

Lesson Study in Environmental Studies: Improving Group Discussion Using a Human Continuum

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BACKGROUND

Course Title

Improving Group Discussions Using a Human Continuum

Student Learning Goals

1. Increase discussion
2. Raise awareness of the discussion topic
In this case, population related issues
3. Discern and express specific positions on these issues

THE LESSON

Major Steps

1. Assign population reading the class before
2. Play outside introductory game called the turtle egg game
3. Come back inside and discuss game results and transition to human population issues
4. Ask students to physically line up in a continuum in the front of the classroom showing their stance on a number of population issues
5. Instructor chooses 3 statements that were most divisive
6. Students agreeing with a particular statement sit on one side of room, those that disagree sit on the other
7. Take 5 minutes to write down statements that tell why you feel the way you do about this issue (We did this 3 ways; individually, in a small group of about 4, and each side as a whole group)
8. Then, as an entire class, the two sides 'discussed' their thoughts and feeling on each divisive population issue

THE STUDY

Approach

An instructor led the class and acted as facilitator during the discussion, and two other instructors took notes and made observations. We also used an evaluation form distributed at the end of class for more info.

Key Findings

1. Physically asking students to place themselves along a continuum helped them to more firmly make a stand on a controversial issue, and the discussion was more enhanced due to the experiential and interactive nature of the activity
2. Students found the outdoor turtle egg game as an effective warm-up to discussion
3. Students enjoy interactive, experiential learning!
4. Utilizing small groups, or even individually, for the 5 minute writing in preparation for all class discussion worked best and saved time. This prep time can even be shortened to 2-3 minutes
5. Have as much time as possible for the all class discussion, as this seemed to be the most thought provoking.