



# EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING

## 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, but given a list of specific actions to observe and note.
6. One idea is to have each student in the outer circle observing one student in the inner circle (you may have to double, triple, or quadruple up.) For example, tallying how many times the student participates or asks a question.
7. Another way is to give each student in the outer circle a list of aspects of group interaction they should observe and comment on. For example, whether the group members use names to address each other, take turns, or let everyone's voice be heard.
8. Make sure all students have turns being in the inside and the outside circles at some point, though they don't all have to be in both every time you do a fishbowl activity.

### **Debrief**

Have inner circle members share how it felt to be inside. Outer circle members should respectfully share observations and insights. Discuss how the fishbowl could improve all group interactions and discussions.

### **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.