

EXPLORING UNRESOLVED PROBLEMS TOOL

Based on [National School Reform Faculty Data-driven Dialogue Protocol](#)

When teams look at data together, there are often differing perspectives, interpretations, and priorities that are revealed. This is GREAT for students because it shows different choices that may be available for strengthening the fit between the student and schooling. These differences can also be stressful for adults, and take some time to work through. When a team is not yet able to reach agreement, here is a protocol that the team can use to assure all team members that the group is on a path to a solution and hasn't yet arrived.

Part 1: Thinking silently (4 minutes total)

Have each team member sit silently for 2 minutes and think about this question:

“What is one thing you predict or assume needs to happen?”

After everyone has had a chance to think silently, each person should share, in 1–2 sentences, what they predict or assume needs to happen.

- The note-taker for the team should write down each person's idea using their exact words. Please DO NOT record who said each idea—just write down all of the predictions and assumptions.
- Each team member should have the chance to speak. When not speaking, other team members should listen in silence. No one should interrupt or talk while someone else is sharing their prediction or assumption.

Part 2: Looking at Data (6 minutes total)

Have each team member sit silently for 3 minutes and look at the data, focusing just on the facts—no opinions, no interpretations. Team members can highlight, underline or write down 1–3 data points that they notice. Questions that can help team members to stay focused on only facts from the data include:

“What is one pattern that I see? Which data points show this pattern?”

“What data points surprised me?”

“What data points are standing out to me right now?”

After everyone has had a chance to look back at the data, invite each team member to share one or two data points that they saw. Each team member speaks once, sharing only 1–2 data points.

- The note-taker for the team should write down only data points—not interpretations or analyses.
- Remind team members, the only thing they can share at this time is what the data says—no interpretations, no thoughts about the data—just read the data points that they underlined or highlighted or wrote down directly from the source.
- People who are good at focusing on just the data should go first.
- If people share information that is not directly from the data, team members should gently remind them that during this part, we only read/share data.

Part 3: Sharing Inferences and Opinions (5 minutes total)

Have each team member sit silently for 2 minutes and come up with 1–2 sentences to answer this prompt:

“One solution that the data points we’ve shared suggest is.....”

If a team member is not able to offer a solution or idea, that team member should respond to the following prompt:

“One additional source of information that would help me to suggest a solution is.....”

After everyone has thought for 2 minutes, each team member should share only the 1–2 sentences they have come up with in response to one of the prompts above. If a team member has not come up with a response, they can pass. No one discusses solutions at this time. The note-taker records solutions and shares these with all team members.

Part 4: Take a Break (varies depending on the needs of the team)

After this conversation happens, the team should take a break. This could be a 10-minute break, or it could be a time of waiting several days before a re-convene.

People need time to think and process all of the suggested inferences and opinions and connect these to data before making a decision.

The final step of this protocol is for the team to determine when to come back together to discuss the solutions that were proposed and make a decision. The note-taker should document when the team will reconvene and share all notes from this session with all team members so that team members can review the information as they consider options they could support.

Team members should be prompted to return with two or more proposed solutions that they would be able to support through consensus-based decision-making.