

Fishbowl Debate

Goal: to weigh the pros and cons of various perspectives on a given issue.

General Concept: students work in teams to develop arguments in favor of a particular perspective or point of view. The various groups then debate the various views.

Process:

1. Break the class into equal sized groups.
2. Assign each group a statement that gives a perspective/point of view on a given topic (e.g. the United States should intervene anywhere in the world where human rights are being abused vs. the United State is not the world's policeman and should not intervene at all in other countries vs. the United States should only intervene when its national interests are at stake vs. the United States should intervene only when a country's government asks for its help).
3. Give each group time to research and develop arguments in support of this point of view and countering the other points of view.
4. Place four chairs in the middle of the room (or however many points of view are being argued). All other chairs should be in a circle looking in on the four chairs (the "fishbowl").
5. Have one representative from each group enter the fishbowl to make their group's opening argument. Only students in the fishbowl are allowed to talk. Those on the outside can only observe and take notes.
6. Once the first four reps have made their opening arguments, someone else from his or her group must tap on them on the shoulder and replace them in the fishbowl.
7. No student may re-enter the fishbowl until everyone in his or her group has been in it.

Ideal for: *bodily-kinesthetic learners* because the activity requires that students move in and out of the fishbowl; *verbal-linguistic learners* because the activity requires that students verbalize their arguments in an effective manner.

Important for peace education because its an activity that sheds light on various perspectives on any given issue and requires students to investigate those perspectives, even if they don't personally agree with them.

Modifications:

- The team picks one representative to be in the fishbowl while the rest of the group hands him or her notes to help develop new arguments as the debate continues.
- Only one person in the fishbowl can speak at a time.