



The Final Word

Adapted by Jennifer Fischer-Mueller and Gene Thompson-Grove.

Purpose

The purpose of this protocol is to give each person in the group an opportunity to have their ideas, understandings, and perspective enhanced by hearing from others. With this protocol, the group can explore an article, clarify their thinking, and have their assumptions and beliefs questioned in order to gain a deeper understanding of the issue.

Time

For each round, allow about 8 minutes (circles of 5 participants: presenter 3 minutes, response 1 minute each for 4 people, final word for presenter 1 minute). Total time is about 40 minutes for a group of 5 (32 minutes for a group of 4, 48 minutes for a group of 6).

Roles

Facilitator/time-keeper (who also participates); participants

Facilitation

- Have participants identify one most significant idea from the text (underlined or highlighted ahead of time)
- Stick to the time limits
- Avoid dialogue
- Have equal sized circles so all small groups finish at approximately the same time

Process

1. Sit in a circle and identify a facilitator/time-keeper.
2. Each person needs to have one most significant idea from the text underlined or highlighted in the article. It is often helpful to identify a back-up quote as well.
3. The first person begins by reading what struck him or her the most from the article. Have this person refer to where the quote is in the text - one thought or quote only. Then, in less than 3 minutes, this person describes why that quote struck her/him. For example, why does she/he agree/disagree with the quote? What questions does she/he have about that quote? What issues does it raise for her/him? What does she/he now wonder about in relation to that quote?
4. Continuing around the circle, each person briefly responds to that quote and what the presenter said, in less than a minute. The purpose of the response is:
 - To expand on the presenter's thinking about the quote and the issues raised for him or her by the quote
 - To provide a different look at the quote
 - To clarify the presenter's thinking about the quote
 - To question the presenter's assumptions about the quote and the issues raised (although at this time there is no response from the presenter)

5. After going around the circle with each person having responded for less than one minute, the person that began has the “final word.” In no more than one minute the presenter responds to what has been said. Now what is she/he thinking? What is her/his reaction to what she/he has heard?
6. The next person in the circle then begins by sharing what struck him or her most from the text. Proceed around the circle, responding to this next presenter’s quote in the same way as the first presenter’s. This process continues until each person has had a round with his or her quote.
7. End by debriefing the process in your small group.