An Adaptive Schools Toolkit of Strategies and Moves for Developing and Facilitating Collaborative Groups

The tools in this Toolkit represent brain-compatible strategies used in Doha, Qatar's learning experience. These tools serve a range of purposes: some focus attention, some energize groups, some serve as intervention moves in meetings, and some support the use of text as a group learning resource – providing structured reading activities in which participants read text, share their experiences and make meaning together. Facilitators choose from among these strategies and moves in accordance with intention. When conversation is about difficult topics, or when a topic may raise emotions, facilitators select strategies that structure task and interactions to help make it safe to participate in the conversation.
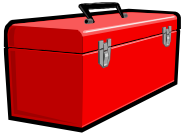
The tools in this Toolkit meet the Triple Track standard. They represent brain-compatible and best-practice methods for use in: (1) group development in the current setting (2) staff meetings and other work groups, and (3) classroom instruction. Terms such as "presenter," "facilitator," and "participants" are used here in a generic sense.

The experience of psychological safety is necessary for candid engagement with others. For some, safety means knowing that one is protected from verbal attack. For others, it means having a sense that one's contributions are recognized – perhaps not agreed with, but understood. For others, it means not losing face, not being embarrassed, or avoiding feelings of inequality. For still others, it can mean freedom from a fear of retribution. For some members it can mean time to reflect before talking. For some, it is experienced when conversations are not dominated by the voices of a few who are highly verbal. Importantly, it also means freedom from having to be certain. One of the greatest barriers to learning and working effectively with sensitive topics and conflicts is the belief that one must speak with certainty.

Without strategies and protocols, groups tend to either avoid hard-to-talk-about topics or do so in ways that evoke affective conflict. Explicit strategies and protocols provide safety by shaping conversations. They provide a focus for talking, name the methods to be used, indicate the cognitive skills required, and set expectations for behavior and topic. Strategies and protocols are designed to create safety, engagement, and learning; they do not necessarily provide comfort. Members are likely to be uncomfortable as they talk about sensitive topics and develop new learning. This is to be expected, is normal, and is valuable - discomfort often is a necessary experience in developing new learning.
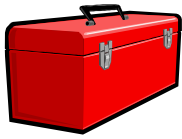
Facilitators choose strategies along a continuum of loose to tight structure depending on the group's skills, members' emotional intensity, and the cognitive complexity of the issue.
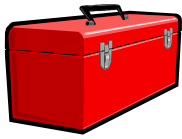
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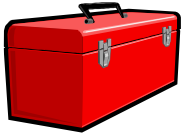|	
Attention Hand	Raised hand as signal for group members to finish their current sentences and be quiet. Primarily visual learners tend to respond to such a signal & become quiet. As the room's noise level drops, primarily auditory learners tend to notice & become quiet in turn.
Like Me	Inclusion activity used with large groups and stranger groups. Helps set norms of participation and answer the question, "Who am I in relation to this group?"
Spend A Buck	Provides participants a method for identifying relative degrees of interest among choices. It was used to identify interest-based groups. The presenter invites each participant to imagine having 100 pennies to spend on the focus areas. Participants are asked to divide their respective pennies among the designated topics. The presenter may then use the interest groups in a number of strategies, such as Corners.
Corners	Assess positions or interests. Direct participants to stand in a corner of a room representing their choice. Often followed with conversation in pairs or trios regarding reasons for which individuals chose this corner.
What – Why – How	Focus groups and redirect possible resistance to an activity. Inform the group what the activity is, why it is beneficial to their learning, and how the process will work.
Show, Don't Say	Focuses attention. Facilitator communicates number of minutes for an activity by showing corresponding minutes with fingers. Helps focus because brain pays attention to novelty.
Minute Fingers **(aka: "Fist to Five")**	To inform a facilitator as to how much time will be needed for groups to finish an activity. Ask a member of each group to hold aloft the number of fingers representing the minutes they need. Ask for ranges such as 0 to 2 or 0 to 5. Announce the numbers as you read them, alerting members that a range of time is needed. Based on the range of need, assign a number of minutes remaining for the task.
Grounding	An inclusion activity that supports contribution by all voices, sets a norm for respectful listening, and allows people to connect with one another.
First Turn, Last Turn, or **Final Word**	Individuals read a section of relevant text, preferably before the meeting. Individuals highlight portions that have special meaning for them. In small groups, each person in turn shares an item he or she highlighted, but does not comment on it. Group members take turns commenting on the item named with no cross talk. The person who named the item then shares his or her thinking about the item and thereby has the last word. The pattern is repeated around the table. (Resource: Wellman & Lipton, *Data-Driven Dialogue: A Facilitator's Guide to Collaborative Inquiry,* pp.90-91; MiraVia, 2004; www.miravia.com)

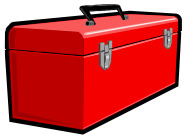| **Matchbook Definitions**	A brief strategy in which a group synthesizes and summarizes information regarding specific content into a succinct definition – one that would "fit on a matchbook." (Resource: Wellman & Lipton, *Data-Driven Dialogue: A Facilitator's Guide to Collaborative Inquiry,* p. 106-107; MiraVia, 2004; www.miravia.com).
Pack, Stack, & Move	A strategy for reorganizing a large group. "Get your things together, stack them up, and move to [a new location]."
Ten / Two	A rule-of-thumb for presenters, teachers and facilitators regarding giving processing time after periods of content. After "some" input - 10 to 20 minutes depending on participant age and emotional character and complexity of content, provide time for participants to talk about what they just heard, respond to facilitator prompts, raise questions, or in other ways engage with the material. For the original research on retention and engagement.
Most Important Point (MIP)	A strategy for processing information, whether from text or lecture. Participants are asked to select a Most Important Point, which may be used in partner conversation or a form of written reflection.
Say Something	Partners each read a defined section of a reading, then stop for each to "say something" to each other. Then the partners resume reading, stopping at a defined place to "say something" about that section.
Paired Reading	Partners are set to read one side of a page each, then each debriefs. Or set to read one paragraph each, then each debriefs to the other on their paragraph.
Text As Expert	A presenter chooses a reading to serve as the source of information – rather than a member of the group, so that participants can approach the content as equals.
Third Point	Also known as three-point communication, the three points are: (1) the facilitator or presenter, (2) the group, and (3) information or data. The third point is designed to separate the information from the people in the conversation to provide psychological safety for deep engagement (Resource: Wellman & Lipton; *Data-Driven Dialogue: A Facilitator's Guide to Collaborative Inquiry*, p. 16; MiraVia, 2004; www.miravia.com).
Each Teach	<u>Each</u> partner or member of a larger group reads information, and then <u>teaches</u> it to the others..
Round Robin Reflection	May be used for reflection on meta-cognition. For example, "What are some of the decisions I made about participating in the conversation and how did my decisions affect me and others?"
Window of Opportunity	A visual strategy to indicate that the time assigned to a task is coming to an end. Presenter holds her/his hands up and apart, bringing them slowly together as (s)he states that "the window is closing." Designed to focus attention, signal a transition is coming, and draw out late contributors.

Strategy Harvest	A process to support the learning of new practices in a workshop, classroom, or other learning setting. A public record is kept of strategies that the presenter uses. In the Harvest: (1) the presenter arranges pairs of participants; (2) the partners review the strategies, check for understanding; (3) each participant selects 2-3 strategies, and develops an application for his/her work. Finally, the presenter invites questions to clarify uncertainties that participants have about how to use any of the strategies.
Write – Pair – Share	Participants are paired in some way. <u>Write</u>: the presenter defines a topic or question about which each participant writes. <u>Pair</u>: partners share their writing with each other. <u>Share</u>: participants are invited to share their writing with the group – a table group or the whole group.
Yellow Light	A presenter signal to alert a group as to the approaching close of a process within a workshop or class. Like the yellow light in a traffic signal, the presenter alerts participants to an upcoming transition. The presenter may holds up fingers corresponding to the number of minutes remaining in the present process, saying for example, "Yellow light! You have this many minutes left." In a second variation, the presenter might say, "You have 'X' more minutes for this activity."
Finger Partners	Allow participants to self-organize into small conversation groups. The presenter says, "Hold up one finger if your interest is topic A, two fingers if it is topic B, and three fingers for topic C." Direct participants to form a small group – like a trio – with number ones. Or form mixed trios each with a 1,2 and 3 in it.
7 – 11 Conversation with Eye Contact Partners	A strategy for pairs to process content as defined by the presenter. Designed to be as brief and efficient as a trip to a 7-11 convenience store. The presenter states the task, such as, "Reflecting on today's meeting, what one or two ideas are most important for you?" The presenter asks participants to make eye contact with someone at another table, then to "go to the store" – meaning join that Eye Contact Partner for a quick conversation about the content which the presenter defined. As soon as they are done, they return to their seats.
PAG/PAU	Process-as-Given / Process-as-Understood, Saves time and increases clarity by ensuring all participants in a meeting know the process to be used. Ask participant(s) to explain back a process just explained/displayed.
TAG/TAU	Topic-as-Given / Topic-as-Understood, Ensures that everyone knows the topic, as PAG/PAU assures that they know what they are to do with it (ala PAG/PAU).
Naïve Questions	Group members support meeting direction by alerting the group when process agreements are not being kept or when the group and facilitator should become aware of current behaviors so they can be questioned.
Relevancy Challenge	A facilitator strategy to maintain meeting focus when a participant makes a comment that is off-task. For example, the topic might be textbook adoption, and a participant wants to talk about the supply room. The facilitator says, "Please help the group understand how your comment relates to our topic."

Disagreement Grid	A tool for helping a group acknowledge multiple perspectives, using a graphic representation of a square subdivided into 16 smaller squares. Participants are asked to identify how many squares they see. No answer is wrong, given that the question is what each "sees." Participants experience "seeing things differently" – which is a safe way to express disagreement. The facilitator says, "How many do you see?" The group responds 16-17-21-24, and etc. The facilitator asks someone to point out how one of the higher numbers can be seen. The facilitator says, "Is the person who said 16 wrong? 17? 21 and so on. Then, when you disagree with a previous speaker, say, "I see it a different way."
Stem Completion	To stimulate thinking. A way to guide strategies such as Think, Pair, Share. The presenter identifies a sentence stem which participants complete in preparation for sharing their thinking with a partner and perhaps a table group.
Card Stack & Shuffle	1. Participants distribute 3x5 cards evenly. 2. Each participant writes one entry per card (nature of the entry depends on the outcome intended by the facilitator – may be ideas, assumptions, values, etc.). 3. Participants stack cards in the center of the table. 4. A participant shuffles the stack, and then returns the newly ordered stack to the center of the table. 5. In turn, participants each draw top card to read aloud. 6. Group may paraphrase, dialogue, etc – depending on task design according to the intended outcome. (Resource: Wellman & Lipton, *Data-Driven Dialogue: A Facilitator's Guide to Collaborative Inquiry*; MiraVia, 2004; www.miravia.com).
Choose Voice	Consciously select voice modulation to give directions or send a message: Credible voice, or receive information: Approachable voice.
Learning Partners	Many possible types of partners pending main topic, theme, or process desired. Example: Seasonal Partners, Round-the-Clock Partners, Four Hats Partners, etc.
3 Types of Paraphrase	(1) Acknowledge, (2) Clarify, (3) Shift Conceptual Level
Jigsaw	A strategy for shared interactive learning. Each member of a group is responsible for one piece of the "jigsaw," so the group represents the whole of the "puzzle." The facilitator divides a reading into segments. Each member of a table group or learning group is responsible for reading one of the segments. Then each group member teaches or summarizes his or her segment of the reading for the group.
Journal Entry	Participants keep a journal over the course of a workshop. Facilitator designs opportunities for participants to make entries in their journals. Journal entries may deepen consideration of a topic, focus on reflection, or anticipate post-workshop applications.

Stir the Classroom	A process that can be used to organize and integrate prior learning or activate and explore a topic to be introduced. Participants are arranged in groups of no more than four. Group members number-off. The facilitator identifies a question for the groups to respond to in conversation. The facilitator then identifies a group member to shift to the next group – "twos," for example. The shifting members summarize the conversation of the group from which they come. The facilitator may then instruct the groups to focus on the same question again, or may identify a new question. Typically, a different group member number will then be called to shift, with the conversation process beginning again.
High Fives	A strategy for creating pairs or trios. Participants travel around the room, greeting one (for pairs) or two (for trios) others with a "high five and clasp hands. They remain together for the ensuing task.
Airplane Stacking	A presentation move for calling on multiple participants at once for questions or other contributions, by assigning numbers to several. Permits the presenter to focus on the contributions, and places responsibility on participants for remembering whose turn it is.
Key Concepts / Key Ideas	Partners read an assigned text stopping at points to be designated. They highlight key ideas. After each stopping point they take turns sharing ideas and connections to their work.
30 Second Speech	A tool for processing content. Each participant plans a 30 Second Speech summarizing information that has been presented aloud or through text. Depending on time, pairs may give their speeches to one another, or one or two table group members may give theirs to the table.
My Job – Your Job	A strategy for specifying specific task(s) of presenter and participants. In classroom settings: (1) best accomplished through engagement of students to create ownership; (2) most useful when posted so that it can serve as a prompting and reminding tool.
Time Timer	www.timetimer.com provides a timer for on-screen use.
Attention First	Gain attention in order to give directions that are heard and understood.

References

R. Garmston & B. Wellman (1999). **The Adaptive School: A Sourcebook for Developing Collaborative Groups**. Norwood MA. Christopher-Gordon.

R. Garmston & B. Wellman (2002). **The Adaptive School: Developing Collaborative Groups**. Norwood, MA. Christopher Gordon.

R. Garmston (2005). **The Presenter's Fieldbook: A Practical Guide**. Norwood, MA. Christopher-Gordon.

www.Adaptiveschools.com.
Offers a range of resources such as writings by Robert Garmston related to the development of collaborative cultures, products in support of Adaptive Schools, a calendar of training and development events, and a weekly *Skill Builders* column.