Irks and Quirks Protocol*

Time: 15 minutes

I. Each participant receives an index card. On one side of the card, participants write *one* pet peeve they have regarding working in groups or at teacher meetings. They begin their pet peeve with the phrase *It burns my butt when . . . .* (e.g., "It burns my butt when people come late to meetings," "It burns my butt when people are interrupted during discussions," or "It burns my butt when one person does all the talking."). (3 minutes)

II. On the other side of the card, participants write *one* trait about themselves that everyone in the group should know to best work with them in a group setting. They begin their trait with the phrase *One thing you all should know about me is . . . .* (e.g., "One thing you all should know about me is that my silence is not due to disinterest; I just need processing time," "One thing you all should know about me is I get excited during discussions, and sometimes people are put off by my enthusiasm," or "One thing you all should know about me is I am very visual and need to see what we're discussing on chart paper or the interactive whiteboard."). (3 minutes)

III. Participants share both sides of their cards in volunteer order **without discussion** (or elaborating on the card). (5 minutes)

IV. *The debrief.* The team members reflect aloud on the experience they have just shared. (4 minutes)

*Originally titled "Peeves and Traits" until Grapple participant Justine Szymala came up with this better name.

Source: Irks and Quirks is a pre-activity for setting up norms in teacher groups developed by Daniel R. Venables. From D. Venables, *The Practice of Authentic PLCs: A Guide to Effective Teacher Teams,* Corwin, 2011. Copyright 2011 by Corwin. Adapted with permission.

PLC Coach's Guide to Asking Deeper Questions

The role of the PLC coach or facilitator involves much more than simply delineating the agenda or leading PLC members through the steps of a timely protocol. Although these tasks have their place and are part of the PLC coach's "job description," they do not actually lead the PLC to do work that has a significant effect on student learning. To truly improve the work of the collective PLC and of individual teachers, PLC coaches must make a habit of asking probing, difficult questions.

Without addressing deeper questions, the team is just a group of teachers who go through a series of motions that have been approved as proper practices of a PLC, but who do nothing to improve student learning. The last thing busy teachers need is to participate in meetings that, in the end, do nothing of real or significant value to foster their students' learning.

I developed this guide, which draws from resources from the National School Reform Faculty's "Pocket Guide to Probing Questions," to help PLC coaches go deeper and push their PLC members to go deeper, so that they can make significant strides in instructional improvement. If PLCs are to do authentic, substantive work, PLC coaches must not only ask deeper questions and prompt PLC members to think on a deeper level but also relentlessly pursue asking these deeper questions. In my experience, this does not happen unless the PLC coach is aware of the importance of asking deeper questions and knows what such questions might look like.

Deeper questions . . .

- Are general and widely useful, often transcending the content of the moment.
- Allow for multiple responses.
- Help create a paradigm shift in the thinking of individuals and teams.
- Empower individuals and teams to think more expansively about a topic, an issue, or a dilemma.
- Avoid yes or no responses.
- Elicit slow, thoughtful responses.
- Move thinking from reaction to reflection, from being reactive to being proactive.
- Encourage taking another party's perspective.

Some questions that help push data conversations include the following:

- What do you think that implies?
- Do you think we have evidence to support that statement? Where?
- Can you point to specific evidence?
- Why? How do you know?
- Do you think this is something that is systemic or specific to particular student populations?

- What do you think we should do to address that?
- What are the big issues here, as opposed to the secondary or ancillary issues?
- Can we see root causes, based on the evidence, that give rise to secondary symptoms in the issues we're seeing? What are the root causes?

Some general question stems that help push deeper thinking include the following:

- Why do you think this is the case?
- What would have to change in order for . . . ?
- What do you feel is right in your gut?
- What do you wish . . . ?
- What's another way you might . . . ?
- What would it look like if . . . ?
- What do you think would happen if . . . ?
- How was [*ABC*] different from [*XYZ*]?
- What sort of effect do you think [*ABC*] would have on [*XYZ*]?
- What criteria did you use to . . . ?
- When have you done/experienced something like this before?
- What might you see happening in your classroom if . . . ?
- How did you determine that [*XYZ*] was best?
- What is your hunch about . . . ?
- What was your intention when . . . ?
- What do you assume to be true about . . . ?
- What is the connection between [*ABC*] and [*XYZ*]?
- What if the opposite were true? What would happen?
- How might your assumptions about [*ABC*] have influenced how you were thinking about [*XYZ*]?
- Why is this such a dilemma for you?

When team members address deeper questions, important truths about instructional practice come to light. It's not that teachers have been hiding anything; it's more that they have not spent adequate time really looking at what they do and, more important, at the effect of their actions on student learning. It is the PLC coach's job to push this kind of questioning so that these truths bubble to the surface during discourse. The questions and question stems in this guide can help.

Source: Developed by D. R. Venables, Center for Authentic PLCs (www.authenticplcs.com), drawing from resources from NSRF's "Pocket Guide to Probing Questions." Special permission has been received to reproduce text from the National School Reform Faculty. See http://www.nsrfharmony.org or call 812-330-2702 for more resources and to learn about coaches' training to use NSRF resources most effectively.

Text-Based Seminar Guidelines

Purpose: To enlarge understanding of a text (not achieve some particular understanding)

Ground Rules:

1. Listen actively.
2. Build on what others say.
3. Don't step on others' talk. Silences and pauses are OK.
4. Let the conversation flow as much as possible without raising hands or using a speaker's list.
5. Make the assumptions underlying your comments explicit to others.
6. Emphasize clarification, amplification, and implications of ideas.
7. Watch your own airtime—both in terms of how often you speak and in terms of how much you say when you speak.
8. Refer to the text; challenge others to go to the text.

Source: NSRF. Special permission has been received to reproduce the Text-Based Seminar from the National School Reform Faculty. See http://www.nsrfharmony.org or call 812-330-2702 for more resources and to learn about coaches' training to use NSRF resources most effectively.

Final Word Protocol

Time: 55 minutes

I. Team members individually highlight or annotate the common text that they have already read. Each person selects one or two significant quotes or sections from the text. Each excerpt should consist of at least a sentence but be no longer than a short paragraph. (6 minutes)

II. Participants work in groups of four*, with a designated timekeeper, facilitator, and first speaker for each round. The facilitator's role is to ensure that the group stays focused, while the timekeeper's role is to make sure that participants stick to the times. There are four rounds of 11 minutes each (44 minutes total). Here's what each round looks like:

   1. The first speaker reads one of his or her selections from the text and then explains the significance of the excerpt and why he or she chose it. *Others in the group are not permitted to speak during this time.* (3 minutes)
   2. Each participant, in turn, gets 2 minutes to comment on the first speaker's selection. Team members may choose to respond to what the first speaker has said *or* to speak to the excerpt itself in any way that extends the group's understanding of the text. No one is permitted to speak except the person whose turn it is to speak. (6 minutes)
   3. After his or her fellow team members have spoken, the first speaker has the **FINAL WORD**. (2 minutes)

   Rounds 2, 3, and 4 begin by rotating the roles of first speaker, facilitator, and timekeeper.

III. The team debriefs the process. (5 minutes)

*Groups of five or six are also appropriate, although their rounds would require 65 and 90 minutes, respectively. Each round can be trimmed, if necessary. Divide a team with seven members into two groups, one of three and one of four, with the recognition that the larger group will finish after the smaller group. If time is limited, a team of six can also be split into two groups of three.

Source: NSRF. Special permission has been received to reproduce the Final Word Protocol from the National School Reform Faculty. See http://www.nsrfharmony.org or call 812-330-2702 for more resources and to learn about coaches' training to use NSRF resources most effectively.

Essential Highlights Protocol

Time: 30 minutes

Purpose: To collaboratively construct meaning from, clarify, and expand thinking about a text

Materials: Hard copies of the text to be discussed and highlighters in yellow, blue, and pink

Setup: Participants sit in a circle or around a conference table.

Roles: Facilitator, timekeeper

I. *Round 1:* Team members individually read and highlight the text as they normally would, using the *yellow* highlighter. Each then passes his or her highlighted copy of the text to his or her left-hand neighbor. (5 minutes)

II. *Round 2:* Team members individually read the highlighted portions of the text they have received from their neighbor and highlight in *blue* a single yellow-highlighted sentence from each yellow-highlighted excerpt in the text. No new sentences may be highlighted—only those previously highlighted in *yellow.* Each team member then passes his or her double-highlighted copy of the text to his or her left-hand neighbor. (5 minutes)

III. *Round 3:* Team members individually read the highlighted portions of the text they have received and highlight in *pink* a single phrase from each highlighted excerpt in the text. No new phrases may be highlighted—only those previously highlighted in *yellow* or in *yellow and blue.* Each team member then returns the text to its original owner. (5 minutes)

IV. Team members take turns sharing with the group the *pink*-highlighted phrases from their original copies of the text. (5 minutes)

V. The team discusses any new insights about the text that may have emerged. (5 minutes)

VI. The team debriefs the process. (5 minutes)

Source: Developed by D. R. Venables, Center for Authentic PLCs (www.authenticplcs.com).

Notice and Wonder Protocol for Student Work

Time: 40 minutes

Roles: Facilitator, timekeeper, presenting teacher

Purpose: To analyze student work

I. *The context.* (5 minutes)
   - The presenting teacher gives the context for the work he or she has volunteered to share. Other team members are silent and take notes. (2 minutes)
   - The presenting teacher distributes relevant documents for the team to review. (3 minutes)

II. *Clarifying questions.* The team asks clarifying questions of the presenter. These questions should be free of judgment; their sole aim is to elicit additional information. Answers to these questions are short, often a single statement. (5 minutes)

III. Quietly and individually, participants write three or four Notice Statements based on their observations of the work. These statements, which begin with the phrase "I notice that . . . ," must be free of inference, judgment, or speculation; they are fact-based, observing only what is already present in the work. (3 minutes)

IV. *Round 1: Notice Statements.* Team members take turns reading aloud one new Notice Statement at a time, *without discussion,* while the presenting teacher quietly takes notes. The process continues until all Notice Statements have been shared. (4 minutes)

V. Quietly and individually, participants write three or four Wonder Statements about the work. These statements, which begin with the phrase "I wonder why/if/how/whether . . . ," may or may not relate directly to Notice Statements shared in Round 1. Sometimes they offer a suggestion; other times they are merely inquiries to help the presenting teacher think more expansively about his or her work. (5 minutes)

VI. *Round 2: Wonder Statements.* In no particular order, team members take turns reading aloud one new Wonder Statement at a time while the presenting teacher quietly takes notes. This process continues until all Wonder Statements have been shared, *without discussion, except* in cases where the

facilitator chooses to ask follow-up questions of a teacher sharing a Wonder Statement or of the whole team. (8 minutes)

VII. *Teacher reflection.* The presenting teacher takes a moment to review his or her notes and then reflects aloud on any or all of the comments made by the team. The rest of the team is silent. (5 minutes)

VIII. *The debrief.* The team members debrief the experience they have just shared. (5 minutes)

Source: The Notice and Wonder Protocol for Student Work (v2.0) is a protocol for looking at student work developed by Daniel R. Venables. From D. Venables, *The Practice of Authentic PLCs: A Guide to Effective Teacher Teams,* Corwin, 2011. Copyright 2011 by Corwin. Adapted with permission.

Notice, Like, and Wonder Protocol for Teacher Work

Time: 50 minutes

Roles: Facilitator, timekeeper, presenting teacher

Purpose: Improving a teacher's (or teachers') work

I. *The context.* (5 minutes)
   - The presenting teacher gives the context for the work he or she has volunteered to share. Other team members are silent and take notes. (2 minutes)
   - The presenting teacher distributes relevant documents for the team to review. (3 minutes)

II. *Clarifying questions.* The team asks clarifying questions of the presenter. These questions should be free of judgment; their sole aim is to elicit additional information. Answers to these questions are short, often a single statement. (5 minutes)

III. Quietly and individually, participants write three or four Notice Statements based on their observations of the work. These statements, which begin with the phrase "I notice that . . . ," must be free of inference, judgment, or speculation; they are fact-based, observing only what is already present in the work. (3 minutes)

IV. *Round 1: Notice Statements.* Team members take turns reading aloud one new Notice Statement at a time, *without discussion,* while the presenting teacher quietly takes notes. The process continues until all Notice Statements have been shared. (4 minutes)

V. Quietly and individually, participants write three or four Like Statements based on their observations of the work. These statements, which begin with the phrase "I like . . . ," are based on personal preferences. (3 minutes)

VI. *Round 2: Like Statements.* Team members take turns reading aloud one new Like Statement at a time, *without discussion,* while the presenting teacher quietly takes notes. The process continues until all Like Statements have been shared. (5 minutes)

VII. Quietly and individually, participants write three or four Wonder Statements about the work. These statements, which begin with the phrase "I wonder why/

if/how/whether . . . ," may or may not relate directly to Notice Statements shared in Round 1. Sometimes they offer a suggestion; other times they are merely inquiries to help the presenting teacher think more expansively about his or her work. (5 minutes)

VIII. *Round 3: Wonder Statements.* In no particular order, team members take turns reading aloud one new Wonder Statement at a time while the presenting teacher quietly takes notes. This process continues until all Wonder Statements have been shared, *without discussion, except* in cases where the facilitator chooses to ask follow-up questions of a teacher sharing a Wonder Statement or of the whole team. (10 minutes)

IX. *Teacher reflection.* The presenting teacher takes a moment to review his or her notes and then reflects aloud on any or all of the comments made by the team. The rest of the team is silent. (5 minutes)

X. *The debrief.* The team members debrief the experience they have just shared. (5 minutes)

Source: The Notice, Like, and Wonder Protocol for Teacher Work is a protocol for looking at teacher work developed by Daniel R. Venables. From D. Venables, *The Practice of Authentic PLCs: A Guide to Effective Teacher Teams,* Corwin, 2011. Copyright 2011 by Corwin. Adapted with permission. This version includes contributions from the fine folks at Caldwell-West Caldwell Schools.

Notice and Wonder Protocol for Data (v2.0)

Time: 40 minutes

Roles: Facilitator, timekeeper, scribe

Purpose: To look descriptively and inferentially at data

I. Participants are presented with a graph or table of data pertaining to their practice. The data may be displayed on a screen for all to see, or they may be given to each PLC member in hard-copy format. (The former is preferable, since graphs and tables of data are often illustrated in color.)

II. Quietly and individually, participants write three or four Notice Statements based on their observations of the graph or table of data. These statements, which begin with the phrase "I notice that . . . ," must be free of inference, judgment, or speculation; they are factual, based on objective examination of the display, and reflect only what is present in the data. (5 minutes)

III. *Round 1: Notice Statements.* Team members take turns reading aloud one new Notice Statement at a time, *without discussion.* The process continues until all Notice Statements have been shared. (5 minutes)

IV. Quietly and individually, participants write three or four Wonder Statements or question-statements about the data. These statements, which begin with the phrase "I wonder why/if/how/whether . . . ," may or may not relate directly to Notice Statements shared in Round 1. Their intent is to gain insight into what the data suggest, how the data are connected, and what the data imply. (5 minutes)

V. *Round 2: Wonder Statements.* Team members take turns reading aloud one new Wonder Statement at a time while the scribe records the statements on chart paper or types them into a document. This process continues until all Wonder Statements have been shared, *without discussion, except* in cases where the facilitator chooses to ask follow-up questions of a teacher sharing a Wonder Statement or of the whole team. (10 minutes)

VI. *The debrief: Content.* The PLC discusses the data and the statements that have been shared, including possible root causes and connections to classroom

instruction, and takes note of additional data that may be needed to gain further insight. (10 minutes)

VII. *The debrief: Process.* The team debriefs the process it has just experienced. (5 minutes)

Source: The Notice and Wonder Protocol for Data (v2.0) is a protocol for looking descriptively and inferentially at data developed by Daniel R. Venables. From D. Venables, *The Practice of Authentic PLCs: A Guide to Effective Teacher Teams*, Corwin, 2011. Copyright 2011 by Corwin. Adapted with permission.

Potential Data Discussion Pitfalls*: How Would You Handle Them?

* aka *Opportunities*

Time: 35 minutes

I. Participants pair off (*A, B*) and access a virtual 10-sided die (e.g., by downloading a dice-rolling app like Dice Roller or The Game Dice Roller or visiting http://www.roll-dice-online.com).

II. *Rounds.* (10 minutes each, 20 minutes total)
   1. Participant *A* rolls the virtual decahedron die to determine which pitfall of the 10 listed in the table below he or she will troubleshoot. Participant *A* has five minutes to collect his or her thoughts *and* share with Participant *B* how he or she would respond. Participant *B* keeps track of the time and does not speak.
   2. Participant *B* has two minutes to respond to Participant *A*'s solution. Participant *A* keeps track of the time and does not speak.
   3. Participants *A* and *B* have three minutes to articulate in the table their best collective thinking on how to address the pitfall.
   4. Participants repeat steps 1–3, this time switching roles, and rolling again if they get the same pitfall as the first time.

III. *Discussion.* Pairs return to the table and share their pitfalls and solutions with other pairs. (10 minutes)

IV. *Large-group debrief.* (5 minutes)

Pitfall	What would you ask, say, or do?
1. Focus of data conversation shifts to issues over which the team has no control.	
2. Focus of data conversation is on trivial, relatively unimportant observations.	

Pitfall	What would you ask, say, or do?
3. The team is quick to blame students and reluctant to accept responsibility for learning gaps.	
4. Data conversation becomes micro-focused on one particular student or test item.	
5. Focus of data conversation shifts to skills students "should have acquired before this year."	
6. Team jumps prematurely to proposing solutions.	
7. Focus of data conversation shifts to items unrelated to the data at hand.	
8. Focus of data conversation is on secondary symptoms of an undiscussed primary issue.	
9. Team is celebratory and self-congratulatory about what is working.	
10. Focus of data conversation shifts to sustained sentiments of helplessness and pessimism.	

Source: Pitfalls come from "10 Potential Data Discussion Pitfalls," by D. R. Venables and N. Cooperman, 2013. © 2013 by Daniel R. Venables and Teaching Matters, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

Shared Dilemma Protocol (v2.0)

Purpose: Teacher teams often experience dilemmas or problems that are pervasive across a grade level or subject area. This protocol provides a structured way for teacher teams to start the process of solving a shared dilemma or problem that is within their sphere of influence or control.

Time: 45 minutes

Roles: Facilitator (explains each step, moderates, and participates), timekeeper, recorder

Pre-work: A specific dilemma that most members of the PLC face is identified in a prior meeting

I. *The dilemma.* The facilitator presents the common dilemma to the group. Participants may ask a few clarifying questions to ensure that everyone has necessary information. (3 minutes)

II. *Probing questions.* (17 minutes)
   1. Participants are given five minutes to quietly write one probing question that will encourage deeper conversation about the dilemma. During the next two minutes, participants take turns sharing their questions without discussion while the recorder writes them on chart paper or a whiteboard or in a digital format that everyone can see. (7 minutes)
   2. Participants take time to respond to and discuss some or all of the probing questions on the list. The recorder writes the responses on chart paper or a whiteboard or in a digital format. (10 minutes)

III. *Solutions.* (10 minutes)
   1. Participants brainstorm possible solutions. Again, the recorder writes the ideas where everyone can see them. (5 minutes)
   2. Participants engage in an open discussion about the proposed solutions and are encouraged to ask clarifying questions to gain a better understanding of these possible solutions. (5 minutes)

IV. *Next steps.* The facilitator asks questions like "What will we do now based on this discussion? Which solutions should we put into an action plan? Which solutions should we investigate further? Which solutions are we ready to agree to implement?" The recorder takes notes using the chart below to organize ideas. (10 minutes)

	Description	Timeline	Responsible Party
Solutions requiring investigation			
Solutions to put into action			

V. *Debrief.* (5 minutes)

Source: Protocol first developed by Cari Begin with contributions from Daniel R. Venables to help teacher teams start the process of solving a shared dilemma over which they have control. © 2013 by Cari Begin. Revised by Daniel R. Venables © 2016.

Planning Protocol Rubric (v3.0)

Dimension	1	2	3	4
Alignment to Standards	Barely aligned or not aligned	Somewhat aligned	Mostly aligned	Completely aligned
Impact on Learning	Low impact	Medium-low impact	Medium-high impact	High impact
Student Engagement	Low engagement for most students	Moderate engagement for some students	Moderate engagement for most students	High engagement for most students
Depth of Knowledge Level	Recall	Skill/concept	Strategic reasoning	Extended reasoning
Technology Integration	No integration of technology	Some integration of technology	Effective and prominent integration of technology	Effective and innovative integration of technology
Teacher Friendliness		High-maintenance (lots of materials and prep work)	Low-maintenance (few materials or little prep work)	
Rigor and Relevance	Teacher works	Students work	Students think	Students think and work
Differentiation	Not suited for differentiation	Suited for differentiation with fairly significant modifications	Well suited for differentiation with minor modifications	Well suited for differentiation as is, with natural tiers built in
Time-Benefit Analysis	Too much instructional time required for relatively little learning	Questionable amount of time required for expected amount of learning	Amount of time required and amount of learning are commensurate	Small amount of time required for amount of learning that exceeds expectations

Dimension	1	2	3	4
Connections	No connections to previous or future standards or to other subjects	A few genuine connections to other standards or subjects	Genuine connections to other standards and/or subjects embedded in various components	Strong, authentic connections to previous and future standards and to other subjects

The Mindful Debrief: A Pocket Guide to Debriefing

The Context

Reflection is an important practice of authentic PLCs. Just as teachers reflect on a lesson they've given to students or on test results from a recent assessment, PLCs reflect on the work they do—very often at the conclusion of a particular collaborative task. Such a reflection is called *the debrief* of whatever task the PLC has engaged in, and it is intended to provide a forum in which PLC members can discuss the process—what worked and what could be better next time. Debriefing encourages quicker growth in the PLC; protocols and processes that may have been awkward the first go-round become refined, efficient, and more productive in really making a difference in classroom instruction and student learning. Debriefing also allows reluctant PLC members to speak their minds about tasks in which the PLC has engaged. It is the perfect forum for lodging concerns and constructive criticism. PLCs that make a regular habit of mindfully debriefing stand to grow twice as fast as teams that never reflect on what they've done and what they're doing.

Questions to Consider

The following questions are meant to guide the PLC facilitator in debriefing. *Do not feel compelled to address them all;* these represent a sampling of the kinds of questions a facilitator might ask of her PLC during the debrief. *Remember:* the debrief is a time to reflect on the *process*—not on the particular content that was the focus of the activity/protocol.

- How did it go? Did you like this protocol?
- What worked well?
- What could we do better next time?
- What might we change for next time? How would that make it better?
- Did we rush the protocol?
- Did we go deep enough?
- Did we stay on task?
- Will our students benefit from our having done this? How?
- Have we experienced a growth spurt from the last time we engaged in this task [or a similar experience]? In what area?
- How often should we engage in this protocol/task/discussion? What makes sense?

How Did Our Facilitator Do?

Did the facilitator . . .

- Encourage all voices?
- Remind members to watch airtime, as needed?
- Keep team members focused?
- Redirect digressive conversations or comments, as needed?
- Preserve the safety of all team members during other members' contributions?
- Call team members on infractions of norms or protocol rules?
- Ask thought-encouraging questions?
- Ask rich follow-up questions, as appropriate?
- Offer a clear explanation of purpose and how the protocol worked?
- Restate directions for each segment, as needed?
- Follow protocol times and conclude the protocol at the appropriate stopping point?
- Lead the team in a meaningful debrief of process?

How Did We Do?

Did all PLC members . . .

- Seem actively engaged?
- Invest in the work?
- Maintain focus on the task?
- Follow the norms or protocol rules?
- Engage in rich (versus superficial) discussion?
- Offer honest but respectful contributions?

Comments?