



SPHERE

Fostering Civil Discourse and Diverse Viewpoints for Every Classroom

Civil Discourse: Creating Norms and Exploring Decision-Making (2)

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Learning Objectives

- Explore community and culture by examining an image or work of art
- Explore community and culture through an artist's lens
- Define and discuss values and norms
- Engage in a decision-making activity to understand varying perspectives, and practice sharing opinions respectfully



Essential Questions

How do we define who we are? What is culture, and how do we express it? What topics/ideas are significant to your lives? What topics are relevant and necessary to human relationships?

Media

- Examples for intro: "Coming to America" by Helen Zughaib or something similar that invites everyone into a unifying and diverse experience about community and culture

Part I: Reading an Image

As students walk into the room, the media the students will be talking about should be displayed. This piece of media should be easy to interpret but also have layers of meaning that encompass what it means to be in a community, have culture, and have shared experiences. Students should use what they say in the discussion as a jumping-off point to talk about their own culture and experiences.

WARM-UP

Ask students the following as a journal prompt:

What do you see? Think about the words, images, colors, and placement of objects. What do you think the image means? How does it relate to who we are in our community? How is it different from who we are in our community?

Part II: Establishing Values and Norms

Preview the unit goals and objectives and then segue into why it is important to have class values and norms before continuing a unit centered on civil discourse through the lens of literature and film.

Display the following: Class Values—What Do We Value as a Class?

Answers can include but are not limited to:

- Respect
- Independence
- Technology
- Music
- Family
- Friendship
- Sports

Let students have time to discuss the definitions and/or importance of each.

SAY

How can we use what we value to create our class norms? Norms are the standards we set to communicate how our class functions going forward.

Display the following: Class Norms That Foster Our Ability to Learn

What do you want to see in this classroom? How should we act?

Answers can include but are not limited to:

- Mutual respect
- Proper use of technology in our classroom
- Being a team player
- Sharing opinions about topics not people
- Understanding we are all different

Once class values and norms have been established, share in such a way that other classes that are completing this same unit can see all the values and norms for each class. This can be done on chart paper, on slides, or in whatever way works best in your classroom.

Once values and norms have been established, the class can discuss the image from the warm-up activity. Record their thoughts and ideas. This can be done by creating a word web on a large piece of paper or using technology (like Padlet or Canva) to create a list of concepts and ideas around culture, community, and our shared experiences.

Use the answers the students give for the second question (How does this work relate to you and your experiences?). Students may say that it is the opposite of or similar to their own experiences. Both are valid and worthy of discussion.

Part III: The Value of Decisions

Desks and chairs may need to be moved for this. The room should be clearly marked so that there are 3 sections:

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Remind students of the norms they just created before starting this activity. Explain to students that they will be participating in a decision-making activity in which they will have an opportunity to share their opinions with others. Emphasize the importance of respectful communication and active listening during the activity.

Ask students to define "Disagree," "Neutral," and "Agree."

Students should all be sitting in their chairs. Read aloud statements from the prepared list or create a list more appropriate for your class. After each statement, students should silently decide where they stand on the continuum based on their agreement or disagreement.

Once students have chosen their positions, allow them to move to the appropriate place

on the continuum. Encourage students to find their positions in silence and refrain from debating with others. After everyone has chosen their positions, invite a few volunteers to calmly explain why they placed themselves where they did.

Encourage students to share diverse perspectives. As students participate and move around, if things get too rambunctious, ask them to go back to their seats for a quiet 30-second break before continuing. You can stop the decision-making activity at any time as long as students have had a chance to move and comment if they wish. Monitor the activity to ensure that students are respecting each other's opinions and maintaining a respectful atmosphere.

Encourage participation from all students by inviting different voices to share their perspectives. Adapt the discussion based on the maturity level and comfort of the students. Emphasize the value of active listening and understanding differing viewpoints. At the end, be sure to thank students for participating and ask students to thank each other for sharing in class.

STATEMENTS FOR DECISION-MAKING

- It's important for students to help each other with their schoolwork.
- It's OK to tell a teacher if you see someone cheating on a test.
- Everyone should have the right to feel safe and respected at school.
- It's important to listen to other people's opinions, even if you disagree with them.
- Students should be encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities.
- It's important for schools to have strict rules against bullying.
- Students should have a say in decisions that affect their school experience.
- It's OK to ask for help when you're struggling with something.
- It's important to stand up for what you believe in, even if it's not popular.
- It's important for schools to teach students about different cultures and perspectives.
- It's OK to make mistakes as long as you learn from them.
- Students should have access to mental health resources and support at school.
- It's important for schools to have programs that promote kindness and empathy.
- Students should have the right to express themselves through their clothing and appearance.
- It's important to take breaks and practice self-care when you're feeling stressed.
- Students should be encouraged to pursue their passions and interests.
- It's important for schools to have a variety of clubs and activities to choose from.
- Students should have access to healthy food options at school.
- It's important for schools to have clear consequences for inappropriate behavior.
- Students should have opportunities to learn about and discuss important social issues.

Closing the Lesson

These questions can be used at the end of class to bring the topics of the day's lessons together or to journal in notebooks:

- In communicating about an image or work of art, what did you learn about your own culture and community?
- What do I value? What do we value?
- What kind of thinking went into making your decisions?
- What norms are needed for honest and open communication?
- Who am I? What represents me and my community?

Common Core State Standards

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.8:** Explain how an author uses reason and evidence to support particular points in a text.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.7.8:** Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence relevant and sufficient to support the claims.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.8:** Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence relevant and sufficient; recognize when irrelevant evidence is introduced.

SPEAKING AND LISTENING

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1:** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, group, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1:** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, group, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1:** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, group, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.