

Circle of Experts—Feedback Session

The purpose of this exercise is to allow colleagues to share knowledge about the portfolio process through an interaction guided by a facilitator. Through this type of feedback session, both the experts (experienced teachers) and the new participants build capacity to independently sustain the portfolio work in the district.

This protocol is based on the Socratic Seminar method. A Socratic Seminar establishes a framework for sharing knowledge while promoting analytic thinking among all members of the group. With this in mind, the leader of a Socratic Seminar takes on the role of facilitator instead of direct instructor, helping to provide the participants with a rich opportunity to explore independent inductive discovery.

Protocol:

- Identify teacher experts (those who have participated) and those teachers new to the program.
- Arrange new participants in a circle.
- Experts make a larger circle around the new participants. Alternatively, experts may simply be outside the circle. This is most comfortable when seated vs. standing.
- Ask new participants to introduce themselves and identify their subject areas, even if they already know each other. Participants will identify the questions and concerns they have. These questions may be charted.
- Once the questions and concerns of the new participants have been identified, the experts will switch places with the new participants.
- Have experts share their experiences and the thought process behind the successful development of their portfolios. The facilitator should be mindful that all of the new participants' questions and concerns are addressed.
 - *A possible activity during this part of the discussion is to have the experts role-play the process for the new teachers.*

Materials:

- Standards and framework for portfolios being discussed
- Portfolio timeline
- Chart paper and markers
- Comfortable seating area pre-arranged into inner and outer circles
- Prepared questions to guide and/or redirect the conversation if needed

Facilitator Role:

Your role as the facilitator is to ask thought-provoking questions. You should be careful to limit your own talk time. Still, you play an active role shaping the dialogue and tracking how it goes so you can coach the participants to build capacity. Prepare guiding questions to guide or redirect the conversation as necessary.

As participants talk, listen carefully, so you can ask thoughtful follow-up questions. Keep track of talk time so you can encourage everyone to participate. You may wish to map the dialogue, taking notes on who participates and how. Afterward, use your notes to offer helpful feedback.

Resist the temptation to save the participants from the uncomfortable silences! Be patient and provide wait time.