

The Issaquah Protocol

Source: Developed by Nancy Mohr, Deborah Bambino and Daniel Baron

Purpose

This protocol uses a process which models the developmentally appropriate order for questioning in coaching/consulting situations. It can be especially useful for coaches who can look at their own work, and, at the same time, model and reinforce the steps they would use in the field.

Time allotted

Approximately 60 minutes.

Group format

The protocol needs one facilitator, with understanding of and experience with the protocol, 10-50 group members. If 10-15, use a regular large group format with rounds for each step (people can pass knowing that you will come back to them at the end of the round). If 15-50, use small groups which first talk with each other and then respond as a group to each part of the protocol.

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
 - The presenter presents a dilemma or problem they are working on: 5-7 minutes
 - Teacher presents their reflection of their dilemma (context for work, focusing question, group is silent): 10 minutes
 - Clarifying questions (questions about missing context): 3 minutes
 - 'Rounds' begin.
 - Active listening by the group. 'What?' statements are used to restate what has been said already ('I heard [the presenter] say...', 'What I'm hearing ...', etc): Go-round 5-7 minutes
 - Interpretive listening by the group. 'So what?' ('What this means to me is ...): Go-round 5-7 minutes
 - Presenter check-in (are we hearing you correctly?): 2 minutes
 - Probing questions by the group (go deeper into what is going on and name paradoxes and controversies that we hear, without asking or implying that there should be some reconciliation): Go-round 5-7 minutes

- Presenter response (which probing question was the one that made you think the hardest? Why?): 2 minutes
- Suggestions by the group. Now what? (ideas to try, 'What if she ...?', 'One thing I might consider/try/do...'): Go-round 10 minutes
- Presenter reflects back (what the presenter is now thinking of doing, concrete steps that can be taken, etc): 5-7 minutes
- Debrief (open discussion of the experiences of the group): 10 minutes
- Thank the presenting teacher