

Philosophical Chairs

SUBJECT MATTER APPLICATION

In theory, learning happens when students use critical thinking to resolve subsequent conflicts which arise when presented with alternative perspectives, ideas or contradictions to what they have previously learned or believed. "Philosophical Chairs" is a technique to allow students to critically think, verbally ponder and logically write their beliefs.

PROCEDURE:

- Students read, prior to coming to class, a newspaper article, short story, essay or literary selection, taking notes as they read; bring those notes to class.
- After reading and taking notes students are presented with a second or third level statement that will elicit thought and discussion. Teacher can provide a statement for the first few discussions and may allow students to collaborate to create future statements if so desired. (Example statements follow)
- The chairs are placed in a horseshoe seating arrangement, with the two ends longer than the back. (see illustration on cover sheet)
- Students are told they will argue the merits of the philosophical statement and that their choice of seat during the discussion will illustrate their position. If they agree with the statement, they should sit on the right; if they disagree with the statement, they should sit on the left, and, if they are "undecided," they should sit at the back of the horseshoe. They will have the opportunity to move as their minds change.
- Choose a student moderator whose job is to see that everyone gets a chance to speak.
- To gain full credit, a student must speak at least two times.