

Facilitation Difficulty: 

 50 min.

 Up to 15

 Preconference  
in advance

**Purpose** – Discussions around data can make people feel “on the spot” or exposed, either for themselves, their students, or their profession. The use of a structured dialogue format provides an effective technique for managing the discussion and maintaining its focus. This protocol allows participants to look at data with new eyes, and ends with possible implications, next steps, and strategies.

**Selecting data to share** – Choose data sets or artifacts that do not lead to a single, “obvious” conclusion, to encourage the most productive conversations. The data you choose should have enough information present so that people have some context, but not so much information that individuals will feel overloaded or that assumptions and judgments will be triggered. People can comfortably look at a page or two of data. If you need to review more data, schedule multiple, separate sessions with significant breaks to avoid “data fatigue.”

**Group size** – Up to 15

**Preparation** – Preconference with the presenters to review the data sample to ensure that it is appropriate (see above). At meeting time, coach brings a timer, presenter brings sufficient copies of the data for all participants, and all participants bring writing materials.

**Possible pitfalls** – Steps 4-6 should be conducted in rounds. In round 4, remind participants to literally share only what they see, without judgments or speculations.

**Prerequisites** – [Giving and Receiving Feedback](#)

**Steps:**

1. **Setup** – (5 min.) Explain that the purpose of the protocol is to look at a particular set of data with new eyes. Participants will be given only limited information about the data, intentionally, to avoid influencing the interpretation of the data. The participants are instructed to act as “data detectives” searching for any relevant clues as to what the data represents, what they might mean, and what implications might arise for the individuals or groups being reviewed. The group’s job is to collaboratively construct meaning around the data as they go through the steps. If participants want more context, assure them that they will be able to add value even without more context since the point is to learn specifically from the data at hand.

Lastly, participants are told that as they examine the data, they should keep in mind that they will be asked to share in three rounds:

- *What you actually see*
  - *What you think the data sample means. Participants are asked to think broadly and creatively. Assume that the data set, no matter how confusing, makes sense to people.*
  - *What you believe the implications of that data set are (suggestions & next steps).*
2. **Present** – (2 min.) The presenter gives a very brief statement (one sentence) defining the data, taking care to avoid revealing any conclusions already drawn. They then distribute copies of the data.

3. **Separate** – (1 min.) Direct the presenter to physically move away from the group but stay close enough to hear, and ideally, turn so they aren't making eye contact with anyone. The presenter should bring materials for taking notes. For the next step, instruct everyone to imagine the presenter has left the room and to avoid eye contact with the presenter. (1 min.)
4. **Examine** – (5-7 min.) Give the group silent reflection time to examine the data, noting any patterns they see, anything significant or unusual, and any conclusions that are beginning to arise. (5-7 min.)
5. **Preview** – (1 min.) Instruct the participants that, for each of these three rounds, you will ask a volunteer to begin. Then we will go around the table, giving each person a chance to share. Participants may pass, and you will invite them to share before you go on to the next round. Each round will begin with a new and different volunteer. (1 min.)
6. **Describing round** – (Up to 10 min.) Remind the group to describe only what they actually see in the data, avoiding all judgments or interpretations. They should identify where the observation is being made - e.g., "On page one in the second column, third row..."  
If judgments or interpretations arise, ask the person to describe the evidence they see, not as a defense, but an observation.

Start the round by choosing a volunteer and asking, "*What do you see?*"

7. **Interpreting round** – (Up to 10 min.) Instruct the group now to attempt to make sense of what the data set says and why. "*This is the time for speculation. We should find as many different interpretations as possible and evaluate them against the kind and quality of evidence we see.*"

As we listen to each other's interpretations, participants can ask questions to improve understanding of each other's perspectives.

Choose a different volunteer and ask: "*What do you think the data suggest? From the evidence gathered in the preceding section, try to infer: what is happening and why?*"

8. **Implying round** – (Up to 10 min.) "*Now we will consider the implications of our observations and interpretations. In particular, consider the following questions:*"
  - *What steps could be taken?*
  - *What strategies might be effective?*
  - *What else would you like to see happen? What kinds of assignments or assessments could provide this information?*
  - *What are the implications for equity?"*

The facilitator then chooses a volunteer and asks: "*What are the implications of this data set?*"

9. **Reflect**– (5 min.) Instruct the presenter to return to the group so they can interact with everyone again. Presenter should share any parts of the protocol that were particularly meaningful or helpful to them. They might consider:
  - *What did you learn from listening to your colleagues that was interesting or surprising?*
  - *What new perspectives did your colleagues provide?*
  - *How can you make use of your colleagues' perspectives?*

10. **Debrief** – (5 min.)

- *What did you think of the protocol?*

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- *Why do you think we asked you to withhold judgment or conclusions at first?*
- *What about the process helped you see and learn interesting or surprising things?*
- *What didn't work well for you?*
- *Can you imagine a way to use this protocol with some of your data?*
- *Could you use this protocol in your classroom? How?*