Three Levels of Text Protocol

Adapted by the Southern Maine Partnership from Camilla Greene’s Rule of 3 Protocol, 11/20/03.

Purpose
To deepen understanding of a text and explore implications for participants’ work.

Facilitation
Stick to the time limits. Each round takes up to 5 minutes per person in a group. Emphasize the need to watch air time during the brief “group response” segment. Do 1 – 3 rounds. Can be used as a prelude to a Text-based Discussion or by itself.

Roles
Facilitator/timekeeper (who also participates); participants.

Protocol
1. Sit in a circle and identify a facilitator/timekeeper.

2. If participants have not done so ahead of time, have them read the text and identify passages that they feel may have important implications for their work.

3. A Round consists of:
   - One person using up to 3 minutes to:
     LEVEL 1: Read aloud the passage she/he has selected
     LEVEL 2: Say what she/he thinks about the passage (interpretation, connection to past experiences, etc.)
     LEVEL 3: Say what she/he sees as the implications for his/her work.
   - The group responding (for a TOTAL of up to 2 minutes) to what has been said.

4. After all rounds have been completed, debrief the process.
Text Rendering Experience

Developed in the field by educators.

Purpose
To collaboratively construct meaning, clarify, and expand our thinking about a text or document.

Roles
A facilitator to guide the process.
A scribe to track the phrases and words that are shared.

Introduction
Take a few moments to review the document and mark the sentence, the phrase, and the word(s) that you think are particularly important for our work.

Steps
1. **First Round**: Each person shares a **sentence** from the document that s/he thinks/feels is particularly significant.

2. **Second Round**: Each person shares a **phrase** that s/he thinks/feels is particularly significant. The scribe records each phrase.

3. **Third Round**: Each person shares the **word** that s/he thinks/feels is particularly significant. The scribe records each word.

4. **Discuss**: The group discusses what they heard and what it says about the document.
   - What new insights have you gained about the text by looking at it in this way?
   - What do you think this text is essentially about?

5. **Debrief**: The group debriefs the text rendering process.
Four “A”s Text Protocol

Adapted from Judith Gray, Seattle, WA 2005.

Purpose
To explore a text deeply in light of one’s own values and intentions.

Roles
Facilitator/timekeeper (who also participates); participants.

Time
Five minutes total for each participant, plus ten minutes for the final two steps.

1. The group reads the text silently, highlighting it and writing notes in the margin on post-it notes in
answer to the following four questions (you can also add your own “A”s).
   - What do you Agree with in the text?
   - What Assumptions does the author of the text hold?
   - What do you want to Argue with in the text?
   - What parts of the text do you want to Aspire to (or Act upon)?

2. In a round, have each person identify one assumption in the text, citing the text (with page numbers, if
appropriate) as evidence.

3. Either continue in rounds or facilitate a conversation in which the group talks about the text in light of
each of the remaining “A”s, taking them one at a time – what do people want to argue with, agree with,
and aspire to (or act upon) in the text? Try to move seamlessly from one “A” to the next, giving each “A”
enough time for full exploration.

4. End the session with an open discussion framed around a question such as: What does this mean for
our work with students?

5. Debrief the text experience.
The Constructivist Listening Dyad

Adapted from the National Coalition for Equity in Education by Victor Cary.

**Purpose**
To create a safe space to become better at listening and talking in depth. Constructivist listening dyads help us as we work through feelings, thoughts, and beliefs that sometimes produce anger or passivity, undermine confidence, or cause interference in relationships with students or colleagues.

**Time**
2 to 30 minutes

Facilitation tips: Talk about the purpose of a constructivist listening dyad.

The simplest format for constructivist listening is a dyad, which is the exchange of constructivist listening between two people….

I agree to listen to and think about you for a fixed period of time in exchange for you doing the same for me. I keep in my mind that my listening is for your benefit so I do not ask questions for my information.

Start with two minutes — at first it may seem difficult, but participants, over the course of time, may work their way up to 5-8 minutes and more each. Remind participants that the purpose of a constructivist listening dyad is that the listening is for the benefit of the talker. This is an essential point to access the usefulness and power of a constructivist listening dyad.

**Guidelines for Constructivist Listening:**
1. Each person is given equal time to talk. (Everyone deserves to be listened to.)
2. The listener does not interpret, paraphrase, analyze, give advice or break in with a personal story. (People can solve their own problems.)
3. Confidentiality is maintained. (People need to know they can be completely authentic.)
4. The talker does not criticize or complain about a listener(s) or about mutual colleagues during their time to talk. (A person cannot listen well when she/he is feeling attacked or defensive.)

**The Activity:**
Each person will have two minutes or more to respond to a prompt. It is very useful to scaffold the prompts. Ex: When is the last time you remembered being fully listened too? How did it feel? Growing up, what was your experience as a learner? What felt supportive? What interfered with your learning? How did race, class or gender impact your experience as a learner in school?

**Reflection questions following the activity:**
- What came up for you using this structure? What came up for you reflecting on the prompt?
- What worked for you? What was difficult for you?
- What purpose do you think it might serve?
- When could it be used?
The Collaborative Ghost Walk is a structured process for the collaborative walk through of a school when classes are not in session.

1. School host shares a brief presentation that gives visitors a focus for their feedback, i.e. “Tone of Decency” or “Personalization,” etc. (5-10 minutes)

2. Visitors brainstorm evidence that they would expect to see in a school or classroom where __________ was a focus. Expectations are charted. (10 minutes)

3. Visitors walk through the building silently, making note of evidence they observe that supports or doesn’t support the host’s focus. (15-20 minutes)

4. Visitors return to meeting room and share their observations, which are charted next to their expectations. The group discusses their findings, looking for any patterns or surprises. The host listens and takes notes. (10 minutes)

5. Host responds to anything that challenged, pushed, and/or added to his/her thinking. The host does not respond to everything heard. There is no need to explain the school or classroom to the visitors. (5 minutes)

6. Debrief of the process.
   - How might you use this process with your colleagues?
   - What adjustments would you make to the process?
   - Other comments?
   (5 minutes)
Microlabs

Developed by Julian Weissglass for the National Coalition for Equity in Education based at the University of California, Santa Barbara; adapted in the field by educators.

Purpose
Microlabs addresses a specific sequence of questions in a structured format with small groups, using active listening skills.

Time
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 within your triad: 1, 2, 3.

Facilitation Tips
“I’ll direct what we will talk about. Each person will have one minute (or, sometimes, 2 minutes, depending on the group and the question) to talk about a question when it’s their turn. While the person is speaking, the other two in the group simply listen. When the time is up, the next person speaks, and so on. I’ll tell you when to switch.” Emphasize that talk has to stop when you call time, and conversely, that if the person is done speaking before time is up, the three people should sit in silence, using the time to reflect.

The quality of the questions matter in this exercise. The questions should be ones that are important to the group, and that spiral in depth from first to last.

It’s nice to have a chime to ring to indicate that time is up.

Process
After instructing the group, read the first question aloud (twice). Give everyone time to think or write in preparation. Then, tell people when to begin, and then tell them when each one/two minute segment is up. On the first question, begin with person #1, then #2, then #3. Then read the next question aloud. On the second question, begin with #2, then #3, then #1. On the third question, begin with #3, then #1, then #2.

Debrief 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?
Focus Point Protocol

Adapted for observing students in ATLAS Communities.

This protocol is designed to help deepen the observed’s understanding of his or her practice. The observer(s)’ role is to note those events that relate to a particular aspect of the observed’s practice and to then serve as an active listener as the observed attempts to make sense of those events.

Pre-Observation Conference
In addition to outlining what will be occurring during the observation, the person to be observed asks the observer(s) to focus on a particular aspect of his practice. Example: “Would you note what kinds of questions my students ask and look at how I respond to them?”

Observation
The observer(s) focus on that aspect of practice raised during the pre-observation conference. Field notes include both descriptions of “focus” events and related questions that the observer may wish to raise during the debriefing. The observer(s) may also wish to note events and questions outside the focus of the observation, but these may or may not be discussed during the debriefing.

Debriefing

Debriefing Option 1
The observer(s) begin by restating the focus and asking the observed to share her thoughts. Example: “What did you notice about how you responded to student questions?” As the observed talks, the observer(s) 1) supply specific events that either corroborate or contrast with the observed’s statements, 2) summarize what the observed is saying, 3) ask clarifying questions, 4) provide warm feedback about what went well, and 5) raise questions related to the focus that were noted during the observation. Be careful not to raise questions of the observed teacher that are thinly veiled criticisms.

Note: Events and questions not directly related to the focus of the observation should only be raised after asking for permission from the observed, and some practitioners think even asking for permission is inappropriate. The observer(s) should refrain from stating their ideas and perspective on the issues unless specifically invited to do so. An important principle in this process is that at all times the person who is being observed is the one who is in control of the situation.

Debriefing Option 2
1. The observed teachers give their impression of the class session that was observed.

2. Observers give feedback only on what their partners have asked them to observe. Start with warm feedback. What went well? Provide specific, detailed information on what was observed. Be sure to refer to and use the feedback norms developed as a group or by the observed and observing educators.
3. Suggestions should only be offered when asked for by the observed.

4. Be careful not to ask questions of the observed teacher that are thinly veiled criticisms. Any questions should be genuine in that they are asking for information that will help the observer better understand what was observed.

5. End the post-conference with the observer and observed reflecting on the process and their reactions to it. What might you do differently next time that would improve the process and debriefing?

Further thoughts on the process:
- Each person should choose the person or people with whom they will work. They should agree to take turns being the observer and observed.
- The pair (or triad) should establish norms or ground rules for giving and receiving feedback. (For example: “Our observation data will remain confidential; we will meet to follow up on the observation within 24 hours of the observation.”)
- The person asking for feedback specifies the areas in which they want feedback. (For example: “Track the kinds of questions I ask: Are they memory questions, or do they require evaluation? Do I give enough time for students to answer? Do I ask boys more questions than girls? How did the small groups work together when I wasn’t there?”)
- The observer(s), informed by a list of what to look for from the person being observed, comes and watches the class or meeting for a short time (15-20 minutes at first, longer as they become more comfortable with both the observation and the feedback).
- The two people meet afterwards — undisturbed — for 10 minutes (it needs to be short at first). During this meeting:
  - The observed and observer(s) should sit with the data between them.
  - The observed should refocus on the questions s/he asked. That is, reflect on the questions in light of the data being brought back by the observer.
  - The observer(s) should share the things they saw, heard, and tracked rather than what they thought about them. Allowing the observer(s) to evaluate or judge the observed will poison the process quickly.
  - There should be some talk of what did and didn’t happen and how the observed could make it happen next time.
  - The observed should encourage the observer to reflect on the relevance of the data to the questions.
  - Both the observer(s) and observed should watch for defensive behavior.
  - All should work to make sure the observed doesn’t get into a defend/attack dialogue (if the observed feels a need to defend him or herself, s/he should stop the conversation and talk about why s/he feels that way and what it would take to reduce that behavior).
  - The observer(s) should check for signals to see when the observed has had enough.
  - End the post-conference with the observer and observed reflecting on the process and their reactions to it. What might you do differently next time that would improve the process and debriefing?
Interesting Moments Protocol

Adapted for observing students in ATLAS Communities.

The underlying assumption for this protocol is that the observer and the observed will work together to create some new knowledge — they are in it together. The observation is a shared experience, and so is the debriefing. One outsider, after listening to such a debriefing, stated that it was a seamless conversation. “The two of you were discovering something about the events you had seen.”

Pre-Observation Conference
Because this form of observation is more open-ended, it is not strictly necessary to have a pre-conference, although it may help to orient the observer as to what will be happening.

Observation
The observer maintains an open field of vision, noting anything that strikes her as particularly interesting — anything that may lead to ‘deep’ questions, about pedagogy, curriculum, classroom management, or other professional topics.

Debriefing
Either participant begins by raising a point of interest, stating as clearly and as fully as possible what occurred. A conversation develops around the incident with both observer and observed attempting to sort out, “What was going on there?” As the ideas build, both are responsible for keeping the conversation on track while maintaining the flexibility necessary to create new understandings.

Note: Prerequisite for this protocol is a high level of trust between the two participants: trust that the debriefing is not about evaluation; trust that each will be thoughtful, will listen and respond to the other; trust that whatever knowledge is created will be shared knowledge.

Reflection
How will what I learned today impact my classroom practice? What will I do differently next time? What do I need to remember to do again?

Note: Prerequisite for this protocol is a high level of respect between the two participants. This respect is demonstrated by language that recognizes the debriefing is not about evaluation, that each will be thoughtful, will listen and respond, and that whatever knowledge is created will be shared knowledge.
Observer as Learner

*Developed in the field by educators.*

The primary “learner” in this protocol is the observer. The observer’s only purpose is to learn how to improve his or her own practice. Since the observer has little responsibility to the observed, the duration of the observation and even the level of attention to what’s going on is determined by the observer, as long as this is fine with the person being observed. The time involved may also be reduced if neither party desires a pre-observation conference.

**Pre-Observation Conference**
It is not necessary to have a pre-conference unless either party would like to have one. A pre-conference would help to orient the observer as to what will be happening.

**Observation**
The observer focuses on whatever s/he wishes.

**Debriefing**
The observer often asks the observed questions that might help him or her better understand the choices made by the observed. The observer often shares an insight or other learning that occurred as a result of the observation, and thanks the observed teacher for sharing her practice.

**Note**
Given the potential feeling of vulnerability on the part of the observed in any situation, and especially in a situation such as this where the observed may have little idea of what the observer is focusing on, it’s important that the observer try to ask questions during the debriefing in a way that does not put the observed on the defensive.
The Paseo
or Circles of Identity


Purpose
When a group would like to examine issues of identity, diversity, beliefs, and values, and would like to begin making connections between who we are and how that shapes our decisions and behaviors, the Paseo can be a tool for initiating the dialogue. It is essentially a two-step process, which begins with individual reflection and then moves into personal storytelling. This is a flexible process, in that the theme of the questions and prompts can be tailored to meet the objectives of the group.

Note: We have been told that The Paseo is a process that has been used in Mexico and the Southwest United States as a way of getting acquainted quickly. Traditionally, males and females of the community would line up in concentric circles, facing one another, and would make “un paseo,” or pass by one another, holding eye contact and having brief opportunities to make connections.

Process
1. Each participant makes/draws a web of circles, roughly resembling the diagram of a molecule. (The facilitator may chart one as a model, with each participant creating his own on a journal page or note pad.) The basic design looks something like this:

![Diagram of a web of circles](image)

2. Within this diagram, each group member should write his or her name in the center circle. Each additional circle should contain a word or phrase that captures some element of his or her identity — those terms or descriptors that have most helped shape who the person is and how s/he interacts in the world. Some groups will move right into this; others will prefer to have the facilitator model what is intended. For example, one circle might contain the word “woman”, another the word “black”, another the phrase “grew up in Deep South”, and so on. As an additional step, participants may be asked to include words or phrases that other people use to identify them. This may be done in a different color, or in pencil rather than in ink.
3. The entire group now moves to stand in a large open area, forming two concentric circles, in preparation for the dialogue portion of this process. Some group members will prefer to take their notepads with them. An even number of people is necessary, since the dialogue takes place in pairs. The outer circle faces inward while the inner circle faces outward. The circles should look something like this:

![Diagram of concentric circles]

The facilitator will now begin to ask the group to think about and respond to a series of questions. Important instructions to provide before the questioning starts are:

- Once the question has been stated, everyone will be allowed one minute to think about his or her own response to the question. This is intended to ensure that each person is fully listening to his or her partner during the dialogue process, without being distracted by a desire to plan a response when his or her turn to speak begins.
- At the end of the one-minute thinking time, the facilitator will announce the beginning of the round of dialogue. Each person will take turns responding, without interruption, to the question or prompt, with two minutes allotted for each. If the speaker does not take two minutes, the full time should be allowed, being comfortable with the silence. The facilitator will call time at the two-minute point, when the pairs should make sure the second partner gets a chance to speak for a full two minutes, without interruption.
- At the end of the second partner's time, the facilitator will ask the group members to thank their current partner, and say goodbye. Either the inner or the outer circle will be asked to shift to the left or right. (Groups may want to shift one, two, or three persons to the right or left, to mix the partners more quickly). Participants should take a moment to greet their new partners.
- The next round of dialogue will begin, with a new question, and with the one minute thinking time. The process continues through each round of questions or prompts.

4. Debrief the process. It is important not to shortchange this step. One way to begin the debrief is to ask the group to take a few minutes to do a quick-write on what they saw, heard, and felt during this process. After the quick-write, do a round robin sharing (30 seconds or less) of what each participant observed. They should provide “just the facts” without inference, interpretation, or judgment. Proceed from there to a more open debrief discussion. Possibly close the debrief with reflection time on one of the following prompts:

- What will you do differently as a result of engaging in this dialogue?
- How will you process the emotions that surfaced for you as a result of this dialogue?
- How might you adapt and use this activity?
Suggested questions or prompts for step 3. Order of questions should be carefully considered. Since the prompts focus on personal experiences, the emotions initially tied to those experiences are likely to resurface. It’s generally a good idea to vary the depth of the questioning, and to never start with the deepest possible questions.

- With which descriptors do you identify most strongly? Why is that?
- With which descriptors do others identify you most strongly? How do you feel about that?
- Describe a time when one of the elements of your identity definitely worked to your advantage, either in your educational experience or in other areas of your life.
- Describe a time when one of the elements of your identity appeared to hold you back, either in your educational experience or in other areas of your life.
- Talk about a time when your perceptions of a student’s identity caused you to do something that held her/him back.
- Talk about a time when your perceptions of a student’s identity caused you to do something that moved her/him forward.
- Talk about a time when you noticed an inequity, wished you had said or done something, but did not.
- Talk about a time when you noticed an inequity and said or did something to address it.

Some ideas to consider:

- Before starting the questioning, decide if you want to include an instruction that people should choose to share either the most significant memory that comes to mind, or a memory that, though perhaps less significant, they feel more comfortable sharing. (Some participants have expressed a preference for hearing this instruction; others have said that they did that kind of internal editing themselves quite naturally.)
- Participants should not pass!
- Decide if you want to include any instructions regarding the demeanor of the listener. For example: whether or not clarifying questions are okay; whether or not the listener should provide affirmative sounds, body language and other cues, or should listen as simply a mirror — devoid of reaction. Your intent, and your knowledge of the group, will guide this.
- Be very aware of the emotional and physical energy level of the group. Because each round takes about 6 minutes, most groups cannot sustain this activity for more than 6 - 7 questions. Some people may need a chair stationed within the circle that doesn’t move.
- Decide the amount of rotation you will use. For some purposes, you may want to have people stay with the same partner for a pair of questions. Sometimes it may make sense to move more than one person to the right, or to move both the inner and outer circle at the same time, in different directions.
Save the Last Word for ME

*Developed by Patricia Averette.*

**Purpose**
To clarify and deepen our thinking about a text.

**Roles**
Timekeeper/facilitator, who both participates and keeps the process moving.

**Time**
Approximately 30 minutes.

**Protocol**
The process is designed to build on each other’s thinking, and not to enter into a dialogue. Participants may decide to have an open dialogue about the text at the end of the 30 minutes. Timing is important; each round should last approximately 7 minutes.

1. Create a group of 4 participants. Choose a timekeeper (who also participates) who has a watch.

2. Each participant silently identifies what s/he considers to be (for him or her) the most significant idea addressed in the article, and highlights that passage.

3. When the group is ready, a volunteer member identifies the part of the article that s/he found to be most significant and reads it out loud to the group. This person (the presenter) says nothing about why s/he chose that particular passage.

4. The group should pause for a moment to consider the passage before moving to the next step.

5. The other 3 participants each have 1 minute to respond to the passage — saying what it makes them think about, what questions it raises for them, etc.

6. The first participant then has 3 minutes to state why s/he chose that part of the article and to respond to — or build on — what s/he heard from his/her colleagues.

7. The same pattern is followed until all four members of the group have had a chance to be the presenter and to have “the last word.”

8. Optional open dialogue about the text and the ideas and questions raised during the first part of the protocol.

9. Debrief the experience. How was this a useful way to explore the ideas in the text and to explore your own thinking?

Protocols are most powerful and effective when used within an ongoing professional learning community and facilitated by a skilled facilitator. To learn more about professional learning communities and seminars for facilitation, please visit the School Reform Initiative website at www.schoolreforminitiative.org