

The Subversive Library: Problems of Practice Protocol

Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Generate one actionable intervention to address your problem. ● Explore the intended and unintended impact of that intervention. 	
Defining the Problem of Practice	Presenter brainstorms and presents a problem of practice surrounding social justice and DEI.	2 min.
	Group members ask clarifying questions to better understand the context/nature of the issue.	2 min.
Generating Possible Interventions	Silent idea generation.	1 min.
	Group members brainstorm ideas of interventions that might address the problem (avoiding lengthy explanations); presenter listens and takes notes.	5 min.
Selecting an Intervention	Presenter identifies one intervention that feels actionable.	A few moments
Analyzing the Intervention	<p>Group members focus on this intervention and ask questions for deeper analysis, presenter listens and takes notes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What do you think might happen? How might people respond? ● Potential unintended consequences? ● How might the intervention be assessed? 	
Refining and Reflecting	<p>Presenter shares reflections back to the group based upon what they've heard and what new ideas this sparked.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● New questions that have emerged? ● Refining or revisiting the intervention ● Asking for further feedback. 	

Adapted from: Harkness Leaders Conference 2025, developed based upon work with Indu Chunagi Singh, Door 21 Consulting

Norms

Follow the protocol: While the protocol might feel constraining, its structure allows for predictability on the part of all group members. Its time constraints make certain that all group members will get to fully present. Its specificity in who speaks when allows for all group members to have a voice.

Keep presenters' offerings confidential: There will be a time for sharing at the end when school groups will determine what they want to share to the whole group. If there's an anecdote from your group that you would love to retell your own school group, ask and receive permission to do so.

Adopt a curious mindset: Avoid the urge to solve the colleague's problem: We are invited to help unpack our colleague's problem and enhance their own interrogation of the problem itself and possible interventions. And the intervention might not lead to a solution in and of itself, but it is a way to further refine understanding of the problem.

Plan for the future: What will you take away?