

Staff Fishbowl/Socratic Seminar Mash-Up

One Type of Fishbowl

Person A presents a scenario, dilemma, or thoughtful question. Give staff some think time to process the information. It may even be best to pose the question to them ahead of time. If you have been participating in a book study together, or have just finished reading an article together, this would be the time to pose a deep question from the text.

- 3 Minutes The circle asks clarifying questions & Person A responds.
- 4 Minutes The circle then becomes "open." No hands are raised; it is a genuine conversation, where the circle participants pop in with thinking as it comes to them. Circle Participants are encouraged to press others on their thinking and to keep asking clarifying questions as the conversation progresses. Circle Partners are listening and taking notes. They may have ideas to share as well. If they do, they should write them down.

3 Minutes Facilitator stops the talk and asks Circle Participants to turn and talk to their partners. If there are a greater number of participants sitting in the room still, have them turn and talk to each other as well. After 3 minutes, the original participant may come back to the circle, *or the Circle Partner* to share additional thinking.

If this were to continue....a new question or thought to move conversation forward could be posed by the facilitator. OR, a new scenario, dilemma could be posed. Switch the Circle Partners with the Circle Participants and repeat process.

A Second Type of Fishbowl

The **open fishbowl**, in which a few chairs (1-2) in the inner circle (5-8 people) remain empty. Any member of the audience can, at any time, occupy the empty chair and join the fishbowl. When this happens, an existing member of the fishbowl must voluntarily leave the fishbowl and free a chair. The discussion continues with participants frequently entering and leaving the fishbowl. Limitations to participants joining the inner circle can be put in place:

Possibly each participant that joins the inner circle can only stay for 1 or 2 minutes OR
You may choose to limit how many substantial statements or comments each participant that joins can make without leaving the fishbowl. **

A Third Type of Fishbowl

Multiple Fishbowls: If the total training group is fairly large, for example 20-30 participants, you can have multiple fishbowls going on simultaneously. Upon completion of the discussions, take one or two representatives from each Fishbowl to present its view in a new, central Fishbowl. After this round of discussion, allow feedback from the observers or let the representatives return to their respective Fishbowl for further discussion. **

**Excerpts taken from the International Training Center's L& T blog. The ITC states that this blog is a "knowledge sharing and staff development tool at the intersection of learning, training and technology." Information on this blog presents ideas and strategies for learning both methodology and technology.

