



DEVELOPING A FOCUS OF INQUIRY PROTOCOL

Purpose	To develop a specific Focus that will guide the <i>Learning Walkthrough</i> .
Description	This protocol will help a <i>Learning Walkthrough</i> team to develop, organize, and prioritize questions that investigate practices and activities in classrooms and build an understanding of the interactions among teachers, students, and content.
Time	60 minutes.

Directions:

- 15 min. **1.** Based on your understanding of district and school data and existing strategic or improvement plans, identify a topic or issue that the *Learning Walkthrough* team wishes to investigate. Write the topic on the top of a piece of chart paper. Relate the topic to improving student learning.
- 15 min. **2.** As a group, brainstorm questions that stem from the original topic. Write the questions on the chart paper. Keep in mind key guidelines for brainstorming:¹
1. Let questions flow freely. Generate as many as possible, saying the first thing that comes to your mind. Don't censor your ideas.
 2. Share brainstormed questions without discussing them. The point of this exercise is to generate questions, not to evaluate or sort them (yet).
 3. Bolder, unexpected questions are best. Break out of old patterns.
 4. Even if your idea is similar to something else that's been said, say it anyway. It will keep the creative energies going.
 5. Do not debate, discuss, sort, or evaluate ideas at this time; don't even say "great idea!"
 6. Make sure everyone contributes.
- 20 min. **3.** From this group of questions, identify three that deal with issues over which the school or district has control and that, when resolved, could have a significant impact on teaching and learning. From these three, identify a top priority question. The *Building Consensus Protocol* provides additional guidance for this decision-making process.

Consider the following:

- It is important for the participants to be able to articulate a question in a way that is not evaluative. A Focus of Inquiry should guide the *Learning Walkthrough* process to identify instructional and student engagement practices that positively impact learning.
- Do not try to make the Focus of Inquiry so all-encompassing that participants in the *Learning Walkthrough* will have difficulty recognizing what to script.
- Ensure that the Focus of Inquiry will help *Learning Walkthrough* team members look for the type of learning they want to see, not the kind of teaching they may see.

The top priority question should serve as the Focus of Inquiry to guide the *Learning Walkthrough*.

¹ These brainstorming guidelines are drawn from two sources: *Moving Beyond Icebreakers*, by Stanley Pollack and Mary Fusoni (2005, www.teenempowerment.org), and *Facilitation at a Glance, 2nd Edition*, by Ingrid Bens (2008, www.participative-dynamics.com).