Three Protocols We Love at High Tech High

Why we use protocols at High Tech High:

As teachers, our time is extremely precious in a way that "civilians" just don't understand. Because of that, an unproductive meeting is really, really awful.

Using protocols makes it much more likely that meetings will be productive. So we use them a lot.

Norms for all protocols:

These norms are the oil that makes the machinery of the protocol run smoothly.

Share the air (or "step up, step back")

If you tend to talk a lot,make sure you don't dominate the conversation, and that everyone has the opportunity to speak. Equally, if you tend not to speak very much, make sure that you are contributing – otherwise nobody will get the benefit of your insights.

Be hard on the content, and soft on the people

Make sure that discussion (especially criticism) is focused on the project, not the person. this distinction needs to be crystal-clear in order to maintain a culture that is both rigorous and collegial.

Be kind, specific, and helpful

- **Be kind:** Presenting your work to your colleagues puts you in an incredibly vulnerable position. for the critic, on the other hand, it's easy to get carried away when you're critiquing work, especially when you feel like you know exactly what a piece of work would benefit from, and inadvertently say very hurtful things. thus, this norm cannot be stressed enough.
- **Be specific:** Even if you are being kind, you aren't doing anybody any favors if you are vague.
- **Be helpful:** Make sure you're proposing solutions as well as diagnosing problems.

PROJECT TUNING (45 minutes)

Goal: to help a teacher refine & develop the design of a project

Adapted from the National School Reform Faculty, and *Work That Matters: The Teacher's Guide to Project-based Learning*, by Alec Patton

Norms:

- Share the air (or "step up, step back")
- Be hard on the content, and soft on the people
- Be kind, specific, and helpful

Size of Group

One facilitator, one presenter (or more, if the project is a collaboration), and 3–10 other people.

If possible, include students as well as staff in the group. Students tend to make the best suggestions.

What the presenter should bring to the tuning:

Bring your draft project plan, and any prototypes you've made and/or models you've found that show what kind of product you want students to create.

Think about the "burning question" they would like the group to help them answer. For example...

- "How can I make this project accessible to students who struggle with English?"
- "Who would be an authentic audience for this project?"
- "How can I help groups take control of their own time management?"

Protocol:

Step 1: As everyone arrives, hand out the project plan

The group should either sit in a circle, or around a table.

- Take a moment to remind everyone of the norms.

Step 2: The presenter introduces their project (time: 10 minutes)

The presenter explains their goals for the project, gives an overview of how it will work and what will be produced, and (if appropriate) explains how the project fits into the wider context of their class. At the end of the introduction, the presenter gives the tuning group their burning question.

Step 3: Clarifying questions (time: 5 minutes)

These are used to get a clearer understanding of the project. They have short, factual answers.

Examples: 'How long will the project last?' 'How many hours per week will students have to work on it?' 'Where will the work be exhibited?' 'Who are you planning to invite to the exhibition?'

- If group members slip into asking "probing" questions, nudge them back to "clarifying".

Step 4: Probing questions (time: 5 minutes)

Probing questions help the presenter to think about their project more deeply and expansively.

Examples: 'How will students demonstrate their understanding through the final product?' 'What will you do if a draft takes longer than you anticipated?'

- Probing questions should not be 'advice in disguise' – for example, questions that begin 'have you thought of trying…' are not probing questions, and should be held back for the next step.

Step 5: Discussion (time: 15 minutes)

The presenter restates their burning question (the presenter may also wish to reframe their burning question at this point, in light of the clarifying and probing questions).

The presenter then physically leaves the circle, goes off to the side, and listens silently to the discussion.

The discussion should begin with positive feedback about the project.

- it's a good idea for the facilitator to state this explicitly

After about eight minutes, the facilitator should ask the group whether they feel they've answered the presenter's burning question. This helps keep conversation on track.

Step 6: Presenter's response (time: 5 minutes)

The presenter may share what struck them most during the discussion, how they now think about their project, and what next steps they plan to take as a result of the ideas that have been generated.

- It is not necessary to respond point by point to what the tuning group has said.

Step 7: Debrief (time: 5 minutes)

This is a time to react on the process of the tuning itself. The facilitator leads it by posing questions to the whole group.

Examples: Did we have a good burning question? Did we stick to the question? When was a moment when the conversation made a turn for the better? Was there any point where we went off track? Did our probing questions really push the thinking of the presenter?

There will be a tendency to veer back into a discussion of the project you've been tuning. Resist this.

Step 8: Closing the loop (time: 5 minutes)

This is a chance to say that one thing you've been dying to say during the tuning. Participants share one of their take-aways with a partner or everyone in the group shares one take-away with the rest of the group.

Participants may also share how participating in this tuning session will impact their own practice. at the end, thank the presenter for sharing their work and their concerns, and thank the tuning group for their questions and advice. a tuning requires effort on everybody's part, and it's important to acknowledge this.

PROJECT CHARRETTE (45 minutes-1 hour)

Goal: to help a teacher quickly brainstorm lots of ideas for a project

Thanks to Amy Raymond, who brought this protocol to High Tech High Chula Vista

Norms:

- Share the air (or "step up, step back")
- Be positive and build on ideas - never say "No" always say "Yes, and..."
- Think Big! There's no such thing as an idea that's "too crazy" in a charrette
- Don't be too protective of ideas

Size of Group

One presenter (or more, if the project is a collaboration), one facilitator, one scribe, and 3–10 others.

If possible, include students as well as staff in the group. Students tend to make the best suggestions.

Advance Preparation:

Make a grid on a whiteboard, a big sheet of paper, or document on the projector.

- You can see a model of a "charrette" on page 7 of this document.

Here's what goes on the grid:

Project Title:______________________

Product	Groups / Equity	Adult World Connection	Content Covered	Assessment	Literacy	Skills

- You can change the headings to suit your project. Other possible headings include "Engaging/Inspiring Students", "Scaffolding for Quality", "Integrating Hands-On & Minds-On Learning", "Access & Challenge"

Protocol:

1. Overview (5 minutes)

Presenter gives a brief (really general) overview of the work and explains what goals he/she has in mind for the project while the scribe takes notes. The presenter might choose to also put the project into context so the group understands how it fits into the larger scope and sequence of the class. Participants then have an opportunity to look at any "work" (e.g. project handouts, models of the kind of products they might make, etc.). The presenter then shares where there are still gaps in their thought process and what section they need the most help with.

2. Clarifying Questions (5 minutes)

These are used to get a clearer understanding of the project. They have short, factual answers.

Examples: 'How long will the project last?' 'How many hours per week will students have to work on it?' 'Where will the work be exhibited?' 'Who are you planning to invite to the exhibition?'

- Given that this protocol is designed for the early stages of project design, the presenter probably won't know the answer to all these questions. That's OK!

3. Making the lists (approximately 5 minutes per column)

For each column the goal is to make an extensive list of possibilities that build on the presenters original idea. At the beginning of each section the presenter throws out their thoughts so far on the topic as it relates to their project and then participants jump in and build off of them.

- The facilitator's job is to make sure the group doesn't go over time and also stays on the topic of the given column. If people start to stray off topic, just remind them of the column you're discussing.
- The scribe's job is to write down every idea voiced - even if it seems silly at the time.
    - Remember: it's better to have ten ideas you don't use than to risk not writing down the idea that transforms the project!

4. Debrief (5 min)

The facilitator leads a conversation about the group's observation of the process. One mark of a good facilitator is his or her ability to lead a good debrief. Questions posed to the group might include: Did this process expand our thinking about our project? Were our ideas big and creative? When was a moment when the conversations made a turn for the better? Was there any point where we went off track? (5 min)

Example of Charrette Notes from a refugee project

This project became the Syrian Refugee Simulation - you can read about the project at http://alecpatton.weebly.com/

Products	Groups/Equity	Content addressed	Assessment	Reflection
• Coffee Table Book with photos and stories • Connections to project zero • Guide to welcoming refugees to the community. Include information regarding resources within the community. • Exhibit you travel through(Holocaust Museum)..Movable • Informational public event (things you're afraid to ask; shares with the community) • Traveling exhibit that kids can create and become experts in this topic (Lillian shoe exhibit) • Photos of refugees with their stories and words • Museum of photography in Balboa. Exhibit with pictures and voice overs • Compare what the audience's daily life looks like compared to refugees daily life and seeking asylum (different stages with assessment and reflection). • Success of refugees in the areas. Who's your audience.	• More comfortable with students working in pairs. • Work will need to happen in groups. • Establish group roles to allow for individual tasks with natural cohesion around a specific refugee group. • Each individual would produce their own work. • Student recommendation: Allow students to work in smaller groups with their friends. They know each other, collaboration is easier to manage. • Most memorable experiences are with bad group. • Best group: 8th grade project; students were allowed to pick their own groups. • Would want to be responsible for: one person or small group of people the individual or group is assigned to work with. Likes the idea of splitting the work amongst the group members to solve the bigger issue. If their separate, it prevents group members from taken over other group member's aspect of the project. • Assign students to groups they have zero knowledge of	• Authentic questions that the students will be able complete pioneer work in their investigative work. Go beyond the clique of empathy and hearing stories. • Mapping where groups of people are (similar to staff map) • Layers of San Diego..where people came from or come from during different time periods. • Myths about who certain groups are (i.e. Chaldean Christians versus Iraqi Muslims)	• The refugees assess project components themselves (i.e. guide) leverage those relationships and encourage students to step up to the plate. • Assessment should apply to all students • Group based community guide for a specific refugee community. Individual students are responsible for their section of the book. • Simulating a real publication process...Lillian is a resource. • Not thinking about grades...not a good tool for assessment..more for accountability.	• What are we making, for whom and why? • Reflection posted in Google classroom are sometimes helpful, but painful.

DILEMMA CONSULTANCY PROTOCOL (20 minutes)

Goal: to help a teacher come up with creative solutions to a thorny dilemma

Norms:

See page 1 for a fuller explanation of these

- Be hard on the content, soft on the people
- Be kind, helpful and specific
- Share the air (or "step up, step back")

Size of Group

One presenter, one facilitator, and 3–10 others.

Advance Preparation:

A presenter should come up with a dilemma. This should be a challenge that's coming up in their practice that they aren't making headway on by thinking alone.

Protocol:

1. **Overview (3 min)** - Presenter gives an overview of the dilemma and frames a focus question for the group to consider. It is helpful to post the dilemma question somewhere everyone can see. Participants are silent.

2. **Clarifying & Probing Questions (6 min)** – First, participants ask clarifying questions of the presenter. Clarifying questions have brief, factual answers and are intended to help the group develop a deeper understanding of the dilemma. An example of a clarifying question is "How many times a week does the entire faculty meet?"

   Participants then ask probing questions of the presenter. Probing questions help the presenter expand his/her thinking about the dilemma. However, probing questions should not be "advice in disguise", such as "Have you considered…?" An example of a probing question is "What is your hunch about how to handle this issue?"

   *****During this time, the group does not discuss the presenter's responses.*****

3. **Discussion (9 min)** - The presenter reframes the question if necessary and then removes him/herself to the outside of the circle. The group discusses the dilemma while the presenter is silent and takes notes. Participants should resist the urge to speak directly to the presenter and instead address each other.
   - Warm feedback: ALWAYS lead with warm feedback, such as "What strengths do we see in the presenter's thinking?" or "What do we appreciate about the presenter's ideas?"
   - Opportunities for growth: Next, the group takes a more critical look at the dilemma, using the presenter's question to focus the discussion. Possible questions to explore:
     - What did we hear?
     - What didn't we hear that we think might be relevant?

        - What questions does this issue raise for us?
        - I wonder what would happen if…
    - Opportunities for intervention styles: Highlight ways that the presenter may specifically use the different intervention styles (prescribing, informing, confronting, cathartic, catalytic, supporting).

4. Reflection (2 min) – The presenter reflects on what they heard and what they now thinking, sharing any points that particularly resonated and any potential next steps.