Small Group Discussion Activity Using the

Four “A”s Text Protocol

Adapted from National School Reform Faculty (ww.nsrfharmony.org) protocol, which was adapted from Judith Gray, Seattle, WA, 2005

This protocol can be used in small group discussion activities designed to help students analyze expository text. Group members focus on four A’s in the text: **A**ssumptions of the author, something they **A**gree with, something they want to **A**rgue with, and something they **A**spire to.

Students will need to have prior instruction in small group norms, how to identify assumptions, and what it means to “aspire to” something.

Divide the class into groups of 3 or 4 and explain the instructions on the following page as students follow along on their own copy of the instructions. Assign a group leader for each group.

Teacher circulates during the small group activity to help keep students focused on the task.

Teacher leads large group debriefing as each group leader summarizes the group’s positions.

Teacher leads large group discussion on the different opinions about the text that emerged, allowing other class members who have not yet spoken to voice and defend their opinions.

Teacher summarizes important assumptions of the writer that students should recognize, how these help the reader understand the writer’s perspective, and why different assumptions of the reader can help explain why there are different reactions to the text.

**Directions for Small Group Discussion Using the 4 A’s Protocol**

Read the text to yourselves silently. As you read, try to identify at least one of each of the following and make a note in the margin:

* An **A**ssumption that the author holds
* Something you **A**gree with in the text
* Something you want to **A**rgue with in the text
* Something you want to **A**spire to in the text

In a round, have each person identify one assumption in the text, citing the text (with page numbers, if appropriate) as evidence.

Next, have each person identify something s/he agrees with in the text, citing the text (with page numbers, if appropriate)

Next, have each person identify something s/he wants to argue with in the text, citing the text (with page numbers, if appropriate)

If there are issues on which there is someone in the group who agrees and someone in the group who wants to argue, give each person one more minute to try to convince the other of his/her point of view.

Finally, have each person identify something s/he wants to aspire to in the text and why.

The person assigned the role of “group leader” by the teacher should summarize for the group what s/he sees as the things on which the group is agreed and the things on which they disagree to make sure there is consensus on the summary before the group leader speaks for the group during the large group debrief.