

Quick Sort Protocol

Author, Title and Affiliation

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Sadler, M., & Nidus, G. (2009). In *The Literacy Coach's Game Plan*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Audience(s) and School Level(s) the tool is designed for

K-12th Grade –Literacy/Curriculum Coaches, Grade Level Meetings

Purpose of the Tool

Many teachers, new and experienced, feel overwhelmed at the process of making sense of student learning. The quick sort protocol is a tool to help teachers analyze begin the process of analyzing student work in order to inform their instruction. This protocol and graphic organizer helps teachers and coaches discuss differentiation, student learning goals, and effective teaching strategies.

Use of the Tool

The coach and teacher(s) should review the tool prior to meeting and discuss the type of work that they will analyze and the goal of the coaching session. During the meeting, the coach and teacher use the protocol to help make sense of the student work and structure the meeting so that it is focused and forward moving. The graphic organizer assists teachers in noting their observations and tracking data about student learning. One of the first steps a coach must do when introducing this protocol to explain not only the purpose of analyzing student work but the point of a following a protocol. The first steps of the Quick Sort Protocol lead teachers to discuss the purpose and context of the assignment. How did students produce this work? What type of support were they offered? What were the goals of this assignment? How were these goals chosen? Next, the coach and teacher begin the quick sort by spending a short amount of time separating the work into three piles. For example, you might make piles based on students whose work seems below standard, on-target, and above standard for that grade level. Once the work has been sorted, the coach and teacher choose one of the piles to start analyzing and begin noting trends in this group. Lastly, the coach and teacher use the strengths and challenges they have noted to design future lessons based on the needs of students.

Insights - that you have gained from using the tool

This tool is a great way to start conversation with teachers about planning instruction based on student work. The process of sorting helps teachers engage in a reflective process that encourages them to investigate the assignment they have given students, share observations about student learning and think critically about how they are judging student work. Adhering to the protocol, keeps both coach and teacher focused on making evaluations that are based on evidence from students' work and is helpful in preventing either party from getting sidetracked into other conversations that lead away from the goals of analyzing student learning.

Quick Sort Protocol

Goal

This protocol can be used by a coach to analyze student work either with one teacher or in a larger group. The coach and teacher might choose to focus on a particular part of the protocol rather than go through all of the steps.

- 1. The work:** Discuss the formative work that you have chosen.
 - a. What is the purpose of this formative work? How does it relate to grade-level goals or standards?
 - b. Did students work together or individually?
 - c. What type of scaffolding did the teacher provide? Was the assignment differentiated for certain students? If so, how?
- 2. Criteria:** The teacher should describe how the work will be evaluated.
 - a. What evidence of learning did you hope to see in this work?
 - b. How will you evaluate student work? (rubric, checklist, exemplar, previous work done by students, other)
- 3. Quick sort:** Sort the work.
 - a. The coach and teacher should discuss how to examine the work. What can you look for quickly when analyzing the work?
 - b. Take a brief amount of time to examine the work and make three piles. For example, you might make piles based on students whose work seems below standard, on-target, and above standard for that grade level.
- 4. Analyze:** What do students have in common in this group?
 - a. What are strengths that you see in this group? Identify examples.
 - b. What are areas that are challenging for them? Identify examples.
- 5. Reflect:** Reflect on your formative evaluation.
 - a. Is this formative assessment a good way of evaluating their knowledge or skills?
 - b. Do the students understand the purpose of this assignment?
 - c. Do students know how their learning is being evaluated? Do they know what good work looks like?
- 6. Plan:** Based on your discussion, what type of instruction does this group of students need?
7. Repeat **steps 4-6** for other groups of learners that have not been analyzed.

Names of Students	Trends among group (Strengths/challenges)	Implications for instruction	Notes on group progress
Members of Group 1			
Members of Group 2			
Members of Group 3			