

Reaching for Divergence

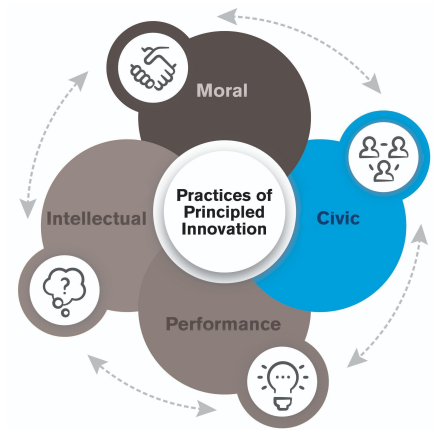
Facilitation Guide

What is it?

Inclusivity means actively seeking out fresh ideas and seeking to integrate them in the problem-solving process. Use this viewing to foster a classroom conversation about what it means to engage the Civic asset of civility by “reaching out” for perspectives that diverge from our own and how to integrate those into the problem-solving process.

Why use it?

The Principled Innovation framework describes Practice **C2** (“Engage Multiple and Diverse Perspectives”) in this way:



Seek and champion equitable and inclusive involvement and contribution to the process, including many different voices who have a variety of lived experiences, beliefs, backgrounds, and cultural wealth.

Practice C2 begins with the phrase “Seek and champion.” These words differentiate “inclusivity” from “diversity.” The mere presence of a diversity of voices will not guarantee that those voices will be heard. In any community, diverse perspectives must be “championed”: the environment needs to be intentionally prepared for that to happen, and the group dynamic needs to be civil and safe for everyone involved. Making Principled Innovation engagements safe involves both **speaking and listening with civility**. Since we ourselves are often part of the problems we are trying to solve, we need to stay in dialogue long enough to hear the divergent (and sometimes difficult) truths that can help us better understand problems and tip us off to possible solutions. This active, open-minded, transformative, and civil engagement is the essence of inclusivity.

Inclusivity generates creative solutions because new ideas open up new understandings of problems and solutions. This divergent thinking is a high-value byproduct of an inclusive environment and has been linked with higher degrees of organization achievement. Divergent thinking brings in new ideas, and convergent thinking attempts to bring those ideas together and focus them on a solution. In the viewing featured in this activity, Harvard professional development instructor Anne Manning describes the way that divergent and convergent thinking lead to new ideas.

Teachers have opportunities every day to employ the twin assets of inclusivity and **civility**. A starting point for inclusive teaching is creating a safe and welcoming environment in the classroom for students of all combinations of backgrounds, identities, and beliefs. Looking for respectful and **empathetic** opportunities to **accurately** represent the voices of students who may not yet feel safe enough to personally express their perspectives can show a teacher’s support for their diverse perspectives. Seeking out parents who might be difficult dialogue partners and working to better understand their views can raise our awareness of the values of our community (Practice **M1**) and of the shortcomings in the **equitable** structure of our schools’ programs. And actively seeking to **take the perspectives** (Practice **C2**) of our colleagues that may differ from us in temperament or beliefs about pedagogy or team structure can afford opportunities for our own growth and allow us to see the world from a more complete perspective. In turn, this inclusive dialogue can be transformative—opening the window to fresh ideas that can lead to **creative** changes for the equitable flourishing of all learners.

What you need

- Time: 10 minutes of participants' time
- Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xjE2RV6IQzo>
- Individual activity or group participants

Instructions

Step 1: Situate

Share the following definition of “Inclusivity,” from the Principled Innovation framework:

Inclusivity is seeking to create environments which respect, bring together, and build upon the multiple perspectives, lifestyles, and experiences of each member of the community.

Explain that the viewing you are going to present describes the way that divergent thinking helps to bring fresh ideas around group challenges and identify solutions.

Step 2: Present

Show the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xjE2RV6IQzo>

Step 3: Discuss

Consider using the following questions to lead a brief discussion about this viewing:

1. What are some social dynamics that would keep a diverse team from accessing and leveraging divergent thinking?
2. What are some of our natural responses to perspectives that diverge the most from our own?
3. How can we create an environment—both within our own hearts and within a group, team, or classroom—for “seeking and championing” multiple perspectives around the problems we face?
4. How can we practice inclusivity in parent or student meetings or in our classrooms so that we can be better prepared for larger contexts in which we need to build an inclusive environment for divergent thinking?