
Reading Apprenticeship Descriptive Consultancy Protocol*

Team Tool 6.11 from *Leading for Literacy*

Purpose

Teachers respond as critical friends to a colleague's Reading Apprenticeship "case," — a lesson, an issue, or a particular success — in the classroom implementation of Reading Apprenticeship. (A total of 15 or 20 minutes may be sufficient a consultancy; sometimes 30 minutes or more is ideal.)

Procedure

(about 30 minutes)

1. **Presenter lays out the situation.** 5 minutes

Presenter distributes lesson materials and describes the lesson or situation in terms of the following questions, referring to the Reading Apprenticeship Dimensions Graphic (Appendix A) or the Reading Apprenticeship Student Learning Goals (Appendix C) to anchor the discussion:

- What was the context for what the presenter was trying to accomplish?
- What happened?
- What were the presenter's initial understandings?

Team members are silent.

2. **Team members clarify what they do and do not understand and try to develop a shared understanding of the lesson, problem, or success and its complexity.** 5 minutes

Team members speak in terms of these questions:

- What did you hear?
- What do you need to know more about?

Presenter is silent.

3. **Presenter responds to clarifying questions.** 4 minutes

4. **Team members refer to the dimensions graphic or student goals and ask probing questions to elicit presenter's thinking:** 4 minutes

- Questions go deeper into the described successes and/or challenges.
- Questions do not attempt to come up with solutions or ideas.

Presenter is silent.

Descriptive Consultancy Protocol

5. **Presenter responds to probing questions.** 4 minutes
6. **Team members brainstorm possible next steps for presenter.** 4 minutes
Team members offer their suggestions reflexively:
 - What might happen if...
 - One thing I might consider/try/do...*Presenter is silent.*
7. **Presenter reflects on concrete steps to try — if only first steps.** 2 minutes
Team members are silent.
8. **Presenter and then the team debrief:** 4 minutes
 - What was it like going through these steps?
 - What was most useful/interesting about this consultancy?

Keep in Mind

Practice being more descriptive and less judgmental (in terms of praise and blame).

Practice keeping the focus on the presenter's experiences (and not those of your own that may come to mind).

Anchor your discussion with the Reading Apprenticeship dimensions graphic or Student Learning Goals (so that the purpose of apprenticing students into ever more competent disciplinary literacy remains clear).

* This consultancy is adapted from Nancy Mohr's formulation of descriptive consultancy. See, for example, "Descriptive Consultancy" in *The Power of Protocols: An Educator's Guide to Better Practice*, by Joseph McDonald, Nancy Mohr, Alan Dichter, and Elizabeth McDonald (2003). New York: Teachers College Press, pp. 53–55.