.

Building a sense of community: Looking collaboratively at student work and participating in collective problem solving moves teachers away from the isolating concept of "my students" and toward the community concept of "our students." These practices develop a culture of shared problem solving and demonstrate the power of focusing multiple perspectives on a single issue.

Fostering a culture that collaboratively assesses the quality and rigor of teacher work: Collegial feedback and discussion enables teachers to critically analyze whether their lessons or units ask students to construct knowledge, develop habits of mind, and make connections between school and the real world.

Developing shared, public criteria to assess student work: As teachers look at student and teacher work, they develop a shared language for assessing student work and a common understanding of what quality student work looks like. When these criteria are made public and shared with students, the quality of the work continues to improve.

The Protocols

In this section you will find general guidelines that apply to all protocols, a short vignette that illustrates the specific protocol, a detailed description of the time frame, materials, roles, and process for each protocol, and specific tips for each protocol.

Guidelines for Using the Protocols

Administrators and leadership teams take the lead in establishing sacrosanct time for looking at student work and ensuring that teams are familiar with logistics of time, organization, and norms that define the process. The Turning Points coach helps teams establish and become comfortable with the process. Suggested guidelines include:

Time: To foster a thoughtful and reflective discussion, protocols require between 40 to 60 minutes. In many cases, the time frame can be altered to accommodate the time limits of the school day. Prior to beginning the protocol, the facilitator should check with the presenting teacher about the best way to limit the time and then share this decision with the entire group. In each protocol, the ideal time is listed.

Academic teams should look at student work on a weekly basis for at least an hour. Because discipline-based teams meet less often, they may look at student work on a monthly basis. Other school teams should take time to look at student and teacher work and use the data they gain from the work to drive decisions about teaching and learning.

Facilitator: The coach often introduces the protocols to the faculty and models the facilitator role. While the team is in the process of learning the protocol, it is important for the coach to facilitate the meetings "transparently," making it obvious what he or she is doing, when, and why. Once the team is comfortable with the process, team members take turns facilitating.

Facilitator tips: A facilitator's role is to support the group's thinking and learning. Although the facilitator may participate in the discussion, she often serves best by listening and using her questions and comments to refocus the group, broaden the discussion, or summarize several points. She needs to create a sense of community that values all ideas and comments, gives all individuals an opportunity to speak, and allows for an individual's right to pass. A facilitator keeps the group focused, acknowledges both positive and negative energy, and ensures that the discussion includes all members of the group. The facilitator honors the starting and ending times, keeping the process moving along. Above all, it is important for the facilitator to be mindful that while the content is serious, it is important to have fun and keep a sense of humor.

Presenter: A presenter may be an individual or a group. In an academic team, teachers take turns bringing student and teacher work to share. It can be helpful to create a schedule to designate who will facilitate and who will present, but be mindful of the fact that this may need adjustment throughout the term due to unexpected interruptions in the school schedule.

Team size: Team size can vary as long as there is always sufficient "air time" for everyone participating in the protocol. Academic teams usually have four to six teachers who share the same students; critical friends groups and disciplined-based teams may have 8–12 members depending on the size of the school. If the leadership team wants all teachers to take part in a protocol, they may decide to use a "fishbowl" format in which a small group conducts the protocol and the larger group observes. Afterwards, the discussion is opened to the entire group.

Team longevity: Teams need to work together over time in order to build trust that sustains open and critical conversation. No specific or ideal length of time will ensure the creation

of trust among team members. It may take some teachers several months before they begin to feel truly comfortable with either showing their own work or providing critical feedback to colleagues.

Documents: The presenter and facilitator are responsible for providing copies of all the documents that every member of the team will need during the protocol. These include: copies of the protocol, teacher lessons, student work, rubrics, and specific learning goals.

Team norms: It is important for teams to establish norms for looking at student work that are a consistent part of the process and that are reviewed at the beginning of each protocol. While teams should generate their own norms, the suggestions on the next page may help them begin.

NORMS FOR LOOKING COLLABORATIVELY AT STUDENT AND TEACHER WORK

- Stay focused on the question or problem.
- Give balanced feedback that acknowledges strengths as well as gaps in student work and teacher assignments.
- Listen thoughtfully and openly.
- Respect differences and focus on understanding where different opinions and ideas come from.
- Reveal your thinking to others.
- Be reflective, patient, and persistent.
- Look openly and critically at the evidence.
- Look for patterns in the work.
- Be willing to change.

Consultancy Protocol[2]

Ms. Stone, the language arts teacher, brought four persuasive essays from her students, along with the graphic organizer that she gave them, to her academic team meeting. "Look at the conclusions my students are writing," she said. "These four are representative of the conclusions I'm getting from all of my students. Before they start writing, I review the organizer with them and walk them through it. But, as you can see, their conclusions are weak. They may express an opinion at the end, but they don't summarize their arguments."

Ms. Stone went on in an exasperated tone, "I haven't been able to help them understand that in a persuasive paper, the writer needs to make sure the reader clearly understands the writer's position." She looked up at her colleagues and added, "I'd appreciate your ideas about how I might get my students to write better conclusions."

The Consultancy Protocol provides the presenting teacher with assistance in solving a problem around a particular issue or challenge. After the teacher presents the context for his or her problem and frames the question, others on the team ask the presenter clarifying, short answer, and probing, thought-provoking questions to ensure that they understand the problem and to stimulate the presenter's own thinking about the problem. The team then discusses the problem and generates ideas that may help the presenter. The presenter responds to the team by reflecting on the ideas they suggested.

PURPOSE

The consultancy is generally used for:

- Analyzing complex dilemmas or challenges
- Addressing issues in students' and/or teachers' work

2. The Coalition of Essential Schools, National Re: Learning Faculty Program.

FACILITATOR TIPS

1

The success of the consultancy often depends on the quality of the presenter's question and how it is framed for the consultancy group. It is sometimes helpful for the facilitator to meet with the presenter ahead of time to prepare a brief written description of the question and related issues for the consultancy group to read as part of Step 1.

2

Clarifying and probing questions frequently confuse team members at the beginning stages of using the Consultancy Protocol.

- Clarifying questions are factual questions that can be answered with a yes, no, or short answer by the presenter.

  How many times did students work with their peer editor?

- Probing questions are open-ended, thought provoking questions asked to stimulate the presenter's reflection. They help the presenter better understand and think through the issue.

  I was wondering what strategies you have used as pre-writes to help students capture the details for their conclusions?

3

The facilitator encourages the group to discuss the issue in the third person. This is easier for the group to do if the presenter pulls her chair back from the table after answering all the questions while the group analyzes the problem. This strategy helps the team to focus their analysis on the problem and allows the presenter to listen more objectively.

CONSULTANCY PROTOCOL

Provides assistance in solving a problem or gaining insight into a dilemma.

Process

TIME: **60 minutes —** The time may be expanded or shortened by adjusting time for probing questions, the group discussion, or the presenter's response to the Consultancy.

ROLES: **Presenter —** Person who brings the issue or work to be discussed by the team.

Facilitator — Person who moves the group through the protocol, watches the time, monitors probing questions, and balances warm and cool feedback. The facilitator may also participate.

Procedure

1. PRESENTER GIVES A QUICK OVERVIEW OF THE WORK (5 MINUTES)

Presenter fully describes the context of the problem and frames a specific question for the consultancy group to consider.

2. CONSULTANCY GROUP ASKS CLARIFYING QUESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Clarifying questions have short, factual answers. The presenter responds briefly to each.

3. CONSULTANCY GROUP ASKS PROBING QUESTIONS (10 MINUTES)

The group asks probing questions of the presenter. These questions are worded to help the presenter clarify his or her thinking around the framing question. The purpose is to expand the presenter's perspective and help him or her examine the issue or dilemma. The presenter may respond, but there is no discussion by the larger group.

The facilitator ends this section by asking the presenter to restate the framing question.

CONSULTANCY PROTOCOL (CONTINUED)

4. GROUP CONSULTS AND PRESENTER LISTENS (15 MINUTES)

The group discusses the work and the issues that were presented, responding to questions such as:

What did we hear?
What are the strengths in the work or context?
What are the gaps or issues that have not been examined?
What do we think about the questions and issues presented?
What has the presenter not considered?

The conversation should include both "warm" and "cool" comments, as well as recommendations for addressing the problem. The presenter does not speak during this discussion, but instead listens and takes notes.

5. PRESENTER RESPONDS AND CONSULTANCY GROUP LISTENS (10 MINUTES)

The presenter describes what he or she heard and what resonated. The presenter shares where his or her thinking is at the moment and next steps he or she might take.

6. FACILITATOR LEADS A SHARED CONVERSATION (10 MINUTES)

Providing time for open conversation is important. In this discussion, team members can summarize responses to what the presenter said, identify common understanding of the problem, and establish a time to bring back to the group what strategies the presenter tried and what the outcomes were.

7. FACILITATOR LEADS A BRIEF DISCUSSION ON PROCESS (5 MINUTES)

The facilitator asks the group to reflect on the process. What did the team learn? What worked and what didn't work? How can the whole group take responsibility for making the process effective? (Because protocols are frequently conducted during team time, this step is often slighted or missed completely. It is an important step, even as groups become more experienced in the process.)

Collaborative Assessment Protocol[3]

The students in Mr. Winston's language arts class had just completed their third writing assignment for the term, in which they responded to a key question. The students had read, The True Story of the Three Little Pigs. *He asked the students to assume the role of literary critic for the New York Times and write a critical review of John Scieska's story. Mr. Winston brought in two samples from one student for a Collaborative Assessment Conference. He passed out the student's writing without the text or the key question. The facilitator asked the group to describe what they saw in the work.*

Trying not to make any judgments, the team began to talk about one of the compositions. One teacher said, "In the first paragraph, I see short, simple sentences that start with capitals and end with periods." Another teacher commented, "The student seems to be writing in a stiff tone." The facilitator pointed out that this was a judgment and asked the teacher to give evidence from the writing. She responded, "The paragraphs don't flow together; the student doesn't use transition words to connect them." Another teacher commented that the student provided explicit examples from the story, which supported his viewpoint that the account was accurate.

After 10–15 minutes of describing the work the facilitator asked, "What questions do these compositions raise for you about what this particular student is working on? For example, I wonder whether this student is working on point of view." The group continued to discuss the work and the student writer for about ten more minutes. The facilitator then said to Mr. Winston, "Why don't you give us your perspective on this work?"

The Collaborative Assessment Protocol provides a systematic way to 1) get information about an individual student (what he or she cares about and the issues he or she is working on) and 2) relate that information to the teacher's goals for that student. The Collaborative Assessment Protocol has "the potential to reveal not only the student's mastery of the curriculum's goals, but also a wealth of information about the student herself: her intellectual interests, her strengths, and her struggles."[4] As the vignette illustrates, it is not easy to let go of the tendency to make quick judgments, but by suspending judgments

3. Steve Seidel and colleagues at Harvard University's Project Zero.
4. Allen, D.; Blythe, T.; Powel, B. (1996) *A Guide to Looking Collaboratively at Student Work* (manuscript draft) p. 79. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Project Zero.

teachers see more clearly where a student is improving and where he or she is struggling. Through sharing the work, a teacher can get objective opinions on what it demonstrates about the student's particular strengths and needs.

PURPOSE

The Collaborative Assessment Protocol is generally used for:

- Seeing the work of a particular student in more depth
- Understanding more about the student's goals: the problems and issues he or she chooses to focus on in the context of an assignment
- Reflecting on and gathering ideas for revising classroom practice
- Assisting teachers in designing effective open-ended assignments

FACILITATOR TIPS

1. The protocol is most often used to look at more open-ended assignments, such as those that ask students to write narratives or solve problems.
2. The protocol is not meant to critique the quality of an assignment, but to discover the student's focus in the assignment and/or reveal the student's academic growth over a few months.
3. Prior to Step 1, it may be beneficial for the facilitator to remind participants that teachers need the perspective of those who are not intimate with their goals for students to help them see aspects of the student and the work that would otherwise escape them.
4. In Step 4, the facilitator needs to assist the group in suspending judgment and looking carefully at what is actually in the work rather than what one hopes to see in it or assumes is there.
5. While the protocol is generally used to look at one piece of student work, it may be adapted to look at several examples of work from one or more students.

COLLABORATIVE ASSESSMENT CONFERENCE

Provides a systematic way of looking at a piece of student work to see what it reveals about the student's thinking, knowledge, skills, and what matters to him or her. It also shows how the things that matter to the student relate to teachers' learning goals and instructional practices.

Process

TIME: **60 minutes —** This time may be varied by altering the group consultation time and/or the presenter response time.

ROLES: **Presenter —** Person who brings the issue or work to be discussed by the team.

Facilitator — Person who moves the group through the protocol, watches the time, monitors probing questions, and balances warm and cool feedback.

Procedure

1. PRESENTING THE WORK (5 MINUTES)

The facilitator reviews the protocol and the presenting teacher puts the selected work where everyone can see it, or provides copies for all participants. The teacher says nothing about the work, the context in which it was created, or the student until Step 5.

2. ANALYZING THE WORK (10 MINUTES)

The participants observe or read the work in silence, making brief notes about whatever they particularly notice.

3. DESCRIBING THE WORK (10 MINUTES)

The facilitator asks the group, "What do you see?" Group members offer observations without making judgments about the quality of the work or their personal preferences. If judgments emerge, the facilitator asks the person to describe the evidence on which the judgment is based. The presenter listens and may take notes.

4. ASKING QUESTIONS ABOUT THE WORK (10 MINUTES)

The facilitator asks the group, "What questions does this work raise for you?" Group members state any questions they have about the work, the student, the assignment, and the circumstances under which the work was carried out. The presenter makes notes about these questions (but does not respond yet).

The facilitator asks the group, "What do you think the student is working on?" Based on their reading or observations of the work, participants speculate about the problems or issues that they think the student focused on in carrying out the assignment.

COLLABORATIVE ASSESSMENT CONFERENCE (CONTINUED)

5. RESPONDING TO THE GROUP DISCUSSION (10 MINUTES)

The facilitator invites the presenter to speak. The presenter provides his or her perspective on the student's work, describing what he or she sees in it, responding to the questions raised, and adding any other important information. The presenter also comments on anything surprising or unexpected that he or she heard during the group discussion.

6. DISCUSSING IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING (10 MINUTES)

The facilitator invites everyone—the participants and the presenter—to share any thoughts they have about their own teaching, students' learning, or ways to support this particular student in the future.

7. REFLECTING ON THE COLLABORATIVE ASSESSMENT CONFERENCE (5 MINUTES)

As a group, the teachers reflect on their experiences of or reactions to the protocol as a whole, or to particular parts of it.

8. REVISITING THE PROTOCOL

The presenting teacher comes back to the team within the next few weeks to share what he or she did with the ideas from the protocol process, and note any changes observed in student learning.

Standards Protocol[5]

At a district-wide meeting of the math department, the high school teachers had shared the results of the September math placement test. As the middle school and high school teachers looked at the results they began to realize that many students at the middle school were not mastering the content outlined in the district standards. The middle school teachers decided to spend time at each monthly meeting looking at student work and analyzing how the work from each grade level aligned with the school, district, and state standards.

At the next meeting, Ms. Tandy brought a student's math product, from a pattern activity, along with the assignment sheet. The facilitator brought copies of the 7th grade math standards for everyone. The student product represented an original pattern and a brief description of the pattern. Ms. Tandy had not made a rubric for scoring this product.

After each teacher looked at the assignment and scored it based on the description in the standards, the general consensus was that this student's work reflected the novice level on the rubric. The facilitator then led the group through a series of questions about what the work told them about the student's learning in relation to the standards and about the design of the assignment.

As Ms. Tandy worked with the group, she realized that her assignment was not clearly tied to the standards. There were many parts of the standards that she had not asked the students to address. Mr. Ford, who also teaches seventh grade math and had spent time developing this unit, agreed to share his work with Ms. Tandy.

The Standards Protocol provides teachers with a structured format for analyzing the relationship between lessons, student work, standards, and rubrics. Standards, developed at state, district, and the school level to define what students know and are able to do are an important part of educational discussion. The Standards Protocol helps teachers look closely at what student work tells us about their learning as well as how well the lesson or assignment is designed to ensure that students will meet high standards.

5. Adapted from a protocol developed by the Education Trust.

PURPOSE

The Standards Protocol is used to:

- Uncover what students know and are able to do
- Analyze student learning in direct relation to standards
- Assess teacher assignments and whether they are structured to produce the desired results
- Provide suggestions for improving instruction and curriculum

FACILITATOR TIPS

1

As the focus of the Standards Protocol is to look at the relationship between student work and standards, the facilitator should help the group connect their discussion to both the work and the standards.

2

Clarifying and probing questions frequently confuse team members at the beginning stages of implementing the Standards Protocol.

- Clarifying questions are for the person asking them and provide specific details about who, what, where, when, and how.

  What standards did this assignment address?

- Probing questions are open-ended, thought provoking questions asked to stimulate the presenter's reflection. They help the presenter better understand and think through the issues uncovered in scoring the work.

  What changes do you think need to be made in the assignment to better address the standards?

3

This protocol ends with an action plan. While it is important to develop next steps and a timeline, the facilitator should also help the group to remain reflective and open.

STANDARDS PROTOCOL

Provides a format for analyzing student work in relationship to specific standards and a scoring rubric.

Process

TIME: **60 minutes —** The time may be altered for asking probing questions and for discussing implications for teaching and learning.

ROLES: **Presenter —** Teacher who brings student work, the assignment, and possibly the rubric that was used to assess the work. The presenter will also identify the standards that the assignment addresses.

Facilitator — Person who monitors the time, keeps the group on task, and ensures that the group asks probing questions and observes the norms. At the end of the protocol, the facilitator leads a discussion of the process with the group.

Procedure

1. DESCRIBING THE ASSIGNMENT AND THE STANDARDS THAT APPLY (5 MINUTES)

The presenter describes the assignment, discusses which standards the assignment addresses, and outlines the assessment process, rubric, or list of criteria. The presenter frames a question for the group to focus discussion.

2. ASKING CLARIFYING QUESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Clarifying questions have short, factual answers. The presenter responds briefly to each.

3. SCORING THE WORK (5 MINUTES)

Teachers individually score the work using the presenter's rubric. If the presenting teacher did not bring a rubric, the group can create a quick informal rubric using the standards and the assignment. The goal is to be able to have a common perception about the overall quality of the work.

STANDARDS PROTOCOL (CONTINUED)

4. LOOKING AT THE WORK (10 MINUTES)

After discussing any discrepancies in their scores, the participants look at the teacher and student work and consider questions that the work raises for them such as:

What does this work tell us about student learning in relationship to our school standards?

Are there patterns that indicate what students know and are able to do, and what they don't know?

Does this assignment help all students meet the standards?

What are the strengths of this assignment? How might it be further strengthened and better aligned with the standards?

5. ANALYZING THE WORK (15 MINUTES)

The facilitator asks the presenter to restate his question and confirms that this is the focus for the discussion by the group. The facilitator also reminds the presenter to only listen to the discussion. As the team discusses the work, they should balance the conversation between the strengths and weaknesses of the work, and tie the work to the standards.

6. PRESENTING A RESPONSE (10 MINUTES)

The presenter shares his or her perspective on the student work and what he or she heard from the group. The presenter may also want to comment on anything surprising or unexpected from the group's reflection, or about his or her thinking about the assignment, as well as how the standards were addressed by the assignment.

7. DISCUSSING IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING (10 MINUTES)

Both presenter and participants share any new thoughts they now have about their teaching practices. They may also look for ways to support this particular student. As a group they may develop an action plan that describes what needs to happen in the classroom or at the school so that all students can do this and similar tasks.

WORKSHEET FOR STANDARDS PROTOCOL

Action Planning

ACTION	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE	EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Charrette Protocol[6]

The 8th grade students at Wallace Middle School were working on their final exhibition projects. Everyone had completed the written part and now they had to develop a visual that was interactive. Each student had spent two work sessions on their plan, but many students were coming up to the teachers on the team with the same complaint. "I have an idea, but I just don't know how to make the interactive part come together."

The teachers decided that this was the ideal time to use a Charrette Protocol with their students. They reminded the students that after the person explained where she was stuck, the problem became everyone's problem. They divided the students into groups of three. Each student was given thirty minutes to have their peers work with them on making the visual more interactive.

Charrette is both a term and a process, borrowed from the architectural community, which means to improve a piece of work. A team uses this protocol when the members have reached a point in looking at teacher and student work where they cannot easily move forward on their own. Charrettes are not normally used to critique a polished product. Instead, they are held in a formative environment, where the requesting team has much to gain from the process and virtually nothing to lose. In short, Charrettes are used to scrutinize and improve work before it is ever completed.

PURPOSE

A Charrette is used for:

- Assisting a group or individual that is experiencing difficulty with the work
- Helping move a group forward that has reached a stopping point
- Improving the quality of the work

6. Kathy Juarez, Piner High School, Santa Rosa, CA.

FACILITATOR TIPS

1

The facilitator for the Charrette is a member of the consulting team who agrees to observe, take notes, ask questions when discussion dwindles, and occasionally summarize the thinking.

2

The facilitator may want to remind the group of the following points:

- Individuals or groups working together can usually produce better work than individuals or groups working in isolation ("none of us is as smart as all of us").
- There is no piece of work that with more time, thought and effort couldn't be improved ("with learning there is no finish line").

3

Unless a preset time limit is given, the Charrette ends when the requesting group knows it has what it needs from the invited group.

CHARRETTE PROTOCOL

Provides a fresh perspective to a piece of work or a project during the formative process.

Process

TIME: The Charrette is a more informal protocol. There are no specific time limits, and the presenting person or team stops the process when they have found what they were looking for. Once the problem is presented, it becomes everyone's problem. The presenter or presenting team stops the process when their needs are met. However, it is usually possible to complete a successful charrette in an hour.

ROLES: **Facilitator —** Person who records information that is being created, asks questions along the way, and occasionally summarizes the discussion.

Presenter — This may be a team or an individual. The presenter(s) describe the work completed and tell the consulting team how they are stuck and what they are hoping to get from the Charrette.

Procedure

1. FORM A CONSULTING TEAM AND PRESENT THE WORK

Team size ranges from three to six people to look at the work. Choose a facilitator from this newly formed group. The requesting team presents its work in progress while the other group listens. There are no time limits, but this usually takes five or ten minutes.

2. FOCUS THE DISCUSSION

The requesting team states what it needs or wants from the Charrette, thereby accepting the responsibility of focusing the discussion. This focus usually takes the form of a specific request, but it can be as generic as "How can we make this better?" or "What is our next step?"

3. DISCUSS THE PROBLEM

The consulting team discusses the problem while the requesting team listens and takes notes. There are no hard and fast rules, and occasionally the requesting team joins in the discussion. The emphasis is on improving the work, which now belongs to both teams. Everyone should work with the attitude that "we're in this together," and our purpose is to improve the work.

4. SUMMARIZE THE DISCUSSION

The process is stopped when the requesting team decides that they have received enough help from the consulting team. The requesting team members briefly summarize what was gained, thank the consulting team and the facilitator, and return to the work with their new ideas.

Assignment Protocol[7]

Ms. Gordon's class was just completing their humanities unit on "A Land Divided." As part of concluding the unit, Ms. Gordon was going to assign a final essay. She decided to take the assignment to the social studies meeting and ask the teachers to use the Assignment Protocol to help her analyze her work before she gave it to the students.

> **Essay question for "A Land Divided"**
>
> Harriet Tubman risks her own life and safety dozens of times in order to give other slaves a chance at freedom. Even when others show concern for Harriet, she refuses to give up her mission of helping other slaves. For that reason, she has been nominated to be honored during Black History Month 2000.
>
> You must write a letter to the selection committee. Try to convince them that Harriet should be the candidate selected for this honor during Black History Month 2000.

The facilitator asks the teachers to take a few minutes and outline how they would respond to this essay assignment. She asks them to consider what they would need to know in order to complete the assignment.

After five minutes of writing, the facilitator asks Ms. Gordon to pull her chair back from the group and asks the group to share their thinking. "When I began to develop my outline for the essay, I realized that I would need to use my knowledge about the country in the 1850s, about Harriet Tubman, and also about other black activists who might be nominated," said one teacher. Someone else noted that the assignment would push students to synthesize information from different sources.

Another responded, "I agree, but I think that students might produce better essays if there was more structure. Maybe specific evidence that the selection committee will be looking for in selecting the nominee. The students don't know the selection committee's criteria."

The teachers continued to analyze the assignment considering what criteria would be most helpful to the students.

The Assignment Protocol focuses specifically on teacher assignments. In creating a strong professional community, it is essential to

7. Turning Points New England Regional Center.

have consistent and frequent teacher communication and collaboration. While in most cases teachers can effectively examine their assignments by looking at their students' work, there is also a need for teachers as a group to assess how they are bringing learning goals into practice. This protocol provides teachers with collegial support as they plan units that challenge students and assist them in meeting their learning goals.

PURPOSE

The Assignment Protocol is used for:

- Assessing whether an assignment asks students to explain, manipulate, synthesize, generalize, hypothesize, and infer
- Determining whether a unit helps students to address big ideas, concepts, and themes
- Analyzing whether students are required to use different habits of mind
- Assessing how an assignment helps students to make connections between school and the real world

FACILITATOR TIPS

1. While time may be a limiting factor, ask teachers to take a few minutes to respond to the assignment as a student might.
2. Remind the team in step 4 to balance warm and cool feedback.
3. Help the group be specific in discussing the assignment. For example, "The assignment does ask students to synthesize knowledge they have studied throughout the unit."
4. In step 2, remind the presenter to pull his chair away from the group and for the group to discuss the assignment in the third person.
5. In step 4, help the group to make connections between the discussion of this work and their own work.

ASSIGNMENT PROTOCOL

Provides insights into how an assignment, project, unit, or other piece of teacher work will enhance student learning.

Process

TIME: **60 minutes —** Limiting the group discussion can shorten the time.

ROLES: **Presenter —** Teacher who brings the assignment or curriculum question to the group.

Facilitator — Person, who moves the group through the protocol, watches the time, balances the warm and cool feedback.

Procedure

1. PRESENTER DESCRIBES THE ASSIGNMENT (10 MINUTES)

The presenter describes his or her objectives, the context for the assignment, and how it fits into the overall plan for the semester.

2. ASKING CLARIFYING QUESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Clarifying questions have short, factual answers. The presenter responds briefly to each.

3. FACILITATOR ASKS THE GROUP TO OUTLINE HOW THEY WOULD RESPOND TO THE ASSIGNMENT (10 MINUTES)

The facilitator asks teachers to consider how they would complete this assignment by taking a few minutes to outline what their response would be.

4. FACILITATOR ASKS THE GROUP TO LOOK AT THE ASSIGNMENT (10 MINUTES)

The facilitator asks the team to first discuss the overall strengths of the assignment. He or she then moves the discussion to focus on what they think students will know and be able to do when they complete this assignment. For example, does this assignment ask students to construct knowledge, use information to analyze, synthesize, or evaluate? Does it ask students to engage in disciplined inquiry, draw conclusions, generalize the information to solve other problems, support their ideas with evidence? Finally, does the assignment connect to student experiences, feelings, and observations about the world?[8] How could it be strengthened before it is used for the first time or assigned again?

During the discussion, the team should balance warm and cool feedback.
The presenter listens as the group discusses the assignment.

8. Newman, Fred M.; Lopez, G.; Bryk, Anthony. (1998) "The Quality of Intellectual Work in Chicago Schools: A Baseline Report." Chicago, IL: Consortium on Chicago School Research.

ASSIGNMENT PROTOCOL (CONTINUED)

5. PRESENTER RESPONDS TO THE DISCUSSION (10 MINUTES)

The presenter responds to the discussion by restating what he or she heard. The teacher may identify changes he or she will make, or decide to come back at a later date with changes.

6. FACILITATOR LEADS A GENERAL DISCUSSION (10 MINUTES)

The facilitator asks if there are any general comments and whether there are any curriculum connections for others.

7. FACILITATOR ASKS THE GROUP TO ASSESS THE PROCESS (5 MINUTES)

The facilitator asks the presenter first and then the entire group about how the process worked for each of them.

Vertical Slice Protocol[9]

In the Self-Study Survey at Harry B. Thomas Middle School, students reported there was "hardly ever" any instructional innovation and variation. Since the school had focused professional development during the past year on instructional practices for heterogeneous groups and diverse learners, the leadership team decided they would look at a sampling, or "slice" of student work over a two-day period to see what it revealed about instructional practices.

The leadership team distributed the following memo to staff on Monday.

> During the past year we have worked hard to explore and implement several new instructional strategies. We believe it is important for us to see how successful we have been in actually increasing the number of instructional strategies that we use in our school. One way to do this is to use a protocol called the Vertical Slice, which captures a broad cross-section of ordinary student work over a narrow period of time.
>
> To help us conduct this protocol we would like you to collect two student artifacts from any of your classes on Wednesday and Thursday this week. These may include homework, worksheets, models, drawings, class notes, etc. Please do not plan special assignments. Ordinary student work will help us get a picture of how well we are meeting the goal we set last year to use more variety in our instruction in order better to meet our learning goals. Please remove students' names from the work and drop it in the 7th or 8th grade box by the staff mailboxes.
>
> We will be looking at this work a week from Monday during the leadership team meeting. Everyone is welcome to attend. Thank you for your help.

The Vertical Slice Protocol enables teachers to collect data, make comparisons, and determine changes in student performance. Repeated at intervals it helps the school identify overall trends in teaching and learning. The Vertical Slice is a protocol through which teachers capture and analyze all "ordinary student work" produced by a broad sample of students during a narrow time period. Ordinary

9. The Bush Educational Leaders Program at the University of Minnesota.

student work may include artwork, notes, drafts, worksheets, homework, and even discussion and classroom interaction captured on audio- or videotape. The work selected may be taken from one day up to a week.

The team conducting the slice defines the purpose and decides what artifacts will help teachers better understand students' learning. The slice may be collected school-wide, by grade, by team, or by discipline, depending on the purpose. For example, every seventh grade teacher collects five samples of work generated during two days. The team looks at the collection, which may include audiotapes, models, pictures, and writing, to see what it reveals about the focus of teaching and learning in the seventh grade.

PURPOSE

The Vertical slice is used for:

- Capturing a broad cross-section of ordinary student work over a narrow period of time
- Assessing the impact of teaching practices on student learning
- Determining how a school is focusing on teaching and learning

FACILITATOR TIPS

1. The protocol is divided into two parts. During Part A, the facilitator must plan and organize the work for the presentation.
2. In Part B, the facilitator helps the group look for patterns in the assignments and the student work.
3. In step 11, the group assesses what was learned from the process and records findings for comparison with future slices.

VERTICAL SLICE PROTOCOL

Allows a school to capture a broad cross-section of ordinary student work and examine what it reveals about teaching and learning.

Process

TIME: **Part A: Steps 1–6: Defining the purpose and collecting the data**

Part B: Steps 7–11: Analyzing the data (2 hours)

ROLES: **Presenter —** A person who describes the parameters of the slice and the methodology.

Facilitator — The facilitator is responsible for coordinating the following tasks:
Planning the presentation and organization of the work
Gathering the work
Obtaining parental permission, if necessary
Making sure that all names are removed from the work
Copying the work
Facilitating the discussion

Procedure:[10]

Part A: Collecting the Slice

1. DECIDING ON THE PURPOSE OF THE SLICE

The presenting team decides on the purpose of the slice. An example of a purpose would be: "To get an impression of the students' current level of performance, skill development, and knowledge."

2. AGREEING ON A GUIDING QUESTION

A suitable question might be, "What does the work reveal about the current literacy level and needs of the students in this grade?"

3. DECIDING ON A SAMPLING STRATEGY

The sample of student work can be distributed across the range of groups in the school or grade.

4. IDENTIFYING METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Decide on the range of student work to be collected—will the team collect only written work done in class or will it include artwork, photos, audio- and videotapes, student notes?

10. Adapted for Turning Points from Cushman, K. "Looking Collaboratively at Student Work: An Essential Toolkit." *Horace*, Vol. 13, No. 2. Nov. 1996.

VERTICAL SLICE PROTOCOL (CONTINUED)

5. DECIDING ON DURATION OF THE SLICE

Decide on the length of time from which the work will be drawn. While the team may look at work from a whole week, consider resources and logistics. Generally one to two days is adequate.

6. ARRANGING THE LOGISTICS

The presenting team decides who collects and collates the data, and organizes the data for analysis. This includes removing names from documents and making enough copies for all members of the team.

Part B: Analyzing the data

The facilitator reviews the norms for the discussion and introduces the presenting team.

7. FRAMING THE PARAMETERS FOR DISCUSSION (5 MINUTES)

The presenter describes the methodology and parameters for looking at the slice of student work. The facilitator then presents the guiding question for the discussion.

8. EXAMINING THE WORK (40 MINUTES)

The group examines the slice of work and takes notes. This group may break up into smaller clusters to ensure that all the work of the slice is examined closely.

9. DISCUSSING THE WORK (30 MINUTES)

The group then engages in a discussion of the work presented while members of the presenting team silently observe and note the discussion. Patterns in the quality of teacher assignments and student work may be identified, and strategies to strengthen both are suggested.

10. HEARING FROM THE PRESENTING TEAM (20 MINUTES)

The presenting team then discusses the work, taking into account the responding group's comments. The group remains silent.

11. DEBRIEFING THE PROCESS (20 MINUTES)

The facilitator then leads a debriefing process, which includes answering the question, "What have we learned of value from looking at this slice and why?"

The presenting team also records findings for comparison with future "slices."

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