

## CLASS 5 HANDOUT

### **1. IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION;**

[http://www.du.edu/idge/media/documents/Teacher\\_Compendium.pdf](http://www.du.edu/idge/media/documents/Teacher_Compendium.pdf)

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Human rights education is important in myriad ways. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action states, “[H]uman rights education, training and public information [is considered] essential for the promotion and achievement of stable and harmonious relations among communities and for fostering mutual understanding, tolerance and peace” (United Nations, 2006).

Effective human rights education can result in numerous beneficial outcomes, such as:

- Produce changes in values and attitude.
- Produce changes in behavior.
- Produce empowerment for social justice.
- Develop attitudes of solidarity across issues, communities, and nations.
- Develop knowledge and analytical skills.
- Encourage participatory education (Flowers et al., 2000, pp.9-10).

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Additionally, human rights education has the potential to create a better international community. If every person in the world were made aware of their rights and in turn defended those whose rights were being violated, the world would become a safer place to live in; a place free of violence, wants, or fears. As expressed in the Plan of Action (2006a), “[H]uman rights education ... contributes to the long-term prevention of human rights abuses and violent conflicts, the promotion of equality and sustainable development (by fostering social cohesion and empowering people to become active participants in social transformation) and the enhancement of people’s participation in decision making processes within a democratic system.”

It is imperative that, as educators responsible for the development of learned, socially conscious and well-rounded citizens, human rights education is implemented locally through the classroom. “[T]he education system plays a vital role in fostering respect, participation, equality and non-discrimination in our societies. [Yet] for the education system to play such a role, a comprehensive approach to implementing human rights education ... is needed” (UNESCO/OHCHR, 2006b).

The advent of technology and reach of globalization have brought issues that are occurring half way across the world right to our doorstep. It is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the plight and hardships of other people, especially when action to help can be taken at an incredibly fast speed. It has also become easier for people to become involved and aid the less fortunate. A human rights education helps in raising awareness of these issues and in advocating for solutions.

If society hopes for a world where peace, security, freedom and prosperity reign—where hate, malice, inequality and abuse are things of the past—then we must teach and instill in every child the values and qualities necessary to help bring about such results and achieve success.

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## **Human Rights Educational Model**

### ***Introduction of the Human Rights Educational Model***

The Human Rights Educational Model evolved through collaboration with educators from the fields of gifted education, general education, and human rights education. These educators shared observational insights made from gifted and general education students' abilities to understand issues and the transformations that the students made through the process. These insights informed the design of the model. The Human Rights Educational Model transcends any age group, from the youngest student through adulthood, while allowing for individual differences.

The Human Rights Educational Model is an important contribution to the field of education and human rights education, because there is currently no model that is for use with young students. This model focuses on the understanding that every individual has different personal experiences and backgrounds. The educators developed a model that focuses on individual change at various levels, and recognizes that not everyone will move to the social action stage. It was critical to develop a model that is process driven, as opposed to a stage model.

The components are fluid, as continual development, change, or awareness is identified with the overall goal, focusing on transformation. Transformation of the individual may happen rapidly or over a lengthy period of time. The transformation may occur as a major transformation, a series of minor transformations, or in any combination. Transformation flows across the model due to the fact that transformation may occur within any component of the model. Components of the model include *Personal Identity, Information, Awareness, Issue Recognition, Action Development, and Social Action*.

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*Personal Identity* is the core of the model. The individual is essential to the model, which starts with the ability of the individual to understand personal character. Personal Identity focuses on

the mind, body, and heart. Personal Identity encompasses advocacy skills, self-esteem, self-awareness, personal beliefs, understanding and application of ethical behavior, and empathy and understanding of others. In order to effect change or to transform an individual, it is critical to start where the individual is at that moment in time.

Personal Identity changes and evolves over time with the learning of new information, developmental stages and growth, personal experiences, and introspection of the individual. For example, a child's Personal Identity develops and changes over time as they learn new skills and independence from their parents, teachers, and other adults in their lives. An adult's Personal Identity may change and develop based on new information, an event, or interactions with others.

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The Human Rights Educational Model is the first model that includes an element of personal identity. This component may remain constant for a lengthy period of time or may continually change. The individual's personal identity may be affected through influences provided by other components within the model.

This Personal Identity core is where the initial transformations occur. Each individual may be willing to change his/her personal identity and values in order to transform throughout the model. Other individuals may hold true to their beliefs and will not be willing to move or transform. Ideally through human rights education, the goal is transformation. However, we need to recognize that transformation is a personal element and that, for some individuals, this will occur quickly and, for others, it may not occur at all. The overarching model provides the opportunity for each individual to fit within the scope of the model and move at an individual pace.

This individual movement through the personal identity is unique to this model. Teachers need to continue to provide information, but also need to recognize that because of the personal identity, development level and other factors within the personal identity, the transformation may not be seen in that child until later in life, or possibly not at all. This personal identity really promotes the understanding and depth of the topics and concepts for the individual. The individual has the flexibility and freedom through their personal identity to choose to transform. Society cannot force people to fight for human rights; it needs to be a personal decision related to an individual's understanding of the issues.

*Information* is the next component of the model. Throughout this component, the individual is learning facts and information related to human rights topics and issues. The Information that is discovered interacts with the Personal Identity component. At this point in the model, there may be an attribute of self-reflection based on the information. Through the self-reflection, the individual may seek additional information, ignore the information, acknowledge the information but not feel the need to do anything further, or move into the next component. Throughout this

Information process, the personal identity may be questioned, stay strong, or waver in light of the new information.

The *Awareness* component is the understanding of the human rights information and mindfulness that there is a specific human rights issue. During this component, the individual becomes aware of the issue, but may or may not have the motivation or recognition that something can be changed or should be changed within the issue. The awareness of the issue does not necessarily lead to change; the personal identity of the individual influences whether or not the person moves into the next component. The personal identity may be affected by this information and the awareness of the issue, and the person may decide that there is a need to make some change, leading to Issue Recognition.

*Issue Recognition* occurs when the person recognizes that the issue exists and that change should happen. Within this component, the personal identity effects whether the individual has the motivation to act for change. The recognition is present, but the acknowledgement of personal ability to make change is not necessarily present. At this point in time, there is not any action that motivates the person, but rather the understanding that change can occur. During the Issue Recognition component, the individual may feel that it is someone else's responsibility or issue, they do not have power to make change, they are not ready to commit to impact change, or they may move into the next component of Action Development. This critical consciousness level is the point when the person decides whether or not they are ready to impact change.

*Action Development* is the process of creating a plan of action to help affect change and impact the issue. The individual uses the attributes of personal identity to create a solution and a plan to help spread the word about the issue. The individual's personal identity attributes and the developmental level need to be elements of the action plan as it is created. The action development will look very different for young children than it will for adults. When focusing on the development of the action plan, it is important to include some sort of action that involves the physical doing of something to assist in the action. The actual action does not occur until the last component of the model, social action.

The *Social Action* component is the enactment of the physical action that takes place after the plan is developed. The Social Action includes the aspect of making a difference in the community or within an issue. This component is the implementation of the plan and the hands-on experience that is developed for the issue. Social Action is the component of the Human Rights Educational Model that is the most visible.

Throughout the model, each component has an impact on the personal identity. The personal identity impacts the ability to transition to the other components of the model and move throughout the process. There is also a flexible nature to the model, in that individuals can move between the components. If an individual is working on the action development, they may need to go back and gather more information, which may lead to a different level of issue recognition

and could provide focus for the action development. Each component leads back to the core of personal identity. Each component has a varying time element. Based on one's Personal Identity, an individual may move quickly from Information to Awareness to Issue Recognition to Action Development and into Social Action on a particular issue or concern. With other issues, an individual may teeter between Personal Identity and Information or Awareness, and may not necessarily move into the next component.

### **Teaching Human Rights: Curriculum Example Using the Human Rights Educational Model**

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The following example is simplified to demonstrate the components of the model. The Issue at hand is water cleanliness. The individual's personal identity has an impact on each of these components but, for the purpose of the example, the personal identity is willing to accept and recognize the information and enact change

*Information* – Drinking clean water is an important component of health, growth and development. Varying contaminants impact health, growth and development.

*Awareness* – Understanding the concepts of health, growth and development, as well as the importance of clean drinking water

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*Issue Recognition* – Not everyone is aware of the need for clean drinking water, the complexities of the issues, and how few people have access to potable water.

*Action Development* – Outline a public service campaign to highlight the importance and health factors of clean drinking water. Develop a plan to focus on water testing and the development of a monthly testing program.

*Social Action* – Construction and establishment of a web site and/or public service materials to provide information to individuals. Participation in water testing for rivers and creeks with results reported to local agencies.

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## **TEACHING HUMAN RIGHTS**

While students' knowledge of human rights may increase through such short-lived efforts, they do not develop the core values of human dignity, self-determination, and non-discrimination or learn how to take responsibility and act against human rights abuses. The Human Rights Educational Model provides a structure to imbed human rights into existing curriculum that is

commonly taught at specific age levels. This relieves teachers of the burdensome attempt to squeeze in yet another lesson, or another objective, into an already busy curriculum.

Human rights lessons can easily be inserted into many aspects of the curriculum. Human rights teaching moments arise frequently in classrooms. Discussions on classroom rules, fairness, current events, history and books/movies, can all facilitate discussion on human rights. A teacher who is fully tuned into children's discussions will be able to morph these into human rights lessons. Many teachers believe human rights education is about detailed lessons on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and, while some lessons may very well focus on specific human rights and articles in the UDHR, creating a human rights culture begins with teaching core values and attitudes on how to treat one another. This can be achieved in a number of ways, through a number of strategies. These strategies and examples of human rights lessons will be further explained.

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In order to teach human rights, the educator must be comfortable with the concepts of rights and the introduction and inclusion of the topic. Within the classroom, children must first begin to explore their own rights. Often times, at the beginning of the school year, students work with the teacher to create classroom rules and procedures. Once children understand their own rights, they must begin to learn about the rights of others. The exploration of the rights of others starts with activities and discussions for students to recognize and identify how others feel. Empathy and recognition of the effect of one's own actions on others are important steps in advocating for the rights of others. The goal of human rights education is to have children become participatory learners by engaging actively with human rights.

### **Imbed Topics into Curriculum**

Human rights can be overwhelming. It is vast and complex. Imbedding concrete human rights issues into already existing curriculum will make human rights accessible and tangible. For example, a history topic on slave trade can easily lead to meaningful lessons on human rights issues such as colonization and its effect effects, modern slavery, human trafficking etc. Working human rights lessons into monthly, weekly, or content-based themes, units and ideas already being explored in the classroom makes human rights much easier to teach. Regardless of the setting, human rights issues can be imbedded into everyday school topics and situations with the awareness and willingness to discuss and bring attention to the topics.

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### ***Bring Human Rights from the International Level to the Local Level***

The best way to engage students and have them understand the concept of human rights is to bring it to the local level. There are plenty of human rights abuses and issues in our own communities that can be introduced into the classroom. When focusing on an issue, it is often easier to focus on the international aspects of the problem instead of the local. Learning and

understanding about an issue starts with what we know and see in our backyards and making connections with what is happening in other places (instructor addition). Students must be encouraged to find, explore, and seek out how issue affect their own villages, towns, communities, cities and around the world. They must find similarities and differences between what is happening in their community and abroad. Bringing international human rights issues to the local level can be achieved in several ways:

- Find similarities between human rights issues abroad and locally (e.g. compare poverty in Kenya to that in Uganda, Somalia, Tanzania, South Africa, Senegal, U.S.A., Canada, Netherlands etc.
- Ask students to recall times or experiences in which they may have interacted with or seen a human rights abuse (police brutality, bullying, homeless person, violence, etc.).
- Introduce human rights as a continual struggle. Struggles of today can be couched in context with other human rights movements (Civil Rights, women's rights, African independence rights etc). Human rights are not just a part of history; they are continual.
- The empowerment of students around issues is the ultimate goal of human rights education, with participation in peaceful and meaningful community activities and projects that will bring about change.

### ***Developmentally Appropriate Practice***

Human rights can be a difficult subject, so keeping it developmentally appropriate is necessary. Large human rights issues must be broken into appropriate sections to be taught at varying age levels. For example, when looking into a lesson on human trafficking, older students may be able to investigate aspects of trafficking such as the sex trade, while younger students might need to focus on issues such as child labor in agricultural work. Using developmentally appropriate practice, students at all levels can participate in the understanding of human rights. Nursery students can understand the basic needs of food, water, and shelter for infants and children. This understanding may lead to more specific discussions of the types of things that are needed within a shelter, a study of nutrition, or a focus on water.

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### ***Starting At Any and All Ages***

There is no one age a child should start to learn about human rights. Values and attitudes about human dignity and equality start to be formed at very young ages. Human rights concepts can be introduced at any age level, but they will appear in different ways depending on the age level.

Students in lower primary classes can be introduced to concepts such as fairness, personal responsibility, respect, diversity, cooperation, and rules through things like classroom rules and the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. In early grades, things that are already a part of daily

routines are great opportunities to start to introduce concepts related to human rights. Classroom rules are a perfect starting point. Introducing the rules, why they were created, and how someone feels when the rules are broken introduces concepts of equality and fairness, both of which are essential to our understanding of human rights (see Reardon, 1995).

Students in upper primary can begin to study concepts like citizenship, community rights, freedom, and social responsibility through exploring the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and Convention on the Rights of the Child. In secondary levels students can be introduced to concepts like justice, equality, and global responsibility through looking at U.N. covenants and conventions (Elimination of Racism; Discrimination Against Women; Civil and Political Rights; Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; etc.). By the time they are in Form 4 they will be able to engage with concepts like moral exclusion/inclusion, moral responsibility, and ecological responsibility through other U.N. Conventions (Prevention and Punishment of Genocide, Prevention and Elimination of Torture, etc.).

Adapted from Reardon, B. (1995). *Educating for human dignity: Learning about rights and responsibilities*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

## **PRACTICAL WAYS TO INTRODUCE CONCEPTS**

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Some educators believe teaching human rights is difficult and tedious. Original human rights documents, like the UDHR or Bill of Children's Rights, can be dry and difficult to understand. While using some of these documents is necessary, finding more natural ways to introduce human rights concepts in the classroom is advantageous. Children bring up human rights issues consistently in school, and many resources and tools educators already use can be modified to include human rights. Below are some concrete strategies to introduce human rights into the classroom:

### ***1. Brainstorming***

One of the most effective tools in a classroom is brainstorming and questioning. Educators must be willing to ask questions in their classrooms to which they do not already know the answers. In these simple activities, students brainstorm what they know about an issue. These discussions should also include the promotion of respectful listening and civil discussion. Putting up a piece of paper with the topic written on it and having students "throw out" words, thoughts, phrases and ideas that come to their mind related to the topic or issue, and recording these on the paper is a great way to start. This allows the teachers and other students to see what is already known about the issue, and what misconceptions may persist. Another way to do this is use the KWL (know, want to know, and learned) format, which includes asking students what they know about an issue, recording this, then asking students what they would like to know about the issue. After the lessons/unit, ask and record what they learned about the topic. This will get questions about the problem out in the open and develop critical thinking skills.



## **2. Books**

Another valuable way to introduce a human right concept is through books. Many children's books deal with basic problems that can easily be related to human rights. Choose a book in which the main character is left out of a game or social group. This type of a story (and countless others) can lead to a discussion on treating each other with respect and kindness. Why was the character sad? Should the other people in the book have left him/her out? Why not? The main character is entitled to be treated with respect and kindness. This is the basis of all human rights.

## **3. Movies and video clips**

If you have access to movies and video clips, they can be a great way of introducing human rights discussions. However, choosing developmentally and age appropriate movies and documentaries are critical.

## **4. Current Events**

Current events lessons and activities can lead to a variety of discussions on human rights. Newspapers, television news channels, and websites always have stories of human rights abuses, many located within the local area. Sharing and discussing these with students actively engages students in thinking about human rights outside of an academic setting. The events that students bring into the classroom can provide additional opportunities for exploration into a variety of topics. Recognition of opportunities to discuss provides the possibility to incorporate and imbed additional information into the classroom in a genuine way. Current event lessons can be designed in a variety of ways. It is important to provide students with journaling opportunities, regardless of format, to reflect on their personal feelings related to the current events. The journaling allows the students the time to interact and reflect with the information in the event, as well as with others views, opinions and knowledge about the topic.

Current events may lead to the opportunity for students to become involved in an issue where they are taking direct action. Petitions, letter writing campaigns, speaking engagements, or volunteering activities may be opportunities students become interested in to enhance knowledge or participation in the human rights issue.

## **5. Classroom Conflicts**

Conflicts inevitably arise in every classroom. Using these conflicts as teachable human rights moments is another way to introduce concepts associated with human rights. These routine arguments and conflicts arise commonly in classrooms and on the playground with each of these serving as an opportunity to discuss human rights. Human rights, in this sense, can be dealt with in very concrete ways that make sense to students. Making minor disagreements into learning opportunities is the easiest way to bring human rights into the classroom. However, not every argument or conflict should be turned into such a discussion on human rights. This would not only be tremendously overwhelming, but time consuming and can devalue the currency of human rights. Choosing specific types of conflicts that all students can relate to provides the opportunity to involve the whole class in recognition of an issue and the problem solving

process. See the example below on how one might use a conflict within the classroom as a teachable moment on human rights:

A teacher provided specific directions to students about the expected engagement and behavior in an activity. Some students within the classroom followed the directions; other students did not follow directions and became discipline issues disrupting the learning environment. The teacher chose to take away a privilege for the whole class. This scenario may lead to questions (at a later time) such as,

- o What are your rights as a member of the classroom?
- o What happens if others choose to do something you have no control over?
- o As an individual can you impose your will on others? Is that right?

While these are basic examples, the purpose is to provide context for discussion to take place within classrooms.

## **TEACHING CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES**

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### ***How to Approach These Topics***

Human rights, by its nature, can be controversial. However, this does not mean educators should shy away from the topic. Learning about controversy helps children develop critical thinking and problem solving skills and allows them to develop these tools in real world examples. Whatever the topic, children need to have some ownership in their learning, including guiding the direction of the topics.

### ***Introduce Different Levels of the Issue***

Human rights abuses can be horrific; therefore introducing concepts in developmentally appropriate ways is critical. Most children have witnessed some sort of violence or human rights abuse, such as a bullying situation or exclusion from an activity. Teaching children appropriate skills and tools they need to actively deal with the abuses they see will help them recognize and understand the larger issues but also empower them to acknowledge and protect the rights of others.

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### **Instructional Context**

Teaching human rights in a participatory approach allows a human rights dialogue to begin in the community. Opening up such dialogue begins to create a human rights culture where awareness and recognition of rights is fostered. However, it also allows for participants to put forth issues which can give cause for concern. Students may begin to question the fairness of activities, bring

up their rights more frequently and engage in serious conversations on rights abuses in their school, home and community environment. Teachers must be willing to embark on an unknown journey with their students, in which they may not have all the answers. In this process, the teacher must be open and willing to learn something new and to struggle with students in confronting human rights abuses.

Challenges and opportunities for inclusion of human rights issues are dependent on the school environment, community, personal viewpoints, and ability to modify curriculum. Regardless of the setting, human rights education is important for the students to access, and should be imbedded into the curriculum and discussions within the environment.

**Moore, Alicia L. and Deshaies, Molly. (2012). *10 tips for facilitating classroom discussions on sensitive topics*. Twin Cities Public Television Inc. [http://bento.cdn.pbs.org/hostedbento-prod/filer\\_public/SBAN/Images/Classrooms/Ten%20Tips%20for%20Facilitating%20Classroom%20Discussions%20on%20Sensitive%20Topics\\_Final.pdf](http://bento.cdn.pbs.org/hostedbento-prod/filer_public/SBAN/Images/Classrooms/Ten%20Tips%20for%20Facilitating%20Classroom%20Discussions%20on%20Sensitive%20Topics_Final.pdf)**

All teachers will inevitably teach about sensitive topics. These topics may range from racism, forced labor or slavery to bullying, sexual orientation, and gender biases — and may be completely unexpected. Any topic of a sensitive nature may make even the best of teachers uncomfortable when exploring the topic with students. Our natural reaction is often to shy away from difficult or controversial topics, or to approach them from a superficial, strained or half-hearted standpoint. But many times these topics are crucially important to students' awareness of the world and its social, moral, political and civic underpinnings. Students deserve to be taught about these topics in authentic, engaging and purposeful ways.

To provide teachers with a framework for tackling sensitive topics, we have compiled a tip sheet to use when facilitating discussions or teaching about sensitive topics in the classroom. These techniques will provide a foundation of confidence for the facilitator and can be used in elementary, secondary or postsecondary settings.

**1. Set the stage.** In order for students to express their opinions and participate in classroom discussions about sensitive subjects, they need to feel safe and not fear retaliation for comments they make during the discussion. It is best to establish a supportive classroom atmosphere with ground rules for discussions early in the semester, but be sure to at least do so before beginning a class discussion about a sensitive issue. The University of Michigan Center for Research on Learning and Teaching offers these six rules to establish in order to foster a more productive discussion: .

- “Listen respectfully, without interrupting
- Respect one another’s views.
- Criticize ideas, not individuals.

- Commit to learning, not debating.
- Avoid blame and speculation.
- Avoid inflammatory language.”

You also need to set the stage in terms of the students’ readiness to discuss the issue(s) at hand. Students should be intellectually and emotionally prepared. In “How Parents and Teachers Should Teach Children about Slavery,” the author explains, “One aspect to consider involves presenting prerequisite concepts, knowledge, and skills within the Social Studies that prepare students for the information. This entails a careful examination of what is developmentally and age appropriate ... and involves an understanding of how to be responsive to, and sensitive of, all children within the classroom community.”

**2. Know yourself.** Before facilitating a discussion about possibly sensitive topics, it is important that you consider your own biases or confusion surrounding the issue. How have you come to know what you know or think what you think? Why have you valued some information or sources over others? When seeking to help students understand others or study historically sensitive topics, it is important to discuss the concepts of empathy and perspective. We are all products of our society and culture, and attitudes and values change. Discussing a moment when your own ideas changed may help model the open-mindedness and conscientious self-reflection that you hope to inspire.

**3. Recognize the diversity of your students.** It is important to remember that each of the students in your classroom comes from a unique background (regardless of race) and has had different experiences. See this diversity as an asset. Authentic opportunities for learning happen when students are exposed to many different perspectives. Give students the opportunity to express their views and make it your goal to understand, value and respect the backgrounds and experiences that formed them. Teach your students to do the same.

**4. Set a framework and objective for the discussion.** To get the most out of your discussion, when possible state an objective for the discussion that connects to the curriculum or standards. Also establish a framework for the discussion with a specific focus. This will keep the students on task and ensure that your goals for the discussion are met. Also keep in mind that a static objective for these discussions should be based upon providing students with opportunities to “engage in experiences that develop fair-mindedness, and encourage recognition and serious consideration of opposing points of view, respect for well-supported positions, sensitivity to cultural similarities and differences, and a commitment to individual and social responsibility.”

**5. Provide a common base for understanding.** The Center for Research on Learning and Teaching at the University of Michigan suggests assigning readings or showing a video clip about a particular conflict or topic to prompt discussion. Using materials that provide a context for examining diverse perspectives allow students to gain an awareness of others’ views, and

offer students a framework in which to expand their knowledge about conflicting positions they might otherwise disregard. Like having a set objective and framework, these complementary materials will help focus the discussion.

**6. Be an active facilitator.** As the teacher you should neither dominate the discussion nor passively observe. Your role as the teacher should include intervening in the discussion to:

- Provide reminders about respecting the right of others to have differing
- opinions, re-word questions posed by students,
- correct misinformation,
- ask for clarification,
- review the main points, and
- make reference to relevant reading materials or course content

**7. Foster civility.** There is a good chance that discussions about sensitive topics may become heated. The main goal of fostering civility is to protect your students from feeling personally attacked. Make sure students understand that it is okay to disagree, but keep comments focused on the ideas and not the people who share their ideas.

**8. Be prepared to deal with tense or emotional moments.** When discussing sensitive issues or difficult topics, it is very possible that some students will get angry or upset. If this happens, remain calm and try to turn it into a learning experience. Don't avoid the issue, but do defer it until you make a plan for dealing with it if necessary.

**9. Summarize.** At the end of the discussion, summarize the main points. You can also ask students for quick written feedback about the discussion, which you can discuss during the next class. Allowing students to summarize provides opportunities for student to recall, review and reflect upon the content of the discussion.

**10. Reflect.** Reflecting plays a key role in two ways. First, encourage students to actively reflect on the comments made by other students, especially those they may disagree with. Second, leave time after the discussion for students to record their reflections in writing. This time will allow quieter students an opportunity to respond privately to the instructor, and allow everyone a chance to unwind and think calmly about his or her views on the issue. Ask students to think about whether there are new ideas, opinions or opportunities for further discussions, awareness and reflection. Use their responses to develop extension activities that will build community and support differing viewpoints.

**S.E.N.S.I.T.I.V.E ACROSTIC**

Every teacher will inevitably face a moment in the classroom when a sensitive topic, situation or event arises. You can never be sure of when these topics will come up, but you can prepare yourself. Use the following tips to guide the way you facilitate discussions surrounding sensitive topics .

Set the stage for difficult conversations by assessing student readiness based on realistic, non-biased expectations. Set the stage by creating a supportive environment based on respect. Provide a framework that sets objectives connected to the curriculum when possible.

Enable and facilitate the discussion of ideas, not people. The teacher must support students and enhance their opportunities to grow in the discussion. The facilitator provides guidelines for safe, productive and respectful discussions and for interventions such as dispelling myths, helping students make curricular connections and clarifying students' contributions to the conversation. Taking this role seriously can be the difference between a successful or unsuccessful conversation.

Never allow your personal biases and opinions to influence the facts or get in the way of opportunities for students to examine diverse perspectives. Know your biases and be aware of their impact on your thoughts, attitudes and behaviors related to teaching.

Seek out age- and grade-level appropriate digital media, readings and other materials that allow students to begin with baseline knowledge and that will be the basis of discussions. Identify materials that show students to “see both sides”: illustrate diverse perspectives and provide students with opportunities to analyze, synthesize and evaluate content discussed.

Interpersonal classroom activities that involve discussing sensitive or controversial issues should be complemented with intrapersonal activities like self-reflection and personal awareness. Allowing the students to have time to reflect on their feelings, conscious and unconscious thoughts, and any new learning provides enhanced opportunities for growth. Seek feedback from students to inform your instructional decisions about upcoming lessons.

The act of summarizing conversations, either orally or in writing, provides students with a chance to recall new or interesting information, and review what was said and how it fits or conflicts with personally held thoughts and opinions. Summarization serves as a foundation for possible subsequent actions such as making personal changes, examining new perspectives, or learning to respect and value the diverse perspectives of others.

Invite disagreement. Encourage students to speak up with different opinions — while still maintaining decorum. It is up to you to foster and maintain civility in your classroom and to help students understand the guidelines for discussing difficult ideas. One way to view civility is through the lens of the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Remind students that we all have the right to agree or disagree with others' perspectives on sensitive topics.

Value the diversity of your students as an asset. Teach your students to do the same. Your actions affect the culture and climate of your classroom. In a classroom that truly values the contributions and differences of all students, authentic opportunities for teaching and learning are nurtured and embraced by all stakeholders.

Emotional and tense moments may arise during discussions about sensitive issues. Be prepared to help students work through them. Acknowledge that there may be times when they feel uncomfortable talking about the issue. Speak to this discomfort and share your personal thoughts and feelings about discomfort you may feel.

About the Authors: Alicia Moore is Associate Professor, Southwestern University and Molly Deshaies is an Elementary Education major, Southwestern University.