

Beautiful Work Protocol¹



Overview:

In recent years an emphasis on quality work through protocoling has risen to the forefront of many educational movements and conversations. Protocoling in education is the use of design thinking and critique and revision which results in unique and powerful learning: learning that takes place when a learner takes meaningful work within a supportive learning environment and is encouraged to improve it through structured learning opportunities. One of the ways to check if the learning process and learning product are “beautiful work” is through examining one question: Is the work being completed purposeful, complex, authentic, and does it involve craftsmanship²?

An emphasis on growth and learning rather than completion and “the correct answer” allows learners the opportunity to engage with their work more intentionally over a longer period. Not only does this process result in amazing products in many cases, it also reflects a type of learning which more deeply embodies a Christian school’s mission. It is through the creation of purposeful beautiful work that we as learners get a more meaningful glimpse at what it means to live as an image bearer of a creative God.

The purpose of this protocol is to facilitate engagement in the development of a shared vision and language around beautiful work. The creation of a collaborative school culture which pursues beautiful work through regular professional conversations allows for the creation of a common vision and common language. As students progress through thirteen years of education in a learning environment where purposeful beautiful work is the norm, growth mindset becomes first nature. Students and teachers grow in thinking, communication, and personal awareness competencies while also developing practices which will support their faith formation. As we plan learning opportunities which allow students to practice their faith while completing purposeful and beautiful work, we are fulfilling our call as educators in Christian schools.

Why Beautiful Work?

Beautiful work is defined as quality work which invites students into God’s story. It is complex, authentic, and involves craftsmanship, it encourages a deepening understanding of the knowledge of God’s Story and His kingdom. Beautiful work extends beyond the acquisition of knowledge encompassing a lived understanding which, over time, through modeling and practice, develops into applied conviction in a student’s life.

Materials (prepared ahead of time):

- 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 expectations based on the scoring tool.
- The assignment or task description that was provided to students
- The scoring tool (rubric, criteria list)
- Beautiful Work Note Catcher Parts 1 and 2

¹ Adapted for use from a variety of protocols, most noticeably EL Education’s [Quality Work Protocol](#)

² [Attributes of High-Quality Work](#) – EL Education

Characteristics of Beautiful Work:

Purpose	Complexity	Craftsmanship	Authenticity
<p>Purposeful work matters to students and contributes to a larger community. Students “get smart” to “serve God.”</p> <p>Purposeful work invites students to recognize themselves as important actors in God’s story of restoration.</p> <p>Purposeful work is designed to serve real needs of real people.</p> <p>Purposeful work provides a meaningful context for students to practice and master content and skills, preparing them for whatever God might call them to do.</p>	<p>Complex work is rigorous: it aligns with or exceeds grade-level expectations. It invites students to higher-order thinking, challenging them to apply, analyze, evaluate, and create.</p> <p>Complex work often shows connections to deep concepts that unite the disciplines.</p> <p>Complex work prioritizes consideration of multiple perspectives. It often invites students to take stand and defend it with evidence or persuasion.</p>	<p>Well-crafted work is done with care and precision. It demonstrates attention to accuracy, detail, and beauty.</p> <p>Well-crafted work should be beautiful in conception and execution. It can be present in thoughtful ideas, imagination, and design, not just in polished presentation.</p> <p>Well-crafted work shows evidence of perseverance, often through multiple drafts and critique from others.</p>	<p>Authentic work demonstrates the original, creative thinking of students—authentic personal voice and ideas—rather than simply showing that students can follow directions, fill in the blanks, or paraphrase research.</p> <p>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).</p> <p>Authentic work often connects academic standards with real-world issues, and local people and places.</p> <p>Authentic work reflects principles of God’s kingdom (creation, justice, beauty, stewardship, etc.).</p>

Process: (2-2 ½ hours)

Framing: (20 mins)

- Timekeeper/Facilitator introduces the protocol, explains goals, terms, and rules of engagement.
 - Optional: Discuss the OACS Dimensions of Learning as the larger context for the Beautiful Work Protocol
 - Read or summarize the introductory overview and rationale above.
 - Possible norms might include the following:
 - Student work is a reflection of professional work and needs to be honoured.
 - We make kind, helpful, specific observations that are descriptive and not judgmental.

- A growth mindset allows us to support each other with the goal of deeper support for students
- In small groups (3-5), discuss the characteristics of beautiful work (see chart above).
 - What strikes you about these characteristics of beautiful work? What might these characteristics look like in a specific example?
 - What processes do students need to go through to produce beautiful work?
 - What do teachers need to prioritize as they plan for beautiful work?
 - Optional: triads can share some of their conversations with the larger group.

Gallery Walk of Student Work (20-30 minutes)

(In the gallery, display only the student work, not the teacher created handouts and rubrics.)

- Distribute *Note Catcher Part 1*—and briefly model ideal written observations for participants.
- Optional: playing instrumental music may help to frame the gallery time aesthetically.
- Participants enter gallery, and quietly identify observations/evidence related to the Attributes of Beauty in Student Work. Participants should spend only 2-3 minutes on a specific artifact of student work.

Discussion of Characteristics of Beautiful Student Work (20 mins)

- In the same groups, discuss observations and evidence of each attribute—purpose, complexity, craftsmanship, and authenticity—in student work. Refer to specific artifacts to illustrate comments.
- As a whole group, create a shared list of patterns related to each attribute with attention to the following:
 - Which attribute and specific descriptors are strengths at our school?
 - Which attributes and specific descriptors could we focus on to help students to do even better work?

Break (10 minutes) *During the break, add teacher handouts, process documents, and evaluation tools that go with each set of student work*

Gallery Walk of Teacher Documents Provided to Support Beautiful Student Work (20 minutes)

- Distribute *Note Catcher Part 2*—and briefly model ideal written observations for participants.
- Optional: play instrumental music, ensuring that it doesn't distract attention for the participants
- Participants enter the gallery and now focus on how teacher handouts and process documents supported students in accomplishing beautiful work.
 - What did the teacher do explicitly that led to the attributes of beauty to be evident in the student work?
 - Are there patterns in what you're noticing in the teacher handouts?

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

- In a new small group, discuss your observations and evidence for how teacher provided documents that invited and supported beautiful student work.

- As a whole group, share findings and create a list of how teachers provided specific tools in the process of creating beautiful work.

Discussion: Goal Setting and Action Steps (15 minutes)

- Brainstorm possible professional learning goals (keeping “SMART” criteria in mind) that will deepen capacity for beautiful student work. If possible, begin limiting the list to 1-2 goals that will then be clarified and supported by school leadership.

Process Debrief (10 minutes) Facilitator invites participants to share “I likes” and “I wonders”.

Beautiful Work Note Catcher 1: *Product: Characteristics of Beautiful Student Work*

As you review the student and educator work, think about your many interactions with beautiful work both within your profession and personal life. What is it about the idea and work shared that makes it a compelling example of one or more of the characteristics of beautiful work? Use this note catcher to collect ideas, characteristics, and the names of the “givers” for further contact during the conference.

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

What opportunities did students have to practice being image-bearers of Christ?

What patterns did you notice across the work samples? What questions do you have about what you have noticed?

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



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Beautiful Work Note Catcher 2: *Process: Teacher Handouts that Support Beautiful Work*

As you review handouts that the teacher created to support the process of beautiful work, use this note catcher to collect ideas, characteristics, and the specifics of how a teacher supported each attribute. What concrete action and tools can we identify and then build on as a best practice?

Teacher Work that supports Purpose	Teacher Work that supports Complexity	Teacher Work that supports Craftsmanship	Teacher Work that supports Authenticity

What patterns did you notice across the teacher work samples? What questions do you have about what you have noticed?

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

Adapted from a variety of protocols, most noticeably EL Education's Quality Work Protocol

