

## Deliberating in a Democracy in the Americas Video Transcript

### **Narrator:**

In order to have a healthy democracy, a critical component is that people can talk to one another about controversial issues. And what we found is that's not happening. It's not happening in classrooms and it's not happening out in the general population.

Deliberating civic issues, especially controversial public issues, is vital to democracies. Deliberation required citizens and policy makers to weigh opposing views, find areas of agreement, and decide difficult questions. Given the current state of public discourse, we need to equip students with deliberative skills to prepare them for the rolls they will play in democratic life. So, one thing we could try to do is make deliberation happen in the classrooms.

In order to talk about controversial issues, it's not a natural thing that happens for people, you actually have to develop the skills in order to do that. So, what we did is created a set of lessons that are supported by a methodology called Structured Academic Controversy that was developed by the Johnson brothers, professors at the University of Minnesota. We adapted that methodology and linked it to our lessons and put all of that online.

The deliberation procedures reviewed in this video can be downloaded from the deliberating and democracy in the America's website under the lessons tab at [DDA.DELIBERATING.ORG](http://DDA.DELIBERATING.ORG).

### **[1:36] Teacher:**

Class today we are going to do a deliberation. We are going to use the eight steps of Structured Academic Controversy.

### **[1:43] Narrator:**

During step one, the teacher should focus on three main areas to help students understand the difference between debate, discussion and deliberation, the rules for a successful deliberation, and why deliberation is important to democracy.

### **[2:01] Student 1:**

Don't expect to be stuck on just one opinion, you have to look at all the opinions throughout the whole deliberation.

### **[2:04] Student 2:**

By deliberating, we're not debating, we're deliberating, and that's teaching us a new skill, that's something new that we learned.

### **[2:17] Teacher:**

So we just completed the introduction. You know what deliberation is. You know what we need to do. Let's go ahead and carefully read the text.

**[2:24] Narrator:**

For students to participate fully in the deliberation, they must have a fundamental understanding of the material. During step 2, teachers encourage students to connect to the reading.

**[2:34] Teacher:**

This is a great time to take out your highlighter, your pen or pencil, and underline or highlight anything that you think is significant. If you're having any problems with a word or concept, can you circle it or put a check mark next to it?

**[2:47] Narrator:**

As a whole class or in small groups, students need to identify and agree on interesting facts or ideas from the reading. Coming to consensus is a good way to start building group collaboration. For the next few steps, teachers may want to distribute handout number 2, which could be found under the lessons tab of the Web site.

**[3:06] Teacher:**

Let's go to step three, clarification.

**[3:07] Narrator:**

In step 3, the teacher builds upon step 2, by reinforcing the concepts and themes included in the lesson. The teacher also makes sure students understand the deliberation question. Some deliberation questions are complex and may present unfamiliar ideas.

**[3:24] Teacher:**

Should our democracy allow schools to punish students for off campus cyberbullying?

**[3:28] Narrator:**

The teacher must take time to clarify the question until all students knows what it means. This clarification will help students remain focused throughout the deliberation.

**[3:40] Teacher:**

Let's move on to step 4, presentation of positions. This is what you're going to do. Are you ready? Side A is going to say "Yes" today, and Side B is going to say "No."

**[3:51] Narrator:**

This step is key to helping students understand the complexity of the issue. Pairs work together focusing on the reading material to gather information in perspectives. Students don't have to agree with the position that they are assigned and at this point do not include their personal opinions or experiences.

**[4:10] Student 3:**

And this paraphrases to: we all have the freedom of expression in all forms, but we also have a responsibility.

**[4:17] Teacher:**

Side B, this is now your turn to present. Side A you are listening.

**[4:24] Student 2:**

The Supreme Court said that the school can limit students' free speech if it interrupts other students' ability to learn.

**[4:35] Teacher:**

It looks like we are ready to move on to step 5, reversal of positions. What we're going to do right now is: Side A you're going to adopt the position of Side B.

**[4:47] Narrator:**

This step helps to listen carefully, understand and analyze what others say and dig more deeply into the meeting. To continue their exploration of multiple perspectives, pairs are assigned the position of the other side. They must select the most compelling reasons, they heard during step 4, and add at least one additional reason from the reading to support their new position. Students continue to work from the reading. Personal opinions and experiences come later in the process.

**[5:16] Teacher:**

I think we're ready to move on to step 6, free discussion. This is where Side A and Side B doesn't matter. We are going to deliberate the issue with your team.

**[5:26] Narrator:**

During the previous steps, students gained content knowledge and explored multiple perspectives regarding the issue. In step 6, students are finally free to drop their assigned rolls and are asked to make a personal decision about the deliberation question. Opinions and experiences can now be shared. Teachers should emphasize that decisions should be supported by what the students learned during the previous steps, as well as new information shared during this step. Small groups are not required to agree on the answer to the deliberation question, but must find areas of agreement. A group may come up with a new policy or determine they need more information.

**[6:06] Teacher:**

You guys have done a great job with free discussion. I think we're ready for step 7, whole class debrief. Now it's an opportunity for all of you to share out.

**[6:16] Narrator:**

The debrief is important so the entire group can benefit from the small group discussions. Students who were in a minority in their small groups might hear that others in the class made similar decisions. The debrief should highlight agreements,

disagreements values and conflict, additional questions, and the connection between deliberation and democracy.

**[6:37] Teacher:**

How does this tie back to what we are learning in our class?

**[6:41] Student 4:**

It links to the Constitution and the amendments, right; the Bill of Rights.

**[6:44] Teacher:**

Do you mean the school district, the state government, the federal government?

**[6:48] Student 5:**

Yes, what I meant by government is that, there should be some way the government can help the school district enforce a policy that would protect the students.

**[6:58] Teacher:**

You guys did a great job with the whole class debrief. We're going to move on to step 8, student reflection, I think it's perfect timing. How many of you would say "Yes, that our democracy should allow schools to punish students for off-campus cyberbullying?"

**[7:14] Narrator:**

Taking a poll in class, and providing time for students to reflect, helps the teacher assess if students gained a deeper understanding of content and the process. The teacher can see if students connected the deliberation to democracy. Handout number 3 is useful for written reflection and there is a poll on the Web site where students can vote and see how others voted.

**[7:35] Teacher:**

What I am going to do is, lay out the numbers one through five on the floor. I want you guys to physically get up and stand on a number. "Should our democracy allow schools to punish students for off-campus cyberbullying?" If you're a "Yes," you're going to stand on the other end where five is. If you're a "No," stand on the one. If you're sort of not sure, maybe stand at a three. Now what I need you to do is turn to the person next to you and explain why you're standing where you're standing.

**[8:11] Student 6:**

I think our school should punish because I think it has to start somewhere.

**[8:13] Teacher:**

I think there's still so many issues that you and I have not addressed, but this is the beginning, right? You guys did a wonderful job, thank you.

**[8:23] Narrator:**

The eight steps reviewed here are from the Deliberating in the Democracy in the America's website. To download reading material, for multiple lessons, visit the Deliberating in the Democracy program portal page at [DELIBERATING.ORG](http://DELIBERATING.ORG).