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ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional Learning

Brain Trust Protocol

A structured design review that strengthens professional learning before it is finalized and delivered

Brain Trusts improve the design. Demo Days improve the delivery.

PROPOSED SAMPLE PROTOCOL

This sample protocol was developed as a proposed professional learning quality-assurance process for Fort Bend ISD. It is intended for planning and demonstration purposes and would require district review, stakeholder input, and formal approval before implementation. It does not represent current FBISD policy or requirements.

Version 1.0 (Draft for Discussion) • Companion document: Demo Day Protocol

How to Use This Document

This protocol is organized into three parts so that the material you read once is separated from the material you use in the room.

Part One — Understanding the Brain Trust

Background and orientation. Read once, before your first Brain Trust.

Section	What You Will Find
1. Purpose and Overview	What a Brain Trust is, what it is not, and the problem it solves
2. Key Terms	Plain-language definitions for anyone new to the process
3. Where the Brain Trust Fits	The full professional learning cycle and the two review points inside it
4. When a Brain Trust Is Needed	Three tiers so the process scales to the stakes of the session
5. Roles and Responsibilities	Who does what, including what Organizational Development does not do
6. Who Participates	How to assemble a review group with the right perspectives
7. Timing and Frequency	Lead times, recurring sessions, and when a second review is warranted

Part Two — Running a Brain Trust

The working tools. Bring this part to the meeting.

Section	Used By	When
8. Presenter Pre-Work Checklist	Presenter	Before submitting materials
9. The Meeting Protocol	Facilitator	During the meeting
10. Feedback Categories and Readiness	Reviewers and facilitator	During the meeting
11. Forms and Templates	All roles	Before, during, and after

Part Three — Reference and Implementation

Supporting material for the people building and sustaining the process.

Section	What You Will Find
12. Worked Example	A complete Brain Trust on a real professional learning topic
13. Frequently Asked Questions	The practical questions campuses will ask first
14. Implementation Guidance	A four-phase rollout that does not overwhelm campuses
15. Measures of Success	Process, quality, and impact measures
Document Notes	Proposed-policy disclaimer and brand source note

PART ONE

Understanding the Brain Trust

Read once, before your first Brain Trust.

1. Purpose and Overview

A Brain Trust is a structured, collaborative review that happens while a professional learning session is still being designed. A small group of colleagues reads the draft, asks hard questions, names what is missing, and helps the presenter strengthen the session before it is finalized.

The premise is simple. The quality of professional learning is decided during design, not during delivery. A session that is unclear about the behavior it is trying to change cannot be rescued by good facilitation. A Brain Trust catches that problem while there is still time to fix it.

The problem this addresses

Campus-led professional learning currently varies widely in quality and coherence. Sessions are often designed by one person working alone, under time pressure, with no structured opportunity for feedback before delivery. The result is uneven quality across campuses, learning that is not clearly tied to an identified need, and sessions that end without a plan for what happens next.

A Brain Trust adds one deliberate pause in the design process. It is not additional paperwork. It is a working meeting that makes the session better.

A Brain Trust helps the presenter

- Clarify the specific need the session is meant to address, and the evidence behind it
- Align the session to district priorities and campus improvement goals
- Strengthen the adult-learning design, including practice, modeling, and application
- Identify perspectives that are missing from the room and from the content
- Anticipate confusion, pushback, and the questions participants will actually ask
- Build in checks for understanding and meaningful opportunities to practice
- Plan implementation support and follow-up coaching before the session, not after
- Improve quality while revision is still realistic

A BRAIN TRUST IS NOT

- An evaluation of the presenter or evidence for an appraisal
- A compliance meeting where a session gets stamped and approved
- An unstructured brainstorm that generates ideas nobody uses
- A place for senior staff to take over and redesign someone else’s work
- A proofreading session focused on slide formatting and typos

The process critiques and improves the learning experience. It does not criticize the person who built it. That distinction is the single most important condition for this protocol to work.

2. Key Terms

Assume that some users have never participated in a Brain Trust. These definitions are intended to be shared with reviewers before their first meeting.

Term	Definition
Brain Trust	A structured review of a professional learning session while it is still in draft form. Focused on design: need, outcomes, alignment, adult-learning structure, and follow-through.
Demo Day	A structured rehearsal of the session after design revisions are complete and before delivery. Focused on facilitation, pacing, clarity, and participant experience. See the companion protocol.
Presenter / Design Lead	The person or team who owns the session. They retain ownership of the work throughout the process.
Brain Trust Facilitator	A trained colleague who runs the meeting, keeps the protocol on time, and protects the norms. Not the presenter and not the presenter's supervisor.
Reviewer	A participant who reads the draft and offers feedback. Selected for the perspective they bring, not their position on an org chart.
Tier	The level of review a session requires, based on its audience, stakes, and reach. See Section 4.
Behavior change	The specific thing an educator or leader will do differently after the session. Stated as an observable action, not as awareness or understanding.
Transfer	Whether the intended practice actually shows up in classrooms, PLCs, or leadership routines after the session ends.
Revision log	A short record of what the presenter changed in response to feedback, and what they intentionally did not change and why.
Readiness status	A descriptive statement of where the design stands. Never framed as pass or fail.

3. Where the Brain Trust Fits

A Brain Trust is one step inside a larger professional learning cycle. It is a quality-assurance and capacity-building step, not the system itself.

Step	What Happens	Who Leads
1. Identify Need	Walkthrough data, teacher feedback, PLC evidence, and student outcomes surface a specific practice gap.	Campus leadership with OD support
2. Design	The presenter drafts the session: outcomes, agenda, activities, materials, follow-up plan.	Presenter
3. Brain Trust	A structured review group strengthens the design before it is finalized.	Brain Trust facilitator
4. Revise	The presenter incorporates feedback and documents changes in a revision log.	Presenter
5. Demo Day	The presenter rehearses delivery with an authentic audience and receives feedback on facilitation.	Demo Day facilitator
6. Deliver	The session is facilitated with participants.	Presenter
7. Support Implementation	Supervisors coach, observe, and follow up on the practice the session introduced.	Principal / supervisor
8. Study Impact	Evidence is reviewed: walkthroughs, PLC artifacts, teacher feedback, student outcomes.	Campus leadership with OD
9. Refine	The learning is revised, repeated, extended, or retired based on what the evidence shows.	Presenter and campus leadership

WHY TWO REVIEW POINTS

Brain Trust and Demo Day answer different questions. A Brain Trust asks whether this is the right learning, designed the right way. A Demo Day asks whether this presenter is ready to deliver it well. A session can be beautifully designed and poorly facilitated, or smoothly facilitated and aimed at the wrong need. Reviewing only one leaves the other unexamined.

4. When a Brain Trust Is Needed

Not every communication needs a full review. A tiered structure keeps the process proportionate to the stakes and prevents it from becoming a scheduling burden.

Tier 1 — Informational Communication

Examples	Requirements
Brief updates and reminders Procedural information Announcements Short compliance communications	Basic planning checklist Peer or supervisor review No full Brain Trust unless the topic is sensitive, complex, high-risk, or districtwide

Tier 2 — Campus or Department Professional Learning

Examples	Requirements
Campus workshops and PD days PLC learning sessions Instructional strategy sessions Campus onboarding Department-level professional learning Sessions led by instructional specialists, coaches, or assistant principals	Professional learning planning template Brain Trust with at least three reviewers Documented revisions (revision log) Targeted Demo Day before delivery

Tier 3 — High-Impact or Districtwide Learning

Examples	Requirements
Districtwide professional learning Major instructional or organizational rollouts New district initiatives Leadership development programs Learning delivered to a large or varied audience Sessions led by newer facilitators High-stakes or sensitive topics	Full planning template Cross-functional Brain Trust spanning departments and school levels Documented revisions (revision log) Full or extended Demo Day Post-session reflection and impact review

WHEN TIER IS UNCLEAR

Default to the higher tier when a session is being delivered by a newer facilitator, touches a sensitive topic, introduces a practice that supervisors will later be expected to coach and monitor, or will be repeated across multiple campuses. Reach for the lower tier when the content is stable, previously reviewed, and the audience is small and familiar.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Presenter / Design Lead	Complete the pre-work checklist and submit materials by the deadline Name the specific feedback they want from the group Decide which recommendations to adopt and document the reasoning Complete the revision log and reflection
Brain Trust Facilitator	Confirm pre-work is complete before the meeting is held Open with norms and keep the protocol on time Protect the presenter from a group redesign Ensure critical feedback is specific and tied to outcomes Close with named revision commitments, not vague encouragement
Reviewers	Read the materials before the meeting, not during it Give feedback on the work, with reasoning attached Surface missing perspectives from their own vantage point Prioritize a small number of high-impact suggestions
Campus Principal	Ensure campus sessions follow the appropriate tier and protect calendar time for the meetings Participate as a presenter for their own sessions, not only as a reviewer Follow through with coaching after the session is delivered
Department Leader	Apply the protocol to department-led learning Contribute reviewers to cross-functional pools Ensure department sessions align with districtwide priorities
Presenter's Supervisor	Support the process without converting it into an evaluation Do not serve as Brain Trust facilitator for their own direct report Use the session's stated behavior change as the anchor for later coaching
Organizational Development	Develop and maintain the protocol, templates, and rubrics Train and calibrate Brain Trust facilitators Build and maintain cross-functional reviewer pools Monitor quality, consistency, and turnaround time Curate exemplars and identify recurring design needs Avoid becoming the approval bottleneck for every campus session

A NOTE ON ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT'S ROLE

OD builds the capacity for campuses to run this process themselves. If every Brain Trust requires an OD staff member in the room, the process will not scale past a handful of campuses and will be experienced as central office approval rather than professional practice.

6. Who Participates

Recommended group size is three to six people, including the facilitator. Fewer than three limits the range of perspective. More than six makes it difficult to give everyone meaningful airtime inside a 45-minute protocol.

Selecting for perspective

Membership should be selected based on the topic and audience, not drawn from a fixed roster. The question to ask is: whose vantage point would catch something the presenter cannot see from where they are standing?

Possible Reviewer Role	What They Are Positioned to Catch
Teacher or teacher leader	Whether the session is realistic given what a teaching day actually looks like
Campus administrator	Whether the follow-up expectations are feasible for a leader to sustain
Instructional coach or specialist	Whether the practice is coachable and whether the modeling is strong enough
Content-area expert	Whether the content is accurate and appropriately deep
Curriculum representative	Whether the session aligns with adopted resources and scope and sequence
Special education representative	Whether strategies work for students with disabilities and for co-teach settings
Multilingual education representative	Whether strategies account for emergent bilingual students and language supports
Technology or digital learning representative	Whether the tools, access, and technical steps will hold up in a live room
Elementary or secondary representative	Whether examples translate across grade bands or only fit one
Member of the intended audience	Whether the session answers a question this audience is actually asking
Organizational Development representative	Whether the adult-learning design supports transfer and implementation

TWO COMPOSITION CAUTIONS

- Avoid a group made up only of supervisors. It converts a design review into an evaluation, and presenters will bring safe drafts instead of real ones.
- Avoid a group made up only of the presenter’s immediate team. Shared assumptions go unexamined, and the blind spots the group shares are exactly the ones the review is meant to catch.

For Tier 3 and districtwide learning, deliberately include representation across departments, school levels, and participant roles.

7. Timing and Frequency

Lead times

Milestone	Tier 2 (Campus / Department)	Tier 3 (Districtwide / High-Impact)
Materials submitted to reviewers	3–5 working days before the meeting	5–7 working days before the meeting
Brain Trust held	10–15 working days before delivery	15–20 working days before delivery
Revision window after Brain Trust	At least 5 working days	At least 7–10 working days
Demo Day held	3–7 working days before delivery	5–10 working days before delivery
Meeting length	45 minutes (standard)	60 minutes (extended)

Complete a first draft of materials before the Brain Trust, but stop short of a polished final product. If the presenter has already finalized slides, printed handouts, and locked the agenda, the group will limit itself to cosmetic suggestions because substantive change has become too expensive.

Recurring sessions

- Require a full Brain Trust the first time a session is designed
- Review annually, or sooner when content, policy, standards, audience, data, or district priorities change
- Allow an abbreviated review (asynchronous written feedback from two reviewers) for minor updates

When a second Brain Trust is warranted

- The design changed substantially in response to feedback
- Significant concerns remained unresolved at the close of the first meeting
- The session is high stakes, sensitive, or being delivered districtwide for the first time
- The audience changed after the original review

A second Brain Trust should be shorter, typically 25 to 30 minutes, and focused only on the areas that prompted it.

Genuinely urgent learning

An expedited path should exist: a 20-minute review with two reviewers, focused on the identified need, the intended behavior change, and the follow-up plan. The expedited path should be tracked. If a campus uses it repeatedly, that is a planning problem worth naming, not a workaround to institutionalize.

PART TWO

Running a Brain Trust

The working tools. Bring this part to the meeting.

8. Presenter Pre-Work Checklist

The presenter completes this checklist and submits it with draft materials. A Brain Trust should be rescheduled rather than held with incomplete pre-work, because the group will otherwise spend the meeting gathering basic information instead of improving the design.

Session basics

- ☐ Session title
- ☐ Presenter name and role
- ☐ Intended audience (role, grade band, campus, approximate number)
- ☐ Session date, length, and format (in person, virtual, hybrid, asynchronous)
- ☐ Tier (1, 2, or 3)

Need and alignment

- ☐ Identified need, stated specifically
- ☐ Evidence supporting the need (walkthrough data, PLC artifacts, teacher feedback, student outcomes)
- ☐ Alignment to district priorities
- ☐ Alignment to campus improvement goals, when applicable

Outcomes and design

- ☐ Intended learning outcomes
- ☐ The specific educator or leader behavior expected to change, stated observably
- ☐ Connection to student or organizational outcomes
- ☐ Session agenda with time allocations
- ☐ Draft slides or materials
- ☐ Participant activities
- ☐ Opportunities to practice the target behavior during the session
- ☐ Checks for understanding

After the session

- ☐ Implementation expectations (what participants will do, by when)
- ☐ Follow-up and coaching plan, including who is responsible
- ☐ Measures of impact

Access and focus

- ☐ Accessibility and inclusion considerations
- ☐ Specific feedback requested from the Brain Trust

THE TWO QUESTIONS THAT CATCH THE MOST PROBLEMS

1. What will someone do differently on Tuesday because of this session?
2. Who will notice, and how?

If a draft cannot answer both, the design is not ready for a room full of adults, no matter how strong the content is.

9. The Meeting Protocol

Norms

The facilitator reads these aloud at the start of every Brain Trust, including with experienced groups.

- Be candid, specific, and constructive. Vague praise wastes the meeting.
- Focus on the work, not the person.
- Ask before assuming. A clarifying question often resolves what looked like a flaw.
- Prioritize the learner experience over presenter comfort and over reviewer preference.
- Connect every piece of feedback to the intended outcomes.
- Surface missing perspectives, including the ones not represented in this room.
- Do not redesign the session for the presenter. Name the problem; leave the solution to them.
- The presenter listens before responding.
- The presenter retains ownership of the work within district expectations.
- Confidential or draft materials remain within the group.

Standard Brain Trust — 45 Minutes

Used for Tier 2 sessions and most second reviews.

Time	Segment	What Happens
0:00–0:03	Welcome and norms	Facilitator states the purpose, reads the norms, and confirms roles. No introductions beyond names and vantage point.
0:03–0:08	Presenter context	Presenter states the need, evidence, intended outcomes, target behavior change, and the specific feedback they want. Uninterrupted.
0:08–0:15	Silent review	Reviewers read the materials and take notes against the feedback categories. Silence is protected.
0:15–0:20	Clarifying questions	Factual questions only. No suggestions yet. Presenter answers briefly.
0:20–0:25	Warm feedback	What is working and why. Specific, tied to outcomes. Not a ritual of politeness.
0:25–0:34	Critical questions and concerns	Reviewers name concerns as questions where possible. Presenter listens and takes notes without defending.
0:34–0:39	Missing perspectives and barriers	Whose experience is not represented? What will get in the way of implementation?
0:39–0:42	Recommendations	The group names the two or three highest-impact changes. Not a list of everything.
0:42–0:44	Presenter reflection	Presenter responds: what landed, what they are still weighing.
0:44–0:45	Revision commitments	Presenter names what they will change and by when. Facilitator records it.

Extended Brain Trust — 60 Minutes

Used for Tier 3, multi-presenter sessions, sensitive topics, and cross-functional reviews. The structure is the same with expanded segments.

Time	Segment	Adjustment from the Standard Protocol
0:00–0:05	Welcome and norms	Add a brief round of reviewer vantage points so the group knows what each person is watching for.
0:05–0:12	Presenter context	Include alignment across departments and any known constraints.
0:12–0:22	Silent review	Longer window for larger material sets.
0:22–0:28	Clarifying questions	Unchanged in purpose.
0:28–0:34	Warm feedback	Unchanged in purpose.
0:34–0:46	Critical questions and concerns	Facilitator may organize this by feedback category to ensure coverage.
0:46–0:52	Missing perspectives and barriers	Explicit attention to cross-department implications and unintended consequences.
0:52–0:56	Recommendations	Group prioritizes and, if needed, distinguishes must-change from consider-changing.
0:56–0:58	Presenter reflection	Unchanged in purpose.
0:58–1:00	Revision commitments and next steps	Confirm whether a second Brain Trust is needed and set the Demo Day date.

FACILITATOR MOVES THAT KEEP THE PROTOCOL HONEST

- When feedback drifts to preference: “Help me connect that to the outcome the presenter named.”
- When the group starts redesigning: “Let’s name the problem and leave the solution with the presenter.”
- When the presenter defends during critical feedback: “Hold that — you’ll have the floor at reflection.”
- When warm feedback is empty: “What specifically is working, and what is it doing for the learner?”
- When silence follows a hard question: let it sit. The pause is usually productive.

10. Feedback Categories and Readiness

Reviewers use these categories to organize their notes during silent review. Not every category applies to every session. The facilitator may narrow the list based on the feedback the presenter requested.

Category	What Reviewers Are Looking For
Alignment to identified need	Does the session address the need the evidence actually shows?
Clarity of purpose and outcomes	Are outcomes stated as observable behavior rather than awareness?
Relevance to the audience	Would this audience recognize this as their problem?
Adult-learning design	Is the session built for practicing adults rather than delivered as a briefing?
Active participation	How much of the time are participants thinking and doing rather than listening?
Opportunities to practice	Do participants try the target behavior during the session?
Checks for understanding	Will the presenter know in the moment whether the learning is landing?
Cultural responsiveness	Do examples, materials, and framing reflect the students and staff FBISD serves?
Accessibility	Materials, captions, contrast, physical access, pacing for varied processing needs
Pacing and cognitive load	Is the session trying to do too much? What could be cut without loss?
Clarity of directions	Could a participant follow the task without asking a neighbor?
Transfer to practice	Is there a clear bridge from the room to the classroom or leadership routine?
Leadership follow-up	What are supervisors expected to do afterward, and do they know it?
Implementation support	Coaching, resources, and time available after the session
Evidence and measurement	How will anyone know whether this worked?
Feasibility	Can this be delivered in the time, space, and conditions available?
Alignment across departments	Does this contradict or duplicate another initiative?
Potential unintended consequences	What might this create that nobody intended?

Readiness Status

The group closes with a shared descriptive statement about where the design stands. This is a description of the work, not a judgment of the presenter, and it is never framed as pass or fail.

Status	Meaning	Next Step
Ready	The design is sound. Any remaining changes are small and at the presenter's discretion.	Proceed to Demo Day
Minor Revisions Needed	The design is strong; two or three specific changes will strengthen it.	Revise, log changes, proceed to Demo Day
Significant Revisions Needed	A core element (need, outcomes, practice structure, or follow-up) requires rework.	Revise and hold a short second review
Additional Review Recommended	A perspective is missing that this group cannot supply.	Add the needed reviewer and reconvene briefly

ESCALATION AND ADDITIONAL REVIEW

Additional review is recommended when a session addresses a legally sensitive or politically contested topic, introduces a practice that supervisors will be expected to monitor formally, contradicts guidance from another department, or receives a Significant Revisions Needed status twice.

11. Forms and Templates

All templates can be printed or completed digitally. Campuses may adapt formatting but should retain the required fields.

Form A — Brain Trust Request

Field	Response
Session title	
Presenter and role	
Campus or department	
Tier (1 / 2 / 3)	
Intended audience and size	
Delivery date, length, format	
Identified need	
Evidence behind the need	
Target behavior change	
Requested Brain Trust date	
Specific feedback requested	
Reviewer perspectives requested	

Form B — Reviewer Selection Check

Completed by the facilitator before the meeting is confirmed.

- ☐ At least one member of the intended audience or someone who works closely with them
- ☐ At least one perspective outside the presenter's immediate team
- ☐ Special education perspective, if the practice affects instruction
- ☐ Multilingual education perspective, if the practice affects instruction
- ☐ Technology support, if the session depends on tools or access
- ☐ Cross-department or cross-level representation, for Tier 3
- ☐ The group is not composed solely of supervisors
- ☐ Group size is three to six, including the facilitator

Form C — Revision Log

Feedback Received	Change Made	Not Changed — Reasoning	Date

The third column matters as much as the second. A presenter who declines a recommendation with clear reasoning is exercising ownership, which is exactly what this protocol is designed to protect.

Form D — Presenter Reflection

Completed by the presenter after the meeting and submitted with the revision log.

What feedback most changed my thinking about this session?

What am I still uncertain about?

What will participants do differently, and how will I know?

What do I want the Demo Day group to watch for?

Form E — Brain Trust Completion Record

Maintained by the campus professional learning lead for Tier 2 and by Organizational Development for Tier 3.

Field	Entry
Date held	
Facilitator	
Reviewers and perspectives represented	
Readiness status	
Revision commitments	
Second Brain Trust needed? (Y/N)	
Demo Day scheduled for	
Record maintained by	

PART THREE

Reference and Implementation

For the people building and sustaining the process.

12. Worked Example

SESSION UNDER REVIEW

Providing Timely, Actionable Feedback Through Learning-Focused Walkthroughs

Tier 3 • Districtwide • Audience: principals and assistant principals • Length: 3 hours

Initial need as submitted

Teacher survey data indicated that a majority of teachers reported receiving feedback from their supervisor fewer than three times per year, and that the feedback they did receive was primarily evaluative rather than instructional. Walkthrough logs showed inconsistent frequency across campuses and limited documented follow-up.

Session outcomes as originally drafted

- Participants will understand the purpose of learning-focused walkthroughs
- Participants will be aware of the difference between evaluative and instructional feedback
- Participants will learn a protocol for delivering feedback

Concerns the presenter brought to the group

- Whether three hours was enough time
- Whether the video examples would feel realistic to secondary administrators

Feedback Received

Category	Feedback
Clarity of outcomes	All three outcomes describe internal states rather than observable behavior. Nobody can watch someone understand or be aware. What will a principal do in a classroom next Tuesday?
Opportunities to practice	The draft allocated 20 minutes of a 3-hour session to practice, at the very end. Participants would hear about feedback for two and a half hours and try it once.
Relevance to the audience	The framing implied leaders are not giving feedback because they do not know how. Several reviewers noted the more common barrier is time and competing demands, and that a session ignoring this would lose the room in the first fifteen minutes.
Transfer to practice	No structure existed for what happens between this session and the next one. The design ended when the session ended.
Leadership follow-up	The session asked principals to change practice but did not name what their own supervisors would do to support or notice that change.
Missing perspectives	No teacher voice anywhere in the design. Reviewers noted that a session about feedback to teachers, built without teachers, would be conspicuous.
Accessibility	Video examples lacked captions. Print materials used low-contrast color coding.
Feasibility	The proposed 6-walkthrough-per-week commitment was not realistic for administrators managing a full campus load.

Revisions Made

Feedback Received	Change Made	Not Changed — Reasoning
Outcomes describe internal states	Rewrote outcomes as observable actions: conduct two learning-focused walkthroughs per week and deliver written feedback within 24 hours that names one specific instructional move and one question.	
Insufficient practice time	Restructured to three practice cycles totaling 95 minutes: script a feedback note from a video, deliver it verbally to a partner, revise after peer response.	
Framing misreads the barrier	Opened the session with time and competing demands named directly, and built a 20-minute segment on protecting walkthrough time in a leader's weekly calendar.	
No structure between sessions	Added a 6-week implementation cycle: peer partners exchange two feedback notes, a mid-cycle check-in, and a follow-up session where participants bring their own artifacts.	
Supervisor follow-up unnamed	Added an expectation that area superintendents review feedback artifacts during regular principal check-ins, and built a one-page guide for those conversations.	
No teacher voice	Added a 10-minute teacher panel video and used real (de-identified) teacher survey comments as the opening artifact.	
Accessibility gaps	Captioned all video. Replaced color-only coding with color plus label. Added large-print handouts.	
Walkthrough frequency unrealistic	Reduced to two per week.	Reviewers suggested one per week. Presenter kept two after checking with three principals who confirmed two was sustainable if scheduled. Will revisit after the pilot.

READINESS STATUS AND NEXT STEP

Minor Revisions Needed at the close of the meeting, moving to Ready after the revision log was submitted. Demo Day scheduled for eight working days before delivery, with a request that reviewers watch the opening 20 minutes and the first practice cycle.

13. Frequently Asked Questions

Question	Response
Does every session require a Brain Trust?	No. Tier 1 informational communication requires a planning checklist and peer review only. Tier 2 and Tier 3 sessions require a Brain Trust.
How often should a campus hold Brain Trusts?	Most campuses find a standing monthly block sufficient, with additional office-hour slots during high-volume periods such as August and January.
What if there is not enough time?	Use the expedited path: 20 minutes, two reviewers, focused on need, behavior change, and follow-up. Track its use. Urgent timelines should not become the standard way to avoid the process.
Is this an evaluation?	No. Brain Trust records are design documents, not appraisal evidence. A presenter's participation should not appear in an evaluation as either credit or criticism.
Who selects reviewers?	The presenter proposes reviewers using Form B; the facilitator confirms the group covers the perspectives the session requires.
What if the presenter disagrees with the feedback?	The presenter decides. They document the reasoning in the revision log. Ownership stays with the person who will stand up and deliver the session.
Do leaders have to do this for their own sessions?	Yes, and this is the part that determines whether the protocol takes hold. A principal who requires Brain Trusts of teacher leaders but exempts their own faculty meeting has communicated that the process is compliance rather than practice.
Who maintains completion records?	The campus professional learning lead for Tier 2, and Organizational Development for Tier 3.
What about external partners?	External partners delivering learning to FBISD staff participate in the Brain Trust process at the tier matching their audience and reach.
Can a session go straight to Demo Day?	Only for recurring sessions with a current Brain Trust on file and no substantive changes.

14. Implementation Guidance

A protocol introduced districtwide in a single semester becomes paperwork. A protocol built with volunteers, refined against real use, and expanded deliberately becomes practice. The phasing below assumes the second path.

Phase 1 — Design and Pilot

- Develop forms, protocols, rubrics, and facilitator training materials
- Pilot with Organizational Development's own sessions first, so OD is the first group to be reviewed rather than the first group to review
- Recruit a small number of volunteer campuses across levels
- Test whether the stated time requirements and tier definitions hold in practice
- Gather presenter and reviewer feedback and revise the protocol before expanding

Phase 2 — Build Capacity

- Train campus and district Brain Trust facilitators, with calibration practice
- Create cross-functional reviewer pools organized by perspective
- Develop exemplars and short training videos drawn from the pilot
- Offer office hours and coaching for first-time presenters and facilitators
- Integrate the process into presenter and leadership development

Phase 3 — Expand

- Implement Tier 2 and Tier 3 expectations districtwide
- Embed the process into campus professional learning plans and calendars
- Establish shared submission forms, scheduling deadlines, and reviewer pools
- Track use, turnaround time, and common support needs

Phase 4 — Refine and Sustain

- Study whether session quality, presenter confidence, implementation, and teacher perceptions improve
- Revise the protocol annually based on evidence, not preference
- Recognize effective presenters and reviewers
- Build internal facilitator pipelines so the capacity does not sit with a few people
- Watch for the process becoming a paperwork exercise and cut anything that has stopped improving the work

SCHEDULING STRUCTURES CAMPUSES SHOULD ESTABLISH

- A standing monthly Brain Trust calendar block
- Optional weekly or biweekly office-hour slots during high-volume periods
- A trained reviewer pool with named perspectives
- A shared submission form with a published deadline
- An expedited protocol reserved for genuinely urgent learning needs

15. Measures of Success

Process measures

- Percentage of applicable sessions completing Brain Trust review
- Percentage completing Demo Day
- Reviewer diversity across departments, levels, and roles
- Turnaround time from submission to meeting to revision
- Presenter satisfaction with the support received
- Completion of documented revisions
- Frequency of expedited-path use

Quality measures

- Improvement in session-design rubric scores across review cycles
- Improvement in presenter readiness at Demo Day
- Participant perceptions of relevance and clarity
- Participant opportunities to practice during sessions
- Consistency of design quality across campuses and departments

Transfer and impact measures

- Participant understanding at the close of the session
- Implementation of intended practices in classrooms and leadership routines
- Quality and frequency of coaching follow-up by supervisors
- Walkthrough or observation evidence of the target practice
- Teacher feedback on the usefulness of professional learning and supervisor support
- Changes in student or organizational outcomes connected to the learning priority

ONE CAUTION ON MEASUREMENT

Satisfaction surveys measure whether people enjoyed a session. They do not measure whether practice changed. A professional learning system that improves satisfaction scores while walkthrough evidence stays flat has improved the experience without improving the outcome.

The Larger System

A polished presentation is not the goal.

The goal is professional learning that changes educator and leader practice and contributes to improved student and organizational outcomes.

Brain Trusts and Demo Days are quality-assurance steps inside that larger system. They sit alongside identifying needs, aligning learning to priorities, participant practice, job-embedded coaching, supervisor feedback, PLC follow-up, walkthrough evidence, teacher voice, student and organizational evidence, and ongoing reflection and revision.

Document Notes

Proposed-policy disclaimer

This sample protocol was developed as a proposed professional learning quality-assurance process for Fort Bend ISD. It is intended for planning and demonstration purposes and would require district review, stakeholder input, and formal approval before implementation.

Nothing in this document represents current Fort Bend ISD policy, requirements, or approved practice.

Brand source note

Brand guidance was drawn from Fort Bend ISD's public Communications pages, specifically the Staff Branding Guidelines and Brand Management pages at fortbendisd.com, which identify the district mission and the Inspire • Equip • Imagine tagline and direct staff to download official logo files rather than copy them from existing documents.

The district's full Brand Standards PDF was not publicly retrievable at the time this document was prepared. Colors used here approximate the district's public navy and blue palette and should be replaced with the official Pantone, CMYK, and hex values before any district use. Typography uses a widely available sans-serif in place of the district's specified typeface.

No logo has been recreated, recolored, or approximated. Logo placement is marked with a labeled placeholder. Per FBISD guidance, an approved logo file should be inserted directly from the district source rather than copied from another document. Questions about brand application would be directed to the Coordinator of Graphic Design and Branding.

Companion document

This protocol is designed to be used with the FBISD Professional Learning Demo Day Protocol. The Brain Trust improves the design of a session. The Demo Day improves its delivery. Using only one leaves half the quality question unexamined.