

Reflect, Consider, Observe, and Analyze

This activity (D. M. Steele & Cohn-Vargas, 2013) has been used in many study groups. Educators find it illuminating and that it leads to greater student participation.

1. Reflect on your personal experience with speaking in a group, both when you were a student and in the present.
 - a. Do you feel free to speak up in groups?
 - b. What allows you to feel safe to speak up in one place but not another?
2. Consider your students who come from backgrounds different from yours.
 - a. How might their experience be like yours, and how might it be different?
 - b. Are any of your students' voices silenced—perhaps not by you, but by past experiences of being marginalized?
3. Observe the speaking patterns in your classroom.
 - a. Make a simple tally of who is speaking in the group. Mark the initials of each child who speaks. We suggest you do this more than one time.
4. Analyze your data and determine next steps:
 - a. How many students in the class spoke out loud in the discussion?
 - b. Which students spoke more than once?
 - c. Which students did not speak at all?
 - d. What were the social identities of those who spoke and those who did not speak?
5. How can you extend opportunities to ensure everyone gets a chance to speak?
6. Brainstorm three strategies to try to increase participation.