



Just ASK's

Making the Standards Come Alive!

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Norms and Protocols: The Backbone of Learning Teams

You cannot force commitment, what you can do... You nudge a little here, inspire a little there, and provide a role model. Your primary influence is the environment you create.

- Peter Senge



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As explained in the issue of *Making the Standards Come Alive!* titled **Learning Teams: Data-Driven Decision Making**, learning teams are central to monitoring the effectiveness of the implementation of the Common Core, the Texas TEKS, the Virginia Standards of Learning, or other state standards. There is power in collaborating around the standards and essential learning for all students. Learning teams have the potential to raise achievement for all students and improve results in significant ways. However, without laying a solid foundation for the work of the team, all efforts will fall flat.

In this issue of *Making the Standards Come Alive!* the focus is on the critical role norms and protocols play in the success of collaborative learning teams.

Assigning teachers to collaborative learning teams is a start, but in order to guarantee meaningful, sustained conversations that increase student achievement, it is critical to spend time establishing norms and making use of protocols. Educators wouldn't dream of assigning students to work in groups without establishing guidelines for their behavior and a structure for their conversation, therefore they should expect the same from their own collaborative learning teams.

According to the research of Patrick Lencioni in his book *Overcoming the Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable*, there are five areas where collaborative learning teams fall apart.

- When teams have an absence of trust
- When teams are unable to have honest conversations about their disagreements because they are afraid of conflict
- When teams lack commitment to one another
- When teams avoid accountability
- When teams don't maintain a focus on results

In contrast to the attributes of dysfunctional teams that Lencioni discusses, high performing teams are characterized by the ability to take perspectives and understand others' point of view, confront issues such as other team members' violating commitments, communicate respectfully, solicit feedback, resolve issues proactively, and remain positive. Teams simply cannot function at high levels without establishing norms for behavior and using protocols for conversations.

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The success of collaborative learning teams is dependent on established and enforced norms and the adherence to protocols. By emphasizing norms and protocols, team members will see the value in their work and build trust with one another in ways that will strengthen results for students.

-Heather Clayton

Norms: Commitments That Serve as Guideposts

Norms govern the behaviors of the members in the learning team. They set the expectations for the group, encourage risk taking and participation, and establish accountability. Norms represent promises made between team members, ensure commitment and trust, protect team members, and strengthen the learning team experience for every member. Ultimately, norms help learning teams to achieve their shared goals and are an essential step of the learning team process.

It is essential for every team to set their own norms and to agree on what will happen when members of the team are not following the norms. For example, members may use a non-verbal cue or picture symbol as a reminder to the member who isn't following the norm. Teams can get creative in their approaches to holding members accountable and enforce norms in any way they see fit. The bottom line is that group members have to agree that they will not be afraid to speak up and hold each other accountable.

In the book *Creating a Culture for Learning: Your Guide to PLC's and More*, Brenda Kaylor provides helpful steps for learning teams establishing norms. Also included in that text are sample team norms, as well as norms for decision-making, strategies for teams when norms are not followed or when groups are in conflict.

In 1999, the **National Staff Development Council (Learning Forward)** dedicated an entire issue of *Tools for Schools* on creating,

publicizing, enforcing, and evaluating team norms. The issue includes the rationale for establishing norms, directions for developing norms, and sample norms for teams to reference. The issue can be found at <http://learningforward.org/docs/tools-for-learning-schools/tools8-99.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

Finally, in their book *Learning by Doing*, Richard DuFour, Rebecca DuFour, Robert Eaker and Thomas Many offer additional suggestions for creating norms. They suggest the following:

- Each team should develop its own norms that reflect the expectations and vision of the members of a specific team.
- Rather than be written as belief statements, norms should be written as commitments or promises. For instance, norms are stated as “We will...” “We commit to...” or “We promise to...”
- Teams should review norms at both the beginning and end of meetings until they have been internalized by all members of the team.
- Teams should hold themselves accountable for following norms and be prepared to address team members if they are not following the norms. Teams should ask questions like:
 - Are we following the norms we set?
 - Do we need to eliminate, revise, or add any norms?
 - Are all members of the team making contributions and participating?
 - Are we working together to reach our goal?

Protocols: Roadmaps for Deep Conversation

Sometimes it is helping those being led to see directions they might go that they would not otherwise have thought of and then inspiring them to go in those directions.

- Phillip Schlechty



Collaboration allows teachers to capture each other's fund of collective intelligence.

- Mike Schmoker

Discussions of Shared Texts or Documents

- Four A's Text Protocol
- A Text Rendering Experience
- Save the Last Word for Me
- The Final Word

Protocols are an agreed upon set of steps or actions that govern team conversations, based on previously established norms. They are a vehicle for collaboration and ensure that the conversation is centered in meaningful learning. Protocols are the structure of deeper conversations and a guarantee that substantive, and collaborative work can be accomplished. There are many benefits to the use of a protocol when facilitating team dialogue. For instance, protocols:

- Ensure a safe, equitable, and trusting environment where team members are safe to ask questions of one another
- Ensure meaningful and sustained dialogue

- Structure the time during meetings
- Provide built in time to think and time to listen without the need for team members to continually respond
- Promote reflection by individuals and teams
- Help members gain differing perspectives and insights
- Focus the team's work on the issue at hand
- Prevent off topic conversations
- Prevent individual team members from dominating the conversation

Protocols for Collaborative Learning Teams

Protocols help facilitate sustained conversations that ensure every voice is heard in an equitable and balanced way. Protocols help to achieve trust, and create an environment where participants are comfortable taking risks and sharing ideas, successes, and challenges. Protocols help to build culture and trust among group members and ensure that substantive dialogue is occurring. Protocols also provide structures that make it safe for team members to share unique perspectives and ask challenging questions of each other.

Collaborative learning team discussions involve varying degrees of risk, trust, intensity, and time, as do the many different protocols available to teams. The protocols shared below move along a continuum from the least amount of trust required to those that require a greater degree of time, intensity, and trust. For instance, a team having a discussion on a shared text is a far different level of intensity and trust than is required by teams who are openly sharing their students' assessment data.

All the protocols described below are available at the **School Reform Initiative's (SRI)** website www.schoolreforminitiative.org. SRI supports educators to address issues of educational equity and excellence for all students by building and sustaining transformational learning communities.

Discussion of Shared Texts or Documents

-low degree of trust required-

Teams read a common text for the purpose of learning about new concepts, skills, and strategies, challenging their thinking and assumptions, or revisiting previously learned content.

Four A's Text Protocol

In this protocol, participants explore a text deeply and consider the author's assumptions, along with their own agreements, arguments and aspirations.

www.schoolreforminitiative.org/download/Protocols/Learning%20from%20Texts/4_a_text.pdf

A Text Rendering Experience

This protocol is designed to help participants work with all group members to clarify thinking, construct meaning, and expand their thinking about something the group has read.

www.schoolreforminitiative.org/download/Protocols/Learning%20from%20Texts/text_rendering.pdf



Save the Last Word for Me

This protocol is created to help participants build on one another's thinking in a way that doesn't engage them in dialogue. As a result of using this protocol participants have a chance to clarify and deepen their thinking about what they have read.

www.schoolreforminitiative.org/download/Protocols/Learning%20from%20Texts/save_last_word.pdf

The Final Word

The purpose of this protocol is to give participants a chance to deepen their thinking about a text they have read as a result of having their assumptions and beliefs questioned by other group members.

www.schoolreforminitiative.org/download/Protocols/Learning%20from%20Texts/final_word.pdf

Looking at Evidence of Student Learning

-moderate degree of trust required-

Art Shack Protocol

Teams review student work for the purpose of aligning to the standards, aligning expectations, studying the impact of feedback, and informing instruction.

This is a non-evaluative, non-judgmental protocol that is grounded in description. As a result of describing and learning from a student's work, participants will gain a window into the student's thinking and the implications that may have for classroom practice.

www.schoolreforminitiative.org/download/Protocols/Focusing%20on%20Students/art_shack.pdf

ATLAS: Learning from Student Work

Teams review student work to align to the standards, align expectations, study the impact of feedback, and inform instructional decision making.

This protocol guides participants in using student work to make discoveries about what students are thinking and understanding. Participants not only consider the things they see in the student work, but also make inferences about what the student was thinking and why. The observations and interpretations made by participants are then used to identify the implications for teaching and assessment.

www.schoolreforminitiative.org/download/Protocols/Focusing%20on%20Students/atlas_lfsw.pdf

Examining Student Work: A Constructivist Approach

Teams look at student work with this protocol individually or in groups with students or adults for the purposes of planning and assessment. Participants identify qualities of excellence in student work and then build those qualities into future work.

www.schoolreforminitiative.org/download/Protocols/Focusing%20on%20Students/examining_student_work.pdf

Tuning Protocol

Originally developed by the Coalition of Essential Schools, this protocol in which teachers present units, lessons, or assessment for review and feedback, is designed to help teachers collaboratively fine tune their own work.

www.schoolreforminitiative.org/download/Protocols/Focusing%20on%20Students/tuning.pdf

Looking at Evidence of Student Learning

- Art Shack Protocol
- Atlas: Learning from Student Work
- Examining Student Work: A Constructivist Approach
- Turning Protocol
- Turning Protocol Guidelines



Analyzing Data

- Data Driven Dialogue
- Data Mining Protocol

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Tuning Protocol Guidelines

This link includes a sample set of shared guidelines participants should follow in order to promote the success of the tuning protocol and ensure a safe and respectful environment for presenting teachers.

www.schoolreforminitiative.org/download/Protocols/Focusing%20on%20Students/tuning_guidelines.pdf

Analyzing Data

-high degree of trust required-

Teams use an inquiry based process to analyze assessment data in order to inform instruction, uncover trends and patterns, challenge assumptions, and make data based decisions.

Data Driven Dialogue

This protocol facilitation plan includes four phases to guide teams when looking at data. Participants make predictions, go visual with the data, make observations, and draw inferences that lead to implications for teaching and learning.

www.schoolreforminitiative.org/download/Protocols/Examining%20Data/data_driven_dialogue.pdf

Data Mining Protocol

This protocol leads teams through analyzing two different sets of data.

www.schoolreforminitiative.org/download/Protocols/Examining%20Data/data_mining.pdf

For a complete continuum of discussion based protocols, visit the following link:

www.schoolreforminitiative.org/download/Documents%20to%20Support%20the%20use%20of%20Protocols/continuum_discussion_protocols.pdf

Tips for Using Protocols in Learning Team Meetings

- **Protocols are most effective in groups of 6-8.** This size group allows each voice to be heard while ensuring that there are different perspectives and diverse responses during the discussion.
- **Facilitators may modify the length of time in a protocol, but should not skip any steps.** In order for a protocol to be effective, steps should not be left out.
- **Teams may use a variety of protocols.** It is not necessary for teams to use the same protocol each time they meet. Rather, the protocol should change to fit the purpose of the meeting.
- **Protocols should be shared with participants ahead of time and a facilitator should be assigned.** Especially in the early stages of learning team meetings, one member should be assigned as the facilitator to ensure that all steps in the protocol are followed.

In summary, the success of collaborative learning teams is dependent on established and enforced norms and the adherence to protocols. By emphasizing norms and

protocols, team members will see the value in their work and build trust with one another in ways that will strengthen results for students.



Just ASK consultants are ready to help you develop new or refine old units to align with the **Common Core State Standards**. For more information, contact us at www.justaskpublications.com.



Resources and References

Clayton, Heather, Brenda Kaylor, Bruce Oliver, Julie McVicker, Paula Rutherford, Sherri Stephens-Carter, and Theresa West. *Creating a Culture for Learning: Your Guide to PLCs and More*. Alexandria, VA: Just ASK Publications, 2011.

DuFour, Richard, Rebecca DuFour, Robert Eaker, and Thomas Many. *Learning by Doing: A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work*. 2nd Edition. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press, 2010.

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Richardson, Joan. “Norms Put the ‘Golden Rule’ Into Practice for Groups.” *Tools for Schools*. Oxford, OH: Learning Forward, August 1999. Accessed November 10, 2015. <http://learningforward.org/docs/tools-for-learning-schools/tools8-99.pdf?sfvrsn=2>.

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Resources and References

www.allthingsplc.info/

This link includes articles, research, and resources to support the implementation of learning teams, referred to here at professional learning communities.

www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/dec08/vol66/num04/Answering-the-Questions-That-Count.aspx

This article from ASCD discusses how looking at student data to answer important, essential questions can have a number of benefits.

Clayton, Heather, Brenda Kaylor, Bruce Oliver, Julie McVicker, Paula Rutherford, Sherri Stephens-Carter, and Theresa West. *Creating a Culture for Learning: Your Guide to PLCs and More*. Alexandria, VA: Just ASK Publications, 2011.

Love, Nancy. *Using Data to Improve Learning For All: A Collaborative Inquiry Approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2008.

<http://mikeschmoker.com/tipping-point.html>

Mike Schmoker's article in *Phi Delta Kappan* entitled "Tipping Point: From Reckless Reform to Substantive Instructional Improvement" explains the rationale and research behind learning teams.

Murphy, Michael. *Tools & Talk: Data, Conversation, and Action for Classroom and School Improvement*, Oxford, OH: Learning Forward, 2009.

www.nsrharmony.org/system/files/protocols/forming_ground_rules.pdf

This link from the National School Reform Faculty provides a plan for establishing norms, or ground rules for learning teams.

Schmoker, Mike. *Results Now: How We Can Achieve Unprecedented Improvements in Teaching and Learning*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2006.

Wellman, Bruce and Laura Lipton. *Data-Driven Dialogue: A Facilitator's Guide to Collaborative Inquiry*. Sherman, CT: MiraVia, LLC, 2004.

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