

Philosophical Chairs

This deliberation strategy emphasizes careful listening and mastery of diverse points of view.

- n Arrange chairs in a "U" formation.
- n Students sit facing each other across the center of the room. One side will argue in favor of the question, and the other will argue in opposition to the question.
- n Students can sit in the neutral zone at one end of the center area (at the bottom of the "U" formation) so that they can see both sides.
- n Students must address each other by their first names.
- n A student must briefly summarize the previous speaker's points to that speaker's satisfaction before he/she begins his/her own comments.
- n Think before you speak. Organize your thoughts. Give verbal clues to your listeners ("I have three points; first...").
- n After a student speaks, s/he must wait until two students on his/her side have spoken.
- n One speaker at a time; others are listeners.
- n The teacher can call time-out periodically to clarify, reflect on the process or content, or refocus the discussion.
- n Address the ideas, NOT the person.
- n One student from each opposing side will provide a summary of the viewpoints presented during the discussion by his/her side.
- n Each student in the neutral zone must take notes on both sides of the argument. If her/his position changes, s/he must explain why s/he came to a new conclusion; if s/he remains undecided, s/he must explain why neither side has changed her/his mind.