Education

Hall

Professional Learning Protocols:

S.W.O.T.

**Goal:** This is a protocol that can be used to evaluate an organization's objectives, current level of performance, readiness to take action, and/or plan of action.

**Time required:**30-60 minutes

**Materials:**Chart paper (sticky-kind is best), bold markers, pertinent data/evidence/resources

**Step 1:** Describe and set the context for the problem, issue, challenge, vision, and/or topic at hand. What are you trying to accomplish? What problem are you aiming to solve? What strategy are you attempting to implement?

*\*Note: Revisiting the problem-of-practice that prompted the creation of a clear and compelling vision can be a very helpful step.*

Share data points, evidence, and other resources relevant to the conversation. Finish by posing a question such as, "How can we achieve the vision we described together?"

**Step 2:** Participants, in pairs or subgroups of 3-6 people, examine the evidence, data, and research together. When needed, participants ask nonevaluative questions for clarity, for instance, "What trends do we notice?" "What questions aren't answered by these data?" "What happened before X?" "When did Y occur?" "Is Z a consistent outcome or an outlier?"

**Step 3:**Together, all participants discuss the strengths and weaknesses (internal factors) and opportunities and threats (external factors) related to the topic, issue, or vision. Encourage participants to support their suggestions with evidence, asking, "What makes you suggest that?" Use the following definitions and examples to bring clarity:

* *Strengths:* Characteristics **within** the organization that might help it solve problems or move forward. *(Ex: We have an instructional coach who can help us infuse guided-reading structures into our lessons.)*
* *Weaknesses:*Characteristics **within** the organization that might hinder solutions or forward momentum. *(Ex: We have limited time in our schedule for adding new learning structures.)*
* *Opportunities:* **External** conditions that might help the organization solve problems or move forward. *(Ex: Our budget provides for release-time for teachers to work together to write focused lesson plans.)*
* *Threats:***External** conditions that might hinder solutions or forward momentum. *(Ex: Lack of substitute teachers makes it difficult for teachers to take advantage of release-time on a consistent basis.)*

As participants discuss, an identified recorder writes concise notes on a piece of chart paper following the format on the following page:

Identified *Problem-of-Practice*:

Goal, strategy, or approach suggested:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| S (internal Strengths) | W (internal Weaknesses) |
| O (external Opportunities) | T (external Threats) |

**Step 4:**Participants reflect silently on the discussion for several minutes, journaling if so desired.

**Step 5:** Participants discuss their reflections, surfacing their thoughts on the implications of the analysis on possible solutions, current state of affairs, unanswered questions, potential actions, and/or ways that elements in one quadrant of the SWOT diagram relate to others. At the end of the time allotted, thank the participants for their earnest contributions and efforts in this protocol and inform participants that the ideas you’ve collected will help create an action plan that is more likely to yield successful outcomes and the realization of the collective vision.