60 MINUTES

Think, Pair, Share

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Activity Rationale and Aims

Aims

01.
Engage in shared discussion to support decision making

Activity Summary

This activity aims to encourage reflection and dialogue on key decisions. It can be adapted to address project specific decisions, such as choosing a research question, identifying a target population, or choosing a tension or challenge to focus on overcoming. Decision options will be hung on giant sticky notes throughout the room. Co-design collaborators will walk around the room and read each option, selecting their top three options. Collaborators will discuss their decisions in pairs before engaging in a whole group discussion.

Rationale

Making decisions is an inevitable and critical part of every collaborative project. It is not only an opportunity to determine consensus at critical junctures and outcomes, it is also a valuable opportunity to reveal divergent perspectives that can enhance the development of the project (Bahktin, 1990; Nathan et al., 2007). The process of discussion that emerges from analyzing differing perspectives presents possibilities for deepening individual and collective thought.

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In Person Steps

As a whole group:

1. Summarize the decision that is needed to be made, providing ample context. Review the options for each decision.

2. Post the different options around the room, on large chart paper.

Individually (think):

3. Provide time for collaborators to consider and develop a written reflection on their own decision.

4. Distribute three sticky notes to each collaborator.

5. Ask each collaborator to vote on their top three choices by placing a sticky note on the chart paper they vote for.

6. Review the collective votes, discussing which ones appear to have most votes.

In pairs (pair):

7. Discuss the rationale behind collaborators' own votes.

As a whole group (share):

8. Have all collaborators discuss what they voted for and why, and if their opinions shifted at all. Visit every option with the group regardless of number of votes. Engage in a highly facilitated discussion of the pros and cons of different decisions.

9. After discussion, invite collaborators to change the placement of their sticky notes, if their mind has changed.

10. Repeat voting as needed until consensus is reached or until a decision is made to continue looking into a few options further before deciding.

Modifications and Virtual Adaptations

• While this is not an anonymous activity, once all "votes" are placed, they are equally represented, without consideration to the power and positionality of each person. If the team wants a truly anonymous process, consider submitting the "votes" on notecards, that then can be visually sorted and represented (e.g each decision card is then pasted on the board in categories).

• If conducting this activity in a virtual environment, have collaborators individually review the digital documents providing options for potential resolutions to the decision. Then provide ample time for collaborators to vote on their top three choices by using one, two, or three asterisks next to their choices in the shared document.

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Facilitator Preparation

IN-PERSON MATERIALS

- Chart paper with a decision option

- Sticky notes

- Materials to take notes (e.g. pen, paper, audio recorder)

DIGITAL MATERIALS

- Slides decks with the different decision options

Facilitation Tips

- The facilitator should keep a record of the conversation and store all materials in both physical and digital archives for later reference, and send a summary of the key decisions made to the team after the meeting.
- Allow for adequate time for reflection and sharing out. Decisions do not have to be made in one day if consensus cannot be reached. The goal is for every decision to be weighed carefully, and for every voice to be heard.
- It is important to closely facilitate the discussion, paying attention to shared discussion space, making sure not to prioritize some voices over others.
- The power and potential of this activity is in the discussion that arises. It is critical to give thought to the facilitation and allocate ample time.

Specific Tips for Online Facilitation

- Go around the digital screen to ensure all voices are heard.
- If there are too many people in the whole group discussion, consider using the chat feature or breaking into two groups (keep detailed notes!)

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Example from the field

This activity has been used in a collaboration that included university faculty, high school students, university students, and school educators. The collaboration brought together people of different ages and educational experiences. This diversity in age and education was critical to the design success, and involved inherent structures of power and authority along lines of educational attainment and age. Engaging in this process where all votes were visually displayed and weighted equally, allowed for team members to consider the opinions of the group without consideration of their age, education, or other identity statuses. It presented the opportunity for the team to engage in discussions about the importance of divergent perspectives as well as to identify points of consensus.

Commitments to Equity and Wellness

Collaborative research and design brings together people from different backgrounds, identity statuses, and professional roles. In these collaborative spaces, there is great potential to generate processes with intentional structures for shared and distributed decision-making that validates, includes, and cares for all collaborators. However, there is also a risk that collaborative processes reinforce traditional hierarchies and power structures, where those with the most positional power ultimately end up making the decisions and the rest of the team agrees or comes to false consensus. This activity is intended to make collaborators' votes mostly anonymous and present a visual model that weighs all collaborators' votes equally.

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Works Cited

Bakhtin, M. M. (1990). *Art and answerability: Early philosophical essays*. University of Texas Press.

Nathan, M., Eilam, B., & Kim, S. (2007). To disagree, we must also agree: How intersubjectivity structures and perpetuates discourse in a mathematics classroom. *Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 16(4), 523-563.

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