

Collaborative Assessment Conference Protocol

Source: Developed by Steve Seidel and colleagues at Harvard Project Zero

Purpose

This protocol has been designed to give teachers a systematic way to look at a piece of student work to determine what it reveals about the student and issues he/she cares about, and then to consider how the student's issues and concerns relate to the teacher's goals for the student. The discussion of classroom practice grows out of these initial considerations.

Time allotted

The time for this protocol is not fixed since it will vary in accordance with the work being considered. At each stage the facilitator should use his or her judgment in deciding when to move the group on to the next step.

Group format

The protocol needs one facilitator, with understanding of and experience with the protocol, the presenting teacher, and a group of 5-10 colleagues with a particular set of objectives in mind to move from personal experience to more generalized knowledge and action.

Facilitation tips

- This protocol works best if one person, preferably someone who is familiar with the protocol, acts as the facilitator. This person will not be part of a group that discusses the question(s).
- The facilitator should begin the session by restating the importance of the trust and respect that this protocol requires. Discussions and feedback that take place in the session are professional conversations between the participants and the teacher seeking feedback.
- The facilitator should also explain that the protocol will be implemented with fidelity to the process and the constructive spirit of the process. The facilitator may ask participants to reword or withdraw comments that are evaluative or judgmental.
- The protocol follows the following steps:
 - Introduction (protocol goals, guidelines and schedule): 5 – 10 minutes
 - Presenting teacher shows the piece of student work to the group (the presenting teacher says nothing, giving no information about the student, the assignment or the context in which the student worked).
 - The participants observe or read the work in silence, making brief notes about aspects of it that they particularly notice.
 - The facilitator asks the group "What do you see?"
 - The participants provide answers without making judgments about the quality of the work, if a judgment is made the facilitator asks for evidence on which it is based.
 - The facilitator asks the group "What questions does this work raise for you?"

- The participants state any questions they have about the work, the child, the assignment, the circumstances under which the work was carried out, etc. (the presenting teacher is silent but may take notes about the questions).
- The facilitator asks the group 'What do you think the child is working on?'
- The participants, based on their reading or observations of the work, make suggestions about the problems or issues that the student might have been focused on in carrying out the assignment.
- The facilitator invites the presenting teacher to speak.
- The presenting teacher provides his or her perspective on the student's work, describing what he/she sees in it, responding (if he/she chooses) to one or more of the questions raised, and adding any other information that he/se feels is important to share with the group. He/she may also comment on anything surprising or unexpected that was heard during the describing, questioning and speculating phases.
- The facilitator invites everyone (the participants and the presenting teachers) to share any thoughts they have about their own teaching, children's learning, or ways to support this particular child in future instruction.
- Debrief (open discussion of the experiences of the group): 10 minutes
- Thank the presenting teacher