Danielle Degele Sanchez and Deborah Steece-Doran, with Judy Jablon

Planning for Positive Guidance

Powerful Interactions Make a Difference

Guiding children's behavior is something done throughout the day, not just when a child acts in a way that is unsafe or unacceptable. You guide behavior by establishing predictable routines, setting clear rules with children, and modeling kindness and respect. You are also attentive and aware of what is going on. Together, these actions help children feel noticed, confident, and secure. Children experience your attention and guidance as a caring embrace holding everything together. They know you're on their team.

(Dombro, Jablon, & Stetson 2011, 58)

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE AUTHORS

This excerpt shapes our thinking as we plan for positive guidance in our classroom at a preschool in Pahoa, Hawaii. Using the three steps of a Powerful Interaction—**Be Present, Connect,** and **Extend Learning**—helps us be more successful at building strong, caring relationships with children and families. Powerful Interactions are interactions in which a teacher intentionally connects with a child to extend his or her learning. We also actively plan for guidance, which keeps a positive climate in our classroom. This boosts how we feel at the end of the day and enhances each child's success as a learner.

Here are some strategies we use to plan for positive guidance, keeping a Powerful Interactions approach in mind.

Teamwork makes positive guidance more effective and Powerful Interactions possible!

It took time for us to become an effective teaching team. We had never worked together and had to become acquainted with each other's teaching style. However, we wanted to be a seamless team because children tune in to their significant adults. We strive to coordinate our messages to children and make them clear and consistent. By staying present (step one of a Powerful Interaction) with each other and connected with our eyes, words, laughter, and other cues, we extend children's learning during group times and transitions. Our teamwork has positive effects on children's behavior and the

classroom climate. It also gives us more energy to guide children in positive ways and enjoy each day. Three tips help us ensure seamless teamwork:

1. Be clear about roles. When we plan together, we clarify who will do what and when. Our goal is to be predictable about our roles during routines so that the children can anticipate what's going to happen and who to look to for directions. This reduces challenging behaviors significantly. For example, at arrival time, Deborah greets children in our lending library and talks with them about books. At the same time, Danielle greets children and families at the classroom door and then moves around the room to support them as they do morning activities.

2. Make two voices one, literally and figuratively. This helps us deliver clear and cohesive messages to children. Too often children check with one adult and if they don't like the answer, ask the other one. When children hear our voices from different areas of the room, they are more relaxed. We're playful and sometimes silly about how we make our two voices one. We might echo each other's voices melodically, complete each other's sentences when giving directions, or finish each other's rhymes. Danielle says, *"There was one little bat in one big cave,"* while looking over at Deborah who immediately chimes in, *"He was so alone and not so brave."* The children enjoy the predictability of listening for our voices bouncing back and forth. Sometimes they look at the other adult to see what she'll say.

3. Use frequent check-ins. We continually check in with each other throughout the day about what children are doing and how they are responding to activities and other children. We give each other signals about how things are going. The more we stay present, the easier it is to connect with each other. The result is a calmer classroom and fewer episodes of challenging behaviors. These tips have worked for us:

- Be on opposite sides of the room during indoor time to keep things running smoothly.

- Scan the room frequently, looking at what children are doing and at one another. Quickly read each other's cues, such as a thumbs-up, smile, nod, or lift of an eyebrow.

- Update each other after an interaction with a child or family member. A quick summary or saying "Remind me to tell you about _____ later today" ensures consistency with each other, the children, and their families.

- Tune in to those children who need a little more attention. This can prevent challenging situations by catching them before they start.

Use daily arrival time to set the tone for positive guidance.
At the beginning of the year, teachers get to know children and their families through home visits and an orientation period (when a few children come for a few hours each day). During the orientation we introduce our arrival time routines. Our goal is for parents to have positive interactions with their children and for us to have Powerful Interactions with children and family members. Our routine and roles allow us to be present and connect with each child and her family for at least a few minutes. We plan activities that address positive guidance as well as language and literacy and math learning. When the day begins well, most children stay engaged and focused. Our predictable routine has three parts:

1. Offer specific activities in learning centers. We display simple written directions for activities parents and children can do together. While completing the activities is not required, parents and children often do them because they are engaging and they spark ideas to use at home.

2. Write an interactive morning message. The daily message is for families to read to their child as the child points to each word. Part of the message specifically relates to positive guidance. In Hawaiian culture and in our program, we emphasize the values of *aloha* (kindness), *malama* (caring), and *kuleana* (responsibility). To engage families and children in discussion, one question invites reflection about one of these three values. For example, the message might ask, What's one way that you will show *malama* today? A family member helps the child answer the question, records his answer on a Post-it note, and adds it to a message chart that is on display for the week. Additional messages might ask, "How many letters are in your name?" or "Who brought you to school today?" We discuss the daily message when we gather for group time later in the morning.

3. Create a library. To encourage Powerful Interactions at home, we set up a lending library. Books are arranged in categories (that change periodically) so children can return their book in the morning and make a new selection. Children enjoy talking with Deborah about the books they return and hearing her recommendations for new selections.

Ensure smooth transitions.

As a team, we sustain a warm and friendly classroom climate by planning for and using teamwork to ensure smooth transitions. Over time we have established a repertoire of successful strategies in three main categories:

1. Humor. A light tone gives us energy and invites positive responses from children. Whether it is simply laughing aloud, making up a silly rhyme to give a direction, or singing funny words to a familiar song, we keep our transition times light and engaging. Sometimes we're laughing at each other and our own silliness, which makes the children laugh, too.

2. Puppets. When we gather on the rug between activities, we each wear a finger puppet. The puppets talk about what will happen next, what they observed about cleanup, or the behav-

iors expected in the next activity. The children know these puppets well and seem completely invested in listening to them. *Daisy: Hey Fuzzy, I used my walking feet when I came over to large group. Fuzzy: Me too. We know our* kuleana *(responsibilities), don't we!*

3. Music. Songs and melodies add to the positive climate. When interacting with one child at a time, we use natural, authentic voices. However, when we want to engage the whole group, we find that singing directions captures their attention more than our normal voices. These strategies work for us:

- Give verbal directions in a melodic voice.

- Use call-and-response or rhymes or something that allows voices to alternate. When we sing songs that have an echo pattern—like "Down by the Bay"—the children know to expect our voices to alternate.

- Give directions as lyrics to a familiar song and alternate voices. For example, as it gets close to cleanup, Deborah starts singing to Danielle to the tune of "If You're Happy and You Know It."

Deborah: *Kumu* (teacher) *Danielle, are you ready to ring the chimes?* (2x)

Danielle chimes in,

Yes I am and I'm walking over now and I am ready to ring the chimes.

Deborah then begins the next verse as she guides the children in cleaning up, and Danielle moves toward the rug to help settle children.

Remember what to do when you hear the chimes . . . (2x) We clean up our activity, and walk over to our name, and sit right down and show Kumu Danielle that you're ready.

We have shared the ways we plan for positive guidance and use Powerful Interactions in our classroom to create a positive climate that prevents many challenging behaviors. The result is an enjoyable, effective, and productive learning environment. We hope you find the suggestions effective and that they spark more ideas for helping children and families.

REFERENCE

Dombro, A.L., J. Jablon, & C. Stetson. 2011. *Powerful Interactions: How to Connect with Children to Extend Their Learning.* Washington, DC: NAEYC.

Does Your Block Center Promote 21st Century Skills?
A Checklist for Teachers

Karen Wise Lindeman and Elizabeth McKendry Anderson

Creativity

- ☐ There is a designated area for block play that is open every day.
- ☐ Blocks are stored on open shelves with easy access.
- ☐ A variety of blocks are available.
- ☐ There are items from nature, recycled items, and art materials.
- ☐ Children can express their ideas in different ways.

Communication

- ☐ Toy vehicles, people, animals, and other props are available.
- ☐ Children can freely move from one center to another.
- ☐ Paper, pens, and pencils are available for blueprint designs.
- ☐ Children have opportunities to use their block creations for dramatic play and storytelling.
- ☐ Children can use digital tools to document, share, and discuss work.

Critical thinking

- ☐ I allow children's block creations to "fail" and encourage children to solve problems creatively.
- ☐ I encourage children to be resilient when facing mistakes and frustrations.
- ☐ Children have time to share solutions and suggestions.
- ☐ I provide ways for children to save and document their building.
- ☐ Children can return to their structures often to improve and redesign them.

Collaboration

- ☐ There are enough blocks for groups of children to build with, but not so many that children can each have enough to build alone.
- ☐ I use the community as a resource for expanding block building and design.
- ☐ I identify tools that help problem solve and encourage children to do the same.
- ☐ Children plan, discuss, and even argue about block use, design, or purpose.
- ☐ Final block constructions are displayed or documented for sharing with others.
- ☐ I modify blocks and props for individual children's needs.
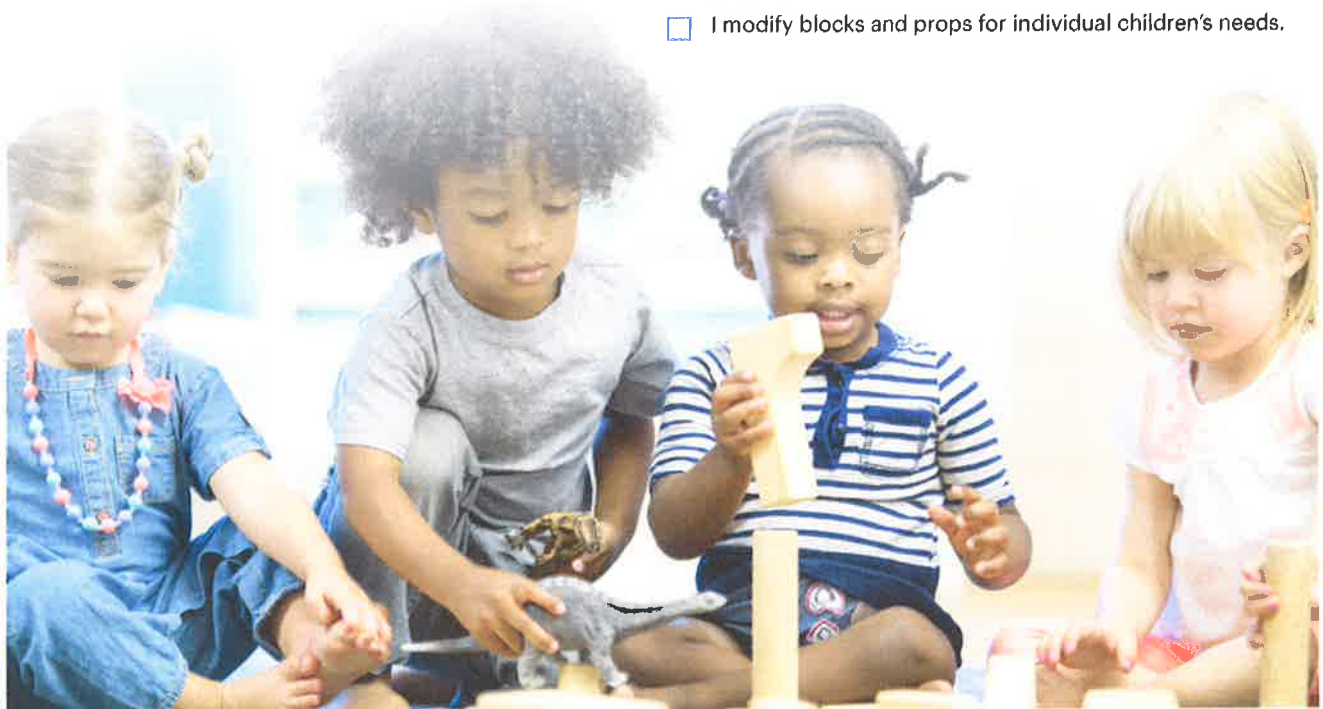
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FIRST PERSON

7 Ways to Bring Out the Best in Special-Needs Students

By Thomas Armstrong

Recently, a former music teacher told me about a 1st grade student with Asperger's syndrome who, on their first encounter, announced in no uncertain terms: "I hate music!" Over the next two years, the student used abusive language, had meltdowns, and was physically aggressive toward his peers. Finally, the teacher scheduled some individual time with him and discovered that he believed he was terrible at music and couldn't sing. She let him play some of the instruments in her room and then showed him the music composition software program GarageBand on her Mac. It turned out that he was fascinated with computers and quickly figured out how to compose a song.

The next week, the teacher shared his song with the class and from that time on things began to change. He still struggled with his behavior, but over the next two years, she explained, "he played instruments in our concerts, joined the choir, had several solos, was in the musical. ... [He] gave his heart and soul to music and continued to compose and mix music at home. He told his mother that whenever he was having a bad day, he would 'go into his music' and there he would find peace and calm." This story illustrates how important it is to find out as much as possible about the strengths and abilities of students with special needs.

As a former special education teacher, I can't count the number of times my students would come up to me and say, "Mr. A., when can I get out of this retarded class?" I began to understand that kids with special needs have two strikes against them. First, they have the disorder itself, and all the challenges it poses. But second, they have to spend a good deal of their time in school dealing with things they're *bad* at. What we need to do is change this situation around so that right from the start, students with special needs are told about all the things they're *good* at, and are engaged in activities that are based on those strengths.

Here are seven ways that you can activate the strengths of your students with special needs, whether you run a full-inclusion classroom, a self-contained special ed classroom, or anything in between:

● **Discover your students' strengths.** Before they even come into your classroom, find out about your students' strengths and abilities by talking with previous teachers and looking at cumulative files (focusing on the highest grades and test scores and any positive comments from teachers). Then, fill out a strength-based inventory for each student—and have parents fill one out as well. I have a 165-item strengths inventory in my book *Neurodiversity in the Classroom*, and there are others out there, too. Also, ask your special-needs students what they're interested in, what they feel like they're good at, and what they'd most like to study. If time is an issue, focus on the students who are the squeaky wheels and have the greatest needs.

● **Provide positive role models with disabilities.** Students with special needs need to learn about individuals with disabilities who have become successful in life. This way, they can hopefully come to the conclusion that "If they can do it, so can I!" Some examples of such individuals include: Noble Prize winning geneticist Carol Greider (learning disabilities), film director Steven Spielberg (ADHD), and animal scientist Temple Grandin (autistic spectrum disorder). Create a curriculum unit entitled, "People with Disabilities Who Changed the World," and make sure that typically developing students also take part in the lessons.

● **Develop strength-based learning strategies.** Once you know your students' special strengths, design strategies that utilize those abilities. If a student is great at drawing but has trouble reading, let her illustrate her vocabulary words. If a student shows gifts in knitting but doesn't understand place value, have him design a fabric art piece by knitting rows of 10. There are thousands of ideas and projects that can be created by combining a student's strengths with a learning deficit.

● **Use assistive technologies and Universal Design for Learning tools.** Learn about apps that capitalize on the gifts of your students with special needs. Provide a student who is a great orator but can't write very well with a speech-to-text program such as Dragon Naturally Speaking, so that he can speak into the computer and produce writing that way. For a student with autism who loves to use an iPad but has difficulty communicating, teach her how to use an alternative augmentative communication app like Proloquo2Go, so that with the touch of a few buttons she can have a synthesized voice speak for her.

● **Maximize the Power of your students' social networks.** So much of learning involves being in relationships with others, and many students with special needs have particular difficulty establishing positive social connections. Create a graphic representation of a student's peer network, identifying both strong and weak relationships. Then, pair the student with classmates that he has the most positive relationships with using peer-teaching, cross-age tutoring, Best Buddies, or other social-learning approaches.

● **Help students envision positive future careers.** Most students with special needs have either no images of themselves as working adults in the future, or have primarily negative ones. Encourage these students by helping them make links between their strengths and the requirements of specific jobs or careers. So, for example, a student with ADHD who loves adrenaline-producing experiences might thrive in a high-stimulation job like firefighting. A student with learning disabilities who has a penchant for art might do very well working as a graphic artist.

● **Create positive modifications in the learning environment.** Think about how you can create changes in your classroom that dovetail with the particular strengths of your students with special needs.

Provide a student with ADHD who learns best by moving, for example, with a stability ball that he can jiggle on while doing his classwork. For a student with Down Syndrome who loves to humorously mimic others, build a simple puppet theater where he can act out math word problems in front of the class and get positive feedback.

A movement is emerging in education called "neurodiversity," which suggests that we view our students with special needs in terms of "diversity" rather than "disability." By embracing this more positive perspective, and coupling it with differentiation strategies that build on students' strengths, we can help ensure that our students with special needs achieve success both in the classroom and out in the real world.

Thomas Armstrong was a special education teacher in Canada and the United States for several years. He currently writes and speaks to educators around the world, and is the author of 15 books, including his most recent, Neurodiversity in the Classroom: Strength-Based Strategies to Help Students with Special Needs Achieve Success in School and Life, upon which this article is based.

WEB ONLY

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Why Preschool Shouldn't Be Like School

New research shows that teaching kids more and more, at ever-younger ages, may backfire.
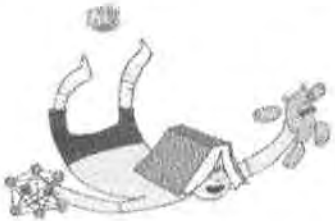
By Alison Gopnik

Illustration by Alex Eben Meyer

Ours is an age of pedagogy. Anxious parents instruct their children more and more, at younger and younger ages, until they're reading books to babies in the womb. They pressure teachers to make kindergartens and nurseries more like schools. So does the law—the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act explicitly urged more direct instruction in federally funded preschools.

There are skeptics, of course, including some parents, many preschool teachers, and even a few policy-makers. Shouldn't very young children be allowed to explore, inquire, play, and discover, they ask? Perhaps direct instruction can help children learn specific facts and skills, but what about curiosity and creativity—abilities that are even more important for learning in the long run? Two forthcoming studies in the journal *Cognition*—one from a lab at MIT and one from my lab at UC-Berkeley—suggest that the doubters are on to something. While learning from a teacher may help children get to a specific answer more quickly, it also makes them less likely to discover new information about a problem and to create a new and unexpected solution.

What do we already know about how teaching affects learning? Not as much as we would like, unfortunately, because it is a very difficult thing to study. You might try to compare different kinds of schools. But the children and the teachers at a Marin County preschool that encourages exploration will be very different from the children and teachers in a direct instruction program in South Side Chicago. And almost any new program with enthusiastic teachers will have good effects, at least to begin with, regardless of content. So comparisons are difficult. Besides, how do you measure learning, anyway? Almost by definition, directed teaching will make children do better on standardized tests, which the government uses to evaluate school performance. Curiosity and creativity are harder to measure.

Developmental scientists like me explore the basic science of learning by designing controlled experiments. We might start by saying: Suppose we gave a group of 4-year-olds exactly the same problems and only varied on whether we taught them directly or encouraged them to figure it out for themselves? Would they learn different things and develop different solutions? The two new studies in *Cognition* are the first to systematically show that they would.

In the first study, MIT professor Laura Schulz, her graduate student Elizabeth Bonawitz, and their colleagues looked at how 4-year-olds learned about a new toy with four tubes. Each tube could do something interesting: If you pulled on one tube it squeaked, if you looked inside another tube you found a hidden mirror, and so on. For one group of children, the experimenter said: "I just found this toy!" As she brought out the toy, she pulled the first tube, as if by accident, and it squeaked. She acted surprised ("Huh! Did you see that? Let me try to do that!") and pulled the tube again to make it squeak a second time. With the other children, the experimenter acted more like a teacher. She said, "I'm going to show you how my toy works. Watch this!" and deliberately made the tube squeak. Then she left both groups of children alone to play with the toy.

Preschool lessons: New research shows that teaching kids more and more, at ever-younger ages, may backfire.

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All of the children pulled the first tube to make it squeak. The question was whether they would also learn about the other things the toy could do. The children from the first group played with the toy longer and discovered more of its "hidden" features than those in the second group. In other words, direct instruction made the children less curious and less likely to discover new information.

Does direct teaching also make children less likely to draw new conclusions—or, put another way, does it make them less creative? To answer this question, Daphna Buchsbaum, Tom Griffiths, Patrick Shafto, and I gave another group of 4-year-old children a new toy.* This time, though, we demonstrated sequences of three actions on the toy, some of which caused the toy to play music, some of which did not. For example, Daphna might start by squishing the toy, then pressing a pad on its top, then pulling a ring on its side, at which point the toy would play music. Then she might try a different series of three actions, and it would play music again. Not every sequence she demonstrated worked, however: Only the ones that ended with the same two actions made the music play. After showing the children five successful sequences interspersed with four unsuccessful ones, she gave them the toy and told them to "make it go."

Daphna ran through the same nine sequences with all the children, but with one group, she acted as if she were clueless about the toy. ("Wow, look at this toy. I wonder how it works? Let's try this," she said.) With the other group, she acted like a teacher. ("Here's how my toy works.") When she acted clueless, many of the children figured out the most intelligent way of getting the toy to play music (performing just the two key actions, something Daphna had not demonstrated). But when Daphna acted like a teacher, the children imitated her exactly, rather than discovering the more intelligent and more novel two-action solution.

As so often happens in science, two studies from different labs, using different techniques, have simultaneously produced strikingly similar results. They provide scientific support for the intuitions many teachers have had all along: Direct instruction really can limit young children's learning. Teaching is a very effective way to get children to learn something specific—this tube squeaks, say, or a squish then a press then a pull causes the music to play. But it also makes children less likely to discover unexpected information and to draw unexpected conclusions.

Why might children behave this way? Adults often assume that most learning is the result of teaching and that exploratory, spontaneous learning is unusual. But actually, spontaneous learning is more fundamental. It's this kind of learning, in fact, that allows kids to learn from teachers in the first place. Patrick Shafto, a machine-learning specialist at the University of Louisville and a co-author of both these studies; Noah Goodman at Stanford; and their colleagues have explored how we could design **computers that learn about the world** as effectively as young children do. It's this work that inspired these experiments.

These experts in machine learning argue that learning from teachers first requires you to learn *about* teachers. For example, if you know how teachers work, you tend to assume that they are trying to be informative. When the teacher in the tube-toy experiment doesn't go looking for hidden features inside the tubes, the learner unconsciously thinks: "She's a teacher. If there were something interesting in there, she would have showed it to me." These assumptions lead children to narrow in, and to consider just the specific information a teacher provides. Without a teacher present, children look for a much wider range of information and consider a greater range of options.

Knowing what to expect from a teacher is a really good thing, of course: It lets you get the right answers more quickly than you would otherwise. Indeed, these studies show that 4-year-olds understand how teaching works and can learn from teachers. But there is an intrinsic trade-off between that kind of learning and the more wide-ranging learning that is so natural for young children. Knowing this, it's more important than ever to give children's remarkable, spontaneous learning abilities free rein. That means a rich, stable, and safe world, with affectionate and supportive grown-ups, and lots of opportunities for exploration and play. Not school for babies.

Correction, March 17, 2011: This sentence originally omitted the names of two of the study's researchers. (Return to the corrected sentence.)
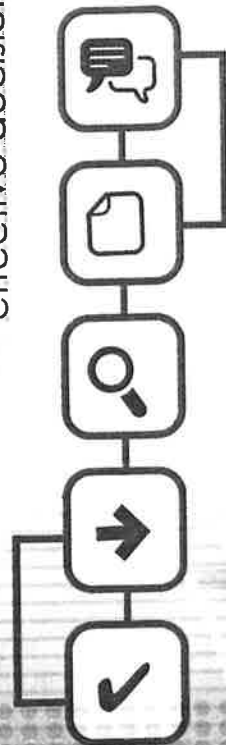
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PROTOCOLS
for Professional Learning

Lois Brown Easton

3

The Last Word Protocol

Source: This protocol, also known as Save the Last Word for Me, was developed by Patricia Averette.

Overview: This protocol has multiple uses. It is great for processing ideas, bringing closure to a discussion, examining student work and professional practice, and addressing problems or issues. As Averette notes, "The process is designed to [allow people to] build on each other's thinking, and not to enter into a dialogue. Participants may decide to have an open dialogue about the text at the end of the 30 minutes" ("Save the Last Word for ME," n.d., ¶ 2).

Number of Participants: The ideal group size is 3–4 participants, so if the whole group is larger, it should be broken into subgroups. If possible, the number of people in each group should be the same (either 3 or 4) so that no group finishes before others. A single group does not need a facilitator, only a timekeeper to move the process along; if there are multiple subgroups, a room facilitator is needed for the same purpose.

Time Required: One or more groups of three can complete this protocol in 30 minutes; larger groups will need more time.

Steps (suggested times based on a 30-minute session):

Step 1: Identifying Significant Ideas (3 minutes). Each participant silently identifies what he or she considers to be the most significant idea addressed in whatever is being examined (e.g., student work, a discussion, a problem or issue, etc.).

Step 2: Sharing, Round 1 (4 minutes)

- One member of the group shares his or her significant idea but does not elaborate on it.
- The other participants each have one minute to respond. They can agree or disagree, offer examples, raise a question, contribute details, or otherwise share their thoughts.
- The first participant then has two or three minutes to respond to and build on what the others in the group said, thereby getting "the last word."

Step 3: Sharing, Round 2 (4 minutes). Step 2 is repeated, but with a different participant initiating and ending the dialogue.

Step 4: Sharing, Round 3 (4 minutes). Step 2 is repeated again, with a different participant initiating and ending the dialogue.

Step 5 (Optional): Open Discussion (as long as desired). If participants wish, they can have an open discussion about what came up during steps 2–4. (If there are subgroups, they can convene as one at this stage.)

Step 6: Debriefing (5 minutes). Participants discuss how well the protocol worked.

Critical Element: Listening well is critical for this protocol. Participants should be encouraged to listen to the very end of the initiating person's statement before beginning to frame a response. Participants who are afraid they'll forget key ideas should be encouraged to jot down reminders. Participants should also be encouraged to pause before they respond and perhaps restate what they heard before proceeding.

Tips for the Facilitator: Except for timekeeping for multiple subgroups, this protocol is relatively self-facilitating. A facilitator may want to have the subgroups develop some norms for self-facilitation, such as adhering to time frames, avoiding side conversations, and resisting the impulse to break into discussion during step 2.

2

Inside/Outside Protocol (Fishbowl)

Source: This protocol works much the way a fishbowl does. It also resembles the California Protocol, developed for the California Center for School Restructuring (CCSR) in 1996 by Steve Jubb and Joel Shawn.

Overview: This protocol involves groups that share the same problem or need to address the same issue. The groups take turns playing an analysis role and a reflector role, deepening the discussion each time they switch. Participants sit, fishbowl-style, in two concentric circles, both facing inward. There is no single presenter because everyone knows the problem or issue; there may, however, be a facilitator for each group.

The purpose of the protocol is not to solve the problem or resolve the issue, but rather to simply illuminate it so that people have greater understanding and can move toward solutions or resolutions.

Other Uses: This protocol can be used to deepen discussion on student work or professional practice, as long as all participants understand and have a stake in what is being presented. This protocol can also be modified so that groups can present plans, gain feedback from each other, and reflect on feedback before switching places and repeating.

Number of Participants: The number of participants can vary from 8 (two groups of 4) to about 30 (two groups of 15). If there are more than 30 participants, the amount of airtime for each is reduced.

Time Required: 30–60 minutes

Steps (suggested times based on a 60-minute session):

Step 1: Introducing the Protocol (first time only; 5 minutes)

- The facilitator welcomes the entire group and explains the steps of the protocol.
- The facilitator reminds the participants that the purpose of the protocol is not to solve the problem or resolve the issue, but rather to dig deeply into the issue or problem for better understanding that can lead to solution or resolution.

Step 2: Framing the Issue or Problem (10 minutes)

- The facilitator states the problem or issue as succinctly as possible (or asks a participant to do so).
- The facilitator restates the problem or issue as a key question for the group (or asks a participant to do so).
- Though the group may not entirely agree on the problem or issue or on the key question, the protocol needs to proceed, as it is likely that the problem or issue or key question will be clarified. If absolutely necessary, the facilitator may invite clarification from participants before starting the dialogue, but the group should trust that the protocol itself will help them achieve clarification and be willing to proceed.
- The facilitator should have the group divide into two relatively equal groups, A and B. These groups should be constructed randomly (e.g., through numbering off) unless group similarity or diversity is desired, whereupon the whole group should decide the makeup of the two groups (e.g., "Let's have all the elective teachers in group A and all the core teachers in group B to discuss a new schedule."). Group A forms the inner circle, and group B forms the outer circle.

Step 3: Group A Discussion (15 minutes)

- Group A discusses the problem or issue and the key question while Group B listens and takes notes.
- At the end of the specified time, Groups A and B switch seats with each other.

Step 4: Group B Discussion (15 minutes)

- Group B discusses the problem or issue and the key question while Group A listens and takes notes.
- Members of Group B may want to build on what Group A has said, bring up their own topics, or do both.
- At the end of the specified time, Groups A and B return to their original places.

Step 5: Group A Reflection (10 minutes)

- Group A reflects aloud on what Group B said in step 4, and may also reflect on their own discussion in step 3.
- If someone from Group B wishes to enter the inner circle to contribute or ask a question, he or she may but must return to the outer circle after having done so.

- It is also possible for someone from Group B to "tap out" a fellow Group B member from the inner circle if he or she has stayed there too long or if someone else from Group B wants to follow up with a question or comment.
- At the end of the specified time, Groups A and B switch places.

Step 6: Group B Reflection (10 minutes)

- Group B reflects aloud on what Group A has said so far, and may also reflect on their own discussion in step 4.
- Members of Group A may comment on the reflection in the same way that members of Group B may in step 5.

Step 7: Reaching Consensus (10 minutes)

- Group B (inside circle) turns to face Group A (outside circle). Participants talk to each other, trying to determine the points on which the two groups have reached some kind of consensus.
- The facilitator should begin round-robin reporting, during which each pair contributes a point of consensus. If possible, these points should be recorded on chart paper, perhaps by the facilitator or a volunteer from either group.
- Each time a point is repeated, a checkmark should be made next to that item on the chart paper, to show that more than one person felt it was a point of consensus.

Step 8: Open Discussion (10 minutes). The facilitator should begin the open discussion with any of these questions:

- Have we properly defined the issue or problem?
- On what points have we reached consensus?
- What is left for us to do regarding this issue or problem?

Step 9: Debriefing (5 minutes). The facilitator should prompt the participants to debrief the process: What went well? What could have gone better? What did we learn? What do we know? What do we still want to know?

Critical Elements: One critical element for this protocol is the grouping of participants. They should be grouped so that they feel they can both listen to each other and have a chance to say something. Sometimes this works best if grouping is entirely random; at other times, grouping should be purposeful, related to the issue or problem. The group as a whole needs to make the determination, prompted perhaps by the facilitator.