

Tips related to protocols

Protocols (also known as “structured conversations”) help group members skillfully:

- listen effectively (Langston Hughes might call it “eloquent listening”)
- stay focused: to be more on-goal or on-purpose than on-task
- give and receive feedback

With popularity also become ubiquitousness. Many educators can talk about being “protooled” at a meeting - where a well-meaning educator tried doing a protocol s/he really didn’t understand or know well. With this lack of familiarity often comes a mismatch to purpose: a protocol being done for the sake of doing it, not using it for a clear and aligned purpose.

Consider teacher leader training about how to facilitate groups effectively. Undergraduate education programs focus on pedagogy, content knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge...what may have been missing was how to be congenial and collegial with our co-workers. Using discussion protocols with a skilled facilitator helps bring forth the disciplines needed for effective collaboration.