One of my favorite NSRF protocols is the Success Analysis Protocol. In schools, I have typically used this protocol at the end of a school term to encourage self-reflection among teachers and to open our eyes to our colleagues’ accomplishments. In Western Civilization culture, “bragging” is often frowned upon, so we have learned to avoid speaking of our successes with joy unless we are surrounded by close friends or family. This protocol, however, makes bragging not only okay, but desirable!

The coach first asks participants to identify a success from a given period of time (i.e. first semester, this school year, in the past 5 years). Participants are then given a couple of minutes to jot down details about that success. What made this a meaningful “success” for you? Who did it affect? Were there fiscal “wins,” powerful community connections made, or other sorts of breakthroughs?

Then, in groups of three or four, a rotation begins. In each triad or quad, the first presenter shares their success, then other participants have an opportunity to ask clarifying questions. After those questions have been answered, the presenter turns their chair around so they may hear but not make eye contact with the other participants. The others then have a conversation, analyzing and extrapolating details of the success. Some of these details may have been heard explicitly, while others may be inferred.

At the conclusion of the analysis, the presenter turns back around to rejoin their quad and reflect on what they heard. Almost always, the presenter expresses an even deeper recognition and satisfaction with their success based on what they heard from the other participants. Their critical friends add perspective to the presented success story, emphasizing its importance and effect on others. Typically, each round ends with a lot of smiles, high-
fives, and fist bumps. It’s a lot of fun! After this, then the next person in each quad presents their success, and the rounds repeat until each person has presented and heard from the others in their small group.

**Modifications for fifth graders**

Until recently, I had only attempted this protocol with adults and with high school students...but recently I was asked to run it with elementary students, so I gave it a shot. The results were fantastic! These kids relished the opportunity to share their successes with their peers, and they embraced the chance to talk about their peers’ successes!

Working with fifth graders, I was very directive in my approach when I had them identify their success. I asked them to consider any success inside or outside of school within this school year, and I posted the 5Ws and H on the board (who, what, when, where, why, and how). I gave them six minutes to write freely about their chosen success, and encouraged them to consider each W and H in their writing.

In contrast with the standard way this protocol is run with adult learners, I added a bit more structure by my serving as a timer for the entire room. As I facilitated, I listened to the amazing variety of things they identified as successes. I also collected their written notes, and here is some of what I learned.

“In November, I got a 100% on my English test. My parents were proud of me, also. I studied a lot.”

Lauren wrote that she got a 90% on a math test last week; she went on to say that her mom got her a shake from Jack-in-the-Box to celebrate!

Another student wrote that she got a 103% on a social studies test that was really hard to study for; she explained how her mom had helped her study.

**Not just academics**

Other things we do in schools provide students with reasons to smile:

One student spoke of how proud she was to have had her art featured at a local mall.

Another student wrote, “When I ran for Student Council, I was really just trying to have fun, but I was so excited when I got voted into STUCO!

Bailey pointed out that a teacher had chosen her, out of all of her classmates, to receive an “Empathy Award.” She was most moved by this because she thought it was “awesome” that her teacher “noticed her.” She added, “He finds ways to notice us all the time.”

**While stressful, school examinations offer opportunities for students to be proud of their work, especially when they’re not always successful...and our responses to their hard work and success (both before and after the tests) are certainly noted.**

**And not just in-school successes**

Athletics and activities give our young people experiences to be proud of:

Wyatt hit two homeruns and won a game for his fall baseball team.

At gymnastics, Megan got “shot through” on the bars. She got it by “practicing and practicing.” She said that her coach helped her.

“My whole family was there. They were a huge support for me.”

Another student got first place in an Irish dance competition. She explained that, “My whole family was there. They were a huge support for me.” Most important to her was that her big sister (in seventh grade) was there.

**Success Analysis feels GREAT!**

Fifth graders relished this opportunity, and adults do, too. One past colleague described the experience of listening to others analyze your success as similar to listening to a sports talk radio show when you’re the person who got the game-winning hit the night before. Others can take our successes and help us to feel just a little heroic, like they should!

Whether you find a situation soon to use this protocol or not, and no matter what ages you work with, I hope you find some opportunities to reflect on your successes. There is never a bad time to do so!

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