

Examining Your Work

Every time you do an assignment—from a quick do now to a long-term project—your teacher has a set of expectations. These expectations might come from the teacher, your school or district, or national standards. But other people’s expectations are not the whole story. Your own values matter, too. This protocol is a structured way for you to get feedback from your peers about how much your work matches up with your teacher’s expectations *and* your own values.

You need:

- Schoolwork that you created (like an essay, poster, slide deck, study guide, or artwork)
- A copy of the assignment that led you to create this work (like a checklist or rubric if there was one)
- Three or four trusted peers
- A facilitator (another peer, a more experienced student, or a trusted adult)

What happens:

1. Share information about your work while everyone else is silent and takes notes. (Five minutes)
 - What was the assignment?
 - What were some of the teacher’s expectations? Is there a checklist or rubric you can show the group?
 - What were the steps you went through to do this assignment?
 - What are some things that make school meaningful for you? How do you want to approach your work?
 - What do you want from today’s session? Is there a particular question you want the group to answer or a goal you have?
2. The group asks questions to get more facts about the work. (Four minutes) The facilitator makes sure that the questions are about facts, not opinions. Some examples follow.
 - How long did it take you to make this?
 - What unit was this assignment a part of?
 - When during the unit did you do this?
 - What lessons were there to teach you how to do this?
 - What did the teacher expect you to already know how to do? What did you have to figure out for yourself?
 - Did you do this in class or at home?
 - Did anyone help you?
 - How many times have you done something like this before?

3. The group silently studies your work. Participants write notes about where the assignment seems to match up with what you said makes school meaningful and how you want to approach your work. They also note where the assignment seems disconnected from what matters most to you at school. (Five minutes)
4. The group pauses to think about the feedback they're about to give. (One minute)
5. You are a silent observer while the group discusses your work. They begin by identifying ways it seems to match what matters most to you at school and continue by identifying possible problems or disconnections. You may wish to take notes. (Seven minutes)

During this discussion, the group refers to you in the third person and does not address you directly. For example, if your name is Steve, the group will say things like, "Steve wrote about his family," rather than "You wrote about your family." This can feel a little weird, but it keeps the conversation about the work and not about you or your reactions.

6. The facilitator returns your work. The group does not offer any more feedback after this point.
7. You share what you're thinking after hearing the group's feedback. Try not to defend yourself. Use the time to reflect upon interesting ideas that came out of the discussion. (Five minutes)
8. The facilitator leads a brief discussion about this experience. (Three minutes)
 - How did you, the presenter, feel?
 - How did the group feel?
 - What did the group learn that might make their own schoolwork meaningful?

McDonald, J., & Allen, D. (n.d.). Tuning protocol: Examining adult work. Denver: School Reform Initiative. Accessed at http://schoolreforminitiative.org/doc/tuning_adult_work.pdf on August 17, 2016.