

Art of Community



**Tigard-Tualatin
School District**

We acknowledge that we bring our lived experiences into our conversations.

We strive to be in community with one another with care.

We try to stay curious about each other.

We recognize that we need each other's help to become better listeners.

We slow down, so we have time to think and reflect.

We remember that conversation is a natural way we think together.

We expect it to get messy at times.

We will listen with intention to learn something new.



WHY

Organizations are human systems. Approaching this work by priming and setting conditions to support critical thinking is conducive to solving complex problems.

WHAT

The objective of this protocol is to normalize:

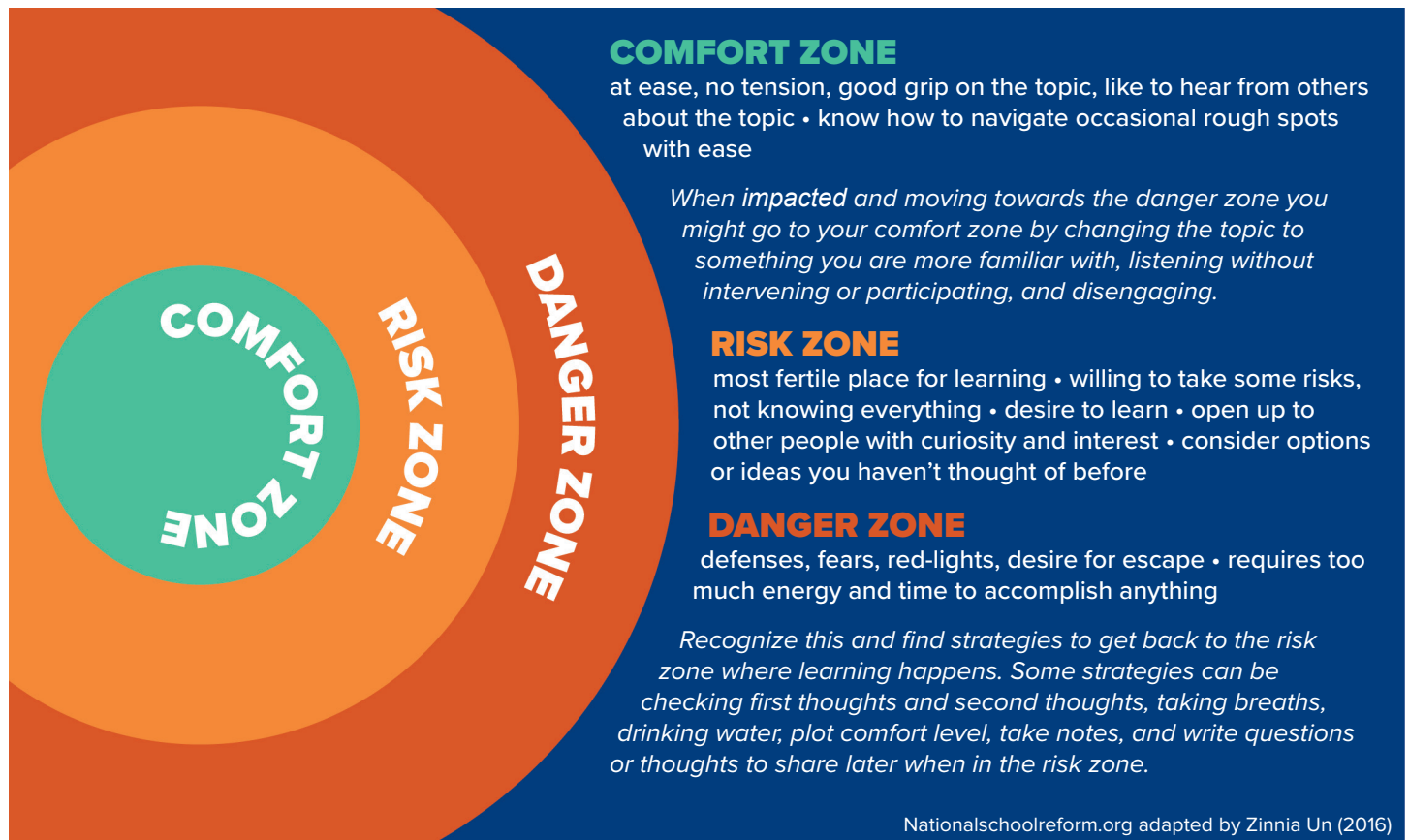
- Openness to learning
- Mitigating bias
- Normalizing conflict for calibrating feedback, change ideas, and implementation aligned to vision and mission

HOW

Starting time together (meeting, convening, gathering) with the Art of Community reminds the group what it takes to be in community with one another with care.

- Centering Care for difficult conversations allows for us to listen past our own experiences
- Art of Community allows us to get to a deeper culture of connection which also supports regulation and co-regulation that allows people in the community to make reasonable decisions as Trauma Informed Practices highlight to access executive functioning skills (the behaviors required to plan and achieve goals like adaptable thinking, time management, working memory, self-monitoring, etc).

Zones of Comfort



WHY

A common misstep in equity work is disregarding the human response to new situations, feelings, and insights that give us pause. The development of emotional intelligence and the ability to self-regulate allows hard conversations to lead to actionable change.

WHAT

Having the expectations and words to use related to the zones of comfort builds capacity in the individual, in teams, and in the organization.

The zones of comfort help gauge people's feelings and impact related to content, imprint (impression), or event. It helps to facilitate understanding and what to do to support productive conversations, problem solving sessions, or calibration in teams.

HOW

"I am trying to move myself out of my comfort zone here, I am wondering about ..."

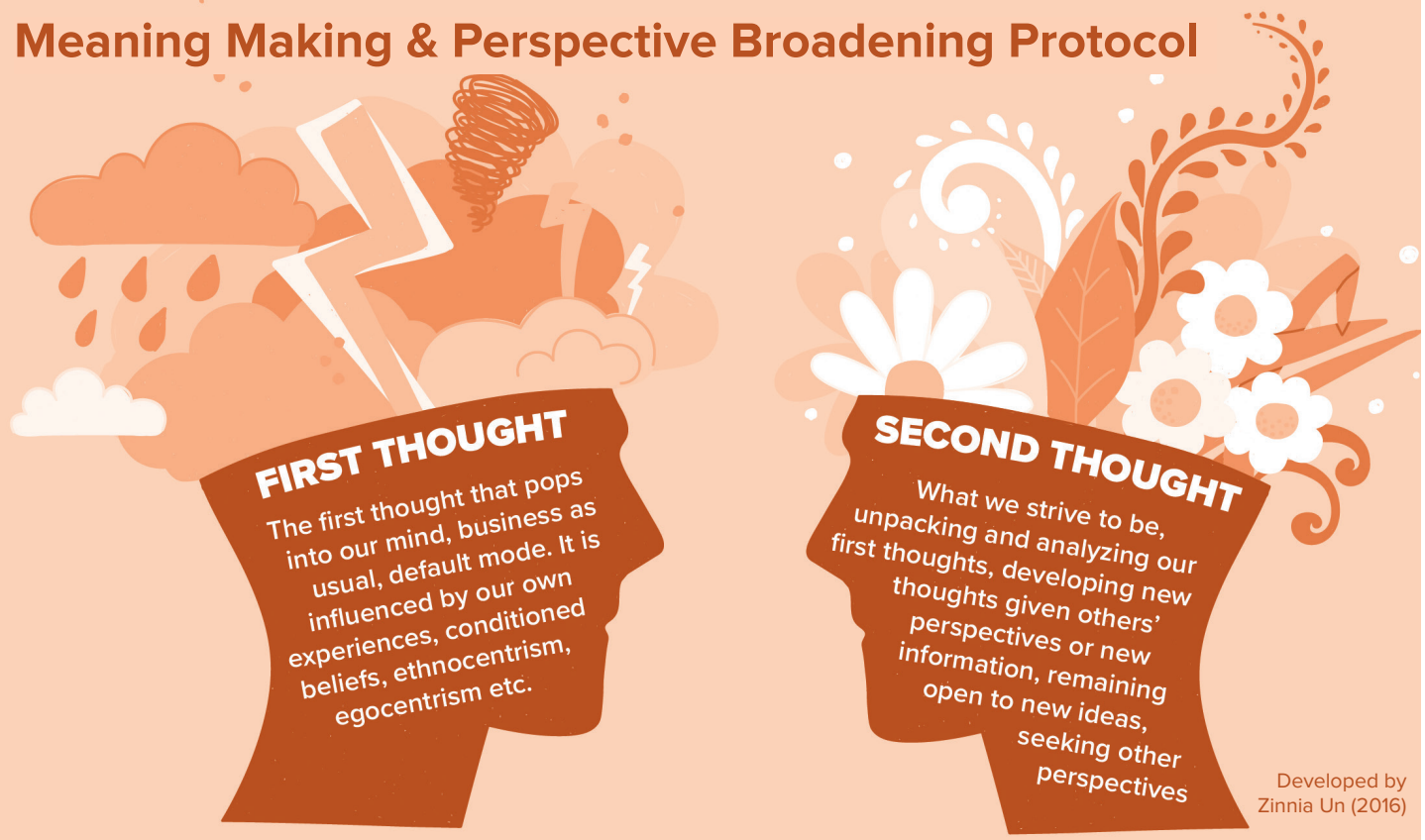
"I am taking a risk here, by sharing this feedback, ... I am wondering about what your thoughts are related to that feedback?"

"Some of the data/ feedback I have to share might be hard to hear or move some of us to the danger zone, take care of yourself as needed, and try to come back and join the conversation"

First Thought/Second Thought

Building Muscles for Critical Self-Reflection

Meaning Making & Perspective Broadening Protocol



WHY

This common language is easily accessible and can be used right away to normalize deeper analysis of practices with empathy.

Our “first thoughts” are not always “perfect” or even what we want them to be, especially when it comes to challenging subjects like equity. Or, at times, we like our first thoughts, and we develop them further given new information or ideas

Perspectives can be dynamic - we can change or add to our perspective given new information or ideas

Expressing our first thoughts allows for safe/low risk entrance into a critical, courageous or caring conversation

WHAT

This protocol can help with meaning making opportunities related to concept, vocabulary, processing a situation, etc.

It also allows the community to process not only the information but the impact or meaning of something in community with others.

This is a great tool for mitigating bias. It also brings forth multiple perspectives in practice that are easy, simple, and can be woven into the fabric of one's community.

HOW

Use this protocol:

- For brainstorming
- To understand the imprint (impression) of something with people
- To calibrate understanding about a concept, idea, action or outcome
- To bring forth multiple perspectives without making it high risk
- To reflect on your own thinking and understanding.

Redefining Actions for Equity



WHY

Often when engaging in equity conversations, we can easily move through the comfort, risk, and danger zones quickly. When this happens we go into trauma responses such as flight, fight, freeze, fawn modes. Having cognitive and discourse scaffolds to remind us to regulate, relate, and reason supports meaningful and effective communication.

This takes practice! Using the reminders of listening to learn & heal, ask questions, reflect & respond, then share with humility allows for there to be care in our conversations. It also provides the support we need for ourselves and others to have grace with one another when difficult conversations arise.

WHAT

Redefining Actions for Equity can be used as an aid for navigating difficult conversations as they arise.

Doing equity work for the last 20 years, I have had several difficult conversations and as a budding researcher, I have noticed patterns and trends in these conversations of where I went wrong, needed to adjust, or reframe my thinking to have productive and effective communication.

Developed by Zinnia Un (2018)

HOW

When I am navigating a difficult conversation, I have to tell myself to intentionally listen. Our emotions can hijack the conversation if we don't build our muscles toward effective listening skills.

Listening Modes

Listening for Information

Listen for the exact words that the person is saying first. As though I have a transcription of the conversation.

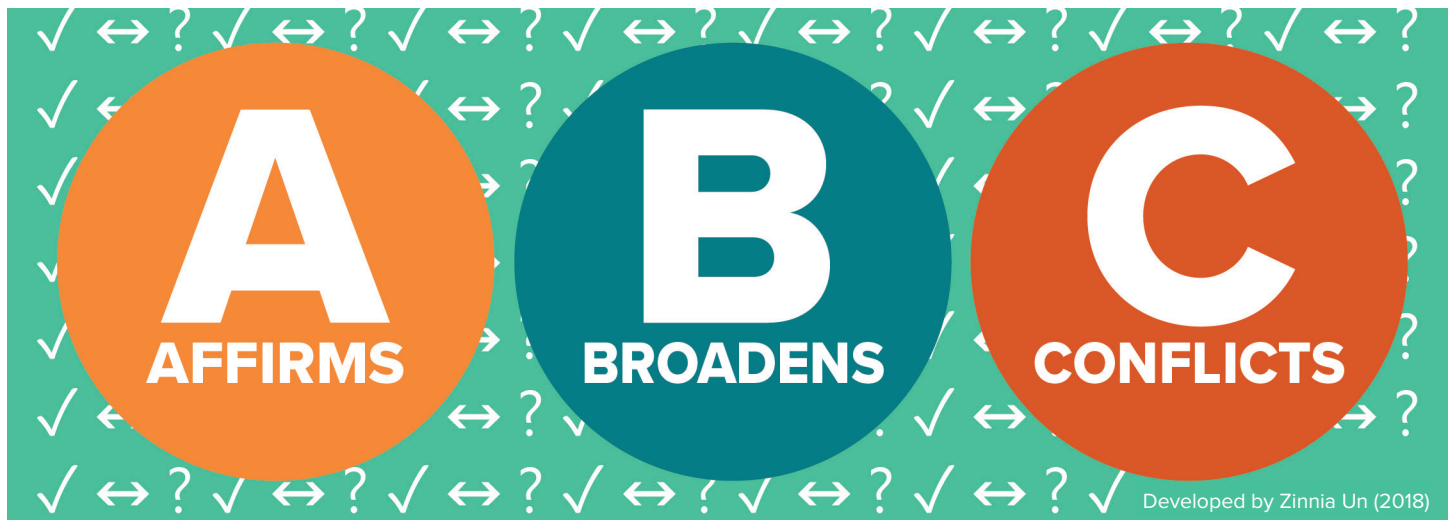
- Often, because emotions run high in equity conversations, we project or overlay our own tone and emotion over other people's words which can misrepresent the message

Nonverbal Listening

70 - 80% of what we communicate comes from our body language. Notice the changes in body language, and instead of assigning meaning to them. Reflect on when the speaker's body language changed. What was said right before that?

- This might help with seeing the impact of a statement. That might lead to asking clarifying questions.

ABC Protocol



AFFIRMS ✓

“This is similar to what I was thinking.” Thoughts are related to processing of information, events or situations that connect to potential confirmation bias (the tendency to search for, interpret, favor, and recall information in a way that confirms or supports one’s prior beliefs or values), or congruence in thought or understanding. Recognizing and unpacking the why of affirmation can help us understand our habits of thought and conditioned beliefs. It can also help us note our own biases and why an idea, option, or concept is given preference.

BROADENS ↔

“Aha, I see.” Thoughts relate to the realization of new information giving us “aha moments.” It also aligns well with the risk zone and our ability to be open to new ideas. This becomes a fruitful space for learning and calibrating new information. A tenet of equity concepts here is the value of multiple perspectives.

CONFLICTS ?

“This is different than what I was thinking.” Thoughts relate to intentional reflection. Can offer value to conflicting thoughts, while pausing to understand why it conflicts with our thinking. Does it have to do with our lived experiences, or something that we know that conflicts with what is said, experienced, or understood? The equity tenet that this might relate to is cultural mismatch, or a singular lens that might be challenged by other lenses or experiences.

WHY

Normalizes conflict and various connections to information, events, or situations.

This protocol also normalizes the time it takes to calibrate understanding among people. It highlights that there are benefits in recognizing that not everyone has the same thoughts.

Taking time to bring that up and out, might save time for calibrating conflict later when things become more high stakes because of various levels of investments in time, resources, emotions, and energy.

WHAT

ABC protocol helps with giving scaffolds for processing information, events, and/or situations through discourse, in writing, or through self-reflection.

The ABC protocol also can help with calibrating understanding about a concept, idea, or process, through the lens of various community members.

The ABC protocol can also be used to support self-reflection when processing one’s actions, information, or situation.

HOW

In groups

Using it as a discourse protocol allows people to have first thoughts related to the content, and then have them sit with their first thoughts and categorize them. This helps build muscle towards reflecting with intention their conditioned thoughts. This muscle building supports mitigating bias in decision-making.

As an Individual

Use it as a reflection tool towards critical friends processes. For example, someone might bring forward work, thoughts, or ideas. The ABC protocol can help with offering feedback that supports the spectrum of outcomes.

4 A's Protocol

4A's PROTOCOL

AHA

APPRECIATION

ASPIRATION

APOLOGY

WHY

This normalizes how each person can have a range of feelings, connections, and ways of processing a collective experience.

Provides an optimistic closure to conversation that promotes reflection and connection to past, present and future experiences.

WHAT

By sharing space to connect with one of these things, it helps check our assumptions and decenter ourselves related to how we perceive a situation or an experience that was understood by others.

HOW

At the end of a meeting, ask the groups to share one of the 4 A's and Why