Tips for making Fishbowl Student Centered activity work:

 Socratic Seminar in a Standards and state Assessment Era

Inner Circle:

* Provide Guiding Questions for the Inner Circle initially; as students become more adept with this text analysis gradually remove the questions
* Adapt the Guiding Questions to what students need to learn, need to work on; scaffold with questions as needed

For example, if one student tends to dominate the discussion that is a to the detriment of full participation, Use as an Inner Circle Protocol that full group participation is expected

* Students writing on the piece discussed follows the discussion, seizing the opportunity for students to write “Text-Based Essay” on the text analysis while they have many ideas as a basis of the writing. Teacher reads aloud to the class best writing pieces (anonymously) as models.

Outer Circle

Two major changes from the traditional Fishbowl activity for current Standards with State Tests for close reading, inference, context clues, central idea, tone:

1. Outer Circle has a copy of the same text the Inner Circle is looking at for close reading and text analysis
2. Outer Circle students listen for good text-based points made, and for smooth interaction, with participants learning from one another, and on task (without student digression from the analysis task, or loosely connected anecdotes).

Outer Circle participants do not comment during the Inner Circle discussion, only write down their observations and report back after the Inner Circle discussion, only commenting on ideas expressed, and not using student names.

After the Inner Circle is done discussing, the students switch roles, and the Outer Circle students become Inner Circle discussants, with a different text.

Design

To make this work well, especially initially:

* The teacher may select which students are in the Inner Circle initially, to select first students who are reliably good participants, while leaving some for the second set of Inner Circle participants.
* When starting to use this practice, use simpler text that is still rich and a bit challenging, then moving gradually to more complex text.
* **Practice this activity frequently**, so that students learn to enjoy it, become good at it, and learn from it and most importantly learn to read and analyze text on their own.

