

Discussion Questions

Lesson Blueprints: **Snowball**

Grade Level: **Middle and High School**

Essential Question

How does reaching a consensus limit or expand our thinking?

Materials

- Open space
- Board/chart to post question/statement/problem

Procedure

1. Ask for a definition of consensus (MERRIAM-WEBSTER: *general agreement, unanimity, group solidarity in belief and or emotion*) and ask the group about their experiences in the classroom with coming to a consensus on a topic. What is the greatest challenge? What are the pros and cons of striving for consensus and the reasons for each? How does consensus help or hurt a cause?
2. Give the group a broad question, a statement, or problem based on the topic of the session, one that is likely to result in many different ideas/responses. It is usually a good idea to post the question/statement/problem in a highly visible area.
3. Form pairs, and have participants discuss the question within the partners. The goal for their discussion is to reach consensus, to find at least one point on which the two partners can agree. Set a time limit for the pairs to share their ideas and responses.
4. At the time limit, instruct each pair to join another pair, forming groups of four. The foursome will share their ideas within a set time frame and once again arrive at a consensus.
5. At the time limit, instruct the groups of four to join another group of four, forming new groups of eight to continue the discussion and achieve consensus.
6. Continue this process until the entire group is involved in one large discussion to arrive at consensus.

Conclusion

Ask the participants to identify the most important thing they learned about the topic after participating in the exercise. Review the questions from step 1 in terms of the question/problem discussion in which they have just participated. How does reaching a consensus limit or expand our thinking about this topic?

Extension

Instead of reaching a consensus in each group, you can have participants continue discussing the question as a larger group, sharing thoughts from previous smaller groups, OR you can ask a new question.