

Chalk Talk

Philippians 19:20 - Get all the advice you can and be wise the rest of your life.

Purpose:

In the Bible, John chapter four, is the story of the Samaritan woman who came to a well to get water and while she was there she met Jesus. It is a great story and one worth learning more about. In Jesus' time people gathered at the well, by the water, to talk about many things. They would get the news, talk about ideas or problems, and support each other in that social setting. Going to the well was not only a necessity of life, but it was a location where people could interact and exchange ideas.

Chalk Talk is a silent way of gathering at the well. It is a time for reflection, generation of ideas, checking on individual or group learning, develop projects, or solve problems. It can be used productively with any group — students, faculty, workshop participants, or committees. Because it is done completely in silence, it gives groups a change of pace and encourages thoughtful contemplation. It can also be a way to gather a maximum amount of input in a minimum of time. It can be an unforgettable experience.

Proverbs 21:11 - Timely advice is as lovely as gold apples in a silver basket.

Time:

Varies according to need; can be from 5 minutes to an hour

Materials:

Chalk board and chalk - or - white board and dry-erase markers - or - large roll paper on the wall and chart markers. Also, enough room to fit the people who will be engaged in the process.

Process:

1. At the beginning of the Chalk Talk the facilitator briefly explains the activity. Chalk Talk works like a mind map, (but with a team), starting with a question and then branching out with additional comments and questions. No one is to talk during the process, and anyone may add to the Chalk Talk with words, pictures, graphics, or whatever works toward answering the question. It is highly encouraged to have participants comment or raise questions on what others have said in their response to the framing question.
2. The facilitator will write a framing question on the board or paper and then put a circle around the question. The question should be something relevant to the work being done or needing to be done. For student work the question can be related to a concept or idea that the teacher wants the students to explore. It could be something the teacher wants to discover about what the students already know. Using the protocol for teacher groups the question might be to stretch an understanding, look at something from a different perspective, find potential solutions, or develop team strategies. It may also be the start of the formulation of a plan. Examples:

Students:

- What are some different ways to solve the following problem/issue?
- What does a comparison of (???) to (???) mean to you?
- How might we solve the issue/problem of (???)
- What was the highlight of your learning today?

Teachers:

- How might we increase student participation in (???)
- What should we do to solve the problem of (???)



- How often should we do (???) to achieve (???)
 - What can we do to support higher achievement in our students?
3. The facilitator may provide a time frame for the activity depending on overall time allotted for the activity. The time frame can be short at times forcing quick responses. For deeper thinking questions the time frame can stretch for a long time giving the participants an opportunity to deeply consider the question and what others have written. The facilitator is always the gatekeeper for the time.
 4. Each participant, (ideally), has a marker or piece of chalk. White boards work best and if each participant can have a different color it is helpful. If the markers are few, then the facilitator will hand them out or place them where people can get to them easily.
 5. The participants reflect on the question and as they are motivated they answer the question or add to the discussion. There can be periods of silence or in-activity. At times the “discussion” is intense and participants cannot get to the board because of the push by others to write. Participants may write comments, ask questions, draw images or graphics, and are encouraged to show connections between comments arrows and words.
 6. When the protocol is done - it is done. The facilitator will call a stop when it is done. It is advisable to take a picture of the work accomplished to use for future or continued work. When using this with students it can stay posted on a wall or used for as long as needed to reinforce a concept or enhance future learning. It can be helpful for teachers to have it in a location for future reflection.
 7. Debrief the protocol and what was expressed in the Chalk Talk.
 - How did the protocol work for you.
 - What was the learning for the group? The individual?
 - What would you want to remember the next time you do this protocol?
 - How else might you use this protocol?
 - What do you notice about what was written?
 - What are you curious about as a result of what was written?
 - What next steps do you feel are needed as a results of what was written?

Chalk Talk Protocol Additional Thoughts:

- Choose a topic for the framing question that pushes the group to think, reflect, and interact.
- Learning to write additional questions based on the responses of the participants is the sign of deeper learning.
- Connect ideas with lines and arrows whenever possible.
- The facilitator can keep the discussion moving by simply putting a question mark next to a comment, circling it, and drawing a line to the comment.
- While the protocol is primarily silent, that does not mean it is without passion, excitement, or heated exchanges of ideas or thoughts.
- This protocol can solve big problems as well as build a learning experience for the group. It is a great way to get a team working on a project.
- This protocol can be followed with other protocols in order to fill out a plan in more detail.