Practicing Open-mindedness

Practicing open-mindedness involves actively searching for evidence against one’s favored beliefs, values, plans, or goals, weighing such evidence fairly, and considering alternative perspectives to deepen one’s understanding and empathy for diverse points of view.

Key Method

Considering and researching perspectives different from one’s own, then practicing voicing the alternative perspective and supporting the other sides of an issue helps students develop open-minded attitudes.

Method Components

While undertaking an activity, the educator challenges students to contemplate their own personal perspectives on an issue and build empathy, tolerance, and respect by discussing that perspective with others who may or may not share that point of view. This activity can be conducted individually, in small groups, or during whole-group instruction.

Suggested implementation

Being able to explain and advocate for a position different from their own can help students develop an open-minded perspective, build tolerance and empathy, and improve the accuracy and depth of understanding of their own beliefs, values, plans, or goals. The following activities can help students practice developing an open-minded attitude:

- Students who identify with a particular political point of view watch videos, listen to radio programs, read websites, or interview people that have a very different political point of view, record their observations in an “Open Mind” journal, and summarize in writing how the experience has affected their own beliefs and views.
- Students identify an issue they frequently argue over with their parents, listing the main points of difference on the matter; in pairs, one student takes the side of the student, the other of the parent, and role-play the argument, then switch roles; finally, the students discuss how the experience of arguing for the parental view affected their perspectives and their levels of open-mindedness.
- Students list evidence and values both in support of and in opposition to a particular position on a controversial issue, choose which of the two positions they side with, research and further develop the list of evidence and values on the other side of the issue, and discuss how this work affected their own views on the issue.
- On a scientific issue currently being heavily debated, students list the scientific evidence on both sides of the debate, describe what additional evidence could sway the debate one way or another, and then discuss the results.

Suggested preparation

Students think of people they know or know about who are particularly closed-minded or open-minded, create a two-column chart of characteristics of both open- and closed-minded people, and then discuss the results.
Suggested review
Discuss how practicing open-mindedness affected students’ willingness to actively search for evidence against their own perspectives and what the benefits might be of having a more open-minded approach in learning and in life.

Supporting Research
Research indicates that being open to evidence, values, and perspectives different from one’s own can increase empathy; improve the accuracy and depth of the evidence for a claim; and lead to greater tolerance, deeper understanding, and a respect for diversity and complexity in learning, relationships, and everyday life.


Resources

Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria
Following are the items you must submit to earn this micro-credential and the criteria by which they will be evaluated. To earn the micro-credential, you must receive a passing evaluation for Parts 1, 3, and 4 and a “Yes” for Part 2.

Part 1. Overview questions
(200-word limit for each response)

- Activity Description: What kind of project activities did you and your students engage in to become more proficient in the practicing open-mindedness competency? Please describe the learning activities and strategies you used.
  - Passing: Activity description is clear with sufficient detail to illustrate what the students did to gain competencies.
- Activity Evaluation: How do you know your students increased their proficiency by engaging in the practicing open-mindedness activities and what evidence did you collect that demonstrates these learning gains?
  - Passing: Activity evaluation process and evidence are clear, appropriate, and sufficient to evaluate the competencies.

Part 2. Evidence/artifacts
Please submit work examples from two students (such as links to writing, audio, images, video, or other media) that demonstrate progress toward the practicing open-mindedness competency, including items such as the issues and evidence for different perspectives and values students explored, examples of students role-playing different sides of an argument, research on scientific evidence that supports different positions on an issue, the personal impacts of deeply exploring a differing perspective, or other relevant items.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Yes”</th>
<th>“Almost”</th>
<th>“Not Yet”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student work clearly demonstrates learning from practicing the open-</td>
<td>Student work demonstrates learning from the practicing open-mindedness</td>
<td>Student work shows some learning from the practicing open-mindedness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mindedness activities through:</td>
<td>activities through some examples of how understanding and empathy for</td>
<td>activities, with a few examples of increases in understanding of differing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Many examples of students exploring and researching different</td>
<td>differing perspectives increased, with a few examples of team discussions</td>
<td>views, but no examples of individual reflections or discussions of how</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>understandings and perspectives than their own</td>
<td>and reflections on the benefits of open-mindedness and lessons learned</td>
<td>the activities changed their perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Convincing evidence of increases in empathy, tolerance, and</td>
<td>from the activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>respect for other perspectives than their own</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Multiple examples of productive discussions and thoughtful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reflections on the value of open-mindedness for learning and life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Part 3. Student reflections**
For the two students whose work examples were included above, submit student-created reflections on their experience of the practicing open-mindedness activities. Use the following questions as a guide (200-word limit for each reflection):

- How did the practicing open-mindedness activities help you better understand and empathize with people who have different views and values than your own?
- How did the practicing open-mindedness activities change your view of the importance of being open to views and evidence that challenge your own beliefs and values?
  - **Passing:** Student reflections clearly indicate how the practicing open-mindedness activities helped them understand and empathize with people who hold different perspectives, and the reflections are specific and convincing. Student reflections also clearly discuss how the activities changed student views on the value of open-mindedness and differing perspectives, and the reflections are specific and convincing.

**Part 4. Teacher reflection**
Provide a reflection on what you learned, using the following questions as a guide (200-word limit):

- What was the impact of engaging your students in the practicing open-mindedness activity?
- How will experiencing these project activities shape your daily teaching practice in the future?
  - **Passing:** Teacher reflections clearly indicate how the activity affected both the students and the teacher. Teacher reflection also clearly states how the experience will affect the teacher’s future practice, and the reflections are specific and convincing.