Protocols for Structured Collaboration in School Leadership

The impact of learning, reflection, and dialogue

In this interactive workshop, participants will explore the power of protocols as structured processes to drive school improvement.

We'll delve into various protocols, understand their purpose, and learn how to apply them effectively.

By the end of the workshop, participants will be equipped with practical tools to enhance professional conversations, foster collective understanding, and contribute to continuous improvement within their schools.

Designing Powerful Conversations for Learning and Leading

Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters.

- Margaret Wheatley

Maureen Ference
maureen.ference@gmail.com

1

1
Prompt

"The first step toward change is awareness. The second step is acceptance."
(Nathaniel Branden)

Reflecting on Practice
Your current meetings

Reflecting on Practice
Meeting Effectiveness

What are the biggest challenges you face in making meetings effective and meaningful?

Protocols

Workshop Agenda

This workshop moves from the
"What?" Protocols
"Who?" Organizations, people, and teams
"Why?" Principles and theory
"How?" Practice, planning, examples
"So what/now what?" Impact and progress.

2. Protocols
Focus: What protocols are, their purpose, and types.
Key Content: Definitions, examples, and group structures.

3. People
Focus: Organizational dynamics, team function, and leadership role.
Key Content: Purpose of organizations, behaviour, structure, teams, leadership.

4. Principles
Focus: Theoretical underpinnings of protocols.
Key Content: Needs theory, adult learning, learning theory.

1. Prompt
Focus: Self reflection and foundational concepts.
Key Content: Reflect on current meeting practices and challenges.

5. Protocols in Action
Focus: Hand-on protocol experiences.
Key Content: Protocol examples in student mental health, safety, and learning.

6. Planning Perspective
Focus: Planning for implementation.
Key Content: School culture.

7. Planning for 2025-2026
Focus: Connecting protocols to needs/outcomes.
Key Content: Protocols for leaders, future planning.

8. Payoff
Focus: Why protocols matter.
Key Content: benefit, impact on students and organizations.

9. Progress
Focus: Reflection and next steps.
Key Content: Measuring and sustaining improvement.

2
Protocols

"**Protocols are the guardrails that keep our collaborative work on track.**"
(NSRF)

Protocols
What are protocols?

- Structured frameworks or guidelines for focused and meaningful dialogue leading to reflection, decision making, and action.
- Not just about managing meetings - it's about designing thinking.

Protocols
What do protocols answer?

- What are we going to talk about?
- Why are we going to talk about it?
- How are we going to talk about it?

What do protocols answer?

What?	Why?	How?
Student data from recent assessments *(Data Protocol)*	Identify trends and patterns in student performance *(Data-driven Dialogue Protocol)*	Round-robin discussion so each team member shares an observation before open discussion *(Round Robin Protocol)*
Results from our school climate survey *(Survey Review Protocol)*	Understand staff and student perceptions and target areas for improvement *(After Action Review Protocol)*	"I Notice, I Wonder" protocol: each person shares one observation and one question *(Notice & Wonder Protocol)*
Discuss school emergency procedure *(Safety Protocol)*	Ensure all staff understand and can implement the safety plan *(Safety Readiness Protocol)*	Assigning roles (facilitator, timekeeper, recorder) to keep the conversation focused and productive *(Consultancy Protocol)*
Generating ideas for a school-wide kindness initiative *(Idea Generation Protocol)*	Encourage creativity and collective ownership of the initiative *(Brainstorming Protocol)*	Brainstorm and categorize all ideas, then group by theme for further discussion *(Brainstorm & Categorize Protocol)*

What do protocols answer?

What?	Why?	How?
Preparing for a school safety drill *(Safety Planning Protocol)*	Ensure everyone understands their roles and procedures for the drill *(Safety Readiness Protocol)*	A small group models the drill while others observe and provide feedback *(Fishbowl Protocol)*
Reviewing student work samples *(Student Work Protocol)*	Calibrate expectations and improve instructional strategies *(ATLAS Protocol)*	Silent review, clarifying questions, group interpretation, and next steps *(ATLAS Protocol)*
Reflecting on staff feedback after PD *(Feedback Protocol)*	Identify strengths and areas for improvement in professional learning *(Plus/Delta Protocol)*	Each participant shares one positive and one suggestion for change *(Plus/Delta Protocol)*
Analyzing equity in classroom participation *(Equity Protocol)*	Ensure all student groups are engaged and represented *(Equity Audit Protocol)*	Use an Equity Pause: after each agenda item, reflect on who is/isn't being heard *(Equity Pause Protocol)*

Protocols
Why use protocols?

- To move from surface-level collaboration to meaningful, structured dialogue.
- To drive innovation and clarity.
- Ensure equity and focus.
- Make meetings more productive and less dominated by a few voices.

Thinking Mode Mapping & Protocol Categories : The Mental Gears Behind the Protocol

Foundational Thinking Modes	Design Intentions	Associated with…	Protocol Category	Protocol Examples
🪞 **Reflect**	Thinking that turns inward to make personal meaning, process experience, or gain insight.	Introspection Self-awareness Readiness	Igniting Engagement	
			Looking Inward	
			Capturing Growth	
🤝 **Relate**	Thinking that builds shared understanding by listening, co-thinking, and surfacing group context.	Empathy Dialogue Inquiry	Expanding Perspectives	
			Surfacing Our System	
🧠 **Refine**	Thinking that synthesizes, prioritizes, and shapes direction from collective input.	Focus Clarity Organizing ideas	Possibility Storming	
			Making Meaning	
			Clarifying focus	
✅ **Resolve**	Thinking that clarifies decisions, defines action, and aligns people to move forward.	Commitment Direction Closure	Committing to Action	

How might structured protocols change the way your team collaborates and makes decisions?

Group Structures
Designing for Interaction

REFLECTION:
Why Intentional grouping?
Why random grouping?

Protocol:
Word, Phrase, Sentence

- **As an individual, review a text and then select and record:**
  - A word that captured your attention or struck you as powerful.
  - A phrase that moved, engaged, or provoked you.
  - Sentence that was meaningful to you, that you felt captures the core idea of the text.

- **Share your selections with three other participants.**
  - Explain why you made the selections you did.
  - What themes emerge?
  - Were there aspects of the text not captured in your choices?

Grouping Types

Pairs	Reflection	● Just Like Me
Small groups	Relating	● Jigsaw
Triads	Refining Ideas	● Placemat
Quads	Resolving decisions	● Decision Grid

* Can be used within any thinking mode

Grouping Strategies

- **Line Up by Experience, birth month** (Icebreaker / Ed Tool) → ✅
- **Puzzle Grouping** (Kagan) → ✅
- **Team Builder Flowchart** *(Original)* → ✅

Group Structures
Designing for Interaction

- Teambuilding is Foundational

"When leaders intentionally plan teambuilding, they create the trust and connection that make real collaboration possible."

Maureen Ference

What group structures or leadership roles have helped your team be most effective?

3

People –
Together

Teams that build

Organizations
Purpose

- Are social inventions.
- Consist of coordinated efforts of people.
- Succeed or fail because of their people.
- Exist to accomplish goals through group effort and effectiveness.

Organizations
Organizational Behaviour

Is the study of attitudes and behaviours of individuals and groups within organizations.

- Distinctive culture that value people.
- Teamwork and rapport among employees.
- Performance bonus and incentives.
- Training, education, and career planning.

Organizations
Organizational Structure

- Defines roles, responsibilities, and communication.
- Supports goal achievement and problem-solving.

WHY IT MATTERS...

Organizations
Solving Problems

- Group effort and effectiveness are key.
- Collaborative problem-solving methods.
  - <u>Protocols</u> help teams build shared understanding, generate ideas, and make better decisions.

Organizations
High Functioning Teams

- Teams thrive on trust, clear roles, shared norms, an psychological safety.

What characteristics define you most effective teams?

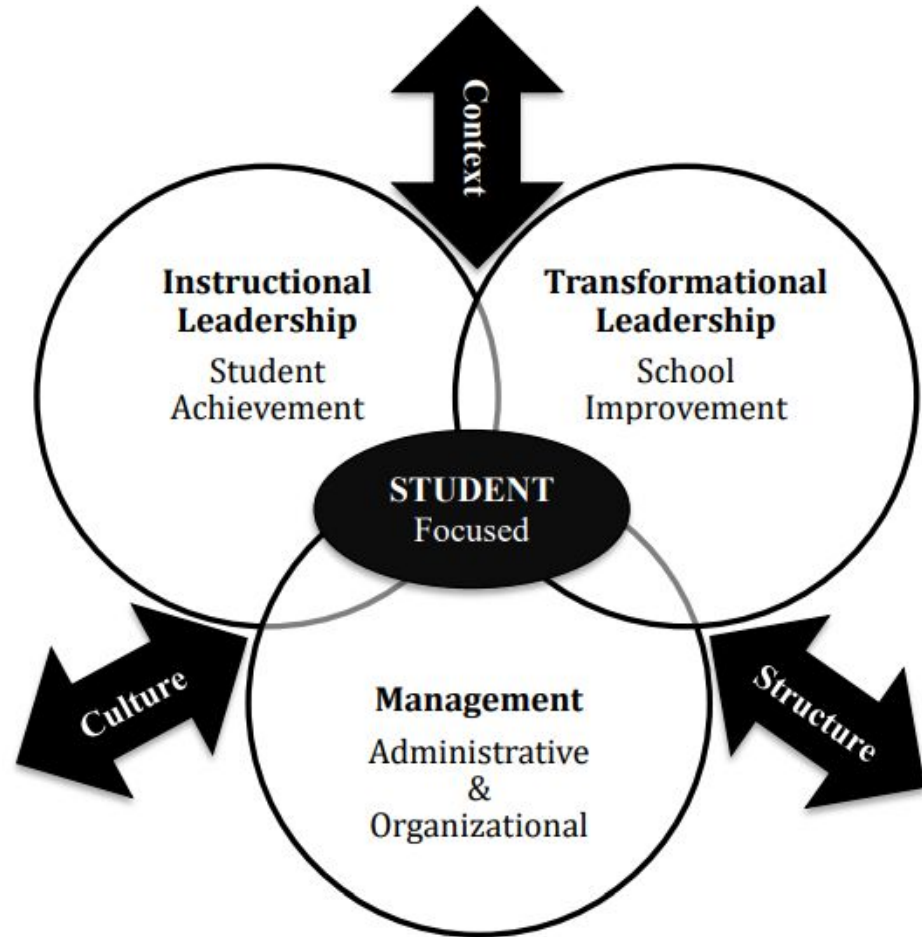**How can you foster these characteristics across your organization?**

Leadership Application
Role in School Administration

- Instructional Leadership Connection
- LQS Alignment

Roles, Responsibilities, and Considerations of the School Principal

(Ference 2023)

4
Principles

"Learning is not the product of teaching. Learning is the product of the activity of learners."
(John Holt)

UNDERPINNINGS
Foundations & Theories

1. FOUNDATIONS

- **Psychological Safety** (Edmondson)
- **Collective Efficacy** (Bandura)

2. NEEDS THEORY

- Maslow's **Hierarchy of Needs**
- McClelland's **Theory of Need**

Parts of the document was drafted with the assistance of AI to synthesize research, generate text and organize protocols.

3. ADULT LEARNING THEORY

- Knowles **Adult Learning Theory**

4. LEARNING THEORY

- **Social Learning** (Bandura)
- **Constructivism** (Vygotsky)
- **Experiential Learning** (Kolb)
- **Transformative Learning:** (Mezirow)

Protocol: **Say Something**

- Assign groups (4 participants per group).

- Choose 4 stopping points of the text.

- Assign readers to each of the 4"chunks" who will initiate the conversation at each section of the reading.

- All members then read the first section silently.

- Then, the initiator starts the conversation.

- Repeat the process for the next three sections of the reading.

Adapted from: Egawa and Harste (2001)

How do these foundational theories inform your approach to leading collaborative work in your school?

5

Protocols in Action

> "Teaching is more than imparting knowledge; it is inspiring change. Learning is more than absorbing facts; it is acquiring understanding."
>
> (William Arthur Ward)

Holistic Approach
to
Continuous Improvement

**Three
Key Areas
of Focus**

Mental Health

Safety
Emotional
Physical

Learning
Curriculum
Instruction
Assessment
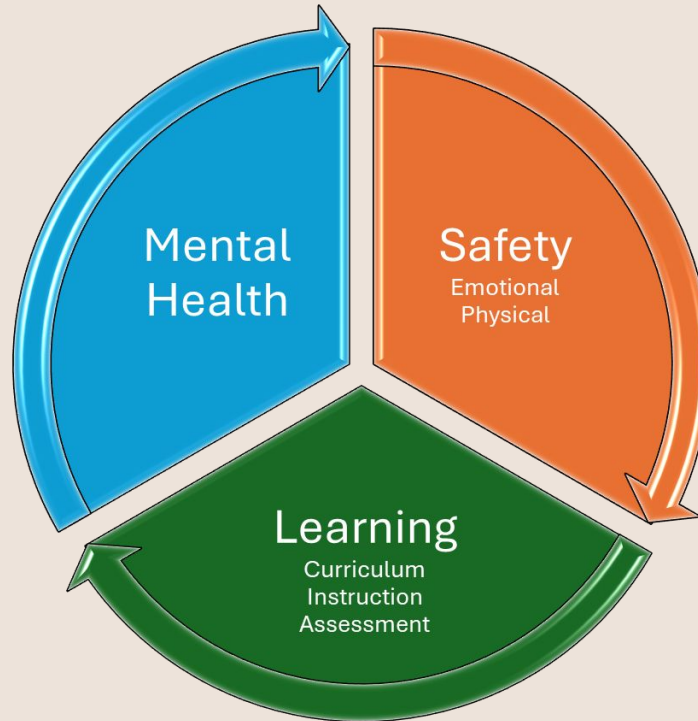
Guided by our
Values & Beliefs

Driven by
Data & Evidence

Focused on
What Matters Most

Protocols Practice
Mental Health

- **PROTOCOL**
  - **Spotlight & Amplify**
    - Recognizing and Celebrating Students' Strengths (awards and rewards)

Protocols Practice
Mental Health

- Benefits of Recognizing Students
- Academic Recognition
- Behavioural Recognition
- Attendance Recognition
- General Recognition (all ages)

Protocols Practice
Safety

- **PROTOCOL**
  - **Know It, Show it**
    - Administrative Procedure on Student Safety

Protocols Practice
Student Learning

- **PROTOCOL**
  - **Concept Formation**
    - Instructional Language
      (Barrie Bennett, Beyond Monet)

Protocols Practice
Student Learning

- **PROTOCOL**
  - **Fishbone Diagram**
    - Analyze current challenges in student learning, behaviour, or attendance.

Criteria for determining a school-wide improvement priority/goal

- ❏ What is our data telling us?
- ❏ What do we have the most control over?
- ❏ What has the greatest impact on student learning outcomes?
- ❏ Is the priority a need in our school or division?
- ❏ Does it address our most pressing needs?
- ❏ Would it have a great impact on student learning?
- ❏ Does this priority build on our existing initiatives, strengths, and/or school/school values?
- ❏ Are staff members willing to support it?
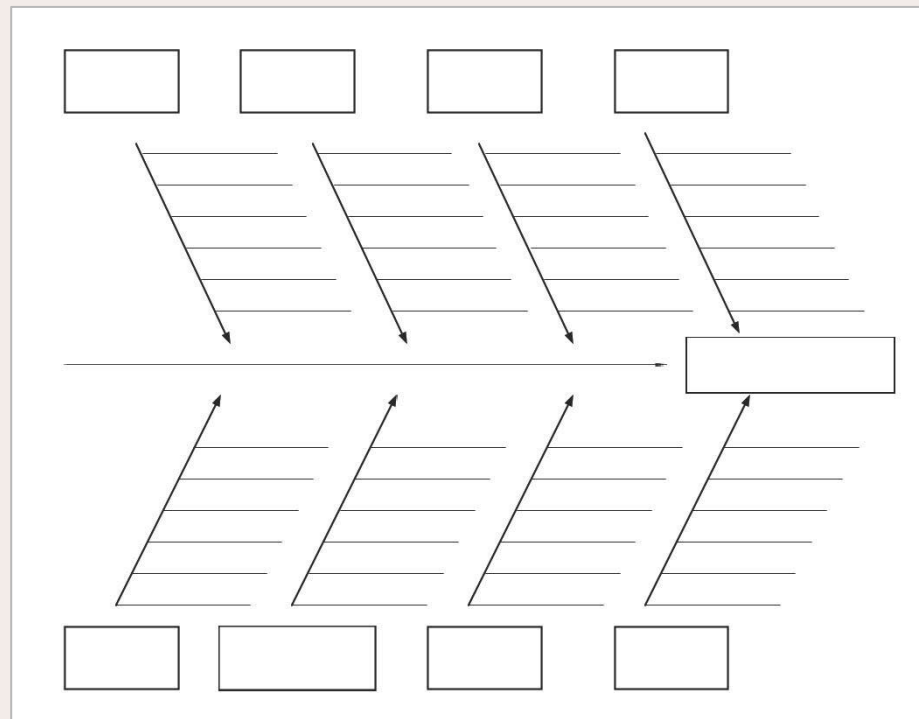
Protocol Development
Student Safety

CANCELLNG
Field Trips/Sports Events

Are buses for Glendon School running?

Are ALL teachers/coaches comfortable to attend?

No — Cancel Trip

Yes

Yes

No — Cancel Trip

Assess whether or not it is safe to transport students, taking into account:
- Distance traveling;
- Condition of the roads;
- Visibility (blowing snow, fog, etc.);
- Outside temperature (determine temperatures in two hour intervals for duration of the trip from departure to place of arrival);
- Wind chill factor;
- RCMP travel advisories; and
- Weather warnings issue by Environment Canada.

Has the Director of Transportation given the OK to transport students?

No — Cancel Trip

Yes — Contact schools between departure and final destination to determine bus status.

Are their buses running?

No — Cancel Trip

Yes — ATTEND Trip

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Which protocols have had the greatest impact in your context, and why?

6

"Show me a school where instructional leaders constantly examine the school's culture and work to transform it into one hospitable to sustained human learning."

(Roland Barth)

Planning Perspective

School Culture
Reflection

How can you ensure that protocols become a sustained part of your school's culture?

7

Planning for 2025-2026

"By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail."
(Benjamin Franklin)

Continuous Improvement
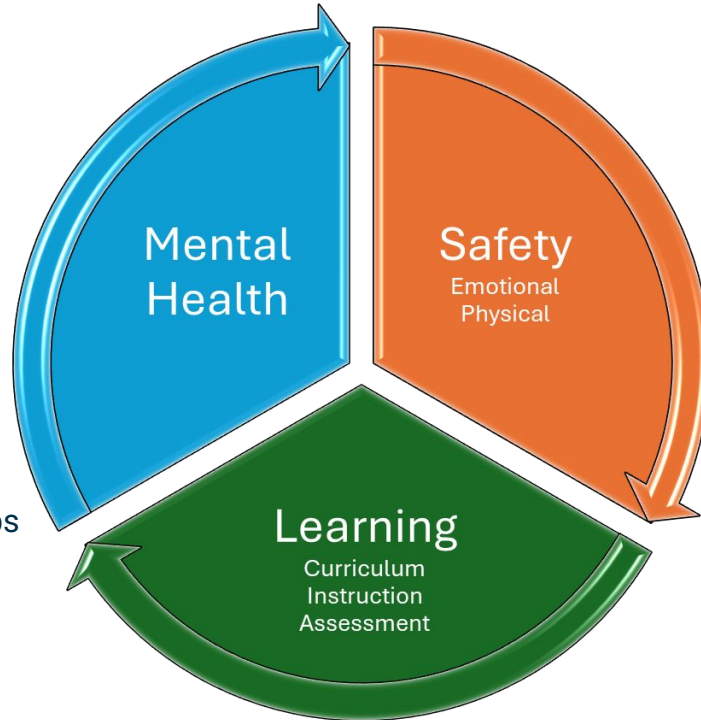## MENTAL HEALTH

Student & Staff Wellbeing
- Emotional support & belonging
- Stress management
- Relationship building
- Social-emotional learning
- Positive behaviour systems
- School spirit initiatives

Support Services
- Mental health services
- Counseling programs
- Crisis intervention
- Community resources
- Parent support programs
- Family and community partnerships

Professional Development
- Mental health training
- Trauma-informed practices
- Cultural competency
- Staff wellness programs

Mental Health

"Mental health in educational settings encompasses the psychological, emotional, and social well-being of students and staff. It affects learning readiness, academic performance, and the ability to build positive relationships within the school community. Good mental health enables individuals to cope with challenges, realize their academic and personal potential, and contribute positively to the school environment"

American Psychological Association, 2024; National Association of School Psychologists, 2024.

Continuous Improvement
SAFETY

Emotional Safety
- Anti-bullying programs
- Clear expectations
- Classroom management

Physical Safety
- Building security
- Emergency protocols
- Facility maintenance
- Infrastructure management
- Technology security

Systems & Processes
- Communication protocols
- Digital safety protocols
- Safety procedures
- Resource management

Professional Development
- Hour Zero
- Public Works

Mental Health

Safety
Emotional
Physical

Learning
Curriculum
Instruction
Assessment

Safety

"School safety is a multi-faceted concept encompassing both physical and emotional security. It includes creating environments where students and staff feel protected from threats, supported in their daily activities, and confident in established safety protocols. Effective school safety integrates preventive measures, emergency preparedness, and systematic approaches to maintain secure learning environments"

National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments, 2024; U.S. Department of Education, 2024.

48

Continuous Improvement
LEARNING

Learning Environment
- Student Engagement
- Equity
- Diversity
- Inclusion
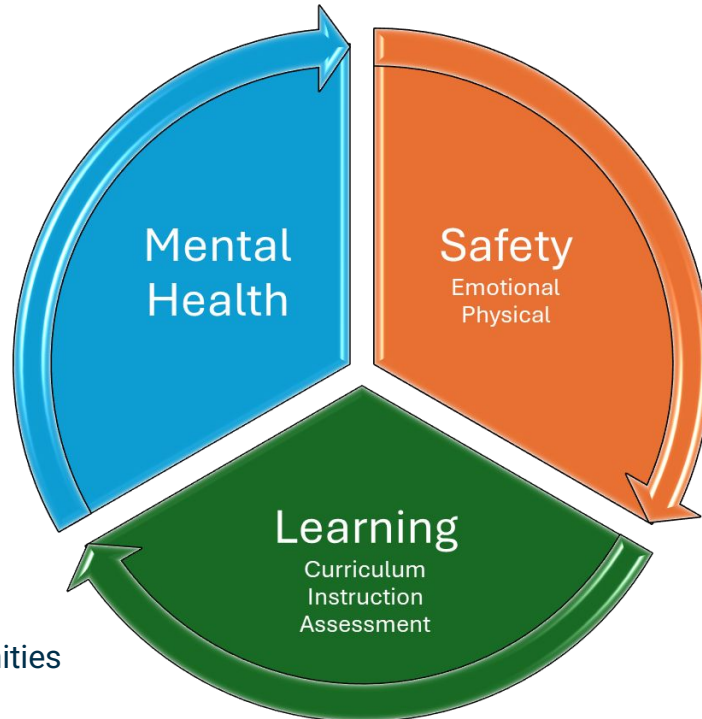
Pedagogical Practices
- Instructional Practices
- Instructional Strategies
- Learning Activities
- Assessment Practices

Resources & Support
- Technology integration
- Materials/tools

Professional Growth
- Parent education programs
- Community learning opportunities

Mental Health

Safety
Emotional
Physical

Learning
Curriculum
Instruction
Assessment

Learning

"Learning in schools represents the systematic acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, and competencies through instruction, experience, and reflection. It encompasses curriculum delivery, instructional practices, and assessment strategies that promote student growth and achievement. Effective learning environments support diverse learning styles, encourage critical thinking, and prepare students for future success"

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2024; International Bureau of Education, 2024.

What protocols will you prioritize next year, and how will you measure their impact?

8
Payoff

"Never doubt that a small group of committed thoughtful people can change the world; Indeed it's the only thing that ever has."

(Margaret Mead)

Your Gems

In what ways has protocols helped your school move from good to great?

What protocols have you found most helpful in your leadership role?

9
Progress

"Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything."
(NSRF)

Tracking and Celebrating Progress

- **Your learning today...**

What stuck with you today?

Tracking and Celebrating Progress

- ## In 2025-2025…

How will you track and celebrate progress as your team continues to use protocols for improvement?

Thank you