FISHBOWL DISCUSSION TECHNIQUE

1. Six seats are placed, in a circle, in the center of the room.
2. All other seats a pushed to the walls for seating for non-participants.
3. The 5 students in the circle, the fishbowl, are the only ones allowed to speak in the room. There is to be no conversation outside of the circle. The teacher chooses the first students in the circle, at random.
4. The students engage in debate on an issue presented, as an open-ended question, by the teacher.
5. All participants must abide by the rules of civic discussion. These rules are provided in the discussion rubric.
6. The participants must also operate under the standards of common courtesy. (No yelling, no interrupting, no name-calling, etc.)
7. Once a student in the circle has spoken, a student from outside the circle may come and tap that student. The student in the circle must then give the one who tapped them their seat and return to the outside observation seats. The new entrant may not be tapped until he or she has spoken at least once.

OR

A new entrant may move to the empty seat in the bowl and in order to allow one person who has already spoken in the circle to quietly move to the outside of the circle.

1. Students, once removed from the circle, may return at any time. (They may not be tapped until they have spoken again) The teacher may grant preferential seating to students who have not yet participated in the debate.
2. The teacher does not participate in the discussion except to provide a new question or to terminate an irrelevant, or inappropriate, line of discussion.

Expectations during the Fishbowl Discussion

Outside the “Bowl”

* Listen actively – pay close attention to what is being said (this is shown through body language
* Take notes
* Use the empty chair to ask relevant questions provide text support, or present info that may help the group’s discussion push deeper
* Sit silently unless in the empty chair
* Do NOT text, nap, doodle, talk, walk about the room at random, etc…

In the “Bowl”

* Support ideas with evidence when possible
* Use non-verbal cues to determine when it is appropriate to speak (and to be done speaking)
* Ask questions of inner circle participants who are being reluctant discussion partic ipants in order to prompt them to join in the discussion
* Don’t attack members for their views/opinions (it is best to disagree with participants by aoffering evidence that illustrates the disparity)
* Stay on topic
* Take notes

Discussion Rubric

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Discussion Rubric | Extending | Applying | Developing | BeginningIncomplete |
| Substantive |  |  |  |  |
| States and identifies issues. | Accurately states and identifies issues. | Accurately states an issue. | States a relevant factual, ethical, or definitional issue as a question. | Does not state any issues. |
| Uses foundational knowledge. | Accurately and expresses completely relevant foundational knowledge pertaining to the issues raised during the discussion. | Accurately expresses mostly relevant foundational knowledge pertaining to issues raised during the discussion. | Accurately expresses somewhat relevant foundational knowledge pertaining to an issue raised by someone else. | Does not express any relevant foundational knowledge. |
| Elaborates statements with explanations, reasons, or evidence. | Pursues an issue with more than one elaborated statements. | Pursues an issue with one elaborated statement. | Elaborates a statement with an explanation, reasons, or evidence. | Does not elaborate any issues. |
| Procedural |  |  |  |  |
| Invites contributions from, and acknowledges statements of, others. | Engages others in the discussion by inviting their contributions and acknowledging their contributions. | Invites comments from others and does not acknowledge their statements. | Does not invite comments from others but allows others to speak. Does not acknowledge contributions from others. | Does not invite comments from others nor acknowledge their statements. |
| Challenges the accuracy, logic, relevance, or clarity of statements. | Constructively challenges the accuracy, clarity, relevance, or logic of statements made. | Responds in a civil manner to a statement made by someone else by challenging its accuracy, clarity, relevance, or logic. | Responds in a civil manner but does not challenge the accuracy, clarity, relevance, or logic of statements. | Does not respond in a civil manner in all conversations. Does not challenge the accuracy, clarity, relevance, or logic of statements. |