

Educator team constructivist listening protocol

Reflecting, releasing emotion and constructing new meaning

Time required: About 40 minutes for a team of four educators

Space and materials requirements:

- A quiet space
- Timer
- Pencil and paper or computer

"Educational equity means that each child receives what they need to develop to their full academic and social potential."

[National Equity Project, 2021](#)

The activities within the Next Education Workforce [Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion collection](#) are intended to facilitate thinking, intention-setting and clarifying purpose along your individual journey and to support your growth with your educator team. We recommend that you plan a sequence of activities for your team with intentionality or follow the sequence we have proposed in the [Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion collection](#).

In this activity, you will engage in an adaptation of the National Equity Project's constructivist listening protocol. About their protocol, the [National Equity Project](#) writes:

“ [Constructivist listening] is distinct from most forms of listening in that its purpose is for the benefit of the speaker, not the listener.

Constructivist listening protocols ask that you give full attention to another person to hold space for them to reflect, release emotion and construct new meaning about whatever challenges they face.

The purpose is to allow new and clearer ways of thinking and acting to emerge. In constructivist listening processes, we put aside our own needs and 'agendas' to offer the gift of deep listening to another human being and the results can be profound.”

National Equity Project, 2021

Getting organized (5 minutes)

1. (2 min) Norms: Review team norms. If your team does not have norms, consider borrowing these:

- Be present
- Speak your truth
- Maintain confidentiality
- Expect and accept non-closure

2. (1 min) Roles: Identify a facilitator who will move the team through the activity and a note-taker who will capture notes on the team's definition of equity.

3. (2 min) Preview: Preview the activity as a team.

Selecting prompts and forming groups (6 minutes)

4. (3 min) Select prompts: Together, as a team, consider the prompts below. Select three prompts to which team members will respond.

- a. *What is your earliest memory of racial difference?*
- b. *What is your earliest memory of difference with respect to language?*
- c. *What is your earliest memory of gender difference?*
- d. *What is your earliest memory of difference with respect to ability?*
- e. *What are some ways your identity shaped your experiences as a PK12 student?*
- f. *What are some ways your identity shaped/is shaping your experiences as an educator?*
- g. *Describe a time from your educational history (i.e., your time as a student) when you felt truly seen by your teacher(s).*
- h. *Describe a time from your professional history (i.e., your time working) when you felt truly seen by a colleague.*
- i. *Describe a time you felt you could not bring your whole self to work.*
- j. *What conditions make you feel as though you can bring your whole self to work?*

5. (2 min) Form groups: If your team is large (e.g., 6-8 team members), consider whether you wish to form smaller groups (e.g., pairs, groups of 3, groups of 4). While this may mean that not all team members hear all responses, it will mean that team members spend more time speaking relative to the overall length of the protocol. Keep in mind that the purpose of this protocol is for the benefit of the speaker, not the listener.

6. (1 min) Establish speaker order: Within each group, choose who will respond first, second, etc.

Engaging in constructivist listening (24 minutes)

7. (8 min) Share in response to the first prompt: Round-robin, each educator should share their response to the first question. Each speaker has two minutes, uninterrupted, while the listener offers undivided attention.

Speaker: The entire two minutes is yours. If you finish early, the listener(s) will hold the remaining time silently. You can add anything additional that you would like, at any point, within the two minutes.

Listener(s): Your job is to listen silently. Try to refrain from giving any verbal or non-verbal affirming signals (e.g., chiming in, nodding, thumbs up). Whether the speaker uses the whole two minutes or not, the time still belongs to them.

8. (8 min) Share in response to the second prompt: Round-robin, each educator should share their response to the second question. Again, each speaker has two minutes, uninterrupted, while the listener offers undivided attention.

9. (8 min) Share in response to the third prompt: Each educator should share in response to the third question according to the directions above.

▶ Reflecting (5 minutes)

10. (2 min) Reflect independently: Silently reflect or journal in response to the following prompts:

- What feelings did this activity raise for you?
- To what extent did this activity help you individually to gain momentum and confidence in your equity journey?

11. (3 min) Discuss: With your team, discuss:

- How might this activity have equipped your team to work more effectively together to better serve your students?
- When might your team explore another activity from the Next Education Workforce [Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion collection?](#)

References

National Equity Project. (2021). *Constructivist listening*. Oakland, CA: National Equity Project. Retrieved <https://www.nationalequityproject.org/frameworks/constructivist-listening>

National Equity Project. (2021). *Educational equity definition*. Oakland, CA: National Equity Project. Retrieved <https://www.nationalequityproject.org/education-equity-definition>