

DISCERNING AMONG THE CONCERNED, SATISFIED, AND IMPATIENT PERSPECTIVES

by Julie A. Zaloudek
University of Wisconsin – Stout

Delivery: In-person (can be adapted for online)
App Time: 30 minutes
Note: This activity is especially effective for in-person classes to help student differentiate among the three camps: Concerned, Satisfied, and Impatient. It should take place after students have read the chapter describing these camps.

STUDENTS WILL:

- Apply the Concerned, Satisfied, or Impatient perspective to a specific issue.
- Articulate the Concerned, Satisfied, or Impatient perspectives.
- Differentiate among the three views.
- Compare and contrast the three views in a discussion.

TEACHER PREPARATION:

1. Before class begins, write the name of each camp (Concerned, Satisfied, and Impatient) on six cards so that there are two of each perspective.
2. Have a plan for how to select six students for the role play (e.g. assigned, drawing, volunteer, etc.)
3. Arrange the room so that there are six chairs in a semi-circle facing the rest of the class. The six chairs are for the “school board,” and the class is the “community attendees” of the meeting.

STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS:

In this activity, we will do a role play of a school board deliberating a difficult (and realistic) problem. Many of the elementary school children have been coming to school without breakfast. This is contributing to many problems in the classroom. They are distracted, grouchy, and we know that children do not learn nearly as well without a nutritious breakfast. We also know that those state standardized tests are coming up, and they determine how many resources our school gets as well as helps us make internal decisions about funding allocation and staffing decisions. In other words, the stakes are high.

The purpose of this meeting is to begin conversations about potential solutions to this problem. We will have twenty minutes to brainstorm ideas of what should be done.

TEACHING NOTE:

Meetings often begin with brainstorming solutions to an identified problem. However, people come to the table from different perspectives that cause them to construct the problem differently, resulting in different approaches to the solution. These are the “invisible” elements of a meeting that can result in miscommunication, stagnation, and gridlock.

FOR THIS EXERCISE, STUDENTS IN THE ROLE PLAY SHOULD:

1. Pick a card with their “camp.”
2. Take ten minutes to think about how someone from this perspective would construct the problem and the solutions that would logically follow. Prepare your ideas to discuss in the school board meeting.
3. In the meeting, bring forward your ideas and engage with others about their ideas “as if” you come from the camp you have been assigned. Try to stay in your assigned perspective for the entire meeting!

FOR THIS EXERCISE, STUDENTS IN THE AUDIENCE SHOULD:

1. Listen carefully to the discussion, and take notes on each person’s ideas.
2. Construct any questions to ask during the “open mic” period at the end of the discussion.
3. Be prepared to vote on which person comes from which perspective when the exercise is complete.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FACILITATOR (TEACHER):

1. You can either serve as the school board president to be more directive in the meeting or allow them to manage the discussion on their own (depending on your goals and the capability of the students).
2. Set up the meeting, and then allow them to hash out their own ideas and responses to others.
3. Open up the floor at the end for questions from the audience so that they can test out their theories on who comes from what perspective. The questions should be the kind that a person might actually ask at such a meeting and not explicitly about the three perspectives, (e.g. How would we pay for the parent education classes on nutrition?).
4. At the end of the meeting, have the class cast vote for which person represented which perspective.
5. If needed, close with a large class discussion about the points of view brought forward in the meeting to clarify any lingering misunderstandings. I like to emphasize again that the different ideologies are the invisible part of the discussion, but arguably the most important. Effective communicators will seek to hear what is unspoken and test their ideas so that they can best educate or persuade.