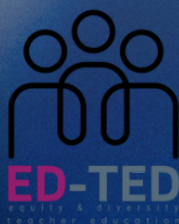


Structured classroom debate

**EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND
INCLUSION**

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Roadmap

I - SCENARIO

II - CHARACTER PROFILES

III - ONE-HOUR CLASSROOM DEBATE ACTIVITY

INSTRUCTIONS:

This activity is a structured classroom debate designed to help students practice empathetic argumentation by stepping into the shoes of different cultural stakeholders. Each participant is assigned a short character profile that describes a particular viewpoint either supporting or opposing a proposed school policy. They then spend a few minutes preparing a concise argument that follows a clear structure - stating their character's position, offering a reason, citing evidence or an example, and anticipating one counter-argument. The class then engages in a timed debate: each student delivers a one-minute opening statement, a thirty-second rebuttal to an opposing view, and a thirty-second closing statement. At the end, participants write a brief personal reflection comparing their own opinion with that of their character and cast an anonymous vote on the policy. This single-lesson exercise develops empathy by encouraging students to understand and articulate perspectives different from their own, sharpens their skills in logical argumentation, and fosters respectful listening and civic awareness within the classroom context.

Adapted from: Hammond, A.
(2006). *Tolerance and
Empathy in Today's
Classroom*. Publications

Scenario

The Ministry of Education proposes the School Cultural Harmonisation Act, mandating that all public secondary schools require every student to attend a fixed extracurricular activity each weekday from 15:00 to 17:00, regardless of religious beliefs, family traditions, or cultural customs. The stated aims are to reduce inequality of opportunity and strengthen socio-emotional skills.

However, in highly diverse schools, conflicts have emerged: many communities observe vital afternoon rituals—Ramadan iftar meals, traditional dance rehearsals, religious festivals, and family gatherings—that they regard as essential to their identity. The imposed uniform schedule threatens these cultural practices and risks undermining students' self-esteem, family cohesion, and cultural belonging. The proposal is currently under public consultation and will be debated by each School Council in three weeks.



Character Profiles

CHARACTER	POSITION	KEY ARGUMENTS & MOTIVATIONS
Headteacher	For	Believes fixed extracurricular time ensures equal access to enrichment and reduces absenteeism.
Educational Psychologist	For	Argues structured routine improves mental health, social skills, and academic performance.
Ministry Rep	For	Claims uniform scheduling fosters social cohesion and prepares students for standardised workplaces.
Parent (Majority Culture)	For	Sees the policy as fair: eliminates privilege based on cultural flexibility and ensures children participate equally.
Governor (Equality Lead)	For	Maintains that uniform activities break down social barriers and promote inclusion.
Muslim Student	Against	Afternoon iftar and prayers during Ramadan are core religious obligations; policy forces choice between faith and school.
Sikh Student Leader	Against	Weekly langar (community meal) and seva (service) in the afternoon are essential cultural practices.
Roma Advocate	Against	Evening family gatherings and music practice uphold Roma cultural identity; policy marginalises their heritage.
Diversity Coordinator	Against	True inclusion recognises cultural difference rather than enforcing uniformity; policy silences minority voices.
Parent (Immigrant)	Against	Fixed schedule conflicts with parental work shifts; children needed at home to care for siblings and maintain family cohesion.



One-Hour Classroom Debate Activity

PHASE	TIME	ACTIVITY
Introduction	10 min	Present scenario; clarify key terms (cultural identity, inclusion, equity). Pose opening question: "Should schools prioritise uniform schedules over cultural practices?"
Role Preparation	10 min	Assign each student a character. Students draft one Claim, Reason, Evidence, and anticipated Counterargument.
Structured Debate	30 min	Opening statements (1 min each)• Rebuttals (30 sec each)• Closing statements (30 sec each)
Reflection & Vote	10 min	Students write a 50-word reflection comparing personal view with character's. Anonymous vote on four options:• Approve policy• Approve with cultural exemptions• Propose alternative schedule• Reject policy

