

ACTIVITY 3: PINWHEEL DISCUSSION

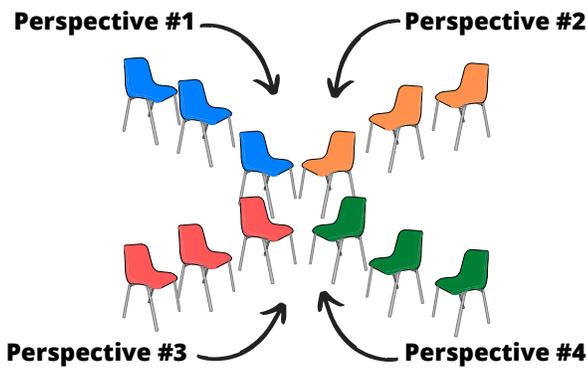


Image Credit: Gary Abud, Jr.

The purpose of this activity is for students to engage in a Pinwheel Discussion about an issue from multiple perspectives by designating each student in the discussion to represent a single perspective on the issue.

Four chairs are arranged facing each other in the middle, one for each speaker representing each perspective. Other students who represent the same perspective—but who will participate in the discussion at a later time—sit near their perspective's active speaker to observe. The chairs fan out in multiple directions like the shape of a pinwheel.

Pinwheel Discussions can be held to help individuals consider different perspectives on an issue and discuss it from multiple points of view. Unlike a debate, the perspectives in this format may not directly oppose one another.

Teaching Tips: Encourage students to use the CER Protocol handout to plan their discussion. Then, during the discussion, they can jot down notes (both when speaking or observing) so that they can respond accurately to what they heard when it's their turn to speak, and reflect on it after the discussion.

First, create groups of 3-4 students for each perspective to be represented (e.g., citizen, leader, etc.) Some pinwheels also have a group called Provocateurs who stimulate the discussion and prompt further consideration, but it is not necessary to have this group.

Then, decide which issue which groups will discuss (nuclear waste or water) and give each group time to research the topic and their perspective on it so that they can be prepared to discuss and summarize their point of view. Advise them to prepare some main points, questions, or examples to raise. They should reference any primary and secondary sources in their research.

Next, each group decides who will speak for their perspective. Speakers sit facing each other in a square (see diagram) with group members behind them. The teacher (or Provocateur) starts off with a general question which the other speakers discuss. Everyone should stay true to the viewpoint their group represents in discussion. The conversation does not need to stay on that question the whole time (e.g., it is not a Q&A format). After some time, students rotate speakers for each perspective to carry on the discussion.

Last, allow time at the end of the Pinwheel for all students to reflect on the discussion, focusing on what went well, what did not go well, and what they learned from the process of considering other perspectives.