

Learning from Student Work An Overview

Developed in the field by educators affiliated with NSRF.

"To be a teacher in the right sense is to be a learner. Instruction begins when you, the teacher, learn from the learner, put yourself in his place so that you may understand what he understands and in the way he understands it." — Soren Kierkegaard

Principles of Looking at Student Work

- Students' work in schools is serious
- Students' work is key data about the life of the school
- Must be connected to serious changes in curriculum, instruction and professional development

Purposes of Looking at Student Work

- Professional Development
- Accountability (determining effectiveness of curriculum and instruction)
- Setting standards
- Reflecting on student learning and development

Protocols

What?

- Guidelines for conversation
- Vehicle for building collaborative work

Why?

- Creates a structured environment for: speaking, listening, questioning
- Makes the most of limited time
- Promotes deep, meaningful conversation about teaching and learning

How?

- Incorporate into your study group meetings/grade level meetings/staff meetings
- Connect it to crucial teaching and learning issues in your study group/grade level/school
- Practice it regularly

Results

Teachers who present work typically find:

- Some of their own impressions about student work are confirmed
- They are likely to gain new insights into the thinking of their students
- The strengths and weaknesses of their assignments

Other teachers who participate

- Develop a sense of the kind and quality of the work going on inside their school
- Learn about students they will teach in future years
- See how students they taught in previous years have developed
- Gain new ideas for their own classrooms
- Begin to develop a shared understanding of standards in different domains and the steps students go through to meet them

Protocols are most powerful and effective when used within an ongoing professional learning community such as a Critical Friends Group® and facilitated by a skilled coach. To learn more about professional learning communities and seminars for new or experienced coaches, please visit the National School Reform Faculty website at www.nsrfharmony.org.