



Center for Leadership & Educational Equity

Protocol for “Day in the Life”

Variation of the Vertical Slice, the Minnesota Slice and the Albuquerque Slice. The Vertical Slice originated in the work of the Bush Educational Leaders Program at the University of Minnesota. The Albuquerque Slice was created by school coaches from the National School Reform Faculty of the Annenberg Institute for the 1996 Fall Forum of the Coalition of Essential Schools.

The purpose of the “Day In the Life” Protocol is to look at student work across time, and/or across classrooms, in order to gain new insights and perspectives on teaching and learning. The process is framed by guiding questions developed by the participating teacher(s) or school community group. A representative sample of student work is collected over a specific period of time. Student and teacher names are omitted from all work. Those who request the “Day In the Life” Slice or Study determine the parameters of the slice including time, sampling, types of work, and guiding questions. (See Initial Check List for Conducting a Day In The Life Protocol.)

- 1. Getting Started.** The facilitator describes the purpose for conducting the “Day In The Life” Slice. The facilitator reviews the Guidelines for Learning from Student Work (Horace p.2, November, 1996) and encourages participants to focus on evidence and refrain from making judgments. [5 minutes]
- 2. Framing the Slice.** A spokesperson for the presenters is introduced and describes the parameters and methodology of collecting the slice. The spokesperson shares how the group arrived at the guiding questions for the slice. The facilitator then presents the guiding questions for the group’s work and future discussion. (The questions are provided in writing to all participants.) [5 minutes]
- 3. Focusing Inward.** Each participant is given the work of individual student(s) to review in depth. Each person is asked to answer the guiding questions in writing and to provide evidence for each response. Questions that emerge from this look at student work are also written down by each participant. [15-20 minutes]
- 4. Broadening the Perspective.** After reviewing the student work, participants having students in the same classroom meet together and share their responses to each question and the evidence supporting their responses. Participants look for patterns in their responses as well as differences that emerge from the evidence. They also identify questions raised by the work. [15-20 minutes]
- 5. Looking At The Big Picture.** Participants each select one of the guiding questions to explore more fully in looking at student work across individuals, classrooms, and grade levels to find patterns and differences in the community of learners. Each participant is asked to write down their responses to the one question, drawing on evidence from across student groups. [15 minutes]

6. **What Have We Discovered.** The facilitator convenes all the participants for a guided discussion. They review the guidelines for sharing perspectives based on evidence. The facilitator invites the presenters to listen and to write down pertinent insights and questions that emerge from the participants' comments. The facilitator then begins the Socratic Seminar using the framing questions to focus the discussion. [30 minutes]
7. **Summary of Group Discussion.** The facilitator (or another designated person) provides a summary of insights, themes, and patterns discovered by the group. They then ask the participants to share questions that have emerged from their study. [10 minutes]
8. **Reactions from Presenters.** The participants and presenters change places, and the presenters continue the seminar discussion among themselves with facilitation continuing. They focus on the following questions: What did we learn from this process? What did we find useful? What did we find frustrating? What questions does this evidence raise for us as a team? [15-20 minutes]
9. **Large Group Reflection.** The facilitator leads a whole group debriefing of the process to explore what was learned, the value of the process and what could be improved. [10-15 minutes]