



# Block Party

Debbie Bambino (n.d.) developed the Block Party protocol as an adaptation of a popular strategy by adolescent literacy specialist Kyleene Beers (2002); I then adapted it to its present form. Previewing a text is a research-based strategy for K–12 learners (Liaw, 2017). This protocol explores a text that participants *have not yet read*.

## Purpose

Participants aim to build interest in a text.

## Group Size

Generally, groups of eight or more are ideal; with a large physical space, a large group of educators could use Block Party.

## Pre-Protocol Preparation

Choose representative quotations from the text and reproduce them (for example, on index cards or cut pieces of paper). The number of quotes may equal the number of participants or duplicate quotes may be included to ensure there are enough quotes for each participant. I usually create 125 percent of the quotes needed in case some participants reject something they initially pick up. Distribute the quotes throughout the space.

## Sequence

1. Ask participants to each find a quote and spend time reflecting on what that quote means to each of them and their work. (Two to three minutes)
2. Ask participants to find a partner, offer their quote, and discuss. (Less than five minutes)
3. Gain the group's attention (for example, by using a sound or visual signal), ask partners to thank each other using names ("Thank you, Paul."), and find a new partner. Repeat step 2. (Less than five minutes)
4. Gain the group's attention (for example, using a sound or visual signal), ask partners to thank each other using names, and find a new partner for the last pairing. Repeat step 2. (Less than five minutes)
5. In this optional step, participants, in quads, offer their quotes, and the group discusses implications for their work, as well as speculating about the larger text from which these quotes emerge. (Less than ten minutes)

## MEETING GOALS

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6. Share the source of the quotes and articulate any next steps for the group regarding this particular text (for example, by handing out the text and assignment to read, encouraging educators to acquire a copy if they are intrigued).
7. Debrief the process.

## Notes

- Some facilitators assign quotes (by saying, for example, “At your place is a quote you will use for the first protocol called Block Party”). Since adult learners prefer choice, distributing a smattering of quotes around the physical space is a way to show the facilitator understands the preferences of adults.
- Some educators struggle with having just one sentence from a text. They long for context and feel frustrated that the protocol seems to prohibit it. Consider having some of the quotes be longer than just one sentence.
- If the text is particularly lengthy, color-coding the papers may be a way to help build categories (or chapters). At the optional step 5, educators with the same color quotes may gather to guess about the possible connections.

## Application Examples

- Gloria wants to break the news about another book study to her department. Department members know her well and assume every semester she will have a new book! Rather than giving a book talk or showing a YouTube clip from the author, Gloria uses Block Party, and it seems to be a welcome change.
- Billy has been given the assignment to teach the teachers about the changes in the faculty handbook. He feels a bit like he is being hazed, as he is the new hire on the administrative team! Rather than creating a slide presentation to talk at teachers the week before school starts, he chooses to use Block Party. At step 5, he is going to gather certain quotes together and ask the teachers to conjecture about why the leadership has made the changes to the handbook.

## References

- Bambino, D. (n.d.). *Block party*. Accessed at [www.schoolreforminitiative.org/download/block-party/](http://www.schoolreforminitiative.org/download/block-party/) on February 4, 2021.
- Beers, K. (2002). *When kids can't read—What teachers can do*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Liaw, M. L. (2017). Reading strategy awareness training to empower online reading. *English Teacher*, 38, 133–150.