



CRITICAL ISSUES

in school reform

An eight-part series
presented by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform
at Brown University
produced by the Annenberg/CPB Channel

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

with Activities
and Resources

LOOKING AT STUDENT WORK

A Window into the Classroom

Increasingly today, schools and their communities are using student work—from essays and public presentations to scientific experiments and model-building—as a way to further the progress of individual students and of the whole school. The collaborative, public examination of student work by teachers, administrators, parents and community members offers a useful tool for improving teaching practice and thereby student achievement. Looking at student work collaboratively enables teachers and administrators to share and reflect on ways to develop new classroom practices and environments that support learning, and encourages schools and their communities to develop common expectations for student achievement.

“Looking at Student Work: A Window into the Classroom” is appropriate in many settings with a variety of participants, including teachers, administrators, parents and interested others in your school or district.

The video can be useful to:

- introduce the idea of looking at student work
- understand the collaborative context for looking at student work
- raise questions about what can be learned from and who might be involved in looking at student work
- provide an example of a group of teachers looking at student work
- get a group of teachers ready to look at their own students' work

I. ABOUT THE VIDEO

“Looking at Student Work” explores a variety of ways in which looking at student work can help improve teaching and learning. The video features students, teachers and administrators at Norview High School in Norfolk, Virginia, a member of the ATLAS Communities school redesign project, who discuss their experiences in looking at student work. The video also includes brief interviews with:

- Paula Evans and Gene Thompson-Grove, Co-Directors of the National School Reform Faculty at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform
- A parent and a community member from Norfolk who participated in looking at student work from Norfolk schools
- Groups of teachers, administrators, and school coaches from around the country who have used looking at student work to further teaching practice and student learning in their own schools

The 28-minute video addresses the following areas:

- Why: Introduces the idea of looking at student work and the ways it can impact a teacher’s practice
- Who & Where: Describes the collaborative process of Critical Friends Groups
- What & How: Looks at student work with a Critical Friends Group at Norview High School
- What if . . . : Broadens the examination of student work to include parents and community members

Norview High School

Norview is one of several high schools serving the urban community of Norfolk in southeastern Virginia, with some 1,800 students and 110 teachers in grades 9–12. Approximately 60 percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. The student body is 71 percent African American, 28 percent white, and 1 percent other.

II. AN ON-LINE DISCUSSION (MARCH, APRIL & MAY 1999)

You can participate with viewers from around the country in an on-line discussion about peer observation and the issues in this program.

Where: www.learner.org/channel/workshops/criticalissues/studentwork

When: March 17 to 24 *and* April 21 to May 5

III. SUGGESTED VIEWER ACTIVITIES

A Viewers’ Workshop

The following workshop is designed for a group with little or no familiarity with the idea of looking collaboratively at student work. The structure can be adapted to your particular situation; for example, the questions in parts 1 and 2 can be used for a general discussion about the video.

The workshop can be completed in a two-hour session, including the 30-minute video.

Part 1: Preparing to Watch the Video (15–20 minutes)

- a. Ask participants to split up into groups of 2 or 3 to brainstorm the times when teachers look at student work.
- b. Reconvene in the full group and compile a list based on the small-group conversations. (Note how many of these examples are cases of an individual teacher examining samples of student work and how many are instances of looking at student work with other colleagues.)
- c. Ask participants to share stories from their own experiences with collaborative work. Encourage responses that address the question: How is looking at student work samples collaboratively different from looking at it individually?

Part 2: Watching the Video (30 minutes)

Ask the participants to keep the following questions in mind as they watch the video:

- What are the potential strengths of using this process?
- What concerns or questions does the video raise for you?

Part 3: Discussing the Issues Raised in the Video (45–60 minutes)

- a. Facilitate a discussion of participants' responses to the questions in Part 2.
- b. Ask the group to consider the following question:
 - What real need are we working on in our school for which looking at student work could be useful? (For example: developing an integrated curriculum, setting new standards, participating in a self-study process.)

Ensuring a Good Conversation: A Few Basic Groundrules

Identify a facilitator and a timekeeper.

Set norms for the discussion. Be sure all participants have an opportunity to understand and agree to these norms. They may want to add others.

- Focus on the video and the discussion in it. Refer to specific examples from the video in your discussion.
- Build on what others say.
- Listen carefully and do not "step on" one another's talk.
- Converse – no need to raise your hand, but don't interrupt either.
- Expose and challenge your own assumptions.
- Watch your airtime.

A Session on Looking at Student Work

Facilitate a session in your school around a selected sample of student work. The session itself should be scheduled to last one-and-a-half to two hours. You will also need to allow time for considerable preparatory work.

NOTE: *This session will require careful advance planning if it is to be successful.* Here are some suggestions to help make this session successful.

Before the session:

Identify a person who will present student work from his/her class.

Decide on the focus question that will be addressed by looking at a sample of student work. (The discussion in Part 3 of the Viewers' Workshop should be helpful in crafting the focus question. For example: What might a final project for a ninth-grade integrated humanities course look like?)

With the presenter, select samples of student work that are relevant to your focus question. (For example: A group interested in discussing the development of integrated humanities projects might look at several pieces of work that demonstrate one student's response to a project with both history content and writing goals.)

Choose a protocol. For groups looking at student work for the first time, both the Tuning Protocol and the Consultancy are good protocols to start with. (Several useful protocols, including these two, are outlined in the November 1996 issue of *HORACE*; see Resources below.)

Schedule the session. You will need *at least* an hour and half to ensure sufficient time for understanding the protocol, looking at the work, and debriefing the process and the session itself.

At the session:

Distribute the time schedule for the protocol, discuss the process and norms, and select a recorder.

Use the protocol to look at the student work sample(s).

Take time to debrief the protocol process you used; ask your colleagues what they learned from the process, what they liked about it, and what they would have liked to do differently. (This information is *extremely* important for planning future sessions.)

Before the session ends, allow time for debriefing the group's experience with looking collaboratively at student work. Discuss what next steps the group would like to take (for example, using the protocol to further explore the focus question you chose or to address a different focus question; or, perhaps, practicing with the protocol in a lower-risk situation before returning to look at their own students' work).

Observe a Protocol in Action

To see a full protocol for looking at student work in action, watch for "Reflecting on Teaching Practice: Student Work, Teacher Work, and Standards Part I – Math," airing on March 23 and 25 as part of this Critical Issues in School Reform series. The program shows a group of teachers using a tuning protocol to provide feedback to a tenth-grade math teacher. The full protocol is shown, with clear facilitation and explanation. Information and resources for this program are available at <www.learner.org/channel/workshops/criticalissues/math>.

IV. RESOURCES FOR LEARNING MORE

Allen, David. 1995. *The Tuning Protocol: A Process for Reflection*. Studies on Exhibitions No. 15. Oakland, CA: Coalition of Essential Schools.

Allen, David (Ed.) 1998. *Assessing Student Learning: From Grading to Understanding*. New York: Teachers College Press. (Includes a listing of organizations providing publications and support related to looking at student work.)

Cushman, Kathleen. 1996. "Looking Collaboratively at Student Work: An Essential Toolkit," *HORACE* 13:2, Coalition of Essential Schools (November).

Hatch, Thomas. 1998. "From a Public Education to an Education in Public," *Education Week*, January 14. (Also available on the Education Week web site at <www.edweek.org/archives>.

Hatch, Thomas, and Steve Seidel. 1997. "Putting Student Work on the Table," *Phi Kappa Phi Journal* (Winter), pp. 18–21.



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REFLECTING ON TEACHING PRACTICE

Student Work, Teacher Work, and Standards, Part I—Math

For several years, teachers, administrators, and colleagues in the education community have been developing ways to use samples of student work as a tool in improving teaching practice, and thereby, student learning. In this program, a group of educators use a “Tuning Protocol” – a structured process for reviewing and giving feedback on a sample of student work – to give feedback to Chicha Lynch, a tenth grade mathematics teacher from San Bruno, California. The group then discusses ways they have found using processes like the Tuning Protocol to be useful in collaborative work in their schools.

This program will be useful for:

- Teachers and administrators considering or already using processes to examine student work in collaborative settings in their schools.
- Pre-service teachers interested in processes for enhancing their practice and building collaborative relationships with colleagues.
- Educators interested in ways that examining student work can help in connecting standards to meaningful classroom practice.

The following items will be useful to participants in viewing the tape:

1. A copy of the problem that students present in Chicha Lynch's math class:

$$\begin{array}{l} 60 \times 60 \times 24 \times 365 = 31,536,000 \\ \text{seconds in 1 year} \\ \\ 12 \times 5280 \times 186,000 = 1.17 \text{ E}10 * \\ \\ \begin{array}{r} 31,3536,000 \\ \times 1.17 \text{ E}10 \\ \hline 3.716 \text{ E}17 \end{array} \qquad \text{Answer: } 3.716 \text{ E}17 \\ \text{inches in 1 light year!} \\ \\ [* \text{ E} = \text{exponent of } 10; \text{ i.e., } \text{E}10 = 10^{10}] \end{array}$$

2. A copy of the NCTM standard on Mathematics as Communication that Chicha Lynch is considering in this lesson and in her focusing question. You will find it posted on the web at <http://standards-e.nctm.org/1.0/89ces/280140s2.htm>

II. AN ON-LINE DISCUSSION (MARCH 1999)

You can participate with viewers from around the country in an on-line discussion about professional collaboration and the issues in this program.

Where: www.learner.org/channel/workshops/criticalissues/studentwork

When: March 23 to March 31

III. SUGGESTED VIEWER ACTIVITIES

The following are suggestions for holding a discussion/workshop around this videotape. The first session is most appropriate for a group with little to no experience in using collaborative processes for examining student work. The second session is most appropriate for a group with some experience in using these processes and interest in further developing their abilities to analyze and respond to student work and questions on teaching practice. Both sessions will take approximately one and one-half hours.

An Introductory Workshop

Part 1: Preparing to Watch the Video (15 minutes)

Brainstorm ways that teachers usually look at student work in schools. Make note of comments on a board or chart paper. Ask the group to think about how many of these ways are solitary, and how many involve working with colleagues. Ask the group to think about what traditional purposes for looking at student work are. Introduce the tape as a different approach to looking at student work, to use it as a tool in improving teaching practice.

Part 2: Watching the Video (45 minutes)

Ask participants to think both about the comments group members make and the process they use in their conversation. You might want to assign some members of the group to pay particular attention to the facilitator, some to pay particular attention to the presenting teacher, and some to pay particular attention to the other teachers.

Part 3: Discussing the Issues Raised in the Video (30 minutes)

Use questions such as the following to facilitate a conversation about the video:

1. What was most interesting to you about the conversation that you saw?
2. What do you think of the careful process for the conversation, or “protocol,” that you saw used? What are the benefits of using such a process? What concerns would it raise for you?
3. If you were the presenting teacher, what would be most valuable to you about this experience? What would be most frustrating?
4. What are some teaching dilemmas that you might appreciate feedback on, using student work as a form of evidence?
5. What kind of relationship would you have to establish with colleagues to make this kind of conversation possible?
6. Would you be interested in this kind of work with your colleagues?

An Intermediate Workshop

Part 1: Preparing to Watch the Video (15 minutes)

Discuss ways that you and your colleagues have used processes to look at student work. What has been particularly rewarding? What has been particularly hard? If you were to make progress in this work, what would be different in six months? In a year?

Part 2: Watching the Video and Discussing the Issues It Raises (90 minutes)

Use the video as an example of a Tuning Protocol that you are able to both participate in and critique. Stop the tape at key points and consider the following:

1. Watch the opening 15 minutes of the program – the setting of the agenda, the norms, the focusing question, and the presentation of student work. Stop the tape. How did the facilitator set a context for the tuning protocol? What are her goals for the “climate” of the conversation? What else would you want to say to the group? How would her comments be different if she were working with a group of teachers who were colleagues in the same school?
2. Watch the facilitator introduce the Clarifying Question. Stop the tape. Take a few minutes to think of clarifying questions that you would ask of Chicha Lynch. Make note of these. Then watch the clarifying questions segment of the discussion. Stop the tape. What questions were particularly useful? What questions were different than those you intended to ask?
3. Watch the facilitator introduce the Feedback Session. Stop the tape. Take a few minutes to think of warm comments that you would make regarding the work. Make note of these. Then watch the warm comments segment of the discussion. Stop the tape. What comments were particularly interesting or useful to you? What comments were different than those you intended to make? Repeat this process for Cool Comments, and for Hard Questions.

4. Watch the debriefing session. Then consider the following questions:
 - a. what did you learn from watching another group in a Tuning Protocol? What questions does this raise for you about your own collaborative examination of student work?
 - b. If you were the presenting teacher, what would you have learned from this experience? If you had been a member of the group, what would you have learned?
 - c. What changes, if any, would you make to the ways you use collaborative processes for examining student work based on this example?

For More on Looking at Student Work

If you are interested in hearing teachers and administrators in a school discuss how they use looking at student work to improve their practice, watch “Looking at Student Work: A Window Into the Classroom,” a program in the Critical Issues in School Reform series on the Annenberg Channel. Broadcast on March 16, 18, and April 20, 22, 27 and 29 at 5 pm and 7 pm Eastern, the program shows faculty members at Norview High School in Norfolk, Virginia discussion the practice and implications of looking collaboratively at student work. For more information, and for resources related to the program, see <www.learner.org/channel/workshops/criticalissues/norfolk>.

IV. RESOURCES FOR LEARNING MORE

- Allen, David. 1995. *The Tuning Protocol: A Process for Reflection*. Studies on Exhibitions No. 15. Oakland, CA: Coalition of Essential Schools.
- Allen, David (Ed.) 1998. *Assessing Student Learning: From Grading to Understanding*. New York: Teachers College Press. (Includes a listing of organizations providing publications and support related to looking at student work.)
- Cushman, Kathleen. 1996. “Looking Collaboratively at Student Work: An Essential Toolkit,” *HORACE* 13:2, Coalition of Essential Schools (November).
- Hatch, Thomas. 1998. “From a Public Education to an Education in Public,” *Education Week*, January 14. (Also available on the Education Week web site at <www.edweek.org/archives>.
- Hatch, Thomas, and Steve Seidel. 1997. “Putting Student Work on the Table,” *Phi Kappa Phi Journal* (Winter), pp. 18–21.



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REFLECTING ON TEACHING PRACTICE

Student Work and Teacher Work, Part II-Science

Historically, teaching has been an isolated profession—school structures encouraged teachers to spend almost all of their time alone in their classrooms with their students. New practices in peer observation, in which colleagues observe one another in their classrooms and then meet to discuss what they saw, are working to break down this isolation and encourage collaboration. Observation is useful, not only for the teacher being observed, but also for the observer, as she makes connections to her own practice and ways to improve her teaching.

This program will be useful for:

- Teachers and administrators considering or already using processes of peer observation in their schools. The program will be particularly useful for groups of educators who have experience with peer observation and are looking to reflect and build upon their existing experience.
- Pre-service teachers interested in processes for enhancing their practice and building collaborative relationships with colleagues.

Observe a Peer Observation

For an introduction to the practice of peer observation at work in one California high school, watch "Innovations in Professional Collaboration: Making Teaching Public" in this series. The program airs on March 2 and 4, and April 6 and 8 at 5 pm and 7 pm Eastern. For more information, visit www.learner.org/channel/workshops/critical-issues/peercollab.

I. ABOUT THE VIDEO

In this program, a group of four teachers will model the kind of reflective dialogue that is prompted by classroom observation. They will use a short video segment of a fifth-grade science classroom to prompt their conversation. After looking closely at and discussing the segment, they will talk about what the segment makes them think about their own teaching. They will also discuss their experiences with and learning from peer observation in their own schools.

II. AN ON-LINE DISCUSSION (MARCH & APRIL 1999)

You can participate with viewers from around the country in an on-line discussion about professional collaboration and the issues in this program.

Where: www.learner.org/channel/workshops/criticalissues/peercollab

When: March 30 to April 8

III. SUGGESTED VIEWER ACTIVITIES

An Introductory Workshop

This session is most appropriate for a group with little to no experience in peer observation and reflective dialogue.

Part 1: Preparing to Watch the Video (15 minutes)

Brainstorm ways that teachers usually interact with one another in schools. Make note of comments on a board or chart paper. Ask the group to think about how many of these ways are connected to student learning, and how many involve time spent in one another's classrooms. Ask the group to think about what traditional purposes for classroom observation are.

Introduce the tape as a different approach to observation: a tool in improving teaching practice.

Part 2: Watching the Video (45 minutes)

Ask participants to think about both the comments group members make and the process they use in their conversation.

Part 3: Discussing the Issues Raised in the Video (30 minutes)

Use questions such as these to facilitate a conversation about the video:

1. What was most interesting to you about the conversation that you saw?
2. What do you think of the process for the conversation? In what ways were the questions used to guide the discussion helpful? What are the benefits of using such a process? What concerns would it raise for you?
3. If you were a participant in this conversation, what would be most valuable to you about this experience? What would be most frustrating?
4. What purposes might reflective dialogue around classroom observation serve in your school? What would get in the way of such dialogue happening?
5. What kind of relationship would you have to establish with colleagues to make this kind of conversation possible?
6. Imagine that a trusted colleague offers to spend a class period in your classroom. What would you like him or her to focus on? What question about your own teaching, or a particular lesson, would you like her input in thinking about?

An Intermediate Workshop

This session is most appropriate for a group with some experience in using these processes and interest in further developing their abilities to engage in and respond to classroom observations.

Part 1: Preparing to Watch the Video (15 minutes)

Discuss ways that you and your colleagues have used peer observation. What kinds of reflective dialogues has it prompted? What has been particularly rewarding? What has been particularly hard? If you were to make progress in this work, what would be different in six months? In a year?

Part 2: Watching the Video and Discussing the Issues It Raises (90 minutes)

Use the video as an example of a reflective dialogue that you are able to both participate in and critique. Stop the tape at key points and consider the following:

1. Watch the opening eight minutes of the program (the introduction, the norms, and the roles).
Stop the tape before the classroom segment begins. In this setting, the teacher whose classroom is being “observed” via videotape is not present. What are the purposes for reflecting on teaching practice when the teacher is not present? What are the limits on such a conversation?
Before you resume watching the tape, ask one-third of your group to pay particular attention to the students in the classroom, one-third to watch and listen to Sarah in her classroom, and one-third to watch and listen to Sarah as she talks about her teaching. Watch the video of Sarah and the students in her classroom.
2.
 - a. Stop the tape after Fran, the moderator, introduces the first question for discussion: “What did you see? What did you hear?”
 - b. In small groups (of no more than eight participants each), with representatives of each of the three roles assigned above, take ten minutes to share what you saw and heard in the classroom. Be as descriptive as possible in your comments; stay away from interpretation as much as possible.
 - c. Now watch the tape for the group’s response.
 - d. Stop the tape, and take no more than 5 minutes to ask how the comments of the videotaped group differed from those in your groups locally, or what comments you thought were particularly helpful.
To further the discussion, consider the following:
What is the value of describing what you see in an observation before moving on to “feedback”? How might you use this step in your peer observing and debriefing structures?
How does what a teacher “sees” or “hears” in an observation reflect his or her own assumptions about teaching?
3. Move on to the next question: “What questions do you have about this observation?” Follow the steps in the box. To take your discussion further, consider these questions:
What have your experiences been in giving feedback on a lesson that did not go well? What kinds of learning can take place in debriefing such a lesson that may not be possible in a lesson that was successful?
How is observing and debriefing different in a context in which teachers share responsibility for lesson planning and implementation? How is giving feedback on such a lesson different than if the teacher is “all alone” in planning a lesson?

The four-step process will be repeated at three more points during the tape.

- a. Watch the statement of the question.
- b. Stop the tape and take ten minutes to discuss your own answers.
- c. Watch the videotaped groups’ answers to this question.
- d. Stop the tape and take 5 minutes for comments on how the comments were different from your own, or what issues they raised you thought were particularly important.

4. Move on to the next question: What were the students working on as learners? What was Sarah working on as the teacher? Follow the steps in the box. To take your discussion further, consider these questions:

How are peer observations shaped by the observers' understanding of what the teacher is "working on"? In what ways can an observer learn about the teachers' goals for the lesson, both for the students and for the development of her own practice?

Many teachers encounter subject areas in which their knowledge is less strong than they would like. How can teachers work together within their schools, as well as with external resources, to strengthen their subject knowledge? How can collaborative work, such as peer observation and debriefing, relate to such an effort?

5. Move on to the next question: What implications does this raise for your teaching practice? Follow the steps in the box. To take your discussion further, consider these questions:

Bob Lisch tells a story about students needing to articulate their preconceptions before moving on to a new experiment in science. How can teachers articulate their own preconceptions to help them move forward in their own practice? Preconceptions also become apparent in observers' comments. What preconceptions do you think the videotaped group members hold? How can you, as an observer, identify your own preconceptions and the ways they influence your observation?

During an observation, how can you get a sense of "what the students are thinking"? Is there a role for examining student work, in conjunction with classroom observation? What kinds of evidence would student work provide that might be useful to the teacher being observed?

6. Watch the remainder of the tape. Then consider the following questions:

- As you commented on how the videotaped groups' comments were different than your own, what did you learn about your own work in using peer observation to improve teaching practice? If you thought that your comments were similar to the videotaped groups', what comments were especially helpful? How can you work to support these kinds of comments in your work?
- If you had been a member of the videotaped group, what would you have learned?
- What changes, if any, would you make to the ways you use peer observation and debriefing as prompts for reflective dialogue?
- Given your experience in your school, what do you think are key elements of effective structures for peer observation and debriefing?

IV. RESOURCES FOR LEARNING MORE

Annenberg Institute for School Reform. 1998. Making Teaching Public: Pasadena High School. 28-minute video, Providence, RI.

Darling-Hammond, L., and M.W. McLaughlin. (1995). "Policies That Support Professional Development in an Era of Reform." *Phi Delta Kappan* 76, 8: 597-604.

Joyce, Bruce and Beverly Showers, "Evolution of Peer Coaching," *Educational Leadership*, v. 53 no. 6, p. 12-16. March 1996.

Lieberman, A. ed., *Building a Professional Culture in Schools*, 1988, Teachers College, Columbia University.

Sergiovanni, T. J., 1992, "*Collegiality as a Professional Virtue*", pp. 86-98, Moral Leadership.

"Using Reflective Questioning To Promote Collaborative Dialogue", *Journal of Staff Development*, Winter 1994, Vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 16 - 21.