

Classroom Deliberations

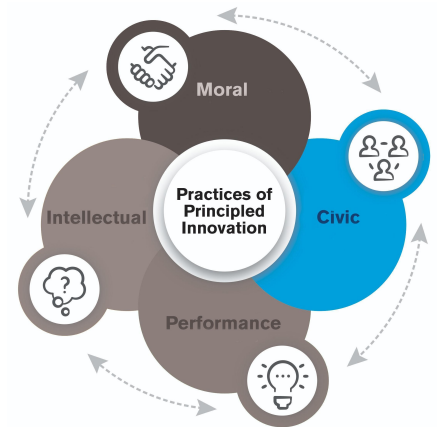
Facilitation Guide

What is it?

This guide to democratic deliberation provides a structure for leading a classroom (or other group) toward fair consideration of opposing viewpoints. Use this guide to walk a group through complex social concerns.

Why use it?

Fair and equitable decision-making is a key component of principled innovation. Practice **M2** of Principled Innovation (“Utilize moral and ethical decision-making”) says this:



Use a values-informed reflective process to assess possibilities, navigate dilemmas, and make the best possible choice to serve the needs of the individual, team, community and learning environment.

Yet it can be especially difficult to make fair decisions in a diverse society in which people bring many different values to the table (PI Practice **M1**). Working through these diverse perspectives and coming to a fair outcome requires thoughtful deliberative processes in which space is given for those perspectives to be heard and understood. Deliberation is a key component in allowing all voices to be heard and toward reaching more equitable decisions. Use this approach in a classroom or other group to structure a deliberation about a topic on which your students may be divided.

What you need

- Time: 45 minutes of participants’ time, following outside reading of the issue
- Teaching Civics guide to classroom deliberation:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BIcltMXNnWWJHDPShcF7C-ZtB411-TJh/view>
- Community participants – classroom or other partners from the learning community

Instructions

Step 1: Situate

Ask participants to identify some of the divisive problems that affect society. Then, show them this definition:

“Fairness is the equitable, just and reasonable treatment of others according to their needs.”

Ask them how it would be possible to make fair decisions as a group or as a society if the opposing sides can't (or won't) hear each other's point of view. What procedures could be followed to allow these differing opinions to be heard? Accept the ideas that are offered and identify one issue to be discussed. Then, follow the guide to assign background reading and prepare for deliberation. In preparation for the deliberation exercise, create a question to be the focus of deliberation, such as, "Should the United States government require that all students be given a standardized test in math and English every year?"

Complete issue guides for deliberations, covering a wide array of topics, can be found online, such as **those provided by Street Law** or by **the National Issues Forum**. Video introductions for many topics can be found on **C-SPAN's Classroom Deliberations site**.

Step 2: Discuss

Follow the procedures in the guide linked above to carry out the deliberative process and to seek consensus.