

Dakota Pipeline, is it Still an Issue?

Grades 9-12

Big Ideas: Fairness/Equity, Ability to Make a Difference, Systems

Education for Sustainability finds the interconnections between economic prosperity, environmental integrity, and social equity. The ability to integrate scientific reasoning, economic impact and social justice as a part of the decision making process helps students to see how systems work and how actions taken can have long/short term consequences as well as unintended consequences.

Activity: A Socratic Seminar is a scholarly discussion of an essential question in which student opinions are shared, proven, refuted, and refined through dialogue with other students.

Geographical and Economic Facts:

Where: The Bakken Shale formation in North Dakota has one of the largest oil deposits discovered in recent U.S. history.

What: The Bakken shale formation holds about 7.4 billion barrels of oil (U.S. Geological Survey estimate).

Economic: Transporting the Oil: The 1172-mile-long Dakota Access Pipeline from North Dakota to Illinois will cost of \$3.7 billion to build.

Conflict:

A large gathering of indigenous people and other supporters of their cause have gathered in North Dakota to protest the construction of this pipeline. The Department of the Army decided on December 4, 2016 to look for an alternate route for the pipeline. Supporters of the pipeline are hoping that when President-Elect Donald Trump takes office this decision may change.

Essential Questions:

- Who decides what is fair and equitable?
- How do we balance the rights of individuals with the common good?
- What determines value?

Socratic Seminar Fishbowl Format:

1. Divide your class in half.
2. Ask one group to position themselves as an inner circle. They will act as “discussants” first.
3. The other half of the class, seats in an outer circle, and acts as observers and coaches.
4. The teacher or seminar leader facilitates the discussion.

Time:

Two-Three 45-minute class periods
1st Socratic Seminar should last about 30 minutes

Before the Seminar:

Research:

- 1) Students should research the issues surrounding the building of the pipeline. Students should choose sources that present both sides of the issue. When contemplating a source, it will benefit students to consider the following:
 - a) Where was the source published?
 - b) Who wrote it, and what was their intention
 - c) Is the piece timely and appropriate?
- 2) Select a few sources from the student research for the entire class to read.

Opening Essential Questions:

1. Develop the essential or opening question for the discussion, (or choose an essential question from above). An effective opening question arises from genuine curiosity, has no single “right” answer, is framed to generate dialogue leading to greater understanding of the ideas in the text, and can best be answered by reference to the text.
2. Provide adequate time for all students to record the essential question, develop their answer, and identify support for the answer. The essential question could be assigned as homework the night before the Socratic Seminar.

Pre-Conference:

1. Prior to the seminar, the teacher will draw names to determine which students will be inner circle participants and will assign each participant a coach from the outer circle.
2. Just before the seminar each participant and his or her coach will meet for a pre-conference to discuss the participant's goals for the discussion. The teacher will provide ample time for informal discussion between participants and their coaches in order to build some confidence in the participant's ideas before the seminar.

Seminar Instructions:

- 1) Students sit in one of two circles (inner circle for participants, outer circle for coaches).
- 2) The essential or opening question is posed and explained if necessary.
- 3) Students respond to the question orally, cite evidence from text, ask questions, and adds new insight or new knowledge from their point of view in regards to the opening question.
- 4) Teacher takes notes for evaluative purposes but provides no verbal or nonverbal feedback that either affirms or challenges what the students say. The teacher may ask follow-up questions; however, teacher questions are used sparingly and deliberately.
- 5) When the opening question has been thoroughly explored one or more additional questions may be asked to examine central points of the text.

Debrief and Reflection Questions:

- The main points and concepts are discussed and recorded
- How was your understanding of the text affected by the ideas discussed during the Socratic Seminar?
- What evidence did you see of people actively listening during the Socratic Seminar?
- What might you do differently in the next Socratic Seminar?
- Coaches and participants discuss the strengths and weaknesses of their participation during the seminar.

Variations and Extensions:

- Coaches and participants should switch roles during the Socratic Seminar.
- Students reflect on the Socratic Seminar process, their performance, and set their own goals for their participation in future seminars.

Bibliography

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