Adapting the Collaborative Protocols

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The paper suggests methods for using the protocols for encouraging group interaction described in the Collaborative Group Work Protocol Handbook Blackboard course sites. Before describing the protocols, a few points about Blackboard and virtual classrooms should be made:

1) Blackboard allows instructors to assign students to groups (see the paper on Working with Groups in Blackboard). Groups can be given assignments and they can be given access to part of a course site that is not open to those outside the group.

2) Several tools for interaction are available on Bb (e.g. discussion board, blogs, chat, journals). In many cases, the differences between them are unimportant. In other cases, especially when the interaction must be synchronous, there are fewer choices.
   a. Discussion Boards—typically, the instructor posts a prompt and students reply, they may also reply to replies; all posts are open to the class or the group
   b. Blogs—typically a student maintains the blog and writes long entries (think paragraphs) and others comment on the posts; all posts and comments are open for all to see.
   c. Journals—these are available to no one else in the class, unless it is a group journal, then it is available to the others in the group.
   d. Chat—is a room in which messages are typed and then seen by everyone else in the room in real-time; private messaging can be controlled by the instructor.
   e. Virtual classrooms—include chat, but also a whiteboard and group browser.
   f. Wiki—allows anyone to edit any content that had been added.

3) Time is sometimes a consideration. Because Bb is an online classroom, a protocol that can be done in a few minutes may require days, Bb so that individuals can access the site and participate.

4) Many educators are concerned about the effects of text lingo on students’ writing. The research is equivocal; no one knows if txt affects writing. Teachers should establish their own ground rules as they see fit. If the purpose is to encourage thinking and building knowledge, then allowing groups to find their own rules may be best; if the purpose is to produce professional products, then Standard English is expected. Instructors who participate should model professional communication regardless of the mode used by other participants.
Because this protocol has students working in multiple groups (first in a group of three then in a group of six) before reporting, this protocol is likely to require a relatively long time when used in an online setting (perhaps even days).

- Consider assigning students to a group of three for two days where they participate in a discussion board, then
- Combining the groups of three into groups of six for two days so they can participate in a second discussion board. (To ensure groups of six are comprised of two of the groups of three, allow students to self-enroll in the groups of six—they will find their partners.)
- The reports from the groups of six can then be posted to a blog (not a group blog, but one that is available for the entire class to see).
Because this protocol suggests students create a visual that represents their answers, it is best to use the 3-2-1 questions as model prompts for responses to posts (on discussion boards or blogs) in online settings. Consider these (notice that contents of the 3-2-1 questions can change to meet the assignment):

- Have students read a text, and then respond to the 3-2-1 questions in a discussion board. The discussions can then become a focus for follow up questions (e.g., “Based on the questions people still have, what was the author unclear about?” or “Based on the posts, what is the most important idea we can take away from this text?”)

- Let’s assume you assigned students with this blog task: “Tell a short story in which a colleague asks you to do something unethical (whatever this is will depend on your field).” Assign students to “Comment on others’ stories by identifying 3 things the colleague did that were unethical, 2 things that one should do if faced with this situation, and 1 thing that could have been done to avoid the unethical situation.”
Questions

This protocol requires students to “consume” questions... once a question is removed from where it is posted, it cannot be removed by another... to replicate this online, you may want to assign questions or have students select them at an in-person meeting.

You would probably want each question to become a separate “conversation” in which everyone becomes involved, with the opportunity to respond to all posts and replies, so it is well-suited for a discussion board. Have students post their question as a thread in a discussion and then “talk about it” by replying to the thread. (This is step 5 in the process.)

Alternatively, each question could become the focus of a chat session, led by the student who chose the question. In either case, the contents of the discussion or the recording the chat can be revisited by the students as they prepare their reports on the interaction.
Carousel Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a process in which there are multiple authors of the ideas and products, so it is well-suited to a wiki. Recall that a wiki is a tool that allows multiple individuals to contribute to a single document.

To use this protocol on Bb, create a wiki and then pages with each question. For example, the “Biographies of Great Scientists” wiki would have pages for “Isaac Newton,” and “Charles Darwin” and “Albert Einstein” that were added by the instructor. Allow students time to edit the wikis with their ideas. For best results, try to limit the number of editors on a page at once. A good method of preventing multiple simultaneous editors is to open the wikis for an extended time (perhaps a week).

To report the results of the brainstorming, one student can be assigned the task of summarizing the content of each wiki page. Have that student use large or bold font so that it is differentiated from the other wiki contents.

Prepare ➡ Brainstorm ➡ Summarize

- Create a wiki and then pages with questions.
- Open the wikis for editing. Encourage students to only add, not delete others' ideas.
- Top 3 ideas are summarized and added to the wiki.

Be aware: There is no way to prevent one from deleting the contents on a wiki.

Brainstorming is also well-suited to the chat and virtual classroom functions on Blackboard. By recording the chat, the instructor can have a permanent record of the session, so the discussion can be reviewed later. (This is helpful for seeing how students' ideas become more sophisticated over time.)

In the virtual classroom feature on Bb, instructors can write on a virtual whiteboard that can be seen by all attendees in the classroom, and the instructor can add a URL to the group browser so that all can see the same web page. In addition, the virtual classroom can be divided into breakout rooms. The students can review the recording of the chat when identifying three top ideas.
Collaborative Annotation

Because of the extensive editing that is part of this protocol, it is well-suited to using a wiki or a group journal; each student creates a wiki page or journal, and the others add their annotations at his or her turn. This is also well-suited to file exchange in which students upload a file, and others download it, comment, and then reload it.

This protocol is also well-suited to document sharing on a service such as SkyDrive or Google Docs. With these services, an author can give others (who have accounts on the system) permission to view, or edit, or comment on (in Google Docs) the file. This does require one to enter the email addresses of those who will have permission to edit the file, but that can be easily accomplished.

Sometimes if I have a group of students who are going to edit each other’s work and they happen to be in the same place at the same time, I have them enter their own email addresses on each other’s computers. If they have each other in their contacts (on Google or SkyDrive or Zoho), this process can be done quickly.

Another variation on this protocol is to use a service such as VoiceThread. This allows users to upload files (text, pictures, and even embed some web media), and share a link that others with accounts can follow to leave comment (text, video, or audio) to the file that is the focus of the VoiceThread.

Students compose in: wiki or document
Share access to their compositions
Report on the annotations

Adapting the Collaborative Protocols
Three A Questions

The Three A Questions are an excellent prompt for online discussions that focus on a text. Also, these questions can be used to organize one’s reply to a discussion post or comment to a blog entry made by another student. The questions can be used on any tool (such as VoiceThread) that allows students (and instructors) to give feedback.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student's Blog Entry</th>
<th>Discussion Focused on Text</th>
<th>VoiceThread Media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Assumptions of blogger</td>
<td>• Assumptions of author</td>
<td>• Assumptions...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Agree with blogger</td>
<td>• Agree with author</td>
<td>• Agree...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Argue with blogger</td>
<td>• Argue with author</td>
<td>• Argue...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fishbowl

This protocol is one in which synchronicity is key—the outer circle really needs to see the discussion of those in the fishbowl as it happens. Because of this, chat is probably the online tool best-suited for it. Whenever using chat, remember to record the chat so that a transcript of the session will be available after the chat ends.

Some instructors have found that a chat transcript can become the outer circle for everyone, even those who participate in the fishbowl. Others find that the individuals in the outer circle should be “disinterested observers,” and so should not be in the fishbowl, even if it is possible.
Think, Pair, Share

This is another protocol that is well-suited to the virtual classroom tool, including the WiziQ tool in Bb. Once students have had a chance to reflect on a piece and write their thoughts, they can be assigned to virtual break out rooms in groups of four. Within those break out rooms, they can enter private chats with one other to form the pair. Then they can enter into a general chat in the breakout room to form the share.

Reporting to the whole class can take several forms. Blogs open for all to see are a good reporting tool, but chat can also be used for immediate reporting. Many instructors also like to have students keep journals with their reflections on think, pair, share, and similar activities.
**Tea Party**

Many students like the Tea Party protocol as it allows for one to eavesdrop on conversations before joining them. (If a pair or triad or quad sounds like it is having an interesting discussion one can join, otherwise one can find another group to join.) That aspect of the protocol is difficult to replicate in virtual classrooms.

Tea Party can be replicated, however, by using either groups (allow students to self-enroll in groups) or through virtual classroom and break out rooms (together with private chat for pairs).

- Tea party protocols done via groups should be done over extended time (days or weeks).
- Use chat for synchronous interaction following the tea party protocol.
The Final Word

Key to this protocol is the person who begins the conversation. He or she should be an observer of what comes afterwards (no clarification can be given, no questions asked or answered). To become an observer, the person who starts the conversation (and who gets the final word) can post a blog entry (or begin a discussion thread) and then observe others’ responses or can begin a chat and watch the conversation that follows before providing the final word. As with the other protocols, time is an important consideration in selecting the interaction tool. Discussion and blogs work well for extended time, chat for synchronous interaction.

Remind students the purpose of the response:

- To expand on the idea presented
- To provide a different perspective on the idea
- To clarify the idea
- To question the idea or issues raised
Play the Role

This protocol is designed to help students interact with text, so it is best done in a synchronous manner and sequentially; the summarizer plays his or her role first, followed by the questioner, then the clarifier, and finally the predictor. The synchronous nature means it should be done via chat.

Gallery Walk

Gallery Walk is well-suited for blogging. Each student posts the main ideas and their questions in a blog entry. Others respond to the blog posts in comments. Gallery walk is frequently used when students have created a graphic organizer or some other representation of their ideas and understandings. The Blog tool on Bb does allow bloggers to add images and other media to their posts. If students are seeking feedback on such representations, this is an excellent protocol to use.
Pause

Pause provides an excellent way to organize a discussion board in a virtual classroom. Too often, instructors seek to have students retell through summary what they read on a discussion board.

Consider:

In a study of the purpose of online interaction, Gunawardena, Lowe and Anderson (1997), found

- Sharing/ Comparing (91.8%)
- Discovering Dissonance (2.4%)
- Negotiating Meaning/ Co-construction of Knowledge (1.9%)
- Testing/ Modifying Proposed Synthesis (0.8%)
- Stating/ Applying New Knowledge (1.9%)

Attempt to craft prompts (including prompts for replies and comments) that encourage students to move beyond sharing and comparing.


Graffiti

This protocol is well-suited for discussion boards. The instructor begins by posting the questions that will focus the brainstorming, each in its own thread. Students post their answers in replies. To ensure each person has others’ comments to read as they respond to the questions, assign different students to begin reading different threads. This can be done by assigning students response numbers (Alex begins replying at thread one, Bob at two... Zelda at 26).
Jigsaw

Key to a successful jigsaw is the assigning of students to groups: Students are assigned to a group in which the group focuses on a single topic (for example answering a single question or summarizing a section of a text). After those groups complete their work, new groups are formed with one student from each of the original groups. In those second groups, each reports what was summarized and concluded in the first group. This is well-achieved via groups on Blackboard. Students are assigned to one group with a common idea, and then they are assigned to a new group to report the findings of the first.

On Blackboard, it is tempting to allow students to exchange files, and each member of the group copies and pastes what was found in the first group into a common document. While this may be efficient, it does remove the social interaction that is the point of the protocol.
The Wagon Wheel

Wagon Wheel is based on a series of conversations with partners. To replicate this online, assign the texts as indicated in step one in the handbook.

In a virtual classroom, list pairs of partners for each round. Have students participate in a private chat with the person for each round. Reporting can then be done with a whole group chat.

One of the issues with this protocol on Bb will be managing time. He is a suggestion:

- Prepare a list of students and partners ahead of time. Post the partners on the whiteboard using the text tool (see below).

- Following the recommendation on page 15, have students enter private chat with a clock display on the group browser for all to see.

- Also learn to turn off private chat.
A Suggestion for Synchronous Chat

Several of these protocols call for private chat that has an end point (e.g. “discuss with a partner for 10 minutes”). To facilitate that in a virtual classroom:

- Have students enter the virtual classroom and use the whiteboard to review the task.
- The instructor clicks “Group Browser” and puts the URL for an online clock (http://www.online-stopwatch.com/online-clock/) in the address field and displays it to users and clicks “Go.”
- When time is up, disable private chat for active members of the chat room.