**UDL Stepping Stone: Peer Communication**

*Note: This Stone is designed to improve the amount and quality of speaking and listening of students in a small group setting. To bring out the value of student talk, we center our own talk on “The Danger of a Single Story,” a video by writer Chimamanda Adichie. This video links to issues of equity and diversity.*

Option: This Stepping Stone can be used in **two** separate professional learning sessions to deepen discussions and thinking about equity and diversity. To do this, use both suggested videos.

For extended learning, the following resources can be used:

\**Productive Group Work* by Frey, Fisher, and Everlove

\**Cultures of Thinking* by Ron Ritchhart

Introduction: “We know that we want to create the best conditions for learning during each class. Today’s session centers on the necessity of including opportunities for students to communicate with each other. We’ll watch a video and use a communication (talking) tool for developing and sharing ideas.”

**Materials needed:**

* **Copy of Microlab protocol (attached)**
* **Video “The Danger of a Single Story” (19 min.)** [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg)
* **Option: “Every Kid Needs a Champion” by Rita Pearson (8 min.)** [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFnMTHhKdkw**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFnMTHhKdkw)
* **Copies of Universal Design for Learning Graphic**

**Sequence:**

1. Introduce the session. (above)
2. Option: Ask participants why people should value our talk.

Ask participants why we should value our students’ talk.

1. Tell participants that they will watch the video “The Danger of a Single Story.” Tell participants that after the video, they will use a communication protocol to develop and share ideas.
2. Watch video.
3. Pass out the directions for the Microlab protocol. (attached)

<http://www.ronritchhart.com/COT_Resources_files/microlabs.pdf>

1. Facilitator will make sure that the procedure to the Microlab is followed precisely. Each step is important to understanding its value.
2. After the Microlab is complete, ask participants: What was valuable about this process?

Optional questions:

• What did you hear that was significant? What key ideas or insights were shared?

• How did this go for you? What worked well, and what was difficult? Why?

• How might your conversations have been different had we not used this protocol?

• What are the advantages/disadvantages of using this activity? When would you use this protocol?

• What would you want to keep in mind as someone facilitating this activity?

Answers might include…

“It allowed me to think about what I really wanted to say.”

“I wasn’t afraid of being interrupted.”

“It was nice to listen and not thinking about how I would respond.”

“I got to hear everyone’s thoughts and compare them to mine.”

“The quiet time to ‘digest’ was weird, but it gave me the chance to let other’s thoughts

soak in.”

1. Ask participants to talk for a few minutes about how this can be used in the classroom. Then elicit suggestions.

Facilitator suggested comments:

* The Microlab isn’t the natural way we have discussions. We are adding an extra “layer” to conversation. But by doing this, we let everyone share equally.
* The Microlab engages all students in learning.
* The Microlab allows everyone to have a voice without fear of being interrupted.
* The Microlab lets students hear other ideas.
* The Microlab is easily managed in the classroom.
* The Microlab protocol aligns with Universal Design, specifically the Engagement and Multiple Means of Expression principles.

**Microlabs**

**Purpose:** To address a specific question or sequence of questions in a structured format with small groups, using active listening skills.

**Time allotted**: About 8 minutes per question — this works best with a series of no more than three questions.

**Group format**: Form triads — either with the people you’re sitting near — or find others in the group you don’t know well. Number off — 1, 2, 3.

**Directions:**

1. After exploring the material (the video), participants are given 3 minutes to write down things that stood out for them: Insights, highlights, comments, thoughts, questions, etc.
2. Triads are formed.
3. Facilitator explains that “one person in the group will speak for 2 minutes interrupted. After the first person shares for the two minutes, we will ‘digest’ the speaker’s comments silently for 30 seconds. Let’s respect this time. After the 30 seconds, the second speaker will share and we will repeat the process. After we ‘digest’ the third speaker’s comments, we will take a few minutes to talk openly with our group.”
4. Start process. Use a timer found here… <https://www.google.com/search?q=timer&oq=timer&aqs=chrome..69i57j69i60l4.675j0j4&sourceid=chrome&es_sm=93&ie=UTF-8>
5. After the process, let triads talk to each other openly for approximately 5 minutes (or longer if needed.)
6. Option: When finished, ask participants what was valuable about the process.

Reflection questions following the activity:

• What did you hear that was significant? What key ideas or insights were shared?

• How did this go for you? What worked well, and what was difficult? Why?

• How might your conversations have been different had we not used this protocol?

• What are the advantages/disadvantages of using this activity? When would you use this protocol?

• What would you want to keep in mind as someone facilitating this activity?

