

The Perspective Taking Educator

Facilitation Guide



Tool for
Civic Character

 30 minutes

 Educator-prep
Leader-prep

Materials

- Read:
[A Closer Look at Social Perspective Taking](#)
- Group Participants

Making Connections

Principled Innovation asks us to work with others and recognize the limits of our own knowledge so that we can better understand and tackle the complex issues our communities face.

Connecting Character Assets:

[Reflection](#)
[Perspective taking](#)

About this Guide

Perspective taking is an important tool for understanding problems and developing solutions. Use this reading and group discussion activity with pre-service or in-service teachers to think through the challenges of enacting perspective taking in the classroom.

The work of perspective taking – of learning about others’ beliefs and experiences in an effort to place ourselves in their shoes – is essential to navigating differences between values and to finding solutions to problems. Playing a central role within Principled Innovation, the process of perspective taking supports multiple assets within the Principled Innovation framework.

It provides our minds with the new information needed to make **empathetic** connections with others and both supports and is supported by **altruistic** intentions, **civility**, and **inclusivity**. Motivated by intellectual **humility** that recognizes that our own perspectives are always incomplete, it gives pause for critical **reflection**, motivates **collaboration**, and can spark the **creative** thoughts that give rise to innovative solutions. Through seeking out others’ values (**Identify and acknowledge fundamental values**, and **Engage multiple and diverse perspectives**) and seeking to understand our cultural and social and built environments (**Understand culture and context**), we supply our minds with more detailed vision of others’ lived experiences, helping us to better understand the problems of our learning communities and catalyze solutions.

In this activity, students think about perspective taking in the daily give-and-take of schools. These smaller scenarios offer a practical setting in which educators can develop this important asset in the context of making their classrooms better serve their “stakeholders” – students, parents, and colleagues.

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Instructions

1 Situate

Explain that you will be engaging students in thinking about how teachers can employ perspective taking in the classroom. Share the following definition of perspective taking, from the Principled Innovation framework:

Perspective taking is the ability to take on another’s point of view to better understand how they think or feel and consider options we may have initially missed due to our positionality.

Explain that Principled Innovation seeks to build dialogue between people who see problems differently for the sake of solving those problems. On a small scale, this practice can be refined in the daily give and take of educational environments to find new ways to improve the daily experiences of stakeholders such as students, parents, or colleagues.

2 Present

Distribute the article electronically or on paper and ask participants to read the article. Explain that they will be discussing the article in the next step.

3 Discuss

Divide into groups of four to discuss the following questions. In this article, Gehlbach makes these statements:

- “Principals constantly need to read and respond to the needs of students, parents, and teachers and resolve issues in ways that are effective and equitable.”
- “Teachers have to figure out each day whether that student in the third row understands what’s being taught.”
- “We need to help students comprehend their classmates’ values, perspectives, and motivations so they can learn from each other as well as from their teachers.”

While most of us would readily agree with these statements, it can be more challenging to turn them into reality. As Gehlbach explains, the “cognitive load” of these activities makes it difficult for educators to practice perspective taking, particularly with a classroom of 25 students.

- **What are some ways that a teacher could engage in perspective taking under these conditions?**
- **What are some practical ways that we can “draw out the perceptions” of others when working with students, parents, and colleagues?**

Gehlbach mentions the value of “delaying judgments about others until ample information is available.” Yet, in the busy classroom, that can be difficult – particular at those public, high-tension moments when students openly challenge our classroom leadership. Our minds get clouded with emotion, and we can easily raise the tensions even further.

- **What are some practical “go-to” phrases or strategies that teachers can use in these moments to defuse the situation and deal with these students later with a clear mind?**

3 Discuss

Some participants might be willing to share something they wrote down – if so, hearing participants’ reflections would be a constructive way to conclude the activity.