

Inclusivity and Harkness Method: Building Empathy in the Classroom



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Presentation Goals

- Pedagogical overview
- Describe how to implement discussion-based learning
- Application to both C3 framework and common core standards
- Try out the method, use my teaching tools

History:

Discussion-Based Teaching

Edward Harkness (1874-1940)

- Inherits Standard Oil fortune
- Attends St. Paul's, Yale, and Columbia
- Lecture method ineffective: Memorization doesn't equate to actual learning
- Harkness offers a huge sum of money to a school willing to redesign their pedagogical model
- He challenges Phillips Exeter Academy head Lewis Perry to make a radical change
- *“of a fundamental nature that were so sweeping and so different from methods prevailing here that...the whole educational system in our secondary schools would not only be changed, but changed enormously for the better.”*

Discussion-Based Teaching is born

- Phillips Exeter proposes an oval table, with “no corners to hide behind”
- Pedagogical model based on discussion
- Caps class size at 12 students
- Harkness makes a \$5.8 million donation to Phillips Exeter in 1930

Re-Imagine Your Classroom: Sit in a Circle

Physical Changes to Learning Space

- No rows
- No pods
- Students can see everyone else
- Everyone is literally at the same level
- If you can't get a table, sit in chairs or on the floor in a circle

Manage the class that tends toward imbalance

- Use this as another method in your toolkit
- Avoid student from fishing for “the right answer”
- Reduce the random guessing
- Encourage participation from all
- Build active listening skills

Pedagogical Overview: Discussion-Based Teaching

Establish a Culture of Respect

- Cultivate a sense of empathy
- Circle of Power and Respect
- Circle as inclusive, sacred space
- Teacher must model for students
- Hold students accountable
- Temporarily ostracize if necessary

Ask the right questions

- Inquiry requires a question with tension
- Can it be argued from multiple perspectives?
- Stop going fishing for “the right answer”
- This is NOT Socratic method

How-To: Step-by-Step

Components of the Process

- Frontloading
- Execute the discussion
- Debrief
- Self-reflection
- Assessment

Frontloading

- Provide adequate information, including reading ahead of time
- Practice the method, begin with ABC game to not interrupt
- Review self-reflection guide, explain that this is a graded assignment

Self-Reflection Guide (provided digitally)

Humanities Discussion Log and Self-Reflection

Name: _____

Consider your strengths and weaknesses, and identify areas you would like to improve on. Honesty is the only path to success with this graded assignment. Rate your performance on the following scale:

- 1 - The worst, I clearly need to set this as a priority
- 2 - Struggling, need to work on this as a goal
- 3 - OK, room for improvement
- 4 - Good, nearly achieving my goal
- 5 - Excellent, goal achieved

Now, go back and star at least three areas you would like to set as goals for the next discussion.

Use the space below, and date, to come up with a plan for you to be more successful. It is not acceptable to simply say “ I won’t dominate the discussion next time” or “I will talk more next time”. Be specific.

Self-Reflection

Discussion Title and Date:					
Preparation					
Read prior to class					
Highlight, annotate, take notes, and/or write questions					
Think about the topic before class					
Bring applicable materials to class					
During the discussion - Participation and Active Listening					
Reference the reading, use evidence to support your argument					
Use appropriate body language, posture and eye contact					
Build on ideas, avoid being a parrot					

Self-Reflection

Pay attention to others when they are talking					
Make comments to the class, not the teacher					
Reference comments of others and use their names					
Stay on topic, help peers stay on topic					
Use respectful language at all times					
Be specific: Avoid generalizations and anecdotal evidence					
Do not dominate the discussion					
Make connection between readings and ideas					
Overall level of engagement					

Self-Reflection

Now, go back and star at least three areas you would like to set as goals for the next discussion.

Use the space below, and date, to come up with a plan for you to be more successful. It is not acceptable to simply say “I won’t dominate the discussion next time” or “I will talk more next time”. Be specific about your PLAN to achieve the goal.

Execute the Discussion: Student Role

- Students own the discussion, for better or worse
- One person speaks at a time
- Cite facts, not opinions
- Build on ideas
- Goal of deeper understanding through conversation

Execute the Discussion: Teacher's Role

- Ask the right question to frame the conversation
- Allow long silences
- Set the tone: Respect
- Ideas will be tracked
- Interruptions will be tracked
- Teacher only speaks to redirect, correct factual errors, or for behavior

My Method: I'm Not a Purist

- Non-emotive instructor is difficult for Middle School students to grasp
- Cognitive development - Middle Schoolers are concrete thinkers
- Duration: 45 minutes might not work, settle for less
- Redirect conversation more frequently than older students

Discussion Tracking

- Create a web!
- Use an oval
- Write student names on the perimeter of the oval
- Write idea they state
- Draw an arrow to the next student who speaks

Debrief

- Close the discussion
- Ask students to summarize:
What was learned?
- Determine what went well in the discussion and what didn't
- Set goals as a class for the next discussion

Self-Reflection

- Use the discussion guide or create your own
- Honest appraisal of preparation and participation
- Set individual goals

Assessment

- Encourage students in their individual goals
- Never compare students to one another
- Reward active listening
- The bar is different for each
- Do not grade as punishment

Application to C3 and Common Core Standards

C3: Civics

- **Developing** questions and planning inquiries
- **Applying** disciplinary concepts and tools
- **Evaluating** sources and using evidence
- **Communicating** conclusions and taking informed action

ELA Standards: Speaking and Listening - Comprehension and Collaboration (9th Grade)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, **building on others' ideas** and **expressing their own** clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.A

Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; **explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence** from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.

ELA Standards: Speaking and Listening - Comprehension and Collaboration (9th Grade)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.B

Work with peers to set rules for collegial discussions and decision-making (e.g., informal consensus, taking votes on key issues, **presentation of alternate views**), clear goals and deadlines, and individual roles as needed.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.C

Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; **actively incorporate others** into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or **challenge ideas** and conclusions.

ELA Standards: Speaking and Listening - Comprehension and Collaboration (9th Grade)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.D

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, **qualify or justify their own views** and understanding and **make new connections in light of the evidence** and reasoning presented.

ELA Standards: Speaking and Listening - Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas (9th)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4

Present information, findings, and **supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically** such that listeners can **follow the line of reasoning** and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

ELA Standards: History/Social Studies - (9th)

Key Ideas and Details, Integration of Knowledge

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.8

Assess the extent to which the **reasoning and evidence in a text support** the author's claims.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.9

Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

Benefits of Discussion-based Learning and Teaching

Why Discussion-Based Learning Works: Student Perspective

- They become the leaders and take ownership of their learning
- They set their own goals
- They hold each other accountable for the quality of the class
- Learn how to talk, how to disagree by getting the space to do so
- Respect and trust are built between students, and also teacher and student
- You become “the cool” teacher

Why Discussion-Based Teaching Works: Teacher as Humanist

- Resembles communication in the real world
- Ideas are judged in the court of public opinion (the classroom)
- Not only tolerance but understanding
- Goal of cultivating a sense of empathy
- Train your students to become independent thinkers

Why Discussion-Based Teaching Works: Teacher as Employee

- Retention: For verbal learners, when they have to explain it, they get it
- Not enough to just memorize vocabulary
- Fully embraces the C3
- Meets a number of Common Core standards
- Benefits other classrooms in the school

Keys to Success

- Practice using the method frequently
- Do not give up on a discussion, even when it tanks
- Silence shows trust in your students
- When correction is required, be swift and do not dwell
- Use pennies to encourage both the introverts and the extroverts
- Modify the question as needed; pause and redirect as required

Let's Try it Out!

Practice the Method: ABC's

- Sit at tables, groups of more than four, introductions, and choose an instructor for the group
- Begin with ABC game: I bribe my students with ice cream...if they get to Z.
 - No interruptions/collisions, start over again
 - Everyone must speak
 - No engineering, no plan, completely random

Practice the Method: Topics

- Choose a topic
- Law and Government: Under what conditions should the freedom of speech be restricted?
- Sociology: Why are the majority of US citizens confused about Climate Change?
- Economics: Does the Free Market require winners and losers?
- History: What were the impacts of the Crusades?
- OR...choose your own!

Debrief

- Debrief as a group
- Was there consensus on the issue?
- Did some people not speak at all?
- Did some people completely dominate the conversation?
- How did you do in the discussion?

Digital Resources

Please see my conference session files for resources I've prepared for your use.

- Oval
- Self-Reflection
- This presentation



<https://www.socialstudies.org/conference/inclusivity-and-harkness-method-building-empathy-classroom/50031>

References

Exeter Humanities Institute

www.exeter.edu/programs-educators/summer-conference-general-information/exeter-humanities-institute

Sign-up for the EHI (two-year wait list!)

<https://fs30.formsite.com/exeter/form139/index.html>

Common Core Standards

www.corestandards.org

The Origins Program

Education for Equity

Advisory Book: Building a Community of

Learners Grades 5-9

by Linda Crawford

www.originsonline.org