

## Final Word Protocols

The "Final Word Protocol" was originally designed to facilitate discussion around a specific text. This structure and the variation of it that follows it are especially useful for helping students listen well to a variety of points of view, rather than immediately trying to figure out how to refute them. They also provide comfortable, small groups for students to share their views.<sup>1</sup> The second protocol has been adapted to focus more explicitly on the skills of listening and paraphrasing.

### Method #1—Using a Text

1. Everyone is given time to read or reread the text, marking particular passages that seem most meaningful or striking.
2. Form groups of three to five people, sitting in tight circles. Each group appoints one person as the time-keeper.
3. The first person begins by reading a passage from the text and explaining why he or she chose it as especially meaningful or striking. He or she has three minutes to speak.
4. Proceeding around the circle, each of the other people has one minute to discuss the passage that was selected by the first person in the round. These people may respond to what the first person said or speak to the passage in any other way that extends the group's understanding, including asking questions.
5. The first person has the "final word," responding to what others said or elaborating on his or her original statement.
6. The next person begins by sharing a passage, and the process is repeated.
7. After everyone in the small groups has taken a turn, end with a large group "debrief," asking questions like these: How did this activity go in your group? Was it easy or hard to stick to the protocol? What did you learn about the text or issue we are studying?

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<sup>1</sup> I (Kathy) have adapted these Final Word Protocols from an exercise developed by Daniel Baron of the Harmony School in Bloomington, Indiana, and by Patricia Averette, Los Angeles Annenberg Metropolitan Project (LAAMP), Los Angeles, California, and used in workshops by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform.

## **Method #2: Final Word Protocol -- Without a Text**

1. Form groups of three people, sitting in tight circles. Each group appoints one person as the time-keeper.
2. The facilitator asks a provocative question or states a provocative proposition.
3. The first person has two minutes to speak
4. Proceeding around the circle, each of the other people have one minute to paraphrase what the first person said. The point here is to reflect and reiterate the first person's ideas, not to build on them or to challenge them.
5. The first person has the "final word," clarifying anything that he or she thinks may have been misunderstood, and elaborating, if desired, on his or her original statement.
6. The next person begins by responding to the question, and the process is repeated.
7. After everyone in the small groups has taken a turn, end with a large group "debrief," asking questions like these: How did this activity go in your group? Was it easy or hard to stick to the protocol? What did you learn about the issue we are studying?