

## Question and Discussion Protocols

### Discussion Protocol: “The Final Word”

- Put students in groups (4-6 works well)
- Give students the same # of questions to discuss as there are group members (4 members in group, 4 questions)
- Questions need to be “thick” or good thinking questions for discussion or debate (pre-planned and written by the teacher OR the students)
- The “oldest” person reads Question #1 aloud
- Each person in the group (moving around clockwise) gives a 30-60 second response to the question or to other responses (minimum of 30 seconds)
- After all have responded, the person who read the question gets 60 seconds to have the “Final Word”. He/She can restate their own thoughts or summarize what the group said.
- Repeat with the other questions until all have had the chance to read a question and to have the “Final Word”

### Discussion Protocol: “The First Word”

- Put students in groups (4-6 works well)
- Give students the same # of questions to discuss as there are group members (4 members in group, 4 questions)
- Questions need to be “thick” or good thinking questions for discussion or debate (pre-planned and written by the teacher or the students)
- The “youngest” person reads Question #1 aloud and has 60 seconds to respond with their own thoughts and opinions
- Each person in the group (moving around clockwise) gives a 30-60 second response to the question or to other responses (minimum of 30 seconds)
- Repeat with the other questions until all have had the chance to read a question and to have the “First Word”

### Discussion Protocol: “Thumbs Up, Thumbs Down”

- Put students in groups of 6-8 or this can be done with the whole class
- Have preplanned, written “thinking” questions for discussion or debate
- The teacher or a student reads the first question and gives a 30-60 second response
- The others in the group hold a “thumbs up” if they agree or a “thumbs down” if they disagree OR have different ideas/opinions
- Each person in the group tells WHY they agree and adds support or tells WHY they disagree
- Person who read the question summarizes what the group members or class said
- Repeat until all questions have been discussed/debated

## Discussion Protocol: “The Chalk Talk”

- Put students in groups of 4-10. Give each group a piece of butcher paper or tag board and colored chalk or markers
- Present a topic or question for the groups (this needs to be a question that can be discussed and there are lots of ideas to brainstorm: For example, “What accommodations can be made in the general education classroom for students with learning disabilities?”)
- Students sit in chairs in a half circle around the piece of butcher paper
- 1-2 students at a time come up and write an idea with chalk or marker on the paper
- Continue for 5 minutes (more or less as needed) until all have written at least two or three ideas and the groups seem out of ideas to write
- Have the groups share what they brainstormed from their papers
- Mark or highlight similar or like ideas
- Summarize or group ideas together and discuss

## Discussion Protocol: “Inside-Outside Circle”

- Have the class form two circles (an inside circle and an outside circle with equal numbers and have them standing and facing each other)
- Have preplanned, written “thinking” questions (5-8 for inside circle people, 5-8 for outside circle people)
- The inside circle people should ask their outside circle partner the first question. The outside people answer the question with a 30 second response
- The inside circle people should then “coach” or “praise” their outside circle partner
- The outside circle people move 1 place to their right and meet up with a new inside circle person
- The inside circle people read question #2.
- Repeat until all inside circle questions have been asked and answered
- Now repeat with the outside circle people asking their questions

## Discussion Protocol: “Inside-Outside Circle”

- Set up groups of 4-8 members
- Place the statements or questions (on strips or index cards) in the center
- Place enough pennies in the center for each person to have two (4 people = 8 pennies, etc.)
- The “oldest” person in the group picks up a statement (if numbered, start with #1) and reads it aloud.
- He/she then takes a penny and responds to the statement (must tell “why” or rationale for answer”)
- Taking turns, each person in the group takes a penny and shares their ideas/response and their rationale until all have shared once.
- Continue taking turns sharing until all pennies have been used. Some people may only use one penny and others 2-3 pennies, as long as all share at least once.
- Return all pennies to the center.
- Go to the next person, he/she picks a statement or question and repeat process.

## Discussion Protocol: “A Hatful of Quotes”

- The “oldest” group member draws a slip of paper with a quote out of the hat.
- He/She reads the quote aloud and responds to it for 30-90 seconds (share an opinion, agree with the quote, disagree with the quote, make a connection, ask a question, share an experience...)
- He/She asks at least 2 other group members to respond to the quote AND to his comments for 30-60 seconds each (agree, disagree, make a connection, ask a question, share an experience...)
- He/She states a summary of the comments/responses: “It sounds like we think....” or “To summarize what we’ve said....”
- Continue in a clock-wise manner until all group members have read at least one quote and all quotes have been responded to
- Share out the summary statement for each quote with the large group (you may want to jot it down)

## Discussion Protocol: The Circle of Voices

- Pose a question, read a passage, etc. that focuses the discussion.
- Ask students to form groups of 4-5.
- Allow students a few minutes of quiet time to organize their thoughts.
- Each student in the group then has 3 minutes of uninterrupted time to respond (this can be done sequentially, or in whatever order, as long as everyone speaks for 3 minutes).
- After everyone in the circle has had their 3 minutes, the discussion is opened up with the following ground rule: Students are allowed to talk only about other people's ideas, not expand on their own ideas (unless asked a direct question).

## Discussion Protocol: Thinking Colors (aka. Six Thinking Hats)

- Participants are organized into groups of five (with the sixth color typically assigned to the facilitator). Participants are each assigned a card of colored paper, and are asked to play the role represented by the color during the discussion:
- Neutrality (White): Asks Questions. Given the available information, what are the facts?
- Feeling (Red): Responsible for instinctive gut reactions or statements of emotional feeling (but not any justification).
- Negative judgment (Black): Seeks mismatches in the discussion by applying logic and identifying flaws or barriers.
- Positive Judgment (Yellow): Seeks harmony in the discussion by using logic to identify benefits.
- Creative thinking (Green): Keeps the conversation going through statements of provocation and investigation.
- The Big Picture (Blue): Often used by the discussion facilitator, who sets the objectives, keeps the group on task, and sets new objectives.

## Discussion Protocol: Simple Jigsaw

- In groups of five, assign each participant a brief unique reading (for in-class or out-of-class).
- The group is given a general topic to discussion, and each participant takes a turn discussing it from the viewpoint of their unique reading.

## Discussion Protocol: Double Jigsaw

- If you have a class of 20 participants, divide them into four groups of five participants each.
- Each participant is assigned a brief reading (for in-class or out-of-class) upon which they will be the expert.
- Each group is assigned a general concept category.
- When the class discusses, the groups discuss the concept via the knowledge of each expert.
- When they are done, the instructor then sends one person in each group to a new group, thus forming five new groups made up of “experts” on a different concept.
- Again, the class discusses in their groups. This is a good way to get the class to examine an issue from many perspectives.
- The double jigsaw works best with 3 groups of 3, 4 groups of 4, 5 groups of 5, etc.
- A variant of this is “Three Stay, One Stray,” in which one member of each team rotates to the next team after the first round of conversation in their group.
- The straying member shares the original group’s thoughts on the issue with his/her new group.