

## Learning from Speakers Protocol

### *Purpose*

The purpose of the Learning from Speakers Protocol is to structure the experience of the invited speaker format, so that learning is maximized for the speaker as well as 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 well 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. The number of participants can range from 15 up to 100.

### *Steps*

1. Introduction. Just as the speaker must know the format and its rules, so must the listeners. In this step, therefore, the facilitator spells these out as part of introducing the speaker. (5 minutes)
2. Speech. The speaker delivers the speech as audience members jot down questions or thought that occur from them along the way. The facilitator may suggest that they imagine the possibility for dialogue at each of these points, even though the dialogue itself must be delayed. The speaker may pause on occasion for 30 seconds and invite the audience to jot down some notes and questions. (30-50 minutes)
3. Five-minute warning. The speaker is given a warning by the facilitator, sitting nearby, 5 minutes before the agreed-upon time frame is due to end.
4. Huddling. When the speaker is finished, the facilitator invites the audience to gather its questions and “huddle” in groups of three to five. These groups should be formed based on proximity, though with encouragement to include at least three members per group. The facilitator instructs the groups to examine all their questions quickly in order to come up with its top question, the one it really wants to make sure the speaker has a chance to consider and answer. (5 minutes)
5. Top questions. The top questions can be called out by representatives of each group. But all of the questions must be called out before the speaker is allowed to answer any one. (5 minutes)
6. Answering. The speaker then answers questions, avoiding repetition and aiming for connections among the questions and the answers. (15-20 minutes)

McDonald, J.P., Mohr, N., Dichter, A., McDonald, E.C. (2003). *The power of protocols; A educator's guide to better practice* New York: Teachers college press, 38-40

7. Sharing. If there is time, audience members are then invited to share with the speaker ways in which their thinking has been pushed, and to ask other questions. If there is only a minute or two, this thinking can be shared in pairs in the audience.

### ***Facilitation Tips***

It is not impolite to structure a speaker's time and to ask that he or she follow a slightly unconventional format. In our experience, many speakers appreciate the opportunity to have more successful interactions with their audience.