

Instructional Rounds
Problem of Practice Tuning Protocol

Having an effective Problem of Practice is instrumental in guiding an external team: it gives the team a focus and allows the team to collect data that will allow them to develop a useful plan in terms of the Next Level of Work (NLOW) for the school. However, the group of critical friends must honor the process used by the host school: they need to be hard on the content, soft on the people. The role of the group of critical friends is to assist the host school in establishing clarity for themselves and the external team around their Problem of Practice. Rather than wholesale changes to the POP, the tuning done by the critical friends is more like a "sound check" for the host school so that they can be as explicit, descriptive and concise as possible for the external team coming on the Rounds day.

1. **POP Review**– Host Principal gives an overview of the work done by the host school to determine their POP, and **frames a question** (ie. "How might I clarify our Problem of Practice so that the external team is clear on what it is we want them to look at?") for the group of critical friends group to address during the discussion. The presenter might choose to also put the POP into context so the critical friends understand how it fits into the larger scope and sequence of the school's improvement plan/process. (4 min)

2. **Clarifying Questions** – Critical friends ask clarifying questions of the host Principal. Clarifying questions have brief, factual answers and are intended to help the person asking the question develop a deeper understanding of their question. An example of a clarifying question is "What were the data sources used to come up with your POP? or " (2 min)

3. **Probing Questions*** – Critical friends ask probing questions of the presenter. Probing questions help the presenter expand his/her thinking about the Problem of Practice. However, probing questions should not be "advice in disguise", such as "Have you considered...?" Examples of probing questions are "How (did) was the staff involved in developing the definition of 'rigor'?" or "What are examples of what students would be doing if they were demonstrating 'creativity'?" (4 minutes)

4. **Discussion*** - The presenter(host Principal) reframes the question if necessary and is then physically removed from the group. The group discusses the dilemma and attempts to provide insight on the question raised by the presenter. It may help to begin with warm feedback (such as what the group believes would be effective about the POP in guiding the external team), and then move on to cool feedback. Cool feedback includes a more critical analysis of the POP, using the question proposed by the presenter to frame the discussion. For example, "What isn't the Principal/host school considering?" or "I

wonder what would happen if...". The presenter is not allowed to speak during the discussion, but instead is only allowed to listen and take notes. It is a good idea for the presenter to physically sit outside of the circle and for the group to close in the circle without the presenter. Resist the urge to speak directly to the presenter. (6 min)

5. **Response** – The presenter has the opportunity to respond to the discussion. It is not necessary to respond point by point to what others said. The presenter may share what struck him or her and what next steps might be taken as a result of the ideas generated by the discussion. (2 min)

6. **Debrief/Closing the Loop** – Participants respond to reflection questions about what they have learned from participating in this protocol and how it could inform their own practice. If time allows, participants share one of their take-a-ways with a partner or everyone in the group shares out one take-a-way. (all at the end of the session)

Questions: What worked in this session? What didn't go so well? Did we answer the presenter's questions? How could this have gone better?