Glossary of Protocol Terms

Developed in the field by educators.

Presentation
At the beginning of most protocols, the presenter, shares some aspect of their work with the group. This may include written documents, data, or student work in any form. At the end of the presentation the presenter asks a focusing question that will guide the protocol to follow.

Clarifying Questions
Clarifying Questions have brief, factual answers. They ask the presenters "who, what, where, when and how." These are not "why" or "what other approaches have you considered" questions. They can be answered quickly and succinctly, often with a phrase or two. The purpose of clarifying questions is to help the questioner better understand the presenter's situation; these questions are not likely to offer any "food for thought" to the presenter.

Probing Questions
The purpose of Probing Questions is to help the presenters clarify and expand their own thinking about the matter they have presented to the group and they are for the benefit of the receiver. They are concise, elicit a reflective response, and do not contain explicit recommendations. This is the time to ask open-ended questions such as:
- What would have to change in order for…?
- What do you assume to be true about ….?
- What's another way you might…?

These questions take longer to answer and often sustain thinking beyond the moment.

Warm and Cool Feedback
Warm and cool feedback is a feature of several protocols. The group should begin and end this part of the protocol with warm feedback. Cool feedback is often best received if expressed with some qualification, or asked in the form of a question, (e.g. "I wonder if..." rather than "I think he should.") By the same token, it is important for the presenter to listen in a non-defensive manner.

Group Discussion
The group talks with each other while the presenter listens and takes notes; the presenter is not allowed to speak at this time. It is helpful for the presenter to pull his/her chair back slightly from the group where s/he can more easily attend to listening and note taking without feeling the need to give eye contact or any other kind of response to the speakers. The group talks about the presenter in the third person, almost as if s/he were not there. As awkward as this may feel at first, it often opens up a richer conversation, and it is only for fifteen minutes or less! It is the group's job to offer an analysis of the situation; it is not necessary to solve the problem or offer a definitive answer.

Presenter Response
The point of this time period is *not* for the presenter to respond to everything the group said. Rather, this is a time for the presenter to talk about what were, for them, the most significant comments, ideas and questions they heard. They can also share any new thoughts or questions *they* had while listening to the group. Once the presenter have responded to their satisfaction and wish to engage in a more free-flowing dialogue, they indicate so to the group by inviting group members to share additional comments, ideas and questions.

Reflection/Debrief
It's important to give everyone a chance to talk about the process and how it went - both as a way to learn what works for the group, as well as to reflect individually on the skills necessary for engaging in reflective dialogue. Often hearing other perspectives on the process helps people see the value of using a structured protocol.