

Project Tuning Protocol

Originally developed by the National School Reform Faculty and refined by High Tech High

BEFORE THE PROJECT TUNING PROTOCOL:

1) Project Description:

The teacher presenting his/her work should prepare a 1-2 page project description for the tuning session. Also, feel free to prepare other planning materials (scope and sequence, unit plan, project prototype, etc.).

The project description should include:

- An overview of the project
- An Essential/Generative Question(s) or a dilemma
 - o Discuss the dilemma and compose a question that is open-ended.
 - o For assistance developing dilemmas and questions, see [National School Reform Faculty: Consultancy Protocol](#).
- Products
- Learning goals
- Timeline
 - o What is the duration of the project?
 - o What are the milestones or checkpoints? When?
- Strategies, scaffolds, or tools for differentiation
- Presentation
 - o Exhibition ideas
 - o Possible curation options
- Assessment(s)
- Optional: a specific question for the tuning panel to focus on.

2) Establish Norms

It is important that you establish – or remind everyone of – ground rules (or norms) at the start of every tuning session. You may use the following High Tech High norms, adapt them for your school context, or create your own.

<u>Project Tuning Session Norms:</u>
- Share the air
o Ensure that you do not dominate the conversation and that everyone has an opportunity to speak and contribute.
- Be hard on content, soft on people
o Ensure that the discussion (especially parts with any type of criticism) is focused on the project and not on the person.
- Be Kind, Specific, and Helpful
o See Ron Berger: The Three Ground Rules of Critique .

THE PROJECT TUNING PROTOCOL:

Step 1: Prepare for the tuning session
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Organise chairs in a circle or around a table.– Distribute relevant planning materials associated with the project.– Establish/remind all participants of the norms.
Step 2: Introduce the project (10 minutes)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– The presenter will introduce and provide an overview of their project (how it will work and what will be produced), explain the learning goals and put the project into a broader context of what is happening in their classroom and their school.
Step 3: Clarifying Questions (5 minutes)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Critical friends ask clarifying questions of the presenter.– Clarifying questions are used to get a clearer understanding and have short, factual answers.– Examples of Clarifying Questions:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ “How long will the project last?”○ “Where will the exhibition be?”
Step 4: Probing Questions (5 minutes)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Critical friends ask probing questions of the presenter.– Probing questions are used to help the presenter deepen, or expand, their thinking about their project.– Probing questions <i>should not be</i> advice in disguise.– Examples of Probing Questions:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ “How is student understanding evident in their final product?”○ “What evidence will you collect to assess whether the learning goals have been met?”○ See National School Reform Faculty: A Pocket Guide to Probing Questions
Step 5: Discussion (10 minutes)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– If necessary, the presenter reframes the question in light of the clarifying and probing questions.– The presenter physically leaves the circle, faces away from the circle, and listens silently. It is recommended that the presenter takes notes during the discussion.– The facilitator will begin the discussion with positive feedback.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Example starting statement: “What strengths do we see in the project design?”– The facilitator will transition into opportunities for growth and critical analysis, using the question proposed by the presenter to frame the discussion.– After approximately 8 minutes of discussion, the facilitator will ask the group whether the presenter’s question has been answered.
Step 6: Response (5 minutes)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– The presenter will physically join the circle again and will have the opportunity to respond to the discussion.– The presenter may share what struck them most about the discussion, new perspectives or insight about their project, and what next steps they plan to take in response to the feedback and ideas generated.
Step 7: Debrief (5 minutes)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– The facilitator will lead a conversation about the project tuning process by proposing questions to the whole group.– Examples of Debrief Questions:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ “Did we stick to the presenter’s question(s)?”○ “Did our probing questions really extend the thinking of the presenter?”

At the end, thank the presenter for sharing their work and their concerns and thank the tuning group for their questions and advice – it is important to acknowledge everyone’s contributions.

TIPS FOR FACILITATION:

- **Before the project tuning, work with the presenter to frame a good question.**
 - Discuss the dilemma and compose a question that is open-ended.
 - For assistance developing dilemmas and questions, see *National School Reform Faculty: Consultancy Protocol*.
- **Maintain the times outlined for each step of the protocol.**
 - Use a timer to keep track of time.
- **Be confident and keep the group focused on the protocol.**
 - If a probing question is asked during clarifying questions, gently ask the critical friend to save their question until you have moved onto the probing question step of the protocol.
- **Redirect the discussion when necessary.**
 - If the discussion starts immediately with the group responding to the presenter's question, redirect the conversation to celebrate the presenter's thinking and work first.
- **Resist the urge to skip the debrief step of the protocol.**
 - The debrief is an important tool for all participants to improve the quality of dialogue and critique for future tuning sessions.
- **Be courageous.**
 - Facilitation is vital to successful dialogue and critique in this protocol. Take ownership of your role as facilitator and be confident. Feel free to read the instructions aloud at each step if it would make you feel more comfortable.