



Teacher Tips for Using *Youth and Police Curriculum Materials*

For best results when utilizing these materials, it is important that teachers feel comfortable about the use of outside resource people, the practices of interactive methodology, and the methods for handling controversial issues in the classroom. The following provides a brief review of these approaches.

Procedure for a Resource Person (e.g., school resource officer, police officer, sheriff's deputy, etc.)

- Contact the resource person and arrange a visit to your classroom for the lesson. After sending a copy of the lesson, discuss the visitor's role and the goals of the lesson.
- Place the visit in context. Explain the class's course of study and the objectives of the course.
- Describe the audience. Tell the speaker how many students will be present, age range, interests, and achievement levels.
- Discuss the length of the lesson, the teaching strategy that will be used, and the time allotted for the resource person. Alert the resource person to any special considerations: particularly difficult questions that could arise, strong feelings among the students about issues that will be covered, etc.
- Request specific times and dates. Suggest two or three alternatives from which your guest can choose. Some resource persons can require considerable advance notice.
- Be sure the speaker has the correct address, directions, and knows where to park.

Tips for Effective Small-Group Work

Small groups require all students to do their job and help others to improve their own work. The final product—the result of several people's best efforts—is better than what each individual could do alone. The following are some concrete suggestions for using small groups effectively:

- Provide **clear instructions** to the group. It is best to give the group just one or two instructions at one time.
- Prepare the students with adequate **knowledge and skills** to do the work (e.g., background readings, classroom discussion, understanding of roles to play, etc.).
- Students must be given **enough time** to finish their task. Think creatively in advance about ways to occupy groups that finish ahead of other groups.
- **Small groups** work best—from three to five students, and only two or three when a complicated written product is the intended outcome.
- Teachers should consider how their **reward and evaluation strategies** affect the use of small groups. There should be a group reward for group efforts.
- Be clear about **management issues** of groups. If someone must report back to the class on the group's work, there should be a process for selecting the reporter at the outset.
- Teachers (and those in the classrooms around them) should be prepared for the **increased noise level** that occurs during cooperative-learning activities.
- Form **diverse groups**. Mix students by skill level, social groupings, etc.
- Teachers should **circulate, observe, and evaluate** what is happening in the groups.
- Look for ways to encourage **interdependence** within a group. If possible, assign each member a specific role. Groups are more effective when their success depends on every group member.

A Guide for Managing Controversial Issues

Controversy is a natural and essential part of our democratic system. This is particularly true when discussing issues of police misconduct, racial relations, and discrimination and proposed solutions to these problems, especially if there are any current controversies in the community. Some of the readings and hypothetical examples in these materials may be particularly sensitive. They were developed to serve two purposes: 1) to provide a factual basis for the discussion of the issues, and 2) to generate critical thinking, debate, and analysis of public policy on the part of participants.

Although each of the readings was extensively researched and reviewed to assure accuracy and a balanced presentation, a certain level of controversy is likely and should be encouraged if it is constructive and productive. But if destructive or unproductive controversy arises in the course of the presentation, try to clarify the nature of the disagreement by:

- Identifying the issue or issues under dispute.
- Identifying areas of agreement and disagreement.
- Identifying underlying assumptions and establishing a factual base.
- Challenging participants to concretely define terms and support opinions or statements with facts and reasons.

The process of definition may bring the subject to closure. If not, use an appropriate strategy for addressing the controversy, such as a discussion, research, formal debate, an anonymous writing assignment, mediation, or a forced perspective activity in which students must argue an issue from the “other” side. Some of these activities can be completed outside of the group or on an individual basis.

To help reduce unproductive controversy, establish certain ground rules:

- Participants must argue ideas, not personalities.
- Participants must represent the opposing position(s) fairly and accurately.
- Participants should attempt to understand the opposing perspective(s).
- Participants should be encouraged to admit doubts and weaknesses in their own position.
- Above all, the argument should concentrate on evidence.
- Participants should be given a chance to air their own views, hear their opponents’ views, and examine both.

In some cases, controversy cannot and should not be resolved. In such cases seek closure by having participants agree to disagree until more information is available or new arguments for one side or the other arise. Assure participants that closure of a controversy does not mean one side wins, nor does an individual need to abandon his or her beliefs, and that there will be future opportunities to discuss the issue.