

## **STEP FOUR: DELIBERATE**

### ***Students weigh trade-offs among multiple viewpoints***

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In this section, students will deliberate on the topic, striving to understand related local, national, and international implications.

#### **Time needed**

10-20 minutes per deliberative dialogue X number of deliberative dialogues, plus transition time

#### **Classroom setup**

6 to 8 chairs set up in a small circle in the center of the room, with the remaining chairs placed in a larger circle around the inner circle (this is sometimes called a fishbowl)

#### **Materials needed**

- Teacher-generated deliberation questions (see *Step Three: Investigate*)
- Completed “Deliberative Dialogue Prep Worksheets” from *Step Three: Investigate* (each student should have her/his worksheets filled out and ready to use)
- Guidelines for Deliberation Handout (1 per student)
- Deliberation vs. Debate Handout (1 per student)
- Deliberative Dialogue Rubric Worksheet (several per student)
- Fact, Question, and Response Worksheet (1 per student)
- Conversation Web Worksheet (1 per student)
- Prompter’s Chair Guidelines (for teacher)
- Chalkboard or whiteboard

#### **Goal**

To have students engage effectively in deliberative dialogues in order to thoughtfully weigh trade-offs among multiple viewpoints.

#### **Objectives**

Students will share their knowledge and interpretations of the multiple viewpoints being addressed.

Students will “listen to learn” from their classmates’ interpretations of the materials being analyzed.

#### **ACTIVITY:**

##### **Introduction**

1. State the goal and objectives of the activity.

2. Explain that the skills and content learned so far (in the first three steps of the Deliberation Process) will be used in today's deliberative dialogues.

### Tasks

1. Pass out one "Guidelines for Deliberation Sheet" to each student. As a class, thoroughly review the "Guidelines" and verbally check for understanding. Tell students that these "Guidelines" are to be adhered to at all times during the deliberative dialogues.
2. Assign students to deliberation groups. Ideally, there should be 6 to 8 students per group.
3. Call the first group to be seated in the inner circle, reminding them to bring their "Deliberative Dialogue Prep Worksheets" for use during the deliberative dialogue.
4. Verbally present this group with one of the deliberation questions and also write it on the board for ease of reference.
5. Allow 10-20 minutes for the deliberative dialogue.

**Note:** *If necessary, prompt students to restart or redirect any deliberative dialogues that appear to be faltering or straying away from the deliberation question.*

6. As the deliberative dialogue is happening, the teacher completes a "Deliberative Dialogue Rubric Worksheet" for each of the students in the inner circle to be used for assessment.

**Extension 1:** *Have students in the outer circle fill out a "Fact, Question, and Response Worksheet" for every deliberative dialogue they observe. This worksheet can be referenced by students as they move on to the next step, which involves writing a personal viewpoint.*

**Extension 2:** *Have students generate conversation webs that track who talks during the discussion. Webs can be used to determine whether or not the conversation was dominated by any one person, which it should not be (see "Conversation Web Worksheet").*

**Extension 3:** *Incorporate a "prompter's chair" by placing an empty chair in the inner circle and allowing one student at a time from the outer circle to sit in it temporarily and ask a question or bring up a point that s/he feels should be addressed (see "Prompter's Chair Guidelines").*

7. Once time is up for the first group, call the next group into the inner circle and present the second deliberation question. Proceed in the same way as with the first group. Do the same with each remaining group until all students have had a turn to engage in a deliberative dialogue. Deliberation questions may need to be recycled, or slightly altered for the sake of variety, in order to have enough questions for the number of student groups.

## Assessment Tool

### Deliberative Dialogue Rubric Worksheet

**Note:** *To help determine student grades, the teacher can also have students in the outer circle fill out “Deliberative Dialogue Rubric Worksheets” for the students who are deliberating in the inner circle. There are a variety of ways this can be done (e.g., the teacher’s rubric may count for 75% of student grades and the student rubrics may count for 25%).*

## Conclusion

1. Debrief the process with students using questions, such as:
  - a. How did it feel to be in the inner circle?
  - b. How did it feel to be in the outer circle?
  - c. What is one thing you learned from listening to your peers, either while in the inner circle or the outer circle?
  - d. Did you adjust or change your opinion/perspective as a result of listening to today’s deliberative dialogues? How so?
  - e. Did you strengthen or enhance an already formed opinion/perspective as a result of listening to today’s deliberative dialogues? How so?
  - f. What did you like about this process?
  - g. What did you dislike about this process?
  - h. Can this process, in some form or another, be used in other aspects of your life?
  
2. Point out to students that it is okay to adjust and revise their viewpoints based on what they learn during the deliberation process, and that building knowledge together in this way is positive and constructive.

## Handouts (reproducible master copies)

- Guidelines for Deliberation Handout (1 per student)
- Deliberation vs. Debate Handout (1 per student)
- Deliberative Dialogue Rubric Worksheet (several per student)
- Fact, Question and Response Worksheet (1 per student)
- Conversation Web Worksheet (1 per student)
- Prompter’s Chair Guidelines (1 per student)

## Role of the Teacher

The role of the teacher is critical for effective deliberative dialogue, which is why an extensive explanation follows.

## Why Deliberate?

Each activity thus far in the process has been building toward engaging students in deliberative dialogue. Student interest has been ignited. Having sifted through a variety of research materials, students have been suitably prepped to conduct informed conversations about the topic. The previously provided deliberation questions, created by the teacher in *Step Three: Investigate*, will serve as guides going forward.

The deliberative dialogues should be almost completely **student-directed**, with all sorts of rich peer-teaching occurring. However, they must be set up delicately, with key guidelines in place to discourage the two critical impediments of successful deliberation: 1) a combative, uninviting discussion environment, and 2) a teacher who is unable (or unwilling) to cede “control” to the students.

The **first impediment**, a combative environment, tends to discourage open discussions, while a respectful environment encourages them. In order to establish the right kind of atmosphere, it is helpful for students to understand the distinction between deliberation and debate and to recognize that deliberation is what will be used. The following excerpt, which can be shared with students, explains the aims of deliberation:

*When we have to make an important decision we **deliberate**. We will consider the merits of a range of alternatives and weigh the advantages as well as the tradeoffs of each. After thinking the issue through, we will try to make the best possible choice, the one that best answers our particular needs. It may not be perfect, but it is informed by all of the information that we can bring to the decision at that time.*

*When we deliberate with others the process is collaborative and involves more than just one person's experience, needs, and perspective. . . . Deliberation requires a commitment on the part of all who enter into the process to listen to the perspectives and the knowledge of all who are participating and to try to learn from one another. . . . You contribute your knowledge and perspective to the whole, listening to one another and building on the contributions of others. By engaging in shared ideas, everyone grows in his or her knowledge and understanding.*

-Retrieved from the Choices Program website at  
[www.choices.edu/resources/guidelines.php](http://www.choices.edu/resources/guidelines.php)

A strength of deliberation is the collaborative experience of weighing the perspectives and knowledge of one's peers, and allowing this engagement to grow one's own knowledge and understanding. Deliberation is as likely to confirm one's opinions as challenge them. Either way, deliberation encourages students to construct well-informed opinions as they share their perspectives and examine those of others.

### **Deliberation is NOT Debate!**

Deliberation is much different than debate because:

*In a **debate**, you hold onto your position with the intent that you will "win" the argument and everyone else will end up in a different place. Debate is a competitive process in which there are winners and losers. Ideas are not built; rather, they are contested.*

-Retrieved from the Choices Program website at  
[www.choices.edu/resources/guidelines.php](http://www.choices.edu/resources/guidelines.php)

The debate format tends to create a close-minded and confrontational environment in which students do not listen to learn, but instead listen to respond. This is not what deliberation is about.

### **Tips to Avoid Failure**

The best way to avoid the impediment of a combative classroom is to require strict adherence to the following guidelines for deliberation (particularly the first couple of times you run a deliberation in your class) (see also *Guidelines for Deliberation* in the Handout section):

- *We reference the shared research.*
- *We listen to learn and not to respond.*
- *We ask questions to clarify and probe.*
- *We recognize the importance of silence.*
- *We don't interrupt.*
- *We don't label the viewpoints of others.*
- *We consider local, national, and international contexts.*

These guidelines are designed to bring as many people into the conversation as possible. The goal is to have every student contribute personal interpretations, supply supporting details, pose questions to other students, and be mindful of the role they and others are playing in the deliberative dialogue.

The challenge, of course, is to strike the right balance. While it is desirable for all students to feel as though their opinions have merit, an idyllic, tension-free conversation where everyone simply yields to one another, or agrees to agree for the sake of being civil, is not desired either. The goal is to have discussion where there is some give-and-take, where there is some "tension" in which certain basic assumptions are challenged and certain viewpoints probed.

In order to ensure that deliberative dialogues have this delicate balance (of give-and-take and yielding and tension), students should be taught to ask questions that (Brookfield and Preskill, 2005, 85-7):

- a. *Ask for more evidence*
- b. *Ask for clarification*
- c. *Are open-ended*
- d. *Link or extend*

Skilled questioning encourages other students to express their thoughts in a more coherent manner. As a general rule, leading questions should not be asked in deliberative dialogues; in other words, students should not ask questions for which there is an intended answer. Instead, linking or extending questions enable an environment “in which new insights emerge from prior contributions of group members; linking or extensions questions actively engage students in building on one another’s response questions.”(Brookfield and Preskill, 2005, 87)

Deliberative dialogues work best when opinions are backed with evidence, so students should develop the habit of forming questions that elicit more evidence. The “Deliberative Dialogue Prep Worksheets,” that students generated while researching the topic in *Step Three: Investigate*, can be very useful because they allow students to refer directly back to the materials they studied in order to provide additional evidence. Because of this, it is critical for students to come to the deliberative dialogue with very detailed and complete “Deliberative Dialogue Prep Worksheets.”

The **second impediment**, an overly assertive teacher, can also obstruct open discussion and effective deliberation by not allowing the deliberation to be the students’ forum. This part of process needs to be the exclusive domain of the students. The teacher played an integral part by creating the deliberation questions, as well as guiding the students through the investigative stage. Now it is time for the teacher to cede the process to the students, trusting that (by virtue of their preparation) the students can deliberate on their own. While the students are deliberating, the teacher should avoid the urge to step in, remembering that:

*Whatever the preparation for class is, it will probably not go exactly as planned. This is where the need for the teacher to let go and have some confidence arises. With a little patience we find that often the students will ask the right question, or develop questions along thoughtful and interesting lines. These may not be the questions or topics that the teacher had planned, but if the discussion is on topic and driven by the students then they are getting something out of it and learning the material. And the teacher has to let go. Silences, feared and dreaded by most teachers new to this pedagogy, are quite often nothing more than a moment in time when the students are all thinking, and if the teacher*

*were to rush and fill the silence the students will become dependent on this and effectively be "let off the hook." (Smith & Foley, 2009, p. 484)*

A good way for the teacher to avoid getting overly involved is to set up the room so that the students are physically central, with six to eight student desks in a circle in the center of the room and the remaining student desks in a larger outer circle around them (this is sometimes called a fishbowl). In this way, the focal point of the classroom becomes the deliberative dialogue. The teacher sits inconspicuously in the outer circle with responsibilities limited to reminding the students of the guidelines prior to each unique deliberation and during the deliberation as necessary, restating the deliberative question being considered by each group, assessing each student's participation, and choosing an appropriate time to end each deliberation. The key point is, once a deliberation has started, the teacher should not have to say anything in the conversation because it should be all student-generated.

Another task the teacher will need to attend to is keeping the students in the outer circle engaged while the students in the inner circle are deliberating. The teacher could have them fill out a "Fact, Question, and Response Worksheet," generate conversation webs that track who talks during the discussion, or incorporate a "prompter's chair" by placing an empty chair in the inner circle and allowing one student at a time from the outer circle to sit in it temporarily and ask a question or bring up a point that she/he feels should be addressed (see *Guidelines: Prompter's Chair* handout below).

## **Reference**

Smith, L.A., & Foley, M. (2009). Education Partners in a Human Enterprise: Harkness Teaching in the History Classroom. *The History Teacher*, 42(4), 477-496.

## HANDOUT: GUIDELINES FOR DELIBERATION

### Guidelines for Deliberation

➤ *We reference the shared research.*

➤ *We listen to hear, not to respond.*

➤ *We ask questions to clarify and probe.*

➤ *We don't interrupt.*

➤ *We don't label others' viewpoints.*

➤ *We help each other develop ideas & build common understanding.*

➤ *We strive to understand local, national, & international contexts.*

Created by the Integrating International and Civic Education Project, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, 2006



## HANDOUT: DELIBERATION VS. DEBATE

### Deliberation

Deliberation is collaborative: the sides work together to formally discuss.

Deliberation builds a learning relationship between people.

Deliberation encourages the participants to identify questions and goals they could share.

In a deliberation the goals are sharing ideas and considering new ideas.

In a deliberation all voices are valued and everyone contributes to solving a problem.

In a deliberation you believe that many solutions might exist, and that different people have parts of the best solutions.

In a deliberation you listen to and are sensitive to each other's feelings, hopes, and ideas.

In a deliberation you contribute your best ideas to be improved upon.

In a deliberation you listen to each other to understand and build knowledge for decision-making.

In a deliberation you search for the good parts of other people's ideas.

In a deliberation you may consider new ideas and even change your mind completely i.e. the fifth option

Deliberation encourages you to evaluate yourself and your ideas.

Deliberation is more likely to promote open-mindedness, including an openness to being wrong.

Deliberation encourages you to see all sides of an issue.

Deliberation invites keeping the topic open even after the discussion formally ends.

### Debate\*

Debate is a type of fight: two sides oppose each other to prove each other wrong.

Debate builds a competitive relationship between people.

Debate encourages each side to articulate its own questions and goals.

In a debate the goal is winning with your own ideas.

In a debate one person and viewpoint wins, the other is dismissed.

In a debate you believe that there is one solution that you have it, and other solutions are not considered.

In a debate you do not care about the feelings, hopes and ideas of others.

In a debate you contribute your ideas and defend them against challenges.

In a debate you listen to each other to find flaws and disagree with the other participants.

In a debate you search for weaknesses in others people's ideas.

In a debate you do not admit you are considering new ideas and you must not change your mind, or you lose.

Debate encourages you to criticize others and their ideas.

Debate creates a close-minded attitude, a determination to be right.

Debate encourages you to see only two different sides of an issue.

Debate, by creating a winner and a loser, discourages further discussion.

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Adapted from Boston Area Educators for Social Responsibility workshop handout, BAESR, Cambridge, MA, 1985.

## WORKSHEET: DELIBERATIVE DIALOGUE RUBRIC

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Deliberative Dialogue: \_\_\_\_\_

	25/A+	24/A	23/A-	22/B	21/B-	19/C	18 D+	17 D	16/D-
	<b>Excellent</b>			<b>Good</b>		<b>Fair</b>			<b>Needs Work</b>
<b>Evidence to Support Comments</b> __ / 25 points	At least 4 comments were supported with specific facts and/or examples from class resources.			At least 2 comments were supported with specific references from class resources.		Comments were relevant and supported by general references.		Comments were irrelevant or did not participate in the deliberation.	
<b>Questioning Skills</b> __ / 25 points	Asked clarifying and probing questions that enhanced the deliberative dialogue of classmates.			Asked clarifying or probing questions that generated additional comments by other students.		Asked a basic question(s) of other students.		Did not question others.	
<b>Higher Order Thinking of Topic</b> __ / 25 points	Able to deliberate on the topic in-depth and from multiple viewpoints. Evidence of higher order thinking.			Able to deliberate on the topic with some depth and showed awareness of other viewpoints.		Able to deliberate on the topic main points in a way that showed an understanding of the topic.		Comments were too few to exhibit an understanding of the topic.	
<b>Mindfulness</b> __ / 25 points	Student demonstrated a mindfulness of each member of the deliberative dialogue and worked to make their group-mates voices heard.			Student demonstrated a mindfulness of some members of the deliberative dialogue and sought to have their group-mates voices heard.		Student demonstrated an awareness of other members of the deliberative dialogue.		Students focus was on self and not mindful of others.	

<b>Comments:</b>	Evidence	Questions Asked	Higher-Order Thinking	Mind-fullness	Contributed



**WORKSHEET: FACT, QUESTION, AND RESPONSE**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Deliberation Question:</b>		
<b>Fact I might use in my reflection</b>	<b>Question I would like to ask in the fishbowl</b>	<b>Responses I have to comments made in the fishbowl</b>

<b>Deliberation Question:</b>		
<b>Fact I might use in my reflection</b>	<b>Question I would like to ask in the fishbowl</b>	<b>Responses I have to comments made in the fishbowl</b>

<b>Deliberation Question:</b>		
<b>Fact I might use in my reflection</b>	<b>Question I would like to ask in the fishbowl</b>	<b>Responses I have to comments made in the fishbowl</b>

<b>Deliberation Question:</b>		
<b>Fact I might use in my reflection</b>	<b>Question I would like to ask in the fishbowl</b>	<b>Responses I have to comments made in the fishbowl</b>

## WORKSHEET: CONVERSATION WEB

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Deliberative Dialogue: \_\_\_\_\_

### Directions:

Using names and arrows, track who talks during the discussion in the space below (e.g., Sally → Sally → John → Sally → Mary → John, etc.). Webs can be used to determine whether or not the conversation was dominated by any one person, which it should not be. The goal is for all students to contribute in as equal a manner as possible.

## **GUIDELINES: PROMPTER'S CHAIR**

(For teacher use)

An extra chair can be placed in the inner circle where the deliberative dialogue is taking place. This is the "prompter's chair." One student at a time from the outer circle can sit in the prompter's chair temporarily to either ask a question or bring up a point that she/he feels should be addressed. The prompter's chair should not be overused; meaning, it should only be used if particularly relevant points are being missed.