

Figure 1.9. Alignment Protocol

The Alignment Protocol

Setup: Create groups of up to 15. Preconference with the presenter so that artifacts are available and the presenter has developed a focusing question that guides the protocol. The presenter will need sufficient copies of artifacts or technology to display them. Participants will need notetaking materials.

Steps:

1. **Setup** (5 min). Review the purpose and steps of the protocol so participants know what to expect. If this is the first time a group is experiencing the protocol, talk about the importance of giving warm and cool feedback and why the presenter moves away from the group in Step 6.
2. **Present** (10 min). Distribute the artifacts (e.g., student work samples). The presenter shares the context around the work, such as the learning goal associated with the work, pertinent curriculum standards, the presenter's desired outcomes, or anything the presenter believes does not work well. End by stating the focusing question that specifically gives the group parameters for their feedback. It is helpful for this question to be posted and visible for the group in the subsequent steps.
3. **Clarify** (10 min). Participants ask clarifying questions of the presenter. Clarifying questions are those with brief, factual answers and are used to help participants better understand the artifacts, intended purpose of the work, and focusing question.
4. **Examine** (5–10 min). Participants review the work through the lens of the focusing question. Participants should take notes for warm feedback, where the work seems to be aligned with the stated goals, and cool feedback, which is designed to strengthen the work. This step is performed silently.
5. **Separate** (1 min). The presenter withdraws from the conversation at this point. It is helpful for the presenter to physically move away from the group, remaining close enough to hear and avoiding eye contact with the group. The group will next conduct a conversation about the work while the presenter silently takes notes.
6. **Warm and cool feedback** (15 min). The facilitator should remind the group that warm feedback may include comments about how the work is aligned with desired goals, and cool feedback offers ideas or suggestions for strengthening the work by addressing the focusing question. It is important that cool feedback is given as a way to answer the focusing question so that it is most helpful to the presenter. Participants will share feedback with each other as though having a conversation while the presenter is silent and takes notes.
Begin with warm feedback. Then transition into cool feedback around the focusing question, couched in "I wonder . . ." statements. If the feedback begins to stray, the facilitator may need to remind participants of the posted presenter's focusing question in order to be the most helpful.
7. **Reflect** (5 min). Invite the presenter to return to the group. The presenter need not defend or address every point in the group's conversation. The presenter may reflect aloud to what she or he heard, particularly feedback that was insightful or helpful, while the participants are silent.
8. **Debrief** (5–10 min). It is important for the group to discuss how the process of the protocol supported the collaborative work. Begin by asking the presenter questions such as the following:
 - How was the experience of presenting?
 - What did you think of turning your chair away and listening silently?
 - How was the outcome of this protocol different from other attempts to improve the work?
 Then open to debrief with the rest of the group.
 - How did the experience feel from your point of view?
 - Did anything the presenter said surprise you?
 - What have you learned that you may use in your work or when facing your own dilemmas?

Source: Adapted from the National School Reform Faculty (NSRF) Tuning Protocol.

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