



## Student Work Gallery

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*Developed by Gene Thompson-Grove.*

1. The Student Work Gallery has two purposes:
  - To help a group become familiar with the kind of work being done by the participants' students, to become aware of what participants value, and/or to become aware of what participants are concerned about.
  - To give everyone at least some feedback, since there is no way all the student work brought to a single session can be the subject of an in-depth look using a protocol.
2. When the Gallery is done in a school, rather than at a network meeting, people begin to see the scope of work being done in a school. They see progressions, holes in the progression, spiraling, repetition, differences in approach etc. It really helps people in a school to become familiar with the "whole" of their students' experience with them.
3. If a large number of people have brought student work for the gallery, set up two sets of the work you have so everyone has a chance to look at it without sitting around waiting for a turn.
4. Encourage people to respond to as many of the pieces as possible, but ask them to also notice whose work has questions on it, and to be sure to distribute the group's responses among the pieces of work as evenly as possible.
5. Be sure to set people up well. Ask them not to make judgmental statements or to evaluate the work in any way. Ask them to be interested in what the student is trying to do, and in what the teacher believes and wants for the students. Ask them to be curious about why students might choose to do things the way they did, what strategies they used, what reflects their voices and perspectives. Ask them to look for strengths, what the maker of the work knows.

The comments should be in the form of questions, and the questions should come from wondering, from observing and noticing, from a place of curiosity. It is possible to veil criticism and judgment behind "I wonder" statements, but at least it is a little harder. The Gallery is also good practice for being more interested and curious, as opposed to being judgmental and evaluative. Many participants say that having to ask questions helps them to uncover their own assumptions and biases.

6. Set a time limit as it can become compelling enough to take up a good deal of time. Thirty minutes is usually enough time to have quite a few good comments attached to all the work (on post-its), to do some reflective writing, and to debrief — and still have the energy and focus needed to do an in-depth exploration with a protocol.
7. It is important for everyone to have time to read the comments put on the work they brought and to debrief with at least a couple of other people. Recently, one teacher was a bit disturbed by some of the

comments — several seemed very critical and made assumptions that were not fair, and wouldn't have been made had the people known the context for the work. The facilitator wouldn't have known that except that the teacher was the one selected to have the in-depth protocol with that piece of work. It turned out to be one of the most profound experiences the group had with examining student work, but the lesson was learned. Leave time for 10 minutes of debriefing around the comments made — if it is a large group, break into groups of 5 or 6 and have each teacher with work talk about how the comments felt — what they learned, what disturbed them, etc.

## 8. The Process

- a. Set up the gallery of student work; participants respond to the work:
  - What questions do you have for the teacher who brought this work? and/or
  - If the students who created/produced this work were here, what questions would you want to ask them?
- b. Reflective Writing: What does looking at this work by these students make me think about *my* practice?
- c. Debrief: both in smaller groups (about the questions on the post-it notes) and as a large group (about the process of the gallery and about the insights people had as part of their journal writing).