

Fishbowl Protocol

Purpose

The fishbowl is a peer-learning strategy in which some participants are in an outer circle and one or more are in the center. In all fishbowl activities both those in the inner and those in the outer circles have roles to fulfill. Those in the center, model a particular practice or strategy. The outer circle acts as observers and may assess the interaction of the center group. Fishbowls can be used to assess comprehension, to assess group work, to encourage constructive peer assessment, to discuss issues in the classroom, or to model specific techniques such as literature circles or Socratic Seminars.

Procedure

1. Arrange chairs in the classroom in two concentric circles. The inner circle may be only a small group or even partners.
2. Explain the activity to the students and ensure that they understand the roles they will play.
3. You may either inform those that will be on the inside ahead of time, so they can be prepared or just tell them as the activity begins. This way everyone will come better prepared.
4. The group in the inner circle interacts using a discussion protocol.
5. Those in the outer circle are silent, participants can be given a list of specific things to observe and note.

Debrief

- *What did you observe during the discussion?*
- *What is one thing you heard that you agree with?*
- *What is one thing you heard that you disagree with?*
- *What questions would you want to ask the group?*
- *What would you want the group to consider?*
- *How did or might power play a role in what you observed?*
- *How did being in the fishbowl affect the manner in which you participated?*
- *How did being out of the fishbowl affect the manner in which you observed*

Variation

Each person in the outside circle can have one opportunity during the fishbowl to freeze or stop the inside participants. This person can then ask a question or share an insight.