

Proposal for Student-Led Discussion: Socratic Circle

The instructional approach I will be using is a Socratic circle. My mentor teacher and I thought it would be good to do a Socratic circle to break into our To Kill a Mockingbird Unit. We haven't had structured whole-class discussions yet and we thought this would be a good opportunity for students to work on their communicating skills, as required by Common Core State Standards as well as our district's required curriculum. As a novice teacher, I don't have much experience leading high school students in discussion. I have had experience with leading college freshman, but I can imagine there will be quite a difference. It will be good for me with the support of my mentor teacher to work on my role as a facilitator of a large group activity for which students assume more responsibility.

The goal for this Socratic circle is to empower students to take charge of their own learning. Students will have to use their listening, critical thinking and discussion skills. This process will allow students to engage in a situation in which they will be able to work cooperatively and enhance their abilities to ask intelligent questions. The Socratic circle is more suitable to me because it helps students develop their skills with little input from the teacher. I like that it eliminates teacher talk and holds students accountable for their own learning. Due to their nature, Socratic circles increase student engagement and motivation in the very sense that they are student operated and students all get to assume the leadership role in the classroom and choose the direction of conversation.

Action Plan for Student-Led Discussion: Socratic Circle

(a) how this new instructional approach will capture and maintain students' attention

Part of the intrigue of a Socratic circle is its capability to draw an audience's interest. Socratic circles are a very mature form of discussion and I believe this prepares students for their future courses and lives. It's The participants are also the leaders. The Socratic Circle is a new concept to some students. When I mentioned last week in class we would be doing one soon, I got positive reactions from my honors students. This does not surprise me as most of these students like to speak up in class. My regular English students appear indifferent. This should be interesting to see how each group reacts to the new process. My classroom is arranged having student sitting in small groups of mostly four; a couple of the pods have five students at them. This discussion format will have students in two circles and they will all be facing each other in these circles. This is different from most days where their attention is focused on me. Students will be thinking about how they will participate and how to respond to their classmates. The students so far have been involved in a somewhat limited amount of student-led discussions involving the whole class. I usually have the students engage in think-pair-share activities. These are fairly structured and I usually have a pretty specific goal. The Socratic Circle has students sitting in a large circle and facing their peers directly. For my activity I plan to have two circles, an inner and an outer. This way, I will be able to have more students talking as well as have students be observing and evaluating each other. Holding students accountable for observing their peers make claims and use evidence as well as recognize their participation skills should be an efficient way to maintain student engagement during the circle. Last time I did a class activity where students had a common goal to learn a text and did a jigsaw, students enjoyed the peer collaboration involved and I think they liked how they had to do less individual work, but received valuable information from their peers. Also, because this is a new activity, I think the novelty should intrigue students. I do, however, worry about my shy students feeling uncomfortable in a large

group. Because of this, I will leave a couple of minutes near the end of each round for students who were not able to say anything to give their voice if they feel comfortable. Worse comes to worse, maybe I can create an alternative assignment for those who don't feel comfortable speaking up. At the same time though, I don't want to create a deficit-driven alternative. Students need public speaking skills.

(b) how you will prepare students for their new roles

Last week in class, I did mock circles with students' claims they used in their analyses papers. I had three circles of seven students and had them go through a discussion of their claims using discussion stems. In her instructional book *Inspiring Dialogue* Juzwik (2014) writes "The purpose of dialogic talk is to "play a role in advancing the goals of civic engagement and democratic participation," (Loc 472). If dialogic conversation is not what teachers and students are used to, all learners must practice engaging in talk to become competent in it. Due to this, I have student practicing with modes of discussion. Though students have interacted with their peers before, I thought it was necessary for them to see what active listening looks like. This activity went ok, but I had difficulty getting the students to take this activity seriously. What this activity did teach me, was that I need to build with the class definitions of argument terms so we are all on the same page when it comes to implementation of terms like, claim, evidence, debate, discussion, etc. I am creating a PowerPoint and a graphic organizer with which to use with students on the day we spend on establishing Socratic Circle discussion norms and procedures. On this day I hope to have high student involvement. I am going to work with students to create definitions for claims we will use in the circle. Students themselves will create the rules for the Socratic circle. For my Socratic circle I have students taking a couple of roles each. Each student will be both a member of the inner circle and outer circle. When they are in the inner circle they will need to have discussion questions they've created as well as a graphic organizer to write down interactions amongst students. They will use this sheet to also record ideas they have as the discussion flows. When students are on the outer circle they will be responsible for evaluating one student in the inner circle. They will keep track of what the person they are observing says and take notes of what they do say. The first day of this project I have the students doing a jigsaw read with the articles so I know each student will have at least a portion of the articles read. Then, students will be responsible for teaching their peers about their portion of the article. After this students will work as a team to discover the claims each author makes. We, as a class, will make a list of claims and work to pull out themes and questions out of these articles.

This way I am guaranteed my students will have read the text I want to use. Those activities will take up a full class day. The next class day of this activity I will have students taking notes on the presentation about Socratic Circles and learning about student roles and discussion norms. Finally, they will have a day on which they must do the participation required of Socratic circle participants.

c) how you will model for students what they are expected to do;

To model for students what they need to do we will be engaging in discussions and presentations centered on Socratic Circles. Previously, I mentioned I would have the students creating their norms and knowledgeable about the texts they are going to be responding to. Students will watch a video of a sample Socratic Circle so they understand what this process looks like. We will pause throughout this clip and discuss what successful students look like during this process. This is a time for students to ask questions and learn about the process itself. Students will have the opportunity to act out a mock circle too. The groundwork for this activity is very structured because the process of the Socratic circle is student-led and holds students responsible for the momentum. Due to this, it's necessary to hold their hands through the beginning process. I will probably also post additional resources on the articles for students to look at on the class website.

(d) how you will manage students while you are teaching in this new way, while also increasing their engagement

I will manage the students with the aid of graphic organizers and discussion prompts. Students will be using each other as guides to go through the process. The students will have created their own expectations for the format of this discussion style. Students have high expectations placed upon them. Students are responsible for differentiating this format of discussion from debate. Students are going to hold themselves accountable. If the students act out, I will handle each situation as it comes. I will be keeping track of student participation and monitoring involvement. The responsibility for keeping the circle engaging is mostly upon them.

After the discussion, all students will be responsible for filling out a self-evaluation plan. The student will be asked to thoughtfully consider how he or she engaged in the circle and self-evaluate. Students are given a rubric to look at and decide where they fall within it. I will be looking at both their self-evaluation and my notes to determine how that student did on the activity. I am still working with my mentor teacher to figure out how we will be assessing the students in terms of specific grades. We are trying to figure out the best way to grade discussion and where it fits best in our syllabus.

(e) how you will manage your own self during this sequence.

During the Socratic circle I will not be participating directly regarding the topic of the circle. I will be taking notes on who participates during this circle and be checking participation of the students. I will present the students with a list of student created questions for the students to discuss. They need to work on playing out their discussion stems to keep on task. If necessary I will give helpful reminders about the procedures, but not enter the conversation at hand. I will work hard not to chime in on the conversation and only model what students are doing.

Work Cited

Inspiring Dialogue

Juzwik, M., Borsheim-Black, C., Caughlan, S., & Heintz, A. (2013). *A Dialogic Stance*. In *Inspiring Dialogue*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Evaluation Plan

On Thursday, November 6th, 2014 I enacted Socratic Circles for all of the classes I am teaching right now. We did Socratic Circles on the N-word as a way to enter our To Kill a Mockingbird Unit. The theme of this unit is changing attitudes through knowledge. For this Socratic Circle we spent a week of class setting up. Due to this, I am spending a lot of time synthesizing and analyzing data. I gave my students so many handouts to prep for this discussion that I am evaluating all of that and videos to figure out what was useful.

The videos are nice to look at because I am able to see the circle from a different perspective. It helps to see how the students' facial expressions change as the discussion goes on and to note confusion that I may have overlooked while teaching. Analyzing these videos is useful to revamping my instructional techniques. I will need to devote a good chunk of MSU prep periods towards deciphering these.

The day before enacting the Socratic, circle in class, I showed the students a PowerPoint and talked through with them about what the circles were and how we would be enacting them in class. I recorded this activity with my focus hour and my fourth hour with the intention of seeing how my explanations are different between an honors class and a regular class. The purpose of me doing this was to evaluate the effectiveness of my verbal directions for different groups of students. So far, I am noticing I am able to maintain a much more casual, comforting tone with the honors kids.

Because we knew it would be difficult to keep track of who was speaking and what they were saying throughout the circle, I decided to record each hour's circle so that we could review the footage. I am working on choosing clips from each hour to show the students so they can see for themselves how they did with the circle. I also had a clipboard with a class list that I would mark each time a member from the circle made a claim or asked a question. I would also take away a point each time a student did something disrespectful. This was tiring, distracting, and possibly took away from my ability to assess quality of conversation. I am thinking there is a more effective way to assess student learning. Possibly relying on students' self-assessments is what I need to do. This is the area I need to reform for the next time I do a Socratic Circle. I need to come up with an effective way to evaluate students' participation during the circle without impeding my ability to pay attention to what's going on in the circle and take time.

After each round of the Socratic circle, the students did a group assessment. I had each member of the outer circle explain what the inner circle could improve on for the next Socratic circle we hold. The students did well with this. Students really enjoyed making comments about how their peers could improve and this was also constructive for their own circles. I am going to look over my notes to see trends in what students thought they needed to improve upon.

I had the students doing a lot of prep work to get to the Socratic circle. It was interesting to again see the difference in my honors classes compared to my regular classes. My honors students had previous experience with Socratic circles in both English and History. My regular English 9 students, on the other hand, had only done them in history. Their Socratic circles in history class had been a little less structured and a little more like a debate than a discussion. The students who had prior exposure to the Socratic circle in their honors 8 English class made more references to the texts. The students who had only did them in history class really struggled with effective transitions.

I plan on reviewing the materials my students completed for this circle. My mentor teacher and I are trying to discover effective ways to assess how well the students did in the circles. Because this was their first circle, we decided to give all of the students full points so long as they completed all of the materials. We gave it more of a completion grade because it was a trial run for all of us.

Before students began learning about the circle, I had them read a few articles about the N-word. These pieces were op-Eds from newspapers and short memoirs. I also had students watch a video of Jay Z and Oprah discussing the N-word and a CNN quick clip about the history of the n-word. The students were instructed to take notes on the articles, t4 and respond to questions about the articles. I am in the process of reviewing the students' written work for this assignment.

For the circle itself, I had students complete graphic organizers. The graphic organizers had four columns and eight rows. Each of the columns was labeled with a different category for information: questions, claims and evidence from texts, anticipated counterclaims, and notes during most interesting parts of discussion. Students were to fill these out (aside for the notes during discussion) prior to the circle to have a physical representation of their thinking.

Students did the circle in pairs. While their partner was in the inner-circle, students were required to take notes on their partner's discussion moves, quality of participation and how often they built on the conversation. This is one of the sheets I would like to reframe. Sometimes it was distracting for students to take notes on each others' behaviors and difficult for them to keep up with the discussion being held.

Immediately after the circle, I had students do self-assessments. Students did two assessments of themselves. The first was one that had students give themselves numeric values for their participation. I find these the most helpful and sometimes the most dishonest. It's interesting to see how highly some students regard themselves. I find most of those students to have inflated senses of self-worth. The honest kids are mostly my honors students and they are way too critical of how they did in the circle. I like this worksheet the best because it asks students for which area they would like help with for future Socratic Seminars. The second assessment sheet I have students had the Common Core State Standards listed on them. These sheets broke down discussion skills into four categories: advanced, proficient, and basic, below basic and far below basic. I told students that I did not expect any of them to be at an advanced level and that most of them would fall in the proficient category. Despite this, I had many students rate themselves as advanced. This was interesting. I am still trying to determine how to organize this data effectively.

I plan on taking the time to organize the data from students in an efficient way to compare students' self-assessments. I want to show students, based on their self-evaluations, where there is room for improvement. I think this can be done in several ways. I think I will first work on getting the data arranged on my computer in virtual form so it's easier to manipulate.

Next time my mentor teacher and I do a Socratic Seminar, we intend on giving our students similar assessment sheets and having them compare their performance to this Socratic circle. After I compile the data, we intend on having students decide on a group goal for improvement for the next circle. We are going to remind students of their individual goals. We think it will be useful to know what areas they ask for help in and we plan to help them prepare for the next circle based on the areas they had requested help for on their self-assessment sheets. I plan to type up my notes on their discussions to show the students Ms. C's observations on each class's circles.

When I have enough time I'd like to create new worksheets for the next Socratic circle we have. This Socratic Circle went well, but I am still trying to figure out how to reformat the handouts I give the students so they can have maximum potential. My mentor teacher and I have decided which handouts of ours we'd like to rework to suit the needs of our classroom. After the success we had with the activity, we'd like to use it again during our *To Kill a Mockingbird* Unit. We are impressed with the discussions our students are having and are eager to see our students improve their discussion abilities.

At the end of the day, student-led discussions are difficult to assess. Not only that, but compiling the data in a useful format seems daunting and nearly impossible. I have the data I need and know generally what I want to do with it. I know students will be able to look at what they did with this first Socratic seminar and learn from it, but I am sincerely hoping my efforts to synthesize and analyze data are productive for students' purposes. But, I think I believe that these student-led discussions are the most useful skills for students in terms of their futures. Public speaking is a valuable skill and I have to believe learning productive ways to respectfully disagree and collaborate with others is an invaluable skill students will be able to use for the rest of their lives—I can't say the same for everything we do in the English classroom.

In my TE 802 class we've been talking about assessment, especially that for student-led discussion. After reading Tovani's piece on assessment not needing to be the enemy in her book *So What Do They Really Know?*, I have come to the conclusion that all types of assessment are beneficial to instruction; Both summative and formative assessments are important. As Tovani points out, summative assessment is what administrators use for your evaluation. Not only that, but students' scores on tests that are well structured can inform you of what content areas students struggle with. That is, if they are effective. In this case, the Socratic Circle was a summative assessment of what students had gotten out of the texts we read. Formative

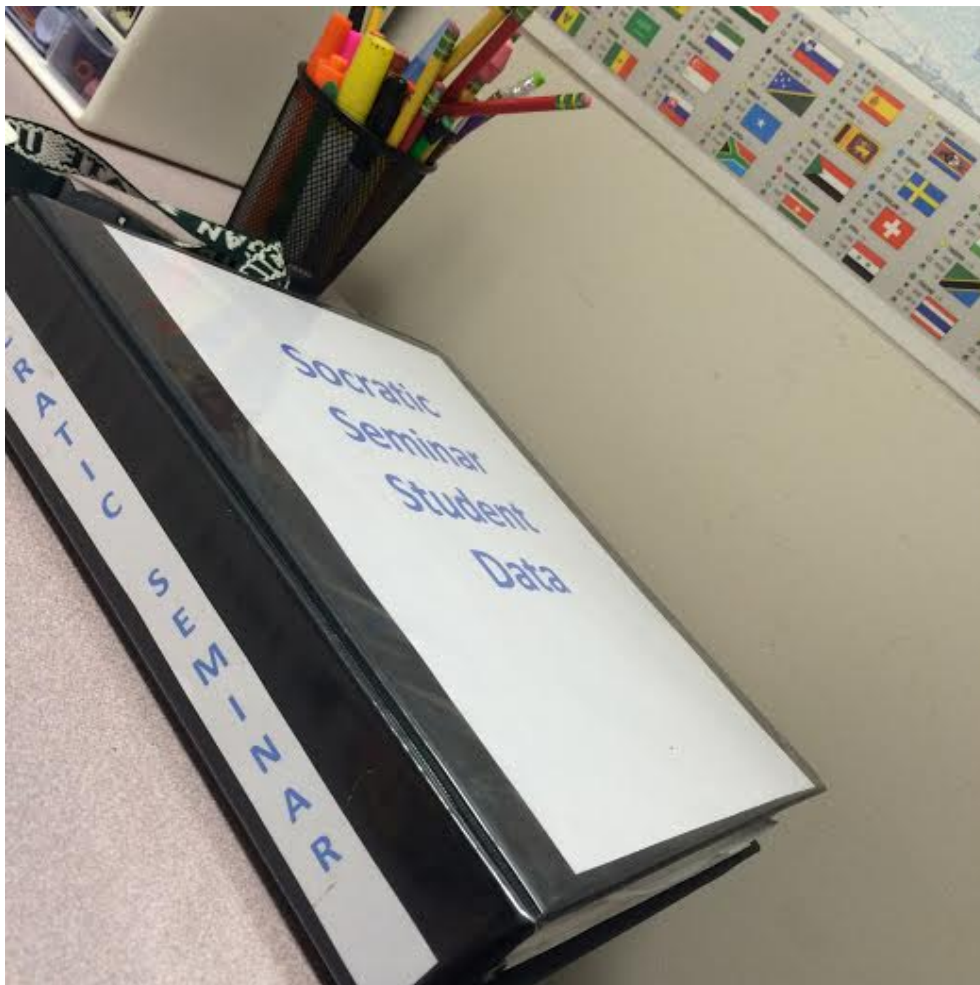
assessments, on the other hand, can be used with just as much purpose. The sheets students filled out are beneficial to their and my knowledge of their improvement.

Works Referenced

Inspiring Dialogue Juzwik, M., Borsheim-Black, C., Caughlan, S., & Heintz, A. (2013). A Dialogic Stance. *Inspiring Dialogue*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Tovani, C. (2011). *So What Do They Really Know?* Stenhouse.

Data Analysis (Independent Study 3)



Description (*What I did*):

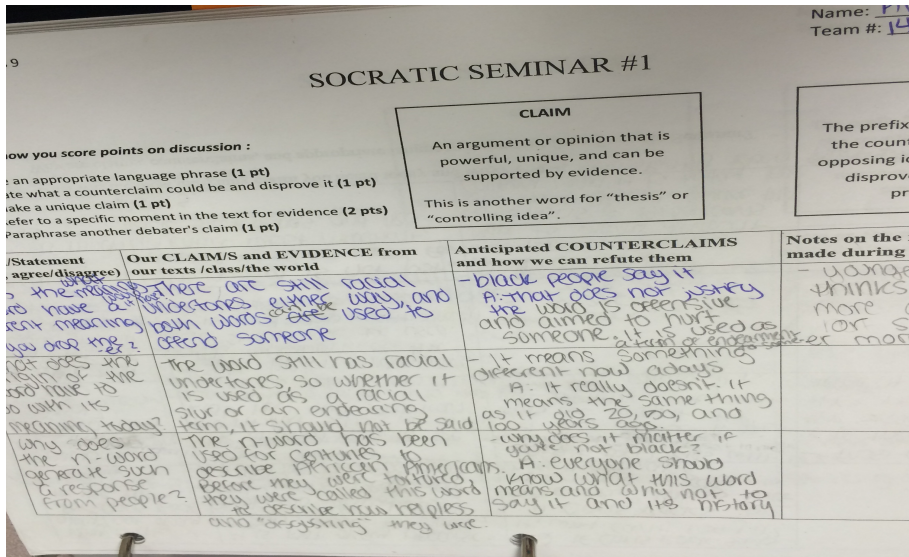
For my Instructional Repertoire Project I decided to hold a Socratic Circle in my classroom. There was a lot of prep work involved and my mentor teacher and I knew that assessment of this experience would be difficult. After all, during the Socratic Circle, we are observers. The teacher role during the Socratic Circle is a lot more complicated than I had anticipated. To help me navigate my role in this process, I had implemented a few assessment strategies to help fairly assess the success of the dialogic process.

Before I had students participate in the circle I had distributed to them the texts they would just to make their claims for the Socratic Circle, their evidence. Students were given readings on various positions surrounding the usage of the N-word. We spent a couple of class days reading these texts and students were to respond on individual bases. The purpose of having them respond individually to the text was so we would not exhaust the conversation before even beginning the circle. I was able to assess each student's understanding of the articles by reading their responses to the questions the article posed. This also helped me understand which ideas from the articles might be too complex for my students to handle. I did learn that the articles I used were slightly above some of my regular English 9 students' comprehension level. This I think was okay because through dialogue they were able to understand what they couldn't comprehend in print.

The day before we did our circle on the N-word, I presented to students a slide show that described what Socratic Circles were and presented students with specific roles they would enact during the course of the circle. This presentation was interactive and during it I was able to assess students' attitudes towards Socratic Circles. I asked questions about general experience and interest with Socratic circles and about how they felt about discussing the topic at hand. Asking these causal questions informed me that my students generally had positive attitudes towards Socratic Seminars and that in other classes their Socratic Seminars were a little more casual. This information was important to me when it came to framing my structure and going over routines and expectations for Socratic Circles in my class.

I had learned during this time that students saw Socratic Circles more as a forum for debate rather than discussion due to their previous experiences. Due to the sensitive of this topic (the N-word), I needed to make sure we were all on the same page and had similar definitions for discussion and debate. I didn't want it to turn into a debate on whether or not people should use the n-word or not, but rather be a discussion about the opinions presented to us in opinion articles surrounding the topic. As a class, we composed a list detailing differences between discussion and debate. Once we came to an agreement, I made a visual to hang during the discussion so students could keep themselves policed on proper discussion procedure.

On the same day we went over rules and expectations, I distributed to my students the graphic organizers on which they would hold their thinking for the Socratic Circle. The purpose of distributing these at this time was so that we could go over what good questions for discussion look like. We as a class pulled out thematic tensions in our articles and used them as framework to compose questions. The night before the circle, students were to comb through their texts and compose questions they might discuss during the circle. Students were also to gather related textual evidence from the texts we used. I assessed how well students did with this by listening to their comments during the circle and also by reading their responses on their graphic organizers. Below, you can see students had one column for questions, one for claims and evidence from the text and one for anticipated counter claims. This allowed me to assess how much thought students had put towards the topic before beginning our circle.



The day of the circle student in the inner circle were to use the graphic organizer to use as a reference for talking points and to also take note on what others were saying. One thing I noticed was difficulty students had taking notes on what others were saying while also being members of the conversation. I think I would like to come up with a better way for students to take notes and participate. From looking at this data, I have noticed most students did not fill in the last column, which was for notes during the discussion. Having difficulty myself taking notes on the discussion while it was happening, I can now see why this was a challenge for the students as well.

During the circle, those in the outer circle were to play the role of coach for their partner on the inner circle. They were to take notes on what their partner was doing and at half time give their partners advice on how to better participate during the second part of the circle. They were to fill out the document below. The document asked the observer to take thorough notes on what their partner was saying, discussion moves they used, and quality of participation. Most students neglected to fill these out thoroughly, which tells me I need to make it a bit less complex. I want to come up with a more helpful way to guide these students in tracking peer participation. Upon informal assessment during halftime though, I did see that most students really took it upon themselves to give honest feedback to their peers. Students were more willing to offer advice to their partners than I had anticipated.

Socratic Seminar Observation Notes

Name: Chelsea Courtois

Directions: Choose three participants in the seminar to observe. Write examples of the behaviors listed below that you see or hear.

Participant	Behavior 1	Behavior 2	Behavior 3	Behavior 4
1. Bailey Barden	Do you believe the word popular will use of the North	Does the word offer popularity	David Banner reference	Agrees on generation and
2.				
3.				

Overall Score (if applicable)

Two goals I have

1. asked a question

2. asked a question

An area where I need to improve

1. asked a question

2. asked a question

3. asked a question

4. asked a question

5. asked a question

6. asked a question

7. asked a question

8. asked a question

9. asked a question

10. asked a question

During each circle's half time we had a more informal assessment of the quality of the circle's discussions. When each inner circle was half way through their circle, each speaker and coach had two minutes to debrief and offer advice to their partner on how they could improve for the second half of the circle. During this time, I was able to assess the helpfulness of the sheets I gave students to take notes on in regards to his or her partner's performance. Many students seemed to be taking direct influence from their notes. Other students used the time unproductively. Maybe two minutes was too much time for coaching advice. Maybe the students needed more direction in this activity.

During the circle I took notes on a roster about who was contributing what information. I also was assessing student participation so that I would know whom to invite to the conversation during the last two minutes of circle time. During the last two minutes of the second half, I interrupt the circle to directly invite those who haven't participating to the circle by name. This is the handout I want to improve most upon. I don't know how practically this allows me to assess performance quality.

Attendance Grid

Teacher Name: LAUREL S. ERVICH

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Evd	Evd	Evd	Evd
1 Bera, Cristina								
2 Caretti, Marguerite								
1 Chaka, Ryan	✓							
2 Chodnick, Maria								
3 Dawson, Madeline								
4 DaClerco, Christopher								
3 Fanone, Santino								
4 Kucharczyk, Emily	✓							
5 Lancaster, Blake								
4 LaRue, Brenden								
5 Laurain, Catherine								
6 Lentz, Megan	✓							
2 Leone, Leah								
5 LoChirco, Carlo	✓							
7 Lytle, Meghan	✓							
3 Mulligan, Katelynn								
9 Stewart, Reese								
9 Zimmerman, Ariana								

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
 14 5 4 9 4 6 8 10 7

Q1 37 Events 30

Teacher observation notes during circle. Each student received a check for a question posed or evidence presented from the text to respond to a question.

Attendance Grid

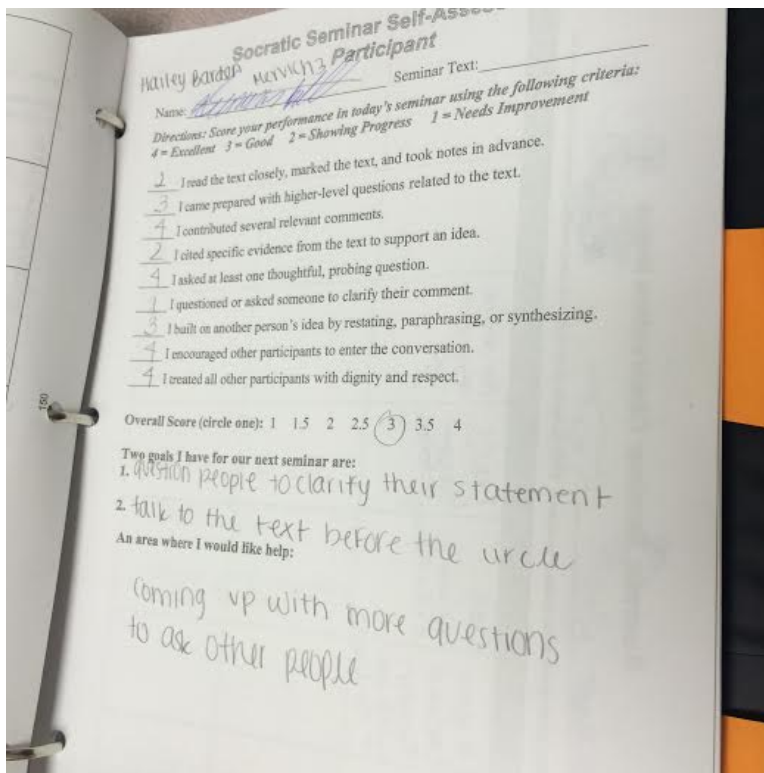
Teacher Name: LAUREL S. ERVICH

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Evd	Evd	Evd	Evd
1 Abdel Fattah, Sarah								
2 Bono, Olivia	✓							
2 Boothe, Zoe	✓							
2 Carabelli, Calena	✓							
3 Carlesimo, Sophia								
4 Cody, Shane								
3 Dal Pra, Nina								
4 Demarais, Chad								
5 Germanski, Roman	✓							
6 Gill, Alessandra	✓							
5 Ho, Allister	✓							
6 Johanson, Blake								
7 Kenmerling, Jack	✓							
8 Krstevski, Nicholas	✓							
7 Malski, Jonathan	✓							
8 Mason, Nicole	✓							
9 Olbrys, Alexandria	✓							
10 Pytel, Christopher	✓							
9 Schmidt, Alec								
10 Semerau, Samantha								
9 Wallace, Isabel	✓							

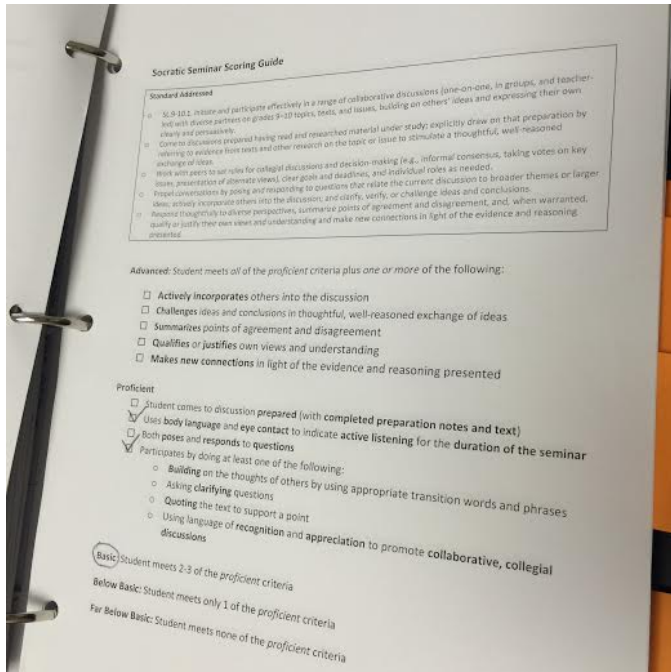
- be more specific
 - Alessandra aware of what he was saying
 - schools
 - transition, manipulation or
 - talking to each other
 - hot seat is for questions
 - expand on...
 - pick
 - work on...

Same as before. This chart includes personal notes. I would keep track of students who didn't have a chance to participate so I could invite them to the circle directly.

After the circle I was able to assess how each student thought he did himself. I distributed two sheets on self-assessment. I think for the next circle I would like to condense them to one sheet because having two sheets to complete overwhelmed some of the students. These sheets helped me to assess how well each student thought he or she did during the discussion as well as informed me to how they thought they had prepared themselves. One of the sheets has the students rate themselves on a scale as for preparedness and goals for next time. The other sheet relates to the CCSS and has each student assess their own level of skillfulness at adhering to the standards. The second sheet was to give students insight as to how well they were doing with meeting standards and for them to see how they could be assessed on a standardized test for the skills they are demonstrating.



Self-assessment individual ranking guide for after circle



Methods for data collection:

My definition of assessment is pretty broad. On the one hand, I have all of these documents and physical responses to how the circle went. Then, there are all sorts of informal, just as useful factors, I took into account when evaluating whether or not the circle was a success. These factors were: student interest towards topic, student attitude towards Socratic Circle format, and student behavior/body language during the circle.

I collected all of the graphic organizers that were distributed. In addition to the handouts distributed, I had many informal assessments while I was doing this project. Previously, I had mentioned I would check students attitudes and understandings informally as well. I also have each Socratic Circle recorded. Viewing the movies I have of these circles has allowed me to view them more for content than I was able to while just watching the circle take place. In review of these video

Videotaping the circle was useful for a couple of reasons. (1) it was difficult often to keep track of who was saying what, how others reacted, (2) also

it was difficult to see the quality of the contributions they were making, I am able to see which students were truly prepared for the circle and which ones could have benefited from more scaffolding or more self-preparation.

Overall, I would say the methods of assessment I have set in place for evaluating Socratic circles are mostly effective. What I would like to be able to do is come up with a quantities way to measure student

success in the circle. I think I like the idea of giving students full points just for engaging in the conversations, but I want students to have something to strive for next time. In a way, students will be working towards advanced discussion skills based on where they thought they were this time (this is based on their self-assessment on the CCSS handout). But, I still hope to give them more concrete guidelines on what they need to strive for next time.

This activity requires a lot of pre-assessment. I don't think you can just jump into a school year ready to begin a circle. You need to give yourself time to assess personalities, students' previous experiences with circles and so forth.

Results of data:

Looking at the data between hours for the Socratic Seminar is the most interesting. The first three circles I led were in honors 9 English classes. The last circle I held was with my split class of four honors students and twenty regular students... In the graphic organizers I am really able to see a difference in the ways students pick out evidence from the texts as well as how they had assessed themselves.

I have noticed that my honors students tend to have the tendency to be more critical in their self-assessments. Those students are typically higher performers, but have the tendency to give themselves higher evaluations. My regular 9 students tend to mark themselves higher. I'm not sure why this is.

I am looking over the materials I gave the students for self-assessment and wondering if they completely are able to understand the terms I have given them for assessment or if I need to go over each standard and specific examples of what an advanced discussion member looks like. I think before we do the next Socratic Circle, I will need to create a better form of self-assessment and provide students more guidance for filling it out.

Resources:

For these circles I depended on several resources. First, I had found a posting on teachingchannel.org that provided me with insight on how to run a circle around the n-word. <https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/teaching-the-n-word>. The teacher who created this video provided me with the literature I used with my students for our Socratic Circle. The large difference was that this was an 11th grade class and so I knew my students would need more scaffolding. This is also perhaps why my students found the texts a little more challenging than I had anticipated.

Luckily, a week before we enacted the circles we had attended a PD conference ran by other junior high teachers who presented on Socratic Circles and Philosophical chairs. From these meetings we were able to take away a couple of our ideas for logistics behind running the circle. The form for student observation during the circle and self-assessment was taken from some of the literature they distributed.

My views of assessment have grown ever since reading the Tovani article "So What Do They Really Know?" which is about assessment and how little forms of assessment can be beneficial to the teaching

moves you produce in your future lessons. For example, finding out my students' prior example with circles helped me discover how I would need to differentiate the one we would have. I think this is why I mention so often informal assessment moves and data throughout the Socratic assessment process.

My mentor teacher helped me to understand why we needed so many ways to track how students were going to prepare themselves for the circle. She said when having discussions it's important for students to have a device for holding thinking. I am still getting used to the idea that it takes more legwork for students at the early high school level to jump into discussions.

Reflection:

For my first time running circles, I'm pretty pleased with what came out of it. There is a lot of preparation that must be done for a circle, especially at the ninth grade level. My mentor teacher and I are hoping to make a way for our students to see how they've improved from the last circle. For now I am holding on to my students' work.

Overall, for this class and for this time in the year, I thought the Socratic Circle was a nice way to peak interest to our To Kill a Mockingbird Unit theme of "Changing Attitudes through Knowledge"

When I have my own classroom, I would like to do Socratic circles on a regular basis. I think student-led discussion is an effective approach towards discussion. The most important factor I've learned to be in student-led discussion is cooperation and respect amongst the participants. I think students find more value out of discovering the truth themselves. But, I also believe to get there they need strong guidance. Dialogic instruction doesn't happen overnight. Students need to be given tools to participate in these discussions and time to work with these tools to use them most effectively.

My mentor teacher and I hope to modify our sheets we distribute for or students to evaluate themselves and others. We entered the circles with trepidation because we had received mixed reactions from people about what worked to keep students accountable during discussion. I'd also like to come up with a better, on-the-spot approach for recording students' ideas. We hope to make some tweaks to the circle regarding the handouts and ways we prepare the students next time.

I think having a student-led discussion was quite possibly one of the biggest learning experiences I've had so far in my placement because I did most of the setup work myself. I am now seeing the importance of having measurable ways to assess student progress. Beyond helping students improve for future circles, creating effective assessment tools sets teachers up for improvement of future teaching and learning.

Questions for future:

What is the most efficient way for the teacher to observe the students?
How much structure should the roles involved in a Socratic Circle have?

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Final Evaluation and Reflection

Socratic Seminars

I have experienced positive and negative experiences with Socratic Circles. The positive experiences have all contained one common element, preparation. If there's one thing I've learned from the transition from being a partaker college discussions to moderating secondary students engaging in discussions, it would be the importance of having sufficient scaffolding for discussion.

I am currently student interning in two different courses. All ninth graders take an English class: about one-third of them are in honors English and the rest in regular English. While this is not a reflection tracking's impact on my placement, I do notice a correlation between student's ability to have discussions and their writing abilities. After all, speech has a complex relationship to writing. If you cannot find the evidence, supporting details, and synthesize your information to make a claim, how can you be expected to verbalize this?

The most positive thing I see about successful dialogic instruction is students' abilities to demonstrate their understandings of the context of the discussion and have them use their student speak to better explain difficult concepts.

Preparation for Dialogic Instruction

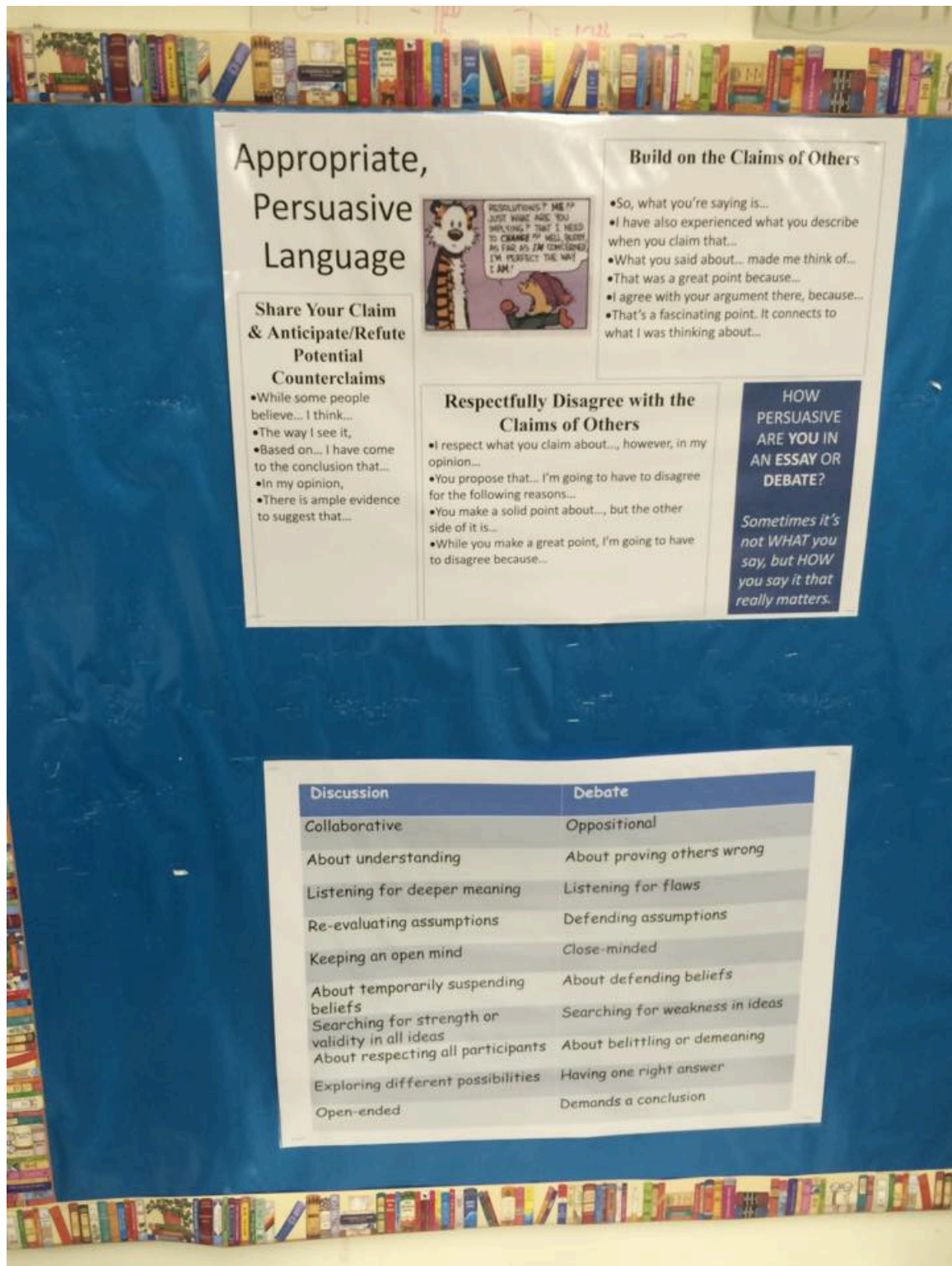
Dialogic instruction doesn't happen overnight. One of the most difficult things I find about being a student teacher is understanding the level at which my regular English ninth graders are at in terms of communication skills. I knew communication through writing took effort, but I forgot partaking in a discussion takes time to attain mastery over. To account for this, before we did Socratic Circles I had students engaging in small group discussions frequently and had been giving students reminders of what appropriate discussion behaviors are.

Preparation for Socratic Circles

To make sure students are getting as much as possible out of the Socratic Seminar experience, it was necessary to take time with each of the steps leading up to the classroom event itself. I needed to make sure students had attained mastery over the text we were to discuss. Next, I had to introduce students to the concept of Socratic Seminar and acceptable behaviors. I spent a day of class going over what they were and helping students formulate questions for their graphic organizers. With my regular students, I had provided them a list of themes with which they could formulate questions. I had my honors students come up with the thematic tensions in our texts.



THE DAY BEFORE THE CIRCLE I PUT THE DESKS IN A CIRCLE/OVAL. I LIKED THIS ARRANGEMENT BECAUSE STUDENTS COULD TURN AROUND AND EASILY COACH THEIR PARTNER DURING HALF TIME.



I CREATED THESE VISUALS TO REMIND STUDENTS OF THE STANDARDS WE HAD SET.

Below is an outline of a PowerPoint I used to prepare my students:

- Socratic Circles
- A Student-led Discussion Approach
- What are they?
- Socrates=Greek philosopher
- scholarly discussions
- quests for knowledge
- dialogic
 - How do they benefit me?
- responsible for my own learning
- less teacher talk
- independent thinking skills
- don't have to raise my hand to talk
- prepares me for high school/college/workplace/
- helps me respect my peers as fellow intellectuals
- Discussion Norms

What do you think it looks like to respect someone?

How would you like to be treated while you and your peers are speaking?

- What is a good question to explore?

Inquiry based learning requires questioning.

We want to achieve deeper knowledge about the ideas presented to us in our texts.

Knowledge comes from discussing implications of a subject and sharing out ideas.

- What themes do we have for discussion?
- Goals for Socratic Circles
- In the first quarter...

- You have already made claims, built off each other's ideas, and challenged each other.
- You have asked probing questions about texts we have read.
- Our new goal is for you to build your discussion skills:

YOU Will...

- create questions based on evidence
- analyze evidence (pick it apart and develop your thoughts on it)
- create personal connections to the text and ideas presented by your colleagues.

- Rules
- Keep an open mind
- Don't dominate
- Treat others with respect.
- What does that look like?
- Suggestions?
- How will class run when we do a Socratic circle?
- How this runs
- 2 teams
- Coaches, speakers, and moderators (teachers)
- The hot seat
- The hot seat person does not get any points. However, if the conversation is lulling and someone from the outside decides they have something to add, they can jump in the seat for 30 seconds..
- How circles run...
- Each circle operates for 15 minutes.
 - 5 minutes for first half
 - 2 minutes for half time
 - 8 minutes for second half (last two minutes for people who haven't had a chance to

speaking)

- 5 minute reflection
 - 5 minutes for first half
 - 2 minutes for half time
 - 8 minutes for second half (last two minutes for people who haven't had a chance to speak)
 - 5 minute reflection
 - This process will take 40 minutes and then we will reflect as a class.
 - Competition
- Each of you has a partner.
 - You and your partner along with other selected teams are to work as a team to coach each other on effective use of dialogue.
 - With your article texts...
 - You will need to reference each article by page number and article title
 - You might want to write the names of your texts on your graphic organizer so you don't forget.
 - You can refer to the articles by authors' names.
 - For example, "I'm talking about the Naylor article. On the second page, the author states she and her family use the word at the dinner table..."
 - Talking piece
 - To avoid the issue of too many people talking at once, we will use a talking piece.
 - You will have to be alert and find ways to naturally let the person who is speaking you'd like to speak.
 - Eventually, we will move away from using this tool.
 - It takes awhile to get used to pausing naturally.
 - Coach Role
 - When my partner is in the inner circle, I take notes about what they are saying.
 - I am responsible for providing the instructor with evidence that my partner used evidence and how they used it so she can record it as a point.

- During half time, I will give my partner time.
- Speaker role

When I am in the inner circle...

- Eye contact
- Recording what other people say
- Actively speaking and/or taking notes
- Using discussion language
- What will my role as instructor be?
- I promise to not enter conversation unless inappropriate behavior occurs.
- I will use nonverbal cues to address our Academic Language.
- I will leave you responsible for deciding when people are being repetitive and politely informing that it's time to move on.
- If necessary, I will open up a two minute period at the end of each circle during which we officially invite those who have not said anything at all to speak up.
- I will keep track of points earned by all teams.
- I will be time keeper.
- I will point to the poster about discussion v. debate if the convo is seemingly heading there. The goal of this is inquiry and gaining points by thoughtfully inquiring. The goal is not to "win" the argument.
- Exit Ticket
- On a sheet of lined paper, respond to the following questions:
 - 1. What is one thing you look forward to about our Socratic circle?
 - 2. What is your personal goal for this discussion?
 - 3. What are you nervous about

Below is the lesson plan I used to prepare students for their roles during the circle.

Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Objectives (What will your students know and be able to do as a result of this lesson?):

SWBAT learn to recognize the claims in a news/opinion article make inferences with respect to them when citing textual evidence.

SWBAT develop strategies for interacting with the text and in doing so work on developing ideas for persuasive arguments in inquiry.

Materials:

Graphic Organizer w/ text
Lined paper for FRQ
Elmo
Colorful pens for markups on Elmo
Pencils (students)
Whiteboard and dry erase marker

Learner Factors

Students will be provided with a graphic organizer, which will serve as a way for students to hold their thinking and mark up the text. In the graphic organizer, I have placed the articles' texts as well as a blank column for students to take notes with. Students are to actively read the article and use this to hold their thinking about the text. This lesson accommodates visual, oral and aural learners. We will be working collaboratively to determine meanings of texts. The different formats for discussion throughout the lesson will allow for the participation of everyone.

Environmental Factors

Students are seated in small groups with students of different academic abilities. Stronger students will be paired with weaker students. Students are seated in groups created with their specific needs in mind. The

lesson begins with us as a whole group discussing the weekend article and. Then, students will watch a clip about the n-word. After that, students will respond in writing to the clip. Students will be talking to the text.

Instructional Activities and Tasks

Grading vocabulary

Large group discussion about readings

Individual write up about the n word

Talking to the text- Students will annotate the article text while reading.

Small group discussions-students will share thoughts with group.

Assessment(s)

Formative-

-SW complete the graphic organizer and mark up the text to show their thinking. The marking on the text will show the teacher and the student that the students are acknowledging the process they are going through while deconstructing the reading. The questions students complete during and after reading the texts will show teacher the processes students have gone through.

-SW engage in small and large group interactions

Summative

After students have mastered the texts they will be engaging in a Socratic Circle, which will enable everyone-students, and teachers alike-to see the progress made by the students. For this assessment, we will have forms for students to self-assess and peer assess.

Rationale: This activity is setting up the groundwork for the Socratic Circle we will have later in the week. We decided it would be necessary to go over the articles in class so that the students can understand what to do with them when it is time to discuss. This activity also has students practicing discussion skills with their peers and makes students accountable for their learning. We have noticed our students struggle with reading comprehension based on their MEAP scores and decided developing students' strategies for breaking apart text into manageable bits would be beneficial. Engaging in this lesson helps students develop and apply metacognitive skills.

Instructional Tasks/Activities	
<i>What will you be doing?</i>	<i>What will your students be doing?</i>
(Before lesson) (5 mins) Vocab time. T recites vocab answers that are projected on the Elmo. T reminds students to use a red pen. T reminds students to put name, date and hour and that if they are noticing zeros on PowerSchool, it's likely because they haven't put their	S will be checking vocab with red pens. Marking score they got out of 40. S will pass to one person from table that will turn them in to the in bin.

<p>names on it or neglected to grade it.</p> <p>(5 mins) school Vocabulary School vocabulary is a school-wide initiative to have students understand tier II vocabulary they will be seeing across subject areas. This is posted by the classroom flag. We do about 1-2 terms a week.</p> <p>(5 mins) Grading grammar lesson 10 using pronouns.</p> <p>-Distribute new grammar worksheet and tell students this is homework.</p> <p>(3 mins) Teacher will play clip from CNN about the N-word</p> <p>(5 mins) Changing attitudes through knowledge T instructs students to respond to the following question, "Is it OK to use the N word?"</p> <p>(5 mins) Teacher calls attention to the article the students read</p>	<p>Students actively listen and ask questions as we work through vocab.</p> <p>S grade with red pen and ask questions for clarification if they need to.</p> <p>- S will Receive new grammar homework and put away in binders.</p> <p>(3 mins) Students will watch clip from CNN about the N-word.</p> <p>(5 mins) Students spend time journaling about this question.</p> <p>Students reflect on weekend homework, this video and on the articles.</p>
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<p>over the weekend and addresses how a word's context can affect its meaning.</p> <p>Look at questions at end of article....</p> <p>Sensitivity</p> <p>T addresses the sensitivity of the conversations we will be having. Has class agree to refer to the n word as 'the n word'</p> <p>(Remaining time) Students will individually T4 the letter to Chris article. "N-work has no place in Society" by Leonard Pitts Jr.</p> <p>What is not finished is homework. Students are to T4 the article "David Banner joins the fight over the N-word"</p> <p>.</p> <p>-How to mark up text? Tell students to look up words they don't know Express that when you read texts you are often looking for different things. Focus of this reading is for them to look for literary devices (listed on handout).</p> <p>(Last 3-5mins) Students complete exit ticket.</p>	<p>Students share out what they put.</p> <p>S listen and offer up thoughts on article in class T4</p> <p>.</p> <p>Students must record three things they learned today from reading the articles and engaging in discussion.</p>
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Teacher's personal goals for this lesson:

- help students understand relevancy of issue.
- put more of the dialogue on the shoulders of the students.
- have students guide each other in learning.

- keep student engagement high.
- set up strong foundation for Socratic circle.
- have students show empathy and understanding

Reflection on Socratic Seminars

The Socratic Circle lends itself well to the Common Core State Standards in terms of discussion. I was able to prepare my students for future discussion and prepare myself for moderation of discussion. My students were fully engaged and able to respectfully agree and disagree with their peers.

Overall, I think Socratic Seminars are very beneficial to students' learning. I believe that this problem-posing sort of method holds students accountable for their own learning experience and gives them incentive to further steer their education. The nature of the circle presents students with a comfortable environment in which to practice their discussion skills.

I think this approach turned out really well because students were presented with materials they were interested in, had an appropriate amount of time to prepare, and were scaffold enough to feel comfortable partaking in a conversation which could trigger sensitivities. I enjoyed this process because I found it community building for my students and since the circle, they are more willing to concentrate on their peers when they speak in IRE format as opposed to just looking at the instructor.

I intend to revisit the Socratic Circle at the end of our To Kill a Mockingbird Unit if time permits. For my next circle, I intend to hold my students to higher expectations and push them to create new goals for themselves in terms of discussion. I would like to present my students with better ways to transition between ideas in conversation. As an instructor, I need to come up with a better method for keeping record of students' contributions. The graphic organizers and self-assessment sheets need to be simplified too.

Before our class does the next Socratic Seminar, I would like to show students our clips from the first one so they can see areas they did well with and areas they might improve upon. From watching the video clips from this circle, I have realized students need to make sure they are pointing more to textual evidence next circle. I might make that part of their grade for next time so they do it more. I plan to come up with a rubric to give to students before they prepare for the circle so they know what kind of behavior I will be looking for the next time.

This project inspired me to use exit tickets with our students at the end of every lesson. This is a way for me to assess areas of mastery and anticipate areas of instruction I need to focus on for next class. This book I've been reading *Teach Like a Champion: 49 Techniques that Put Students on the Path to College* suggests that a good exit ticket is "quick, designed to yield data and allows students see what they are learning," (106). I started using them with the Socratic Circle and I try to use them most days now because it's a good opportunity for me to check students understanding and address students who might

not feel comfortable vocalizing their concerns.

Works Referenced

Lemov, Doug. *Teach Like a Champion: 49 Techniques That Put Students on the Path to College*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010. Print.