

Choosing Topics That Matter

This protocol is for students who are helping each other choose topics to study. Try it after students have thought about what topic they might choose but before committing to one.

1. Form a group of three.
2. One member of the group (the presenter) talks about a topic using the following prompts. The presenter doesn't have to go in any particular order or get to all the prompts. The other group members silently listen and take notes. (Four minutes)
 - What have I experienced that draws me to this topic?
 - Why study this topic at this particular point in my life?
 - What do I most want to get out of studying this?
 - If I study this, what important things will I be able to do next?
 - How does this topic connect to other things that matter to me, to my family, in my community, or in the world?
 - If I don't pick this topic, how might it affect me or someone else?
3. The presenter is silent while the group members say back what they heard. The presenter takes notes. (Two minutes)
4. Repeat steps 1 and 2 so each member of the group becomes the presenter. (Six minutes per group member)
5. Each member of the group commits to a topic—the one he or she talked about, some variation of it, or a new topic altogether—and explains why he or she is making the choice to study it. (Two minutes per group member)

Porosoff, L. (2014). Curriculum at your core: Meaningful teaching in the age of standards. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.