



FAMILY ENGAGEMENT PROBLEM OF PRACTICE PROTOCOL

PURPOSE

Family engagement challenges can be nuanced and complex! They often don't have clear cut solutions or simple answers. The problem of practice protocol is a process for collective problem-solving around a family engagement challenge and generating ideas for taking action to address it.

DIRECTIONS

Create groups of four to five people. Before beginning the protocol, assign each group member to one of the following three roles:



The presenter is the person who shares their family engagement challenge with the group. The presenter describes the details of their challenge and presents a guiding question for the group to discuss.



The facilitator moves the group through each step of the protocol.



The thought partners listen to the challenge presented, and help the presenter create action steps for addressing it.

SAMPLE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT CHALLENGE AND GUIDING QUESTION

Details: *I had a difficult time engaging one of my student's families this year. I made many attempts to reach out through phone calls, emails, and notes home. Most of the time, I didn't receive a response. The contact information for the family changed several times throughout the year and it was hard to keep up with the changes. The family didn't attend parent-teacher conferences and I never had the chance to build a partnership with them.*

Guiding Question: *What steps can I take to build a partnership with a student's family when their contact information changes frequently and/or I don't receive a response when I reach out.*



CONVERSATION PROTOCOL TIME: About 20 minutes

- 1 The presenter gives an overview of the family engagement challenge they are grappling with and presents a guiding question for the group to discuss. *3 minutes*
- 2 The thought partners take a coaching stance and ask thoughtful questions to help the presenter clarify their thinking about the challenge, identify root causes, and consider options for addressing it. (See page 3) *5-7 minutes*
- 3 The thought partners take a consultant stance and offer ideas and advice for how the presenter can address the challenge. (See page 4) *5-7 minutes*
- 4 The presenter concludes the discussion by summarizing new thinking about the challenge and identifying the specific next steps they are going to take to address it. *3 minutes*

COACHING STANCE

Taking a **coaching stance** means you're asking questions to help the presenter clarify their thinking, gain new perspectives, and identify ways to address their family engagement challenge. The most effective coaching questions are often open-ended questions that invite thoughtful reflection. For example:

- What would be the most helpful thing for you to take away from this conversation?
- What's most important to you about this challenge?
- What other factors are relevant?
- What connections are you making between ____ and ____?
- What have you already tried to address the challenge?
- What was the outcome?
- What biases might be at play?
- What's within your locus of control?
- What's outside of your locus of control? How can you work within these limitations?
- Who else is involved? What is their perception?
- Who else can support you in addressing the challenge?
- What would you like to happen that is *not* happening now, or what would you like not to happen that *is* happening now?
- What's your ideal outcome for this challenge? What would be a milestone along the way?
- What do you believe is the single most important action you can take to make an impact on this situation/challenge? How are you thinking about moving forward?
- What are some other possibilities for actions/approaches you can take?



CONSULTANT STANCE

Taking a **consultant stance** means you're drawing from your own experiences, knowledge and skills to offer practical advice and guidance. The most effective consultants offer ideas that are actionable for the presenter. As you move into the consultant rounds, consider the following:



Make sure you fully understand the challenge and its root causes. Before sharing your experience and giving advice, be sure you're clear on the root cause of the challenge and the outcome the presenter would like to achieve.

Recognize when more information is needed.

Sometimes the best advice is to get more information before taking action. If the presenter has gaps in their understanding about the challenge, student or family, help them to think about how they'll get the information they need to make informed decisions about next steps.



Make recommendations that are specific and concrete. Your advice and guidance should provide the presenter with ideas for concrete actions they can take that will help them move toward the outcomes they want.

Package your advice in a story. People connect to stories rather than isolated facts and statistics. Whenever possible, share stories of the wisdom you've gained from your own experience. Focus on how the story connects to the presenter's challenge, and what they can learn from it.



Don't force it. It's OK if you don't have the answers. Be honest about it! Unhelpful advice or impractical suggestions can leave the presenter feeling stuck. If you don't have ideas for how to address the challenge, it may be best to help the presenter find someone who is experienced with the type of challenge they're facing and/or can relate to the challenge differently than you can.

