



## The Art Shack Protocol

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*A combination of Describing Children's Work and the ATLAS Process for Learning from Student Work, developed in the field by educators affiliated with NSRF.*

This process is grounded in description, not judgment or evaluation. The major assumption is that all work bears the imprint and signature of the author and so offers important access to the maker's interest, ways of creating order, and point of view. The purpose is to understand this student's (or these students') way(s) of knowing.

The process is formal. During the descriptive portion of the protocol, the team speaks in go-arounds. You are free to pass. Everyone listens carefully. There is no cross dialogue. Comments are kept short (if you keep hearing yourself say "and," you've said too much). Use action words, descriptive words and phrases. The chair sets the focus for each round, listens, and takes notes for common ground.

### **Getting Started** (10 minutes)

- The facilitator reminds the group of the norms of collaboratively looking at student work and, with the group, establishes time limits for each part of the process. At this time the tone is set for description through a brief activity or exercise if the participants are unfamiliar with descriptive review.
- The presenter providing the student work gives a very brief statement of the assignment. The presenter should also describe only what the student was asked to do and avoid explaining what he or she hoped or expected to see.
- The presenter providing the work should not give any background information about the student or the student's work. In particular, the presenter should avoid any statements about whether this is a strong or weak student or whether this is a particularly good or poor piece of work from this student.
- The presenter may, at this time, inform the group of the question or dilemma s/he would like the team to consider.

### **Examining the Student Work** (10 minutes)

- The presenter may choose to read some of the work aloud or have someone else do so. There will be some time for silent examination of the work after the reading, or the entire examination time may be silent.
- The amount of time needed to examine the work depends on the amount of student work, complexity, and number of team members.

### **Descriptive/Interpretive Rounds Begin** (30-90 minutes)

- Each round (or rounds if the same focus is used for several rounds) is summarized by the facilitator and the focus for the next round set.
- Facilitator may vary the beginning person for rounds, and change order from clockwise to counter-clockwise.
- Facilitator may choose to insert a clarifying question round, where team members can ask the presenter clarifying questions—not probing questions.
- A pause for the presenter to reflect on what s/he is learning, either silently or aloud to the team, can be interjected into the rounds.
- There is no absolute order, nor focus for rounds, except for literal description rounds, which must always be done: "What do you see? Six colors used: one cloud, two people, one with red pants..."

### *Rounds*

- Literal Description Rounds
- Physical description...what do you see?
- What Student is Working on Rounds
- Elements that seem apparent (style, rhythm, tone, form. . .)
- Tasks student is trying to accomplish
- How the student is visible in the work
- What does the student appear to value? Offer evidence.
- What does s/he know how to do re: skills?
- What does the student seem on the verge of understanding?
- "I wonder"
- Teaching Focus Rounds
- What does the teacher appear to value, with evidence?
- What teacher expectations seem present in the work?

### **Hearing from the Presenter** (5-10 minutes)

At this point, the presenter comes into the discussion by offering any additional background, clarifying information, reflections, etc. that s/he wants the team to know about the work before continuing.

### **Implications for Classroom Practice** (10-20 minutes)

Based on the group's observations and interpretations, discuss any implications this work might have for teaching and assessment in the classroom. In particular, consider the following questions:

- What steps could the teacher take next with this student?
- What teaching strategies would be most effective?
- What other information would you like to see in the student work? What kinds of assignments or assessments could provide this information?
- What does this conversation make you think about in terms of your own practice? About teaching and learning in general?

### **Reflecting on the Process** (10 minutes)

As a group, share what you learned about the student, about your colleagues, about yourself. Use these questions as a guide:

#### *Looking for evidence of Student Thinking*

- What did you see in this student's work that was interesting or surprising?
- What did you learn about how this student thinks and learns?
- What about the process helped you see and learn these things?

#### *Listening to Colleagues' Thinking*

- What did you learn from listening to your colleagues that was interesting or surprising?
- What new perspectives did your colleagues provide?
- How can you make use of your colleagues' perspectives?

#### *Reflecting on One's Own Thinking*

- What questions about teaching and assessment were raised by looking at this student's work?
- How can you pursue these questions further?
- Are there things you would like to try in your classroom as a result of looking at this student's work?

If the group has designated someone to observe the conversation, this person should report his or her observations.