

STRUCTURED DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES

Inclusive Pedagogy Seminar

Bernard L. Schwartz Communication Institute

Allowing anonymous reactions

When students have read a text on a particularly contentious subject (white privilege, affirmative action, welfare reform), ask them at the beginning of the class period to jot down a few more words describing their feelings as they read or thought about the material. Collect these, then ask them to write down whatever thoughts and questions came to them. Read aloud both piles of anonymous reactions, first the feelings, then the thoughts and questions. Or, read the feelings aloud, then shuffle the thoughts and questions and pass them back to students to read aloud. Discussion will follow.

From *When Race Breaks Out*, p. 126

Hatful of Quotes

Before class:

- Select five or six passages from a text
- Transfer them to small slips of paper, with each quote appearing on at least two slips of paper

In class:

- Put the quotes in a hat (or other suitable container)
- Ask the students to draw a slip from the hat
- Give them several minutes to write about the quotes they drew
- Then ask everyone to read his or her quote aloud and comment on it to the group

From *Start Talking*, p. 104

Fishbowl

Place four chairs in a square, facing each other, in the center of the room. Have students help move the rest of the chairs to a circle around these center chairs. Explain that four volunteers will take the seats in the center and start off the discussion on the topic of the day. They can give their own arguments and opinions or take on the role of someone whose opinion they disagree with (or don't really know whether they agree or disagree with). Students sitting in the outside chairs must remain silent. However, at any time a student from the outside chairs may tap the shoulder of any student in the center and change places with them.

From *When Race Breaks Out*, p. 129

Coin exercise

Have students sit in a circle, and place a wastebasket or baseball cap in the center. Ask students to take out two pennies and a silver coin. (I bring extra pennies and encourage sharing, telling the class they will get their coins back at the end of the exercise.) Tell students: "The pennies represent statements and the silver coin represents a question—not an information question, but a question that turns the discussion in some new direction. When someone wants to speak, s/he throws the coin into the center. That person then has the floor and no one can interrupt. When s/he is finished

speaking, someone else can throw in a coin. When you use up your coins, you can't speak any more and you must stay silent; no begging, buying, or stealing of other people's coins! You don't have to use up all your coins, but I encourage you to do so. I also will have three coins and follow the same rules.

From *When Race Breaks Out*, p. 129

LARA Method

This deceptively simple method of dialogue on emotionally charged issues was developed by Bonnie Tinker of Love Makes a Family using non-violence techniques she had been trained to use in the Civil Rights Movement. It involves four steps: Listen, Affirm, Respond, and Add. The idea is to listen deeply "until you hear the moral principle that [your opponent] is speaking from or a feeling or experience you share." Then affirm by "express[ing] the connection you found when you listened," letting the person know that you agree or empathize on a deep level. Third, respond fully and honestly to the issue the person raised, and finally, add new information that will correct mistaken ideas and give a more factual basis for discussion. The point is not to "win" the argument but to reach a deeper understanding and connect on a human level, despite differences.

From *When Race Breaks Out*, p. 132

Jigsaw Puzzle Technique

1. Divide Students into groups: these should be diverse in terms of gender, ethnicity, race, and ability
2. Appoint a group leader: initially, this should be the most mature student in the group, but it can rotate as the class gets familiar with the activity
3. Divide the day's lesson into segments, according to the number per group
4. Assign each student to learn one segment, giving them access to only their segment
5. Give them time to learn it
6. Form temporary "expert groups" by having one student from each jigsaw group join other students assigned to the same segment
7. Bring students back into their jigsaw groups
8. Ask each student to present their segment to the group: encourage others in the group to ask questions for clarification
9. Float from group to group, observing the process and making appropriate interventions in group dynamics if necessary
10. At the end of the session, give a quiz or otherwise make all the students accountable for what they learned from their peers

Adapted from Aronson, et al.

When discussion is silent or superficial, ask or prompt:

- Why is [race, gender, religion] so hard to talk about?
- What is your [race] and how do you know it?
- When did you first recognize your place in the [racial hierarchy]?
- One thing I've been reluctant to say is...

Adapted from *When Race Breaks Out*, pp. 117-123