CLEE

Center for Leadership & Educational Equity

Artifact Box Protocol

Developed in the field by educators.

Getting Started (15 minutes)
The facilitator reviews the steps of the protocol.
Then participants look at the artifacts, reading or examining two or three prices of the work in silence. Participants take notes and prepare to share their responses to one artifact.

Describing the Work (20 minutes)
Each participant chooses one artifact to share. Each participant should take approximately 2-3 minutes to:

- Describe the artifact.
- Describe your assumption about what the artifact means, demonstrates about the culture of the school.
- Describe the questions you have about the artifact.

Participants should try not to choose the same artifact to share. This is not time to debate or question each other, it is time for each participant to share perspectives and questions about the artifacts. Observations should be made in statement form, without judgment.

Raising Questions (10 minutes)
Participants pursue questions raised by themselves and their colleagues. Group members ask questions about the artifacts that have come up for them during the previous steps. i.e.

- Why do I see these artifacts in this way?
- What does this tell me about what is important to me? To the learning of students in this school?

Again, this is not time to question or challenge each other. It is time to learn from our colleagues perspectives. The facilitator takes notes on these questions and comments.

Discussion (15 minutes)
Based on the artifacts and the questions raised, discuss thoughts about children's learning or the culture of the school.

Reflection (5 minutes)
Putting the artifacts aside, the group reflects together on how they experienced this session of looking at artifacts, i.e.

- What did you see in the artifacts that were interesting or surprising?
- What about the process helped you to see and learn these things?
- What did you learn from listening to your colleagues?
- What new perspectives did your colleagues provide?
- What questions about the school did looking at these artifacts raise for you?

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Artifact Box Protocol
Key Facilitation Points

Developed by Patty Maxfield.

I believe this protocol was designed to help groups of teachers examine the culture of a school. I have adapted it and used it many times to help folks learn about a school, a school within a school, a large project, etc. I have used it with parent groups, teachers and kids. In this case, you could substitute "learning community" for "school" in the protocol and generate a good conversation. My experience has been people appreciate not being "lectured to" and truly get to uncover and explore. I have done this protocol in a fishbowl format, which worked out okay, but is not as deep as each person actually experiencing the work.

Facilitation Tips

- You need a good facilitator for each group, someone who will gently hold people to the protocol.
- You need at least as many "artifacts" as there are people in the group. These artifacts are usually placed on the center of the table and then group members choose what they want to look at.
- If an artifact is long, say a 10 page document, then it works well to have two people look at the same artifact. You would need two copies. It does not work to have two people share an artifact.
- The facilitator should take good notes during the "questions" part of "describing the work" and use them to jump start and/or direct the conversation during the "discussion" section of the protocol.
- If the artifacts are not even remotely self-descriptive, it helps the group if the facilitator does a very brief overview of the artifacts before they dig in to them
- To learn more about learning communities, I would probably include artifacts like a piece of student work with a protocol attached, a piece of text with a protocol attached, agendas from learning community meetings, a teacher's journal (with permission of course), anonymous reflection forms, feedback from learning community members' students, lesson plans that have been tuned — anything really that the learning community has worked on.
- When selecting artifacts, think about your audience and purpose, then select artifacts that align with them.
- It works to have more artifacts than there are people. It sends the message that there is more to learn. The facilitator needs to make clear that not all artifacts have to be examined.

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