

# The Tuning Protocol

## Introduction

The tuning protocol is a procedure for (fine-tuning a piece of work) structuring a presentation, request for assistance, reflection, dialogue or feedback about practice. There are five main steps, preceded by an introduction (to explain the protocol and establish time limits). This is followed by a debriefing (to discuss the process). There is also a more detailed process, but this is a shortened version that could be completed in 20 minutes.

## Purpose:

To support an individual with clarification through critical friendships that are non-judgemental; to generate and receive feedback for teachers to improve their work. The tuning protocol is designed in a specific way because it can be difficult for people to give feedback diplomatically, or to hear feedback and not become defensive. It can be used as 'work in progress' or at the end of a piece of work to reflect on the results.

## Setup:

In a small group of 4 to 7 people, preferably sitting in a circle with no tables, one person (the presenter) will present an issue. One other person could act as a moderator to quality assure the principles of the tuning protocol and to keep a sense of timing.

### 1. Presentation: (estimated time 5-7 minutes)

The presenter offers one or two key points to be addressed and sufficient information about their issue; how the issue plays on in its context/environment; the situation, timeframe and factors that result in any pros/cons; what they want instead of the problem etc. The presenter must state as much information as possible that is relevant for the participants to be able to understand/respond.

### 2. Clarifying questions: (estimated time 5 minutes)

Only any necessary **non-evaluative** questions about the presentation, avoiding any suggestion of judgement or advice should then be made. For example, closed questions that simply seek clarification and a yes/no response. It is important for the individual to self-regulate their questions, or for the moderator to intervene if the question does not seek clarification, but evaluation.

## For example:

Individual A: "Is the YZX a result of ABC?"

Presenter: "Yes."

Individual B: "What do you mean by X?" Moderator intervenes ... "Is X, ABC?"

Presenter: "No."

Individual C: "What did Y say?"

Presenter: "Y said ABC."

The questions are pitched purely to enable the individuals to seek clarity.

### **3. Individual writing: (estimated time 5-7 minutes)**

In silence, each individual writes down their immediate thoughts to generate (wide-ranging) ideas. The individuals cannot ask any other questions and the presenter does not elaborate on any further questions or statements made. The silence **ensures** everyone records immediate thoughts without one initial comment, question or discussion dictating the conversation - and losing those thoughts.

### **4. Participant discussion: (estimated time 10 minutes)**

The presenter remains silent. There are several ways of doing this stage, but what is most beneficial, is that the presenter turns away from the group. An alternative could be that the presenter faces the group but remains silent and avoids eye contact. The presenter is allowed to take notes based on listening to the individuals' discussion.

The individuals discuss the issue in the third person.

For example, "Why does Ross do this?" or "How might Ross seek to move forward with X; should he consider doing ABC and abandoning Y and Z?" This is the most significant stage of the tuning protocol for the presenter.

### **5. Presenter Reflection: (5 minutes)**

The presenter now reflects on the group discussion or comments. They can choose to say 'thank you' or elaborate on their thoughts and note-taking as the participants' discussion evolved.

### **End.**

The moderator or group may wish to debrief on the process.

The process also can be used with students during a project, as a formative assessment checkpoint of their work-in-progress.

- First developed by the Coalition of Essential Schools, USA (~1990s).
- There is a video demonstration provided by the [Buck Institute for Education](#) (March 2018).
- There are about [3,000 academic articles](#) from 2018.