As Coaches we all know that protocols are valuable tools that help us create a safe space where teachers feel comfortable bringing their questions and dilemmas to the table for feedback. As an experienced Coach, I continue to value these tools and the need for a safe space, but lately I have had the nagging sense that I/we might not be going as far as we can in our examination of student and teacher work. My nagging doubts grow out of my awareness that at times the process or protocol being used and my adherence to it might be limiting the conversation, especially in the area of implications for equity in our work. So I began to think about the ways we might continue to create a safe space where we could have the “uncomfortable,” risky conversations about equity that we need to have if we are serious about serving historically marginalized students.

Following our Coaching for Educational Equity (CFEE) Seminar last July in Sonoma, a number of the participants held email discussions about the role of equity in using the Looking at Student Work (LASW) protocols. During the discussion, some of us recalled Nancy Mohr’s draft of “Looking at Student Work: Building in the Habit of Equity” protocol. In her writing, Nancy proposes that we “go beyond protocols to the next step which must be specific actions.” I began to think about actively including the equity lens within the protocols as we use them. Nancy suggested preliminary work around community building and equity prior to using protocols. I include her suggestions here:

**Purpose:** To focus looking at student work specifically so that it furthers equity for our students, our teachers and our schools.

**Facilitation tips:** There must be appropriate community building before using any protocol. Suggestions include: (and these are only a few of the many things that can be done – there has to be a lot of facilitator judgment used)

- Reflection on the word equity
- Days on feelings about equity
- Introductions, which include self-identification, historical moments, etc.

And building norms for doing hard and sensitive work together – if this hasn’t already been done. If it has been done months ago, time for a review.

In the process of considering how this should be a preparation for all our efforts, looking at student work, I began to consider how one of the often used protocols might be “expanded” to include the focus on equity that Nancy championed. Here’s a snapshot of my thinking as it applies to the Tuning Protocol (suggestions in italics). This is not a finished product, but I hope it will open up the conversation about the ways we can go deeper with our efforts to serve all students through our collaborative learning from student and teacher work.

**Introduction to the Tuning Protocol**

Often the presenter begins with a focusing question or area about which she/he would especially welcome feedback, for example, “Are you seeing evidence of persuasive writing in the students’ work?” Participants have time to examine the student work and ask clarifying questions. Then, with the presenter listening but silent, participants offer warm and cool feedback — both supportive and challenging. Presenters often frame their feedback as a question, for example, “How might the project be different if students chose their research topics?”

Some specific examples of equity questions might be useful here, such as “Does this look/feel like a project that all students can access?” or “How can I make this work relevant to the different perspectives/experiences of the student in my class?”

After this feedback is offered, the presenter has the opportunity, again uninterrupted, to reflect on the feedback and address any comments or questions she chooses. Time is reserved for debriefing the experience. Both presenting and participating educators have found the tuning experience to be a powerful stimulus for encouraging reflection on their practice.

**Tuning Protocol**

Developed by Joseph McDonald and David Allen

1. **Introduction — 5 minutes**

   a. Facilitator briefly introduces protocol goals, guidelines, and schedule
   b. Participants briefly introduce themselves (if necessary)

2. **Presentation — 15 minutes**

   The presenter has an opportunity to share the context for the student work:
   a. Information about the students and/or the class; what the students tend to be like, where they are in school, where they are in the year.
   b. Descriptions of the students grounded in evidence

   The way descriptions are shared in (continued on page 14)
Creating the space for the participants to undertake the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual growth to eliminate their behaviors that support the cycle of inequity (i.e., fostering trust, increasing confidence, decreasing pretense and passivity). By the end of our Seminar, we challenge you to be ready, willing, and able to interrupt inequity and oppression in your school, build the alliances required to create that equitable reality, encourage new leaders to emerge, and to support these new leaders to reflect on the issues of equity that arise in their lives and work. All schools need to create safe opportunities for educators to share and reflect upon stories and experiences about how racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression have affected our lives as individuals, parents, educators, and citizens. In CES Small Schools it is our responsibility to do so.

We mean by Rigor. “Two texts; ‘Hip Hop In the Classroom,’ and ‘What Do Learning Matters?” The facilitator should be clear about the student work. Clarifying questions are helpful to them to understand the context for the student work. Clarifying questions might be, “How are all students being served with this assignment?” Or “How was it different for the members of this particular class?” Samples of student work — photographs of work, classroom, classroom, and student names removed.

More questions to consider: How did the presenter select the work? Was it truly random? Does it represent not only the range of learning, but also the range of diversity in the class? Evaluation format — scoring rubric and/or assessment criteria, etc. Questions here could focus on how evaluation is handled. Are clear, high expectations stated for all, using student-friendly language that guides the students to equitable outcomes? Focusing question for feedback. Participants are silent questions are entertained at this time.

3. Clarifying Questions — 5 minutes

Participants have an opportunity to ask “clarifying” questions in order to get information that may have been omitted in the presentation that they feel would help them to understand the context for the student work. Clarifying questions are matters of fact. The facilitator should be sure to limit the questions to those that are “clarifying,” judging which questions more properly belong in the warm cool feedback section.

4. Examination of Student Work Samples — 15 minutes

Participants look closely at the work, taking notes on where it seems to be in tune with the stated goals, and where there might be a problem. Participants focus particularly on the presenter’s

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Lakweisha was Hungry to talk to me about your job and how you use your coaching skills in your work with parents and family members?

My official job description is Family Partnership Specialist. Due to rising attention about the parental role in support of student achievement, the Chattanooga Non-profit Community, in my case the Urban League, joined forces with the Hamilton County School System to design a program that would place point people in nine urban elementary schools to address parental engagement. I’m one of those people.

In terms of what I do, you do have about 72 hours? Because it may take that long for me to describe my job. No, seriously, I’ll just give you some highlights. One of my responsibilities is the identification and organization of an Action Team of parents/family members and staff school, who will put the school’s Family-Community Partnership Plan into action.

What’s the Family-Community Partnership Plan?

The Family-Community Partnership Plan brings staff and families together in order to achieve the school improvement plan’s goals. My role in this process is all about facilitating collaboration and communication. My Coaches’ training gave me some skills for my toolbox that help me approach issues with parents and teachers so that we can have real conversations about concerns both groups have.

What are some of the challenges you’ve faced?

It’s been rough. One of the first things I had to do was find out how interested the staff really was in parental input. Lots of times parents are invited to meetings where presenters talk at them and then the parents don’t come back. Since my job was about creating a partnership, I wanted to guarantee that a consistent parental base would be present at the table.

Using text-based and other protocols has helped me hold a place at the table for everyone’s voice, especially the missing voice of the parents.

Lakweisha Tibbs

NSRF’s Living History: An Interview with Lakweisha Tibbs
Debbie Bambino, Pennsylvania

Here in Chattanooga, we’ve been working really hard to improve the student scores. We’ve been under the gun at schools like mine and we’ve made a tremendous gain of ten points in just one year, the highest gain in the state. Well, after

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What steps have you taken to get a base of parents engaged?

I left had a dominant parent voice in the group, not just one or two folks who are totally outnumbered by teachers and administrators. I knew that parents would find safety in numbers and would be more willing to speak up if they came as a group. I also wanted to make sure that our meetings went beyond the traditional one-way transmission model where schools tell parents how to help with homework at home but parents don’t get to tell schools what they need.

But back to your question, I make home visits. I meet with groups of parents at our school. I coordinate an after school/weekend literacy tutorial program that works with community organizations and resources along with teacher consultants to yield measurable academic improvements for students.

Basically, I communicate with families. I use student and school data to ask parents my number one question. If you don’t defend your kids, who will I don’t stop there though, I also work to give parents the skills and opportunities they need to speak up and be heard.

I remember when we met last summer, you told me about parents lobbying and holding a press conference. Can you refresh my memory about these actions?

Sure, the first thing was the press conference. Here in Chattanooga, we’ve been working really hard to improve the student scores. You’ve been under the gun at schools like mine and we’ve made a tremendous gain of ten points in just one year, the highest gain in the state. Well, after (continued on page 16)
Debbie Bambino, Pennsylvania

“Aggressive Neglect” in Urban Districts Calls for Unreasonable Action by Warriors of Justice!

If it’s about developing better lessons here, or a personalized advisory program there, without engaging in deeper collaborative discussions about the ways our schools reproduce the ongoing inequities of our society.

In the same vein, my work as a graduate student needs to shed new light on the issues of power and inequality at play in the ways schools are failing kids, especially poor kids of color. In other words, my research needs to be participatory and action oriented, or it’s going to be just another dissertation that misses the problem of student failure, even though it might be looking at the crisis from a different angle.

The best way I know to push my thinking and my work beyond the safe, hand-aided measures that I used to be content with, is to approach my work collaboratively across differences of race, class, and position in the structures of our schools. If I continue to do my work mostly alone, and with other white teachers and grad students who look, and often think like me, chances are pretty good that I’ll stay locked-in to the status quo of my own thinking and practice. However, if I build bridges across differences and include teachers of color, students and members of their families in the mix, I can increase the likelihood for multiple perspectives and theories of action to emerge.

Dr. Ladson-Billings suggests that “aggressive attention” is needed before we forget the lessons of Katrina. Jonathan Kozol calls for an end to high stakes testing and full funding for universal, high quality education. And Dr. Lucero’s young son urged us, through her, “to pay attention.” My challenge is to keep these lenses in place as (continued on page 13)

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Equity and additions by Debbie Bambino

• What have each of us learned about building the habit of equity through doing this protocol?
• What are our next steps?
• Who’s at the table? Who’s missing?
• Why aren’t those voices included?
• How can we include those whose perspectives have been silenced historically?
• How does the work we’ve just done serve all of our students?
• How does it serve those students who have been marginalized in the past?

9. Debrief — 5 minutes
• How well do we feel we answered the presenter’s question?
• Facilitator-led discussion of this tuning experience.

In conclusion, examining specific protocols through the lens of equity begs the question of doing the equity work ahead of the protocols. It seems that trying to do the work through the protocols could be risky and half-baked if the baseline work of some of the equity tools we used this summer at the CTEE seminar (Constructivist Listening, Examining Equity Perspectives, relevant readings), or other thoughtful equity work, hasn’t been done previously with the group. On the other hand, if we wait for that preparation to be done, we may never get to examining the student/teacher work. So once we’ve examined these protocols for equity we need to think about stepping up and making a strong case for CEE training and existing CEEs to do purposeful equity work. This might include more CEE seminars around the country and an equity “curriculum” involving all our protocols. I like to think Nancy is cheering us on!

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A printer friendly version of this protocol is available at www.nurharm.org/connections.html