Collegial Discourse: Using Facilitation Protocols to Enhance Collaboration

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Objectives

• Explore facilitation protocols
• Learn how to encourage engagement by using probing questions
• Plan ways to use protocols with students
Working Agreements

• Listen for new understandings and note them.
• If you wonder about it, ask it.
• Withhold judgment; presume good intentions.
• Balance listening and speaking.
• Encourage participation.
• Trust the process.

(MacLean, 2016)

Tolerance for Ambiguity

Like detailed,
written plans........................................................................................................Go with whatever comes
Your Desk (home or work)

Orderly and neat
all the time.................................................................Utter chaos

Reflection

• What might findings from this protocol say about you?

• What might findings from this protocol say about others in your organization?

• What are some underlying messages or themes from this exercise?
Critical Discourse

“The person doing the most talking about the content is growing the most dendrites, or brain cells, regarding the content. In many classrooms . . . that is the teacher. Making all students a part of the conversation helps to ensure that the content is understood and remembered. The teacher’s job comes prior to the lesson—that of planning a lesson that can then be facilitated when it is taught.”

Tate, M. (2016.) Worksheets Don’t Grow Dendrites.

Types of Questions

**Review** – recalling and reviewing knowledge and information (e.g., terminology, content)

**Procedural** – directing class work (e.g., going over directions, organizational and management related)

**Generative** – exploring a topic (i.e., authentic questions and answers the teacher does not know the answer to)

**Constructive** – building new understandings (i.e., connecting and linking, extending and interpreting)

**Facilitative** – promoting the learners’ own thinking and understanding (i.e., requesting elaboration and justification)

(Project Zero’s “Cultures of Thinking” project)
A powerful question . . .

- stimulates reflective thinking,
- challenges assumptions,
- is thought-provoking,
- generates energy and exploration,
- channels inquiry,
- touches on deeper meaning, and
- evokes more questions.

(Eric Vogt)

How can I frame better questions?

- Is the question real and relevant?
- Is it genuine, a question to which I really do not know the answer?
- Is this question likely to invite fresh thinking?
- What work do I want this question to do? What kind of conversations do I hope will result?
- What assumptions or beliefs are embedded?
- Is the question likely to generate hope, imagination, creativity, or new possibilities?

(Public Conversations Project)
Probing Questions

Probing questions are open questions that are for the benefit of the person being asked the question. These questions, based on positive suppositions, uncover passions and beliefs, and they deepen and challenge current thinking.

Examples:

How could you have students use a rubric to assess their work?
What would happen if students used a rubric for assessment?
How might you increase students’ investment in their work?
What would have to change for students to be self-motivated?

A good probing question

• allows for multiple answers,
• avoids yes or no responses,
• challenges assumptions,
• channels inquiry,
• touches on deeper meaning, and
• promises insight.
The Focus/Framing Question Exercise

1. Identify one classroom dilemma that is important to you.
2. With your team,
   1. select a facilitator,
   2. facilitator selects a team member to present,
   3. presenter provides a brief overview of their dilemma while others take notes,
   4. team members pose clarifying questions to presenter,
   5. team members pose probing questions to presenter,
   6. team members discuss the dilemma while the presenter listens and takes notes, and
   7. presenter reflects on what they heard or insights gained from the team conversation.  
   (School Reform Initiative, p. 108)

Reflection

• In what way(s) might you use the protocols we have explored with students, teachers, leaders, or others?
• What did you learn about yourself when experiencing each protocol?
• What condition(s) must exist to effectively implement protocols that emphasize facilitation?

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