

What's the Dilemma?¹

Step 1 Describe your dilemma

A dilemma is a puzzle, an issue that raises questions, an idea that seems to have conceptual gaps, something about a process or product you can't figure out. **(10 minutes)**

1. Write a description of your dilemma. Keep your description within the confines of the space below.
2. End your dilemma with a question. What do you *really* want to know?

¹ Dilemma protocol adapted from, and best used alongside, National School Reform Faculty's *Consultancy Dilemmas* <http://www.nsrffharmony.org/>

Step 2 Reflect on your dilemma (10 minutes)

- Why is this a dilemma for you?
- Why is this dilemma important to you?
- If you could take a snapshot of the dilemma, what would you/we see?
- What have you already done/tried to remedy or manage the dilemma?
- What have been the results of those attempts?
- **Who do you hope changes?** Who do you hope will resolve this dilemma? *If your answer is someone other than yourself, change your focus* to present the dilemma as it relates to your practice, actions, behaviors, beliefs, and assumptions.

Space for Reflective writing/notes:

Step 3 Frame a focus question for your group (5 minutes)

- **What is your focus question?** A focus question summarizes your dilemma to help focus the feedback.
- Try to pose a question around the dilemma that seems to get to the heart of the matter.
- Remember that the question you pose will guide your group in their discussion of the dilemma.

Generic Examples of Dilemmas & Focus Questions:

- The teaching staff seems to love the idea of involving students in meaningful learning that connects the students to real issues and an audience beyond school, but nothing seems to be happening in reality.
 - Question: What can I do to capitalize on teachers' interest and to help them translate theory into practice?
- The community is participating in visioning work, but the work doesn't seem to relate to the actual life of the school – it is just too utopian.
 - Question: How do I mesh dreams and reality?

Room for working out your focus question:

Step 4 Critique your focus question

- Is this question important to my practice?
- Is this question important to teacher/admin/student learning?
- Is this question important to others in my profession?

Step 5 Share your Dilemma

- First: Share your dilemma and focus question with your group. Group members listen during the sharing time and refrain from comments or questions. **(5 minutes)**
- Second: Colleagues ask clarifying questions that elicit brief, factual answers to clarify the dilemma for the group. **(5 minutes)**
- Third: The group asks you probing questions. The questions should be worded so that they help you clarify and expand your thinking about the dilemma. The goal is for you to learn more about the question you framed or to do some analysis of the dilemma. You may respond to the questions asked, but *the group will not move into discussion at this time.*
 - At the end of **10 minutes**, restate your question for the group.
- Fourth: The group discusses the dilemma as it was presented, using framing questions to drive the discussion. Colleagues sometimes suggest actions you may consider taking; most often, they work to define the issues more thoroughly and objectively. You do not speak during this discussion. **(15 minutes)**
 - Framing Questions include:
 - What did we hear?
 - What didn't we hear that we may think is relevant?
 - What assumptions seem to be operating?
 - What questions does the dilemma raise for us?
 - What do we think about the dilemma?
 - What might we do or try if faced with a similar dilemma? What have we done in similar situations?
- Fifth: Reflect on what you heard and on what you are now thinking, sharing with the group anything that particularly resonated for you during the any part of the dilemma presentation/clarification/discussion. **(5 minutes)**