



# Looking at Data Sets

## A Collaborative Inquiry and Problem Solving Protocol (A Variation of the Consultancy Protocol)

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*Developed by Anthony Conelli and Alan Dichter, New York.*

### **Purpose**

- To provide the presenter with an opportunity to articulate her/his initial reaction to the data presented
- To provide the presenter with a lens to examine and understand the data
- To provide the presenter with feedback on her/his assessment and analysis of the data
- To provide the presenter with additional perspectives and what might be significant in the data
- To provide the presenter with an opportunity to synthesize her/his thinking and consider next steps

### **Time**

Approximately 60 minutes

### **Group Format**

The presenter and facilitator meet with 3-5 other educators invited by the presenter. The group can be composed of colleagues from other schools, staff, coaches, network team members, or any combination of the above. It would be helpful if at least one member of the group was knowledgeable about the data set and could answer generic questions. That could be the presenter. The presenter should be comfortable with the members of the group. The presenter should NOT also facilitate.

**Below are the steps of the protocol. The guide, explaining each step and providing the focus questions to the protocol is on the following pages.**

### **Process**

1. Presenter Responses to Guide Questions (10-15 minutes)
2. Clarifying Questions (3-7 minutes)
3. Probing Questions (5-7 minutes)
- 4a. Presenter Response (5-7 minutes)
- 4b. Optional Check-In (5-10 minutes)
5. Participant Discussion (7-10 minutes)
6. Presenter Response and Next Step Questions or Ideas (5-10 minutes)  
(Optional) Open Discussion — if time allows and presenters wants it
7. Feedback on Process



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## Facilitator and Participant Guide

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### **Preparation — Presenter Review of Data**

The presenter reviews the data and considers these questions:

#### **1. What?**

- What information is this providing to me about my school, my students, and my faculty?
- What do I notice?

#### **2. So What?**

- What strikes me as significant?
- What confirmed my perceptions of the school, students, and faculty?
- What surprised me?
- What concerned me?
- What does that cause me to think about?

#### **3. What Else?**

- What do I want to find out?
- What do I not know that I now think I need to know?

#### **4. What Else (part 2)?**

- What do I want people to know to help them understand this report?
- What is the context within which I want people to understand this data?
- What do I want from the consultancy (presenter may frame a question for the group — this will serve to help the group ensure it addresses the needs of the presenter, but is not necessarily to restrict the discussion?)

#### **5. Participants Review Data**

Effort should be made to have the participants get the data in advance; otherwise, 15-30 minutes must be added to the time for the protocol to allow for data review.

## Protocol Steps for Collaborative Reflection of Data

### 1. Presentation (15 minutes)

The presenter shares her/his response to the questions, What?, So What?, What Else?, and What Else? (part 2).

The participants take notes and jot down questions.

*Facilitator Tips: Model taking notes. If the presenter finishes and has not posed a question, ask the presenter if there is any area in particular they want the group to pay some attention to. It's ok if the presenter says no.*

### 2. Clarifying Questions (3-7 minutes)

Participants ask clarifying questions of the presenter. If there is an expert on the technical aspects of the particular type of data set, the presenter may defer to them for answers — but this should NOT become a mini-lesson on the construction of the data set. Questions are asked and answered.

*Facilitator Tips: The facilitator must be mindful of not allowing the group to speculate on factual answers they do not know the answer to.*

*The facilitator should ensure that this step does not become a review of the data itself or an extended lesson on how the data was collected or how the numbers were crunched. This is particularly important to pay attention to when the data set is high stakes or represents a controversial new reporting system.*

Examples of clarifying questions: How many students are captured in this data? How old is the school? How many staff members? How long have you worked in the school?

*Facilitator Tips: Often participants are not clear about the distinction between clarifying and probing questions. If that is the case, the facilitator should be sure to review this and the next step and explain the purpose and difference of each set of questions.*

### 3. Probing Questions (5-7 minutes)

Participants ask probing questions and should focus their attention on comments made by the presenter regarding what they thought was significant and what did and didn't surprise them. Probing questions may also be about things participants notice and think might be significant that the presenter did not mention.

Examples of probing questions: You didn't comment on the disparity between X and Y — what is your thinking about that? What's your thinking about why that might be the case? Why does that particular finding trouble you so much? What do you think the reaction of the teachers will be to this data?

The presenter is silent, taking notes during this portion.

*Facilitator Tips: Remind the group that the purpose of probing questions is to push the presenter to think more deeply or expansively about the data and the questions the data raises. Make sure the presenter doesn't answer, but does write the questions down. Sometimes a few probing questions can surface the need for an additional clarifying question – it's OK to allow that (as an exception). This is also the time that participants feel an overwhelming urge to disguise advice or want to give their interpretation of the data. The facilitator must be very careful to stop that and refocus the attention of the group on framing probing questions.*

#### **4a. Presenter Response** (5-7 minutes)

During this time the presenter has the opportunity to respond to what she/he heard. The presenter can decide if she/he wants to respond to any of the questions raised. The presenter can reorganize the probing questions into new questions that may shape her/his thinking about the data. The presenter can share what the probing questions are making her/him think about at that moment. The presenter may also share any new thoughts she/he might have.

Participants are silent.

*Facilitator Tips: Before the presenter begins, remind them that they do not have to answer all the questions if they don't want to. They are to share their thinking now. If they had presented a focus question earlier, this is the time to review that question and ask the presenter if they want to modify or change that question in any way.*

#### **4b. Optional Check-In**

Some facilitators add a "check in" step here. The participants do a quick round (3-7 minutes) of, "Here is what I am hearing the presenter say...here is what is important to the presenter." The presenter then gets an opportunity to tell the group where they are on target and provide clarifying or additional information. Basically the presenter is asked by the facilitator, "Does the group seem to understand your issue? Is there anything else you think we need to know?" (2-3 minutes)

This can often help the following discussion be more focused. Time, the nature of the information being reviewed, and the needs of the presenter often dictate if this step is included. It can be decided before hand or in the moment.

#### **5. Participant Discussion** (7-10 minutes)

The presenter is now silent and the group talks with each other about what meaning they are making from the data and from the additional information provided by the presenter. They have the opportunity to answer the "So What?" and the "What Else?" questions based upon their own perceptions and thinking.

##### **So What?**

- What strikes me as significant?
- What confirmed my perceptions of the school, students, and staff?
- What surprised me?
- What concerned me?
- What does that cause me to think about?

##### **What Else?**

- What do I want to find out?
- What do I not know that I now think I need to know?

During this discussion the participants may offer alternative explanations or theories about the data.

The purpose of this section is to expand the group's understanding of the data — not to give advice. The facilitator should intervene if suggestions about action steps (other than about gathering more information) are made.

*Facilitator Tips: The goal here is to have the participants have a conversation as if the presenter were not present. They are to talk to each other and not the presenter. Some facilitators make a slight adjustment in the seating and move the presenter just outside the circle or formation, or ask them to just move back a little, to shift the group's focus from the presenter to each other. If people start talking to the presenter, remind them to stay focused on talking with each other.*

#### **6. Presenter Response and Next Step Questions/Thoughts** (5-10 minutes)

The presenter is “invited back in” and briefly responds to what she/he heard. This can also be a time for the presenter to share where she/he thinks the group is on or off target.

##### **Now What?**

The presenter can now share her/his thought on next steps. There are several options available to the presenter at this time.

- If the presenter has some thoughts about what action should be taken, she/he can share that with the group for feedback.
- If the presenter has a question about next steps, she/he can pose the question to the group for discussion.
- If the presenter is unsure of an action or a question, she/he may ask the facilitator to use the time to facilitate a brainstorming session about next steps.

*Facilitator Tips: After the presenter responds there can be an open discussion and a more free-form exchange. The facilitator may also ask the presenter if there is anything particular she/he would like to hear the group's thoughts about. This discussion portion should not be lengthy.*

#### **7. Feedback on Process** (5 minutes)

The facilitator should ask the group to reflect on the process. The facilitator can start by asking the group to share some general impressions of the process. Make sure you help the group avoid continuing the discussion of the data or the issues raised. The facilitator can also ask more specific questions of the participants and the presenter. Here are some suggested questions.

For the presenter:

- Did the process help deepen her/his understanding of the data and how to use the data to make informed decisions?
- Did the process push the presenter's thinking in new directions?
- Did the presenter feel supported by the process?

For the participants:

- Did the process help deepen your understanding of the data and how to use the data to make informed decisions?
- Did the process enable you to think about your own use of data in making informed decisions?
- Were there any parts of the process that were challenging to you as an active participant?