

Purposeful meeting routines and structures

Launch and collaborative working routines

Choose the routine for the purpose. Protect participation, maintain focus and move the work forward.

1. Meeting launch routines

Use these to establish connection, surface current thinking and make participation visible from the beginning.

1 Check-in round

CONNECTION AND EARLY PARTICIPATION

Move around the group once. Each person offers one word, a brief update or a recent success.

Watch: Keep responses short and avoid turning the round into problem-solving.

2 Hopes and fears

BEGINNING CHANGE OR A NEW INITIATIVE

People record one hope and one concern anonymously. Group related responses and identify what needs acknowledgement, clarification or action.

Watch: Return to the concerns later; gathering them without responding can weaken trust.

3 Norms review

MAKING COLLABORATIVE BEHAVIOUR INTENTIONAL

Select one agreed norm at the start. A team member explains what it could look and sound like in this meeting.

Watch: Use the norm during the meeting and revisit it briefly at the close.

2. Collaborative working routines

Use these when the team needs to examine practice, develop thinking or support a colleague with a real piece of work.

1 Tuning protocol

IMPROVING A PLAN, RESOURCE OR PIECE OF WORK

A presenter shares the work and a focus question. Colleagues clarify, examine and offer structured feedback while the presenter listens, then identifies what is useful.

Watch: Agree the feedback lens before beginning; feedback should serve the presenter's purpose.

2 Chalk Talk

BROADENING PARTICIPATION AND SURFACING CONNECTIONS

Place a question or dilemma on paper or a shared board. Participants respond silently, read one another's thinking and add questions, links or extensions.

Watch: Finish by identifying patterns and unanswered questions; the writing is the conversation, not the endpoint.

3 Consultancy protocol

HELPING A COLLEAGUE EXAMINE A PROFESSIONAL DILEMMA

The presenter describes the dilemma and asks a focused question. The group clarifies, probes and discusses possibilities while the presenter listens, then reflects on new thinking.

Watch: Do not rush into advice. The aim is to enlarge the presenter's thinking, not take ownership of the problem.

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Decision-making, alignment and reflection

A routine builds trust only when the facilitator responds constructively and follows through.

3. Decision and closing routines

Use these to test alignment, make individual learning visible and improve the next cycle of work.

1 Fist to Five

TESTING READINESS OR DEGREE OF SUPPORT

Everyone shows a score at the same time: five indicates strong support; lower scores signal questions or reservations; a fist indicates a serious block.

Watch: Define the scale first. Explore lower scores respectfully rather than treating the vote as the decision.

2 Whip-around synthesis

CLOSING WITH INDIVIDUAL MEANING AND NEXT STEPS

Move quickly around the group. Each person completes one shared sentence stem, such as: 'One action I will take is...'

Watch: Use one concise stem and protect equal airtime; this is synthesis, not another discussion.

3 Plus / Delta

IMPROVING THE TEAM'S NEXT MEETING OR PROCESS

Collect what helped the work and what should change next time. Convert the most useful delta into a specific adjustment.

Watch: A delta is a proposed improvement, not a complaint. Show that feedback changes the next meeting.

Selecting and facilitating a routine

PURPOSE

What does the team need to accomplish?

PARTICIPATION

Whose voices need deliberate space?

TIME

How much time can the routine genuinely hold?

OUTPUT

What should be clearer, stronger or decided afterwards?

FOLLOW-THROUGH

How will the response, decision or feedback be used?

Attribution and further resources

The descriptions and facilitation guidance in this KDPD sheet are original wording. Chalk Talk is a Project Zero thinking routine, adapted from Hilton Smith of the Foxfire Fund. Tuning and Consultancy are established educator protocols developed and refined through Critical Friends Group work and the National School Reform Faculty. Norms Review draws on the 7 Norms of Collaboration from Thinking Collaborative. Check-in Round, Hopes and Fears, Fist to Five, Whip-around and Plus / Delta are widely used facilitation structures.

[Project Zero - Chalk Talk](#)

[NSRF - protocols and activities](#)

[NSRF - Tuning Protocol](#)

[Thinking Collaborative - Adaptive Schools resources](#)