Chapter 2
Play by the Protocols

Simplicity is the keynote of all true elegance.

—Coco Chanel

So many trades have mastered the concept of protocols. But in education, we still lean towards two models: Use the overly scripted, corporately prepared lesson plan or bounce from freestanding lesson plan to lesson plan which offers no cohesion or flow to our students. A great coach, chef, or architect works within models and templates, but he or she also owns all their content—their signature dish or innovative approach to planning. (An excellent example of this is the *Chef's Table* series on Netflix. These professionals bring so much passion and creativity to one of our simplest daily pleasures: food.)

Does a chef have 365 daily breakfast recipes? No. That would be untenable. A chef might have a handful that they have truly mastered. People typically will say, "I bet a chef has less than a dozen remarkable breakfast dishes." How about a CrossFit trainer? Would they need a unique routine for every day of the year? Or do they have a core workout, with leg days, arm days, and some days where they work the entire body?

If you have played a sport, what would be the effect of not having a daily practice schedule? The answer is that game performance would suffer. Similarly, classrooms that do not have daily, weekly, and monthly protocols will, by the very nature of human learning, underperform compared to their potential. In practical terms, we define protocols this way:

Marlena

Think of it like this: You have a beautiful picture frame on the coffee table, but the print has faded some, and the kids have grown a little this past year, anyway. When the new prints arrive, you slip the old picture out of the frame and insert the new picture. Now you have a beautiful new picture on the coffee table again. EduProtocols, like the picture frame, stay the same. The lesson, like the print, easily changes, resulting in a whole new learning possibility!

You need to ship a wedding present to your nephew, and it just so happens the box is huge and heavy. You decide that the cheapest way to transport it is by train. You buy the ticket and send it on its way. Every day, that train makes the same trip at the same time, only the train carries different cargo each trip. EduProtocols, like the train carriage, stay the same. The content, like the cargo, changes for each trip.

EduProtocols:
The format stays consistent while the content changes.

The Iron Chef EduProtocol emerged from the need to streamline delivery of content from teacher to student: share a slide deck, research, take notes, present in teams, score. (We detail this EduProtocol in Chapter 13.) The result was the same across the board: Kids could focus on the learning, collaboration, and creativity because they already *knew* the process. By teaching with EduProtocols, the *process* of daily work becomes nearly invisible, and the *content* becomes preeminent in the classroom. That's when massive growth occurs: when students are focused on the content.

Kindergarten student completes the Iron Chef EduProtocol using images.

Teaching with EduProtocols Makes Your Career Easier and Portable

Moved to sixth grade this year? Use the Iron Chef EduProtocol to teach Greek civilization. Another move to fifth grade next year? Use Iron Chef to teach the thirteen colonies. Master the math variation of Iron Chef while teaching fourth grade, and you are ready for any grade level using the same EduProtocol. If you are a high school teacher or move to the college level with five different classes this year, reduce your prep and use the same EduProtocols in all your classes, with different content for each course.

Do we teach for tasks or do we teach for content?

How many times has the method of teaching gotten in the way of your students learning? Instead of unintentionally making it more difficult for children to learn because we're actually teaching both the task and the content, let's develop EduProtocols: workflows which can be repeated with changing content.

Teachers often personally purchase lessons, and when the lesson is over, they buy another one. Every time the lesson changes, the brain load on kids (and teachers) raises their affective filter as they try to figure out what the task is asking them to do. Even in textbooks, we see dozens of graphic organizers, and since there are too many to memorize, each time the kids ask, "What do we do next?" or, "Is this right?" Teachers find themselves pushed to the front of the classroom answering questions about the mechanics of the lesson. The more kids focus on figuring out the task, the less brain power is available to understand the content, and the more they will rely on you for support.

Do we teach for tasks, or do we teach for content? If we teach for content, we can regain brain power by using EduProtocols to frame the changing content.

Marlena

This is why our cook has a defined repertoire of dishes. A cook cannot master a recipe if he is cooking up something brand new every single day of the year.

New Is Messy

Marlena

A solid EduProtocol will become a trusted tool that makes content the focus for students, but it also stabilizes workflow for the teacher. Teaching is a big job; we need stabilization!

As you read and reflect on your classroom, imagine EduProtocols replacing lessons. Think about how to teach the protocol until kids master the process and how you can use EduProtocols to deliver content all year long. Just like a chef, if you've mastered a few EduProtocols, you will have an infinite number of lessons at your disposal to educate anyone on any topic—with a minimum of preparation. The only materials you'll need to customize your EduProtocols are on the internet: Wikipedia (cite their sources), YouTube, and specialized websites have all the content you'll ever need for the raw materials included in your EduProtocols to cover any subject.

Marlena

Beginning with Smart Start activities as the preseason warm-up will help students ease into the EduProtocols with content later.

You might notice that as you begin to teach using the EduProtocols, students will struggle to understand what you are asking them to do. We expect this. It's new, and new is messy. Kids will have questions. They will make mistakes. So will you. You might not provide directions in the clearest manner. Your timing might be off. When it gets a little crazy, don't give up. Debrief with the class so they can learn the EduProtocol.

Ideally, use a particular EduProtocol for at least a full quarter. It takes about ten repetitions for students to become masters at the task.

Marlena

Reps: the repeated practice, the repetition that we talked about earlier that we all need when learning something new. We over-focus on what kids are learning and forget to give students the time they need to internalize how to learn.

EduProtocols can run once a week, once a day, or biweekly, but they should last all quarter, all semester, or all year. With practice, the needs of the protocol will move into the background, and the content will take the center front.

Then, and only then, can your students be free to enjoy the learning.

Our Eight-Point PROTOCOL Checklist

It is easy to confuse EduProtocols with other types of lessons and digital worksheets. EduProtocols are structured enough to be repeated, yet open ended enough that students can be creative and have choice in demonstrating their learning. The lesson design itself is fairly simple, with the goal of shifting the workload from the teacher to the student. What makes an EduProtocol? There are eight common characteristics of EduProtocols that make them powerful tools for teaching and learning:

1. **Protocol = Lesson:** If EduProtocol + EduProtocol + EduProtocol equals a unit, then one EduProtocol is somewhat equal to a lesson. They have substance and are not to be confused with "activities" which we might do within a lesson; for example, these are not protocols: quick write, pair share, gallery walk, exit tickets, elevator pitches, voting, sentence stems, writing what you learned in the form of a song, or folded-paper books for notes.
2. **Replicable:** An EduProtocol has a defined structure that can be repeated by other students and teachers. The EduProtocol should be named to provide it an identity and to separate it from the content.
3. **One to One:** Accountability for each and every student for a part of the activity is a key component of the EduProtocols. The contribution is traceable and provides evidence of learning.
4. **Time Frame:** A fitness trainer wouldn't have a client do bench presses or squats for a full hour. Effective workouts have variety. EduProtocols should be ten to thirty-five minutes in length. Ideally, an EduProtocol does not use the entire class period, allowing students to work on multiple learning events in one period. Simplify the content so that it can be completed in the allotted time.
5. **Overtly Connected Standards:** An EduProtocol should feature multiple adopted standards (ten to twenty-five grade-level standards) in a single setting. Kids will strug-

Note: *Do not confuse Smart Start singular-use activities, which are intended to build culture, with EduProtocols. Smart Starts might be protocols, but more likely they are activities with the specific purpose of getting the year off to a good start while building camaraderie and culture.*

gle on day one but will be rolling by day five. (See #1 and #2 under "Best Practices" below for reference.)

6. **Cs in Action: (Four Cs—Communication, Collaboration, Critical Thinking, and Creativity)** Do not turn your class into an Edu-gulag with unceasing fill-in-the-blanks-type work. Effective EduProtocols are not just worksheets. They embody open-ended learning and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) concepts. If your students don't like a protocol, you are likely doing it incorrectly.
7. **Open and Able to Be Used Across Multiple Subject Areas:** EduProtocols should work in multiple subject areas (an EduProtocol used for science would also be able to be used with social studies and language arts) or across multiple standards within a subject. (Math-specific EduProtocols could be used to teach the associative property as well as factor trees.)
8. **Loved by Kids:** Design for children! Take your teacher hat off and tap into your own innate creativity. Design something that's irresistible to students of many ages.

Best Practices with EduProtocols

Keep in mind the SPIRIT to which EduProtocols are designed as you deploy them with your students. Six tips to remember are as follows:

1. **Serious Commitment:** We always tell our own children, "If you are going to play a sport or be in a play, commit to the whole season." You can do the same by making the commitment to use the EduProtocol weekly, all semester, or all year long so students gain fluency with the process, which will enable them to focus on the content.
2. **Progression:** The EduProtocol begins quickly and easily. The first two reps of an EduProtocol should focus on a nonacademic, low cognitive-load task so students can concentrate on the task, not the content. Educators should simply focus on students completing the EduProtocols.

Quality may be low at first. Over time, add skills and subtasks or shorten the time frame to add intensity.

3. **Immediate Feedback:** If you are grading an EduProtocol any time other than immediately, your EduProtocol is in danger of losing student intensity. Athletes crave feedback. Chefs come out of the kitchen to see how guests enjoyed the meal. Develop for immediate feedback, and you'll find more immediate impact.
4. **Reps:** Jon's football coach, Mike Waufle, loved to say, "Reactions are what you do without thinking. The only way to get the very best results is to do a million reps." We can't do a million reps in class, but we can do twenty or thirty or more, and that's mastery learning.
5. **Interest:** Keep the pace just fast enough to hold the attention of kids with just the right amount of content for the right amount of time.
6. **Tech Balance:** Please use tools like Quizizz, Kahoot, Google Suite, Flipgrid, and others, but remember: Sometimes paper is faster. Brain research tells us a good old Frayer or Venn diagram on paper can be a super-efficient way to set up for the digital tools where ideas get synthesized.

How to Start?

Our desired state is that students, thoroughly familiar with the technology and the protocol process, can completely focus on the content. It is imperative to move into the EduProtocols with purpose and at a pace that is slow enough that all students can master the process first. We cannot stress this enough. Choose one EduProtocol, and when it's going smoothly, after using it weekly for about a month or two, start another. Work the EduProtocols into your curriculum slowly, one at a time. The students will adjust to this different way of learning, and you will adapt as well. Over the course of the year, your students should be able to master between

Jon

So I'm going to go back in my wayback machine to the year 2002. I'm minding my own business, teaching sixth grade, doing Latin roots. We get to the quarter-final test. Now, the quarter-final test is cumulative, right? And I want my kids to do well. So on Monday I give them the test, and my kids self-correct. Out of the forty-five words for the cumulative, we realized that many of us missed about the same fifteen. So I made those our words for the week. Guess what we did on Tuesday? We did the test. Guess what we did on Wednesday? We did the test again, with immediate feedback. I had about seventy-five kids, so when we got to Friday for the test, I didn't give anybody less than a B. I realized that I could massively increase their learning with this EduProtocol.

Don't raise your hand;
I'm calling on everybody.

—Sam Patterson

four and seven EduProtocols. As Cori Orlando, K–6 tech coach, says, "Expect a learning curve, but don't give up."

The following year, as you have successfully built your capacity for teaching with EduProtocols, you will be able to introduce them more quickly to your students. Perhaps one or two per month until students build up a repertoire of EduProtocols to call upon. Refer to the list of Best Practices, but the most important one is this: Use the EduProtocols weekly!

Fast and Curious

Start your journey as follows: As soon as possible, Monday morning or perhaps tomorrow, try this entry-level vocabulary EduProtocol with an online quiz program such as Quizizz or Socrative to get you started.

In this EduProtocol we are going to use the quiz program for the instruction instead of for the test. The purpose of this EduProtocol is to teach vocabulary. This isn't necessarily the highest activity on the Four Cs scale, but we include it here because the greatest teaching benefit of this EduProtocol is recapturing the time spent introducing and teaching vocabulary—so you can invest in other EduProtocols.

There are a lot of great quiz programs out there: Kahoot, Quizizz, Socrative, Quizlet Live. But Quizizz is our favorite. Here's why:

Monday

It's Monday morning: vocabulary day for the new unit. When the kids come in, we immediately crank up the quiz. If we have fifteen words this week, let's say they get half of them right. (Notice it's not that they got half wrong; they got half right.) They now know what they know! Now, out of the fifteen, we've only got to focus on seven, and it's Monday. So take the words, and use the Quizizz feature where your questions turn into slides and hit Review Quiz. Click through the slides and give the kids immediate

feedback. "The correct answer for this is this, and here's why, and there's the picture that goes with it." Repeat for each of the words.

Then do the test again, right away. Remember, reps build speed, and this is where we want speed. Do it twice on Monday. Quizizz gives you a class total on the fly. See how many kids have passed or not passed immediately. So imagine it's Monday morning, we've got fifteen new science words, we've got fifteen new math words, and we've got fifteen new spelling words. (What grade? Any grade, realistically.) The kids walk in, sit down, and do the test.

Based on how many they got right, give them a mini-lesson and run the quiz again. We can do this with *human children* in under fifteen minutes. Wondering what they're going to do for homework? They don't need homework. We're doing the work in class.

Marlena

This works because we are asking kids to actively use their brains to recall the words (with immediate feedback) instead of just looking up definitions or copying words from one part of a page to another. On day two, recall again. On day three, remember again. Bam! By the end of the week, the words have begun the move from short-term memory to long-term memory.

Thursday Is the New Friday

Tuesday morning rolls around, and it's the same EduProtocol. Give them the quiz again. The magic of this process is that what used to be two or three days a week of class time now takes much less time, and we gain those two days for other learning. We're not eliminating, we're automating. If we used to do the test on Friday, taking at least half of the class period, we just gave ourselves half of the class time back—every week for the rest of our career!

But let's say you want to get the kids more involved; you want them operating on a higher Four-C level. Once we do this EduProtocol for about three weeks, we outsource the test making. "Table four, you're making the test for next week." The students are now operating at a higher level because they must find the right pictures and carefully consider the information. This works all the way from fourth-grade kids working on state history to AP classes.

Why do we call it "Fast and Curious"?

First, this EduProtocols is a fast way to expose kids to words, which saves classroom time. Second, people are curious about their own abilities. *Reader's Digest* has tapped into that for decades with Word Power and quizzes such as, "How Artful Is Your

Vocabulary? Take our quiz to see if you've got a flair with artful words." Marlena's tenth-grade ELA teacher used Word Power in class every week to expose them to new vocabulary. It worked. The Encyclopedia Britannica has figured out that the more you take a quiz, the more you learn the words. As the *Encyclopedia Britannica* says, "The faster you answer, the higher your score. When you are done, try again to beat your best score."

As Jane McGonigal, American game designer and author, says, "We've been playing games since humanity had civilization—there is something primal about our desire and our ability to play games." People don't want to look up words; they want to play games, because it's human nature to be curious about our ability to know things.

Directions for the Fast and Curious Protocol

Prior to day one: Set up your quiz. (We prefer the question-to-flashcard and immediate class feedback features in Quizizz, but any quiz program will work.)

Day One

1. Quiz students. (Make sure students receive immediate feedback on their missed words.)
2. Review most-missed words.
3. Quiz again, ensuring immediate feedback.

Day Two

Repeat missed words from day one.

Day Three

Repeat missed words from day two.

Day Four

Conduct the final quiz or test.

Call to Action

This entry-level EduProtocol is an excellent way to experiment and see the impact protocols can have in your classroom. Use this activity tomorrow to kick-start EduProtocols in your classroom.

Note: *In the next section of the book we will discuss tips for developing class culture, which we have found to be beneficial in the successful implementation of EduProtocols.*

We further explain EduProtocols beginning with Chapter 15.