

Quality Work Protocol Facilitation Guide

Overview

EL Education is distinguished in the educational landscape by an explicit focus on high-quality student work as an essential part of student achievement. One reason that others avoid this topic is that it is messy. Quality cannot be easily defined and quantified. EL believes, however, that when schools regularly engage in the difficult process of working together to define, recognize, and analyze quality work (and even quantify when possible), the results are positive and powerful. When a student is done with schooling, she is judged for the rest of her life not primarily by her ability to perform on tests, but by the quality of person she is and the quality of work she does. Developing an ethic of quality in students is vital.

EL Education has worked closely with Harvard’s Steve Seidel, who is an international expert in the field of quality in general and quality student work in particular. After over a decade of work as a part of Harvard’s Qualities of Quality Project, Steve shares with us two key points:

1. Quality is best viewed not as an end-state, but as a discussion. A stellar symphony orchestra or sports team can only keep quality high by constantly analyzing and critiquing – discussing quality during rehearsals and practices and after performances. If the analysis and discussion stops, quality will deteriorate. EL Education schools engage in this discussion about quality through a variety of routines and structures by looking at student work together, planning curriculum that addresses issues of quality, engaging in regular critique with students, etc.
2. It is not possible to create an effective single rubric for “high-quality work”. Rubrics are useful when they name concrete, specific features that students and teachers can recognize in work. A useful rubric for a first grade Haiku will look very different from a rubric for a high school physics lab report. Across grade levels, disciplines and formats (e.g., geometry proof; book review), specifics differ and matter. We can, however, generalize attributes of quality students can aspire toward in any piece of work, which can be used to calibrate a general sense of quality and recognize patterns and trends in student work, and for that reason we use EL Education’s *Attributes of High-Quality Work* as an anchor document in this protocol.

Purposes

- Engage in discussion to develop a shared vision of quality work characterized by complexity, craftsmanship and authenticity.
- Identify patterns related to quality across student work to inform goal setting and action steps Like an instructional learning walk, this protocol provides participants with the opportunity to view many examples quickly and search for patterns of strength and areas for growth based on common criteria.
- Create a “body of evidence” that a school can use to reflect on how student work has changed and improved over time. This body of evidence is also what schools reference when applying to become a credentialed EL Education school.

Preparation

- Schedule one or two dates for the Student Work Protocol and set aside 3 hours on each date.
- Determine if you will be using products that are the result of long-term projects (typically 2-6 weeks) or shorter task work (work created in less than 2 weeks) for each protocol. We recommend dealing with these different types of work in separate protocols. Additionally, we believe that most schools will be best served by initially focusing their Quality Work Protocols on long-term projects.
- Identify a team of approximately 6-10 participants including your EL Education school designer, school leaders, and teachers with diverse perspectives, positions and levels of experience.
- Determine who will facilitate the protocol (e.g. school leader, school designer, instructional coach).
- Share protocol dates and *Attributes of High-Quality Student Work* with teachers and let teachers know in advance what they will need to provide (see below).

At least 24 hours prior to the protocol, ask teachers to submit the following:

- Copies or photographs of the same product/task from **three** students. If the product/task does not copy well, please also submit the original work. Each of the three products/tasks should be “accomplished”/ meet the standards based on the scoring tool.
- The assignment or task description that was provided to students
- The scoring tool (rubric, criteria list)

Materials

- For each participant print the following:
 - *Quality Work Protocol for Participants*
 - *Attributes of High-Quality Student Work*
 - *Quality Work Protocol Note Catcher* (copy back-to-back so participants have plenty of room. Also, make extras, as some participants may want a clean copy in the 3rd step: Discussion)
 - Optional: *Dimensions of Achievement in EL Education Schools*
- Way of capturing notes publically (chart paper/ white board and markers, computer/ projector, etc.)
- Space that will accommodate laying out all student work

Facilitating the Quality Work Protocol (Total time = 2-2 ½ hours plus a break)

Framing (25 minutes)

- Optional: Anchor participants in the “Dimensions of Achievement” one-pager to clarify where the focus on high-quality work comes from.
- Read and discuss the overview and purpose for the protocol (10 minutes)
- Review “Attributes of High Quality Work” (10 minutes)
 - Read the document silently, highlight key words/phrases, then discuss what stands out to you and why with a partner.
- Preview the steps of the protocol itself. (5 minutes)
 - Set a positive, safe, and respectful tone by reviewing norms; use the staff’s existing professional norms, or use these suggested norms:
 - Observe the work non-judgmentally; be descriptive, not evaluative of the student or teacher
 - Contribute to a building a collective understanding of quality
 - Maintain a growth mindset
 - Solicit volunteers to be the timekeeper and process checker.

Gallery Walk of Student Work (20-30 minutes)

- Have student work only (not tasks or scoring tools) distributed on tables around the room, labeled with grade level.
- Distribute and review the *Quality Work Protocol Note Catcher* (part 1).
- Model what you might write on the note catcher in a very brief (1 minute) think-aloud
- Provide time for participants to circulate around the room and capture notes silently and independently, looking at as many sets of student work as possible. Participants should spend no more than 2-3 minutes with an individual piece of work.
- Give participants an alert 3 minutes before the end of this step to focus on capturing patterns across the work.

Discussion: Attributes of Quality in Student Work (20 minutes)

- With a partner or triad, discuss observed patterns related to each attribute: complexity, craftsmanship, and authenticity. (Offer clean copies of note catchers as needed.)
- As a whole group, share observations and create a scribed list of patterns related to each attribute.
 - Which attributes of quality (and specific descriptors) are currently strengths at our school?
 - Which attributes of quality (and specific descriptors) could we focus on improving at our school?
 - What are some strengths we have related to tasks and scoring tools that support student in creating high-quality work?

Break (10 minutes)

- During the break, distribute the tasks and scoring tools that go with each set of student work.

Gallery Walk of Product/Task Descriptors and Scoring Tools (20 minutes)

- Review *Quality Work Protocol Note Catcher*, part 2
- As before, participants circulate around the room with their note catchers (Part 2), now focusing on how the tasks and scoring tools associated with the student work support students in achieving quality.
- Give participants an alert 3 minutes before the end of this step to focus on capturing patterns related to tasks and scoring tools.

Discussion: Tasks and Scoring Tools that Invite and Support Quality (15-20 minutes)

- With a partner or triad, discuss your inferences regarding how the tasks and scoring tools invited and supported students to create high-quality work.
- As a whole group, create a scribed list of how the tasks and scoring tools supported students in creating high-quality work.
 - What could we do to improve our tasks and scoring tools?
 - What connections do we see between the quality of student work and the tasks and scoring tools teachers are creating? What do these connections suggest in term of goals?

Discussion: Goal Setting and Action Steps (20 minutes)

- Determine **one** or **two** possible next steps, named as school-wide SMART goals, based on the discussion. If necessary, note that the school leader will make the final determination about next steps (including the exact goal and how the goal will be supported), communicating with the staff within the next few days.

Process Debrief (10 minutes)

- The process checker leads a conversation focused on the group’s use of the protocol and the agreed-upon norms.
- The process checker shares her observations.

After the Protocol:

The school leader and school designer (perhaps in conjunction with the instructional guide or leadership team)...

- Complete the *Quality Work Protocol Summary Sheet*
- Select **THREE** pieces of student work (and the related task/scoring tool) that represent the current status quo at the school.
- File the summary sheet and the three pieces of student work with your credentialing documentation.
- Work that met all three attributes of quality should be considered for EL Education’s Center for Student Work. Identify any work that meets this criteria, record on the *Quality Work Protocol Summary Sheet* and support submission. (Search for “Submission Form”)

Quality Work Protocol for Participants

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Quality Work Protocol Overview

Roles

Timekeeper and Process Checker

Protocol

Gallery Walk of Student Work (20-30 minutes)

Identify patterns across work related to the Attributes of Quality in Student Work (Note Catcher, part 1)

Discussion: Attributes of Quality in Student Work (20 minutes)

Break (10 minutes)

Gallery Walk of Product/Task Descriptors and Scoring Tools (20 minutes)

Identify patterns about how tasks and scoring tools invite and support quality (Note Catcher, part 2)

Discussion: Tasks and Scoring Tools that Invite and Support Quality (15-20 minutes)

Discussion: Goal Setting and Action Steps (20 minutes)

Process Debrief (10 minutes)

Attributes of High-Quality Student Work

The descriptions below are intended to provide educators with common vision and terminology as they engage in using student work to improve teaching and learning, be it shorter task work or products that are the result of long-term projects. These attributes are not intended to constrain a conversation about quality, and not all descriptors must be present for a piece of work to be high quality. They are intended to provoke deeper conversation and act as a starting point for formulating a shared understanding of quality. These descriptions align with EL Core Practices 5 (Designing Projects and Products) and 7 (Producing High-Quality Student Work).

Complexity

- Complex work is rigorous: it aligns with or exceeds the expectations defined by grade-level standards and includes **higher-order thinking** by challenging students to apply, analyze, evaluate, and create during daily instruction and throughout longer projects.
- Complex work often **connects to the big concepts** that undergird disciplines or unite disciplines.
- Complex work prioritizes **transfer of understanding** to new contexts.
- Complex work prioritizes consideration of **multiple perspectives**.
- Complex work may incorporate students' **application of higher order literacy skills** through the use of complex text and evidence-based writing and speaking.

Craftsmanship

- Well-crafted work is done with care and precision. Craftsmanship requires attention to **accuracy, detail, and beauty**.
- In every discipline and domain, well-crafted work should be **beautiful work in conception and execution**. In short tasks or early drafts of work, craftsmanship may be present primarily in thoughtful ideas, but not in polished presentation; for long-term projects, craftsmanship requires perseverance to refine work in conception, conventions, and presentation, typically through multiple drafts or rehearsals with critique from others.

Authenticity

- Authentic work **demonstrates the original, creative thinking of students**—authentic personal voice and ideas—rather than simply showing that students can follow directions or fill in the blanks.
- Authentic work often **uses formats and standards from the professional world**, rather than artificial school formats (e.g., students create a book review for a local newspaper instead of a book report for the teacher).
- Authentic work **often connects academic standards with real-world issues, controversies, and local people and places**.
- Authenticity gives purpose to work; the **work matters to students and ideally contributes to a larger community** as well. When possible, it is created for and shared with an audience beyond the classroom.

Quality Work Protocol Note Catcher

Part I: Attributes of Quality in Student Work

As you review the work we have collected today, think about the “Attributes of High-Quality Student Work” and make notes below about student work samples that reflect the criteria. It is fine to list the same piece of work in more than one column. Please also include a brief note that explains your rationale for including the piece within a specific column.

Work that displays Evidence of Complexity	Work that displays Evidence of Craftsmanship	Work that displays Evidence of Authenticity

What patterns did you notice across the student work samples? What questions do you have about these patterns?

Which column has the most examples of work? Which column has the least? What does that make you wonder?

Part II: Tasks and Scoring Tools that Invite and Support Quality

Record inferences about how features of the tasks and scoring tools invite and support students in creating high-quality work.

Task or Scoring Tool (grade, title)	Features that Invite/Support Complexity	Features that Invite/Support Craftsmanship	Features that Invite/Support Authenticity

What patterns did you notice across tasks? What patterns did you notice across scoring tools? What questions do you have about these patterns?

Quality Work Protocol Summary Sheet

School Name	
Date of Protocol	
Participants (Name and Role)	1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10.
Based on today's protocol, what conclusions did you draw about the level of quality displayed in the student work?	
Based on today's protocol, what conclusions did you draw about the tasks and scoring tools that teachers are designing?	

Based on these conclusions, what goals and action steps did you determine?	
Goal	Action Steps/Dates
Which student work, representative of school-wide quality, will you be archiving from this protocol? 1. 2. 3.	
Which student work, if any, will you be submitting to EL's Center for Student Work? 1. 2. 3.	

Dimensions of Student Achievement

Dimension of Achievement	Students	Teachers and Leaders
Mastery of Knowledge and Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate proficiency and deeper understanding: show mastery in a body of knowledge and skills within each discipline • Apply their learning: transfer knowledge and skills to novel, meaningful tasks • Think critically: analyze, evaluate, and synthesize complex ideas and consider multiple perspectives • Communicate clearly: write, speak, and present ideas effectively in a variety of media within and across disciplines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that curriculum, instruction, and assessments are rigorous, meaningful, and aligned with standards • Use assessment practices that position students as leaders of their own learning • Use meaningful data for both teachers and students to track progress toward learning goals • Engage all students in daily lessons that require critical thinking about complex, worthy ideas, texts, and problems
Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to become effective learners: develop the mindsets and skills for success in college, career, and life (e.g., initiative, responsibility, perseverance, collaboration) • Work to become ethical people: treat others well and stand up for what is right (e.g., empathy, integrity, respect, compassion) • Contribute to a better world: put their learning to use to improve communities (e.g., citizenship, service) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elevate student voice and leadership in classrooms and across the school • Make habits of scholarship visible across the school and in daily instruction • Model a school-wide culture of respect and compassion • Prioritize social and emotional learning, along with academic learning, across the school
High-Quality Student Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create complex work: demonstrate higher-order thinking, multiple perspectives and transfer of understanding • Demonstrate craftsmanship: create work that is accurate and beautiful in conception and execution • Create authentic work: demonstrate original thinking and voice, connect to real-world issues and formats, and when possible, create work that is meaningful to the community beyond the school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design tasks that ask students to apply, analyze, evaluate and create as part of their work • Use models of excellence, critique, and multiple drafts to support all students to produce work of exceptional quality • Connect students to the world beyond school through meaningful fieldwork, expert collaborators, research, and service learning