Protocol Families

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At their very core, protocols emanate from a particular place. Certain features and components of protocols may be found in protocols that look similar, but the very reason for the protocol existing may be different — its essence is unique.

Looking at Work Protocols
When giving a presenter feedback on student or adult work, four families of protocols emerge:

Descriptive
Some protocols exist in order to provide structure for participants to slow down and describe work, either their own or their students. These descriptive processes differentiate between the literal, the interpretive, and the evaluative. Often used with open-ended assignments.
Examples:
ATLAS
ATLAS: Looking at Data
Collaborative Assessment Conference
Examining Assessments
Art Shack

Dilemma Management
Asking well-crafted probing questions is a particularly critical part of dilemma management protocols. When “beautiful” questions are posed, they prompt the presenter to think more deeply or expansively about the question, but not necessarily give an answer. Thus, the presenter may leave with better thinking about how to manage the dilemma.
Examples:
Issaquah
Consultancy
Peeling the Onion

Refining
Gaining feedback from others often germinates from a need to check in on the quality of our work. Refining protocols allow presenters to listen in as others pore over work samples and offer feedback, focused with a question or a goal.
Examples:
Tuning
Slice
Ghost Walk
Gap Analysis

Protocols are most powerful and effective when used within an ongoing professional learning community and facilitated by a skilled facilitator. To learn more about professional learning communities and seminars for facilitation, please visit the School Reform Initiative website at www.schoolreforminitiative.org.
Generative
The final family of Looking at Work protocols provides opportunities for the presenter (individual or group) to listen and observe (and perhaps participate), while others generate ideas, understandings, questions, and possibilities for consideration.

Examples:
Chalk Talk
Charrette
Constructivist Protocol
Fears and Hopes
Realms of Concern and Influence
Success Analysis
Wagon Wheel Brainstorming
The World Café

Protocols Where Adult or Student Work is Not Central

Shared Understanding
Hearing the multiple points of view or ideas around a common question, experience, or other prompt such as text(s) is a first step to build shared understanding. These protocols provide processes to capture multiple points of view held by members of the group and then, through guided discussion, arrive at some degree of shared understanding of the issues, challenges, agreements, and opportunities facing the group.

Examples:
Block Party
Coffee Talk
Continuum Dialogue
Making Meaning Adapted for Text
Multiple Perspectives Adapted for Text
Norm Construction
ProMISE for texts about equity
Questions and Assumptions
Text Rendering
Text-Based Seminar
The 4 “A”s
The Final Word