

Tuning Protocol

Source: adapted from techniques originally developed by the Coalition for Essential Schools; and Dr. Tina Blythe, Project Zero

Purpose

To involve colleague teachers in providing feedback that fine-tunes student assessment systems for exhibitions, portfolios, writing, presentations, products, design projects, and other student work assessed using behaviorally- or standards-anchored rating scales, also known as rubrics.

Time allotted

About 60 minutes or more depending on the number of pieces of student work to be considered and the number of people involved in the protocol.

Group format

The protocol needs one facilitator, with understanding of and experience with the protocol, one teacher seeking feedback on an approach to assessment and providing a range of examples of student responses to the task that is being assessed, and three or more colleagues prepared to offer constructive feedback. Note that the tuning protocol can only be used successfully in an environment of trust and respect. By making their work more public, teachers are voluntarily exposing themselves to critique.

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
 - Teacher presentation (context for work, focusing question, group is silent): 10 – 15 minutes
 - Clarifying questions (questions about missing context or the focusing question): 5 minutes
 - Examination of student work (work samples, teacher is silent): 5 – 15 minutes
 - Pause for reflection (participants consider cool and warm feedback; all are silent): 3 minutes
 - Warm and cool feedback (framed as questions; teacher is silent): 15 minutes
 - Reflection (teacher speaks to selected questions; participants silent): 10 – 15 minutes
 - Debrief (open discussion of the experiences of the group): 10 minutes