Whole-Class Discussions for Exploring Multiple Perspectives

Educator effectively selects and facilitates a whole-class discussion protocol in which students explore multiple perspectives about a global topic, concept, or issue.

Key Method

The educator identifies a discussion protocol appropriate to the classroom context and one that will engage students in recognizing and considering multiple viewpoints. The educator facilitates student participation in a whole-class discussion of various perspectives on a global topic, concept, or issue, and facilitates a reflective debrief of the experience.

Method Components

How can whole-class discussion protocols help students explore multiple perspectives around global issues?

In class discussions where each student has the opportunity to contribute to the conversation, everyone benefits by hearing various perspectives from their classmates. Whether students are collaboratively building on one another’s ideas or respectfully disagreeing, gaining multiple viewpoints helps students see the topic in a more complex, authentic way. Carefully selected discussion protocols give students the opportunity to consider and incorporate multiple viewpoints as they develop greater understanding of a global issue. See “Tell Me About a Discussion Challenge You Overcame” and “Group Work and Group Discussion” in the Resources section.

Why are multiple perspectives important for global competence?

Given the complex and interdependent nature of world events and global issues, a key aspect of global competence involves weighing and evaluating multiple perspectives, including one’s own. By valuing multiple viewpoints and seeking out various perspectives on an issue, students are better able to understand and apply different perspectives to problem-solving and decision-making. (See the Resources section for more information.)

Examples of Global Topics or Issues for Whole-Class Discussions for Exploring Multiple Perspectives

- **Habitat loss in the Amazonian rainforests** – In this discussion, students must weigh the perspectives of conservationists who see value in preserving biodiversity and habitat against the perspectives of ranchers and farmers who rely on the land for their livelihood.
- **Enhanced food production** – In this discussion, students must weigh concerns about genetically-modified foods against the interests of many other countries to provide abundant food supplies to their people.
- **Access to energy** – In this discussion, students use the example of the Fukushima nuclear accident in Japan to weigh the need for reliable energy against the importance of global safety.

Suggested Implementation Strategies
1. Based on your classroom and curriculum context, identify the global topic, concept, or issue students will be discussing. If appropriate, provide students with information about the issue/topic through reading(s), video(s), and/or other learning experiences designed to build their background knowledge.

2. Select a whole-class discussion protocol that will engage students in considering multiple perspectives. See the menu of “Suggested Whole-Class Discussion Protocols for Multiple Perspectives” in the Resources section. Prepare any needed materials and arrange the classroom as appropriate to the protocol you have selected.

3. Facilitate the discussion and conclude with a debrief in which you ask students to reflect on how the discussion helped them gain multiple perspectives and how this deepened their understanding of the global issue. One suggested strategy is to engage students in “Debrief Circles” (see Resources). Students should also record individual written reflections before and/or after the reflective debrief.

Supporting Research
When facilitated so that all students are fully engaged and participating, whole-class discussions are an active-learning strategy that promotes collaborative and constructivist learning. When students are engaged in participating through meaningful contributions to a whole-class discussion, they are more actively involved in thinking and learning. Thus, the effective use of whole-class discussion is an instructional best practice (Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde, 2005) and one that has been shown to have a positive impact on student achievement (Hattie, 2012).

  http://visible-learning.org/2013/01/visible-learning-for-teachers-book-review/


Resources
Global competence refers to the knowledge, skills, and dispositions individuals need to be successful in today’s interconnected world and to be fully engaged in and act on issues of global significance. The Global Competence Task Force defined globally competent individuals as “those who use their knowledge and skills to investigate the world beyond their immediate environment, recognize their own and others’ perspectives, communicate their ideas effectively with diverse audiences, and translate their ideas into appropriate actions” (see link below).

Example Global Competence Frameworks

- The **Global Competence Matrix** was created through a collaboration between World Savvy, Teachers College, Columbia University, and the Asia Society. The matrix identifies components of global competence, which assists educators as they foster global competence in themselves and develop it in their students. 
  http://www.worldsavvy.org/global-competence/

- **Global Competencies: 21st Century Skills Applied to the World** was developed by the Global Competence Task Force, formed and led by the Council of Chief State School Officers’ EdSteps Initiative and the Asia Society Partnership for Global Learning
### Example Global Issues

- Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform  
  [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/sustainabledevelopmentgoals](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/sustainabledevelopmentgoals)
- Pulitzer Center Lesson Builder  
- The Choices Program  
  [http://www.choices.edu/](http://www.choices.edu/)

### Suggested Whole-Class Discussion Protocols for Multiple Perspectives

The discussion strategies below are widely used by educators across the field. The following organizations provide helpful explanations of how they work through written descriptions and illustrative videos:

- Facing History (FH)  
  [https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies](https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies)
- ReadWriteThink (RWT)  
  [http://www.readwritething.org/](http://www.readwritething.org/)
- School Reform Initiative (SRI)  
  [http://www.schoolreforminitiative.org/protocol-alphabetical-list-2](http://www.schoolreforminitiative.org/protocol-alphabetical-list-2)
- The Teacher Toolkit from Education Service Center Region 13 (TT)  
- Teaching Channel (TC)  
  [https://www.teachingchannel.org/](https://www.teachingchannel.org/)
- Expeditionary Learning (EL)  
  [http://eleducation.org/resources](http://eleducation.org/resources)

### Whole-Class Discussion Protocols

For asking students to taking a stance or position:

- Barometer (FH)
- Surveys (see pp. 15-19)  
- Consensogram (TT)
- Four Corners (FH, TT)
- Take a Stand (EL):  
  [https://vimeo.com/101559969](https://vimeo.com/101559969)
- The Grid (see pp. 6-11)  
• Pick a Side (TC)

For engaging students in silent written conversation:
• Big paper (FH)  
  http://bit.ly/1qmvy41
• Chalktalk (SRI, EL):  
  https://vimeo.com/101254151
• Graffiti Boards (FH)

For getting students to move around and exchange ideas:
• Classroom Mingle (TT)
• Give One, Get One (FH)
• Give One, Get One, Move On (EL):  
  https://vimeo.com/103459509
• Inside/Outside Circles (TT)
• Two Stray, One Stay (TT)
• Walk, Talk, Decide (TT)
• World Café  
  http://www.theworldcafe.com/

For engaging students in a sustained, often text-based, discussion:
• Cafe Conversations (FH)
• Socratic Seminar (FH, RWT, TC)
• Fishbowl (FH)
• Pinwheel Discussions (TC)
• Town Hall Circle (FH)

• Tell Me About a Discussion Challenge You Overcame offers many wise tips and suggestions for successfully facilitating whole-class discussions.  

• The Group Work and Group Discussion video from Expeditionary Learning provides an overview of important factors for successfully implementing small-group discussions such as norms, clear expectations, roles, and responsibilities.  
  http://eleducation.org/resources/group-work-and-group-discussions

• High school students talk about "Learning Through Collaboration" as part of the What Kids Can Do Just Listen: Students Talk About Learning project.  
  https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL57F56BDE72F67BA6

• Debrief Circles engage all students in sharing their reflections with a peer and listening to others’ reflections as well. The rotating inner/outer circle structure give students the opportunity to exchange ideas with a variety of partners.  
  https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/students-reflect-on-learning-exl

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**Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria**

The items in this following section detail what must be submitted for evaluation. To earn this micro-credential, you must receive a passing evaluation for Parts 1 and 3 and a “Yes” for Part 2.

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Part 1. Overview Questions
(500-word limit total):

- What were your goals and expectations for engaging students in the whole-class discussion of the global topic, concept, or issue? How did you select and plan for the discussion protocol you chose with these aims in mind?
- What did you observe during the discussion? Please describe what you heard and noticed as students were engaged in the conversation and what you did as the facilitator.
  - Passing: The educator provides a thorough and thoughtful rationale for his/her choice of global topic/concept/issue and discussion protocol and a detailed description of observations made while students participated in the discussion.

Part 2. Work Examples/Artifacts
Please submit a video or audio recording of students participating in the reflective debrief at the end of the discussion (maximum length: three minutes) OR written reflections from three to five different students that demonstrate how the discussion helped them understand the global issue from multiple perspectives (maximum length: three pages).

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<tr>
<th>&quot;Yes&quot;</th>
<th>“Almost”</th>
<th>“Not Yet”</th>
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| Student reflections clearly and consistently demonstrate that the educator is able to successfully implement a lesson using a whole-class discussion protocol to help students explore a global topic, concept, or issue from multiple perspectives. Student reflections include strong evidence of students:  
  - Interacting and learning from one another  
  - Being open to multiple perspectives  
  - Analyzing various dimensions of viewpoints on the issue; and  
  - Understanding the complexities of the issue. | Student reflections demonstrate that the educator is able to implement a lesson using a whole-class discussion protocol, but there is not enough evidence to support whether it helps students explore a global topic, concept, or issue from multiple perspectives. Student reflections include limited evidence of students interacting and learning from one another and being open to multiple perspectives. | Student reflections do not yet demonstrate that the educator is able to implement a lesson using a whole-class discussion protocol to help students explore a global topic, concept, or issue from multiple perspectives. Student reflections include little or no evidence of students interacting and learning from one another and being open to multiple perspectives. |

Part 3. Reflection
(750-word limit total):

- What did you learn from your own experience planning and facilitating the whole-class discussion of a global topic/concept/issue? How did you engage students in perspective-taking through the use of the selected discussion method?

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- What did you learn from your own observations as well as the insights students shared in the reflective debrief and in their individual written reflections?
- Given what you’ve learned, what will you do the next time you implement a lesson using whole-class discussion to help students explore a global topic/concept/issue from multiple perspectives? Please include things you will do the same and differently in the future.
  - **Passing**: The educator provides a thorough and thoughtful reflection that address all three questions in detail, and clearly and consistently demonstrates an understanding of how to implement lessons that use whole-class discussions to help students understand global topics/concepts/issues from multiple perspectives.