



Center for Leadership & Educational Equity

Learning From Speakers Protocol

Adapted from The Power of Protocols by Joseph McDonald and Nancy Mohr.

Purpose

The purpose of the protocol is to structure the experience of the invited speaker format, so that learning is maximized for the speaker as well as for the learners. The principles of the protocol are the same as for many others: to keep a focus, to foster listening, and to provide an opportunity to construct knowledge both individually and collectively.

Details

The speaker must understand this new format in advance. The time frame and other details can be negotiated, but it must be clear to the speaker that there is a different format to be followed, one that must be respected.

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

Just as the speaker must know the format and its rules, so must the listeners. In this step, the facilitator spells these out as part of introducing the speaker.

2. Speech (30-50 minutes)

The speaker delivers the speech as audience members jot down questions or thoughts. The speaker may pause on occasion for 30 seconds and invite the audience to jot down some notes or questions. The speaker is given a warning with 5 minutes left by the facilitator, who is sitting nearby.

3. Organizing (5 minutes)

When the speaker has finished, the facilitator invites audience members to take their questions and gather in groups of three to five, based on proximity. The facilitator instructs the groups to examine all of their questions quickly and prioritize them in order to come up with their top two or three. These are burning questions that groups want to make sure the speaker has a chance to consider and answer.

4. Top Questions (5 minutes)

Representatives of each group then call out their top questions, one at a time, or write their top question on an index card and hand it in to the facilitator. All of the questions are either called out or handed in before the speaker deals with any of them.

5. Answering (15-20 minutes)

The speaker answers and/or explores the questions, avoiding repetition and aiming for connections. Questions not dealt with by the speaker should be explored in some other way by the end of the session.

6. Sharing (optional)

If time permits, the audience is then invited to share with the speaker ways in which their thinking has been deepened.