

TOOL

# Meaning-Making Protocol

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# Meaning-Making Protocol

## **Purpose**

This protocol supports teams in making meaning of new learning by engaging both thinking and emotion. It creates a structured way for participants to process content, deepen understanding, and surface meaningful questions together.

## **When to Use**

Use this protocol after participants engage with new content (a reading, video, or experience) and need time to process, reflect, and discuss. It is especially useful when you want to move beyond surface-level reactions and support deeper thinking and connection.

## **How to Use It**

Guide participants through the structured steps: first reflecting individually (connections, questions, and feelings), then sharing in pairs, and finally engaging as a whole group. Maintain the sequence to ensure all voices are heard and that both cognitive and emotional responses are acknowledged. As a facilitator, hold the space for inquiry and reflection rather than rushing to answers or solutions.

Exhibit 10.3. © Elena Aguilar, *The Art of Coaching Teams: Building Resilient Communities that Transform Schools*. Jossey-Bass, 2016.

# Meaning-Making Protocol

## I. Read and Think:

1. Connections: Read the text and note connections. Connections are anything you've heard about before. If you'd like, code the text with a "C" at those points.
2. Questions: Read the text and note your questions on the side or on a sticky note.
  - a. Determine which questions are clarifying questions—you need information or the definition of a term, (indicate these with a "C?") and which questions are Big Questions—probing or reflective and probably in need of discussion (you can note these with a "B?").
3. Feelings: Read the text and notice any feelings that come up. Note those on the side or on a sticky note.

## II. Talk and Share:

4. Turn to a partner and share your connections.
5. Share connections with the whole group.
6. Turn to a partner and share your clarifying questions. If your partner can answer your clarifying question, cross it off.
7. With the whole group, share your clarifying questions and see if others can answer them.
8. With your partner, share your big questions. Identify the biggest of your big questions you think the team should discuss. Write this one down on a sticky note and give it to the facilitator. The facilitator can decide when to address them.
9. Turn to a partner and acknowledge the feelings that surfaced. Just listen to each other and hold space for the feelings without trying to fix them or make them go away. If either of you feels that it would benefit the team to share some of your emotional responses, offer these in a whole-group discussion.

Exhibit 10.3. © Elena Aguilar, *The Art of Coaching Teams: Building Resilient Communities that Transform Schools*. Jossey-Bass, 2016.

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