

Inquiry-in-Community Protocol

A 30–45 minute protocol for examining a dilemma of teacher educator practice with others.

Purpose

Inquiry-in-community treats uncertainty as shared professional work rather than a private deficit. The goal is not to give the presenter an answer, but to help the group surface assumptions, develop interpretations, and create a thoughtful next move.

Before you begin

- Choose a facilitator/timekeeper.
- One person brings a real dilemma, not a hypothetical case.
- The presenter owns the final interpretation and next move.
- Participants critique ideas and practices, not the worth of the practitioner.
- Advice is delayed until the group has clarified and interpreted the situation.

1. Bring a moment — 5 minutes

The presenter describes one concrete dilemma, interaction, decision, or tension from teacher educator practice. Include enough context to understand the situation, but resist explaining it away.

2. Clarify before solving — 5 minutes

Others ask factual or contextual questions only. Examples: Who was involved? What happened immediately before? What responsibility did you hold? What constraints were present?

3. Surface assumptions — 8 minutes

The group identifies possible assumptions embedded in the situation. Consider assumptions about teaching, teacher learning, authority, expertise, equity, responsibility, knowledge, or what 'good' practice should look like.

4. Offer alternative readings — 8 minutes

Participants offer different ways of interpreting what happened. Use language such as: 'Another way to read this might be...' or 'I wonder whether...' Avoid turning interpretations into prescriptions.

5. Generate possibilities — 5 minutes

Only now consider possible responses, questions, tools, or experiments. Aim for multiple possibilities rather than one best answer.

6. Re-enter practice — 3 minutes

The presenter names one thing to try, notice, ask, or investigate. The move should be small enough to enact.

7. Return — at the next meeting

Revisit the dilemma. What happened? What changed in your interpretation? What new uncertainty emerged?

Useful inquiry moves

Move	Prompt
Clarify	What were you noticing at that moment?
Surface	What assumption about teacher learning might be operating here?
Complicate	What might someone else in the situation see differently?
Connect	What larger program, institutional, or relational condition is shaping this?
Reframe	What changes if we treat this as a learning problem rather than a performance problem?
Experiment	What is one small thing you could try and then bring back to the group?

Facilitator reminder

A productive inquiry group does not remove uncertainty as quickly as possible. It helps participants become more capable of thinking and acting responsibly within it.

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