

TUNING PROTOCOL FOR TASKS

Purpose

To receive feedback and fine-tune tasks.

Planning

- **Time:** 40 minutes
- **Group size:** 4–6
- **Preparation:** Presenter gathers task contextual materials (if any) and focusing question.
- **Roles:** Facilitator, presenter, timekeeper, and recorder/reporter

Process

- 1 Norms:** The facilitator reviews the protocol process and norms with the group. (3 minutes)
- 2 Presentation:** The presenter shares the context for the task (i.e., information about the students, the class, student learning goals, etc.), a focusing question, and the task itself. (5 minutes)
- 3 Clarifying questions:** The facilitator invites participants to ask clarifying questions in order to better understand the context for the question and the instructional task. Clarifying questions are matters of fact and generally elicit quick answers. The facilitator reminds participants that thinking or probing questions are better left for the feedback section. (5 minutes)
- 4 Examination of the task and any contextual materials:** Participants silently examine the presenter's materials and the guidelines for effective tasks and take notes, with a focus on the presenter's question. The presenter also remains silent. It is sometimes helpful for the presenter to slide his or her chair back to observe while being slightly removed from the group. (5 minutes)
- 5 Feedback and group discussion:** Participants share feedback with each other, reflecting collaboratively for the benefit of the presenter. The presenter takes notes, but continues to remain silent as the group thinks for him or her. (12 minutes)
 - a. In what ways is the task aligned—or in tune—with the presenter's goals?
 - b. What aspects of the task make it effective?
 - c. In what ways is the task not aligned with the presenter's goals?
 - d. What aspects of the task may lessen its effectiveness?
 - e. How would we answer the presenter's focusing question?
 - f. What have we learned about instructional tasks from examining this one?
- 6 Reflection:** The facilitator invites the presenter to reflect aloud on the feedback and to comment on ideas or questions that were particularly interesting, reminding the presenter that the group's feedback is offered in service to the presenter, so there is no need to defend or explain. (5 minutes)
- 7 Debrief:** The facilitator asks the group to comment on their experience with the Tuning Protocol. (4 minutes)
 - a. Did the team honor the norms at all times?
 - b. What went well?
 - c. What could have gone better?

Guidelines for QPA Common Tasks

- The task sparks students' imaginations and creativity. Use words or phrases that invite a variety of interpretations and responses and that connect to an essential question.
- The task includes an authentic audience for the writing task. Students understand the audience's familiarity with the topic. The task specifies the level of formality in writing style appropriate to the audience.
- When specifying an authentic, beyond-school audience for a performance assessment, always include the evaluator, who is typically a teacher. (Some audiences require less sophisticated writing than we want to see in our assessments.)
- Directions are clear and provide expectations for genre, length, sources, and format and call attention to aspects of the rubric by which the work will be judged.
- Directions are succinct. Too much direction in a task can stifle originality in students' compositions.
- If sources are not provided by the teachers, the task should include expectations about how students find and use evidence sources.
- The task is appropriate in content and form to the grade level of the students being assessed.
- The task is for both the student and the scorer, so they can clearly interpret the rubric in light of the task, especially in terms of audience, evidence requirements, or genre-specific features.