



EXPEDITIONARY  
LEARNING

# **Grade 3: Module 4: Unit 3: Lesson 5**

## **Discussion Circles: What's One Thing We Should Do?**



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Long-Term Targets Addressed (Based on NYSP12 ELA CCLS)

I can effectively participate in a conversation with my peers and adults. (SL.3.1)

Supporting Learning Targets

- I can effectively participate in a discussion circle about one thing we should do to ensure there is clean water for everyone. This means:
- I can effectively participate in a discussion circle about one thing we should do to ensure there is clean water for everyone. This means:
  - a. I can follow our class norms when I participate in a conversation. (Review from Module 1 and 2A.)
  - b. I can prepare for the conversation by using evidence from research texts and *One Well: The Story of Water on Earth*.
  - c. I can ask questions so I am clear about what is being discussed.
  - d. I can ask questions on the topic being discussed.

Ongoing Assessment

- Preparing Evidence and Questions for Discussion Circles recording form
- Discussion Circle Criteria Checklist



| Agenda   | Teaching Notes   |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Opening<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>A. Engaging the Reader: Discussion Circles (5 minutes)</li><li>B. Unpacking Learning Targets (5 minutes)</li></ol></li><li>2. Work Time<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>A. Preparing Evidence and Questions for the Discussion Circle (20 minutes)</li><li>B. Conducting the Discussion Circle (20 minutes)</li></ol></li><li>3. Closing and Assessment<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>A. Debrief: How Has Your Thinking Changed or Grown? (10 minutes)</li></ol></li><li>4. Homework<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>A. Continue reading your independent reading book.</li><li>B. Continue completing your Independent Reading recording form.</li></ol></li></ol> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In this lesson, students participate in a discussion circle, which is structured in much the same way as Science Talks, which students will be familiar with if they did Module 2A about freaky frogs.</li><li>• Discussion circles serve several purposes:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. They support students' speaking and listening skills: Students share their opinion and build on one another's ideas.</li><li>2. They provide a structure for students to develop their ability to orally express their opinion about one thing that can be done to conserve, protect, and provide access to clean water. Determining this opinion is the third component to students' VoiceThread presentations.</li><li>3. They give teachers a window into students' thinking and help them assess what students know and what their misconceptions may be.</li></ol></li><li>• The Concentric Circles protocol was modified for this lesson (see Appendix and supporting materials).</li><li>• Students will need access to their water journals, research texts, and recording forms from previous lessons to prepare their recording form: Preparing Evidence and Questions for the Discussion Circle.</li><li>• In Advance: Create the Participating in a Discussion Circle anchor chart (see supporting materials).</li><li>• Determine whether to use chairs or have students sit on the floor for the discussion circles. Set up the room accordingly.</li><li>• Review Discussion Circle/Concentric Circles protocol (see supporting materials).</li><li>• Post: Learning targets.</li></ul> |



| Lesson Vocabulary                              | Materials  |
|--|--|
| participate, effectively, discussion, evidence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Equity sticks</li><li>• <i>One Well: The Story of Water On Earth</i> (book; one per student)</li><li>• Preparing Evidence and Questions for the Discussion Circle recording form (one per student and one to display)</li><li>• Document camera</li><li>• Water journals and texts (from previous lessons; see Teaching Note above)</li><li>• Discussion Circle/Concentric Circles protocol (one to display)</li><li>• Participating in a Discussion Circle anchor chart (new; teacher-created)</li><li>• Discussion Circle Criteria Checklist (for teacher reference)</li></ul> |



| Opening   | Meeting Students' Needs  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>A. Engaging the Reader: Discussion Circles (5 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tell students that today they will engage in a discussion circle about one thing that should be done to conserve, protect, and provide access to clean water.</li><li>• Ask students:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* “What are some of the many things we have read about that people are doing to be well aware?”</li></ul></li><li>• Invite volunteers to share out. Listen for answers like: “We read about Chad, who was cleaning up the trash in rivers”; “We read about how dry Australia is, and what people are doing to save water”; or “We read about Ryan building wells for people who didn’t have access to clean water in their villages.”</li><li>• Tell students that the discussion circle will be a time to help them think about the many things people are doing to ensure everyone has clean water and decide on one thing they think should be done.</li><li>• If students completed Module 2A on freaky frogs, explain that the discussion circle will be a lot like the Science Talks they engaged in. Ask students to discuss what they remember about Science Talks with a nearby partner.</li><li>• Use <b>equity sticks</b> to call on one or two students to share. Listen for things like: “We talked about our research on frogs,” “We followed discussion norms,” or “We looked at all our notes first.”</li><li>• Tell students that today’s discussion circle will be similar to a Science Talk, only instead of talking about things they learned about frogs, they are going to share their opinion about one thing that can be done to ensure everyone has clean water.</li><li>• Explain that this discussion will support their work in the next lesson’s Mid-Unit 3 Assessment, in which they will write about their opinions.</li><li>• Say something like: “Today’s discussion and the writing on the Mid-Unit 3 Assessment will help you think about the third and final part of your VoiceThread PSA or public service announcement: your opinion about one thing that can be done. Remember that discussions like this help experts build their understanding by sharing their own thoughts, as well as learning from what others say. Experts in the real world talk all the time to expand their thinking. Experts in the real world also talk about their ideas first before they put them together in a formal presentation, which is what you are going to do. In your PSA, you are the experts presenting.”</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Making connections between past and present learning helps students solidify understanding.</li><li>• Provide nonlinguistic symbols to support students’ understanding of words in the targets (e.g., a question mark over the word question).</li></ul> |



| Opening (continued)  | Meeting Students' Needs |
|--|-------------------------|
| <p><b>B. Unpacking Learning Targets (5 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Direct students' attention to the posted learning targets. Invite one student to read the main learning target aloud:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– “I can effectively participate in a discussion circle about one thing we should do to ensure there is clean water for everyone.” Ensure that students understand the meaning of the words <i>effectively</i> and <i>participate</i>.</li></ul></li><li>• Invite students to identify the key words in the “this means” subtargets, listed as a–d. Guide them toward the words <i>norms</i>, <i>prepare</i>, and <i>evidence</i>. Review the meanings of the words as necessary.</li></ul> |                         |



| Work Time   | Meeting Students' Needs   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>A. Preparing Evidence and Questions for the Discussion Circle (20 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share the discussion circle question with the class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* "What's one thing we can do to ensure that everyone has access to clean water?"</li> </ul> </li> <li>Direct students' attention back to the learning targets. Refer to supporting learning target "b" for today: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– "I can prepare for the conversation by using evidence from research texts and <i>One Well: The Story of Water on Earth</i>."</li> </ul> </li> <li>Explain the importance of experts sharing specific evidence from texts, such as <i>One Well: The Story of Water on Earth</i>, in their discussions with others.</li> <li>Distribute the <b>Preparing Evidence and Questions for the Discussion Circle recording form</b> to each student and display one copy on a <i>document camera</i>.</li> <li>Briefly model how to fill out the recording form using evidence from students' <b>water journals and the texts</b> they have read. In the box describing one thing we should do to ensure everyone has clean water, you might model something like this: "I think one thing we should do is build wells." In one of the evidence boxes, your model could be: "Then people wouldn't have to walk long distances to get clean water. I read that in the article about Ryan Hreljac."</li> <li>Tell students they will have 15 minutes to complete their Preparing Evidence and Questions for the Discussion Circle recording form.</li> <li>During this time, circulate and confer as necessary, reminding students to use specific evidence from texts to support their thinking. Support their efforts by asking questions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* "Tell me what your opinion is about one thing we should do. In which text did you read about that solution?"</li> <li>* "Where might you find more information about cleaning up trash? Think about what you learned when we read about pollution in <i>One Well</i>."</li> </ul> </li> <li>After 15 minutes, ask students to finish their recording forms and put away their water journals and any texts they used to prepare their recording form.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing visual models of academic vocabulary supports language development and comprehension.</li> <li>Allow ELLs and other students to use pictures and symbols as necessary on their recording forms.</li> <li>Consider writing for struggling learners one or two of their reasons. This still allows them to do the thinking, but it supports their ability to participate in the discussion.</li> <li>Provide sentence frames for students to use as they participate in the discussion circle: "One thing I think we should do is ____." "One reason I have is ____ because I read it in ____." "I wonder ____."</li> <li>Struggling learners likely will rely more on reading their thinking aloud from the recording form rather than engaging in a conversation. This is still valuable practice for students' speaking skills. Support struggling learners with the sentence frames so that they have the confidence to converse. Consider standing near those students to encourage them to ask a question or make a connection.</li> </ul> |



| Work Time (continued)   | Meeting Students' Needs |
|---|-------------------------|
| <p><b>B. Conducting the Discussion Circle (20 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gather students in the whole-group area in concentric circles (inner circle facing outer circle, so each student is facing a partner).</li><li>• Focus them whole group. Display the <b>Discussion Circle/Concentric Circles protocol</b> on the document camera. Review the protocol with students.</li><li>• Then, direct students' attention to the Participating in a <b>Discussion Circle anchor chart</b> and briefly review this with students. Answer any clarifying questions.</li><li>• Instruct students to use their Preparing Evidence and Questions for the Discussion Circle recording forms during discussion. Explain that they will begin their discussion with each person sharing their thinking from their recording form. Then they will have a conversation by asking their partner a question or making a connection to what their partner said.</li><li>• If necessary, provide a model for making connections to each other's thinking such as:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* "_____ might say: I think that one thing we should do is build wells. When I read how far people had to travel to get water, it made me think that this was one thing we could do to protect our clean water."</li></ul></li><li>• Then, _____ might say: I think that's a good idea. I remember reading that some people walk so far for water that they don't have time to go to school. Did you have another reason for building wells?"</li><li>• Explain to students that each person should share his or her thinking and respond to his or her partner's thinking.</li><li>• Tell students they will have an opportunity to talk to three people in this discussion circle so that they can hear lots of ideas and thinking.</li><li>• Direct students to begin the discussion circle.</li><li>• Use the <b>Discussion Circle Criteria Checklist (for teacher reference)</b> to monitor student progression toward the learning targets. Redirect and support students as needed, but avoid leading the conversation.</li><li>• After 15 minutes, stop the discussion circle. Ask students to form one whole circle.</li></ul> |                         |





| Closing and Assessment  | Meeting Students' Needs  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>A. Debrief: How Has Your Thinking Changed or Grown? (10 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide students with specific feedback about the quality of their reasons that supported their opinion. For example: "I heard _____ refer to what she read on page 28 of One Well to support her opinion that one thing we should do is conserve water."</li><li>• Remind students that everyone might have a different opinion about what should be done, but what matters is that they use evidence to support their opinion.</li><li>• Direct students' attention to the main learning target for the discussion circle.</li><li>• Ask students:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* "How has your thinking changed or grown?"</li></ul></li><li>• Cold call a few students to share out.</li><li>• Then, ask students to discuss with a neighbor:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* "Based on our main learning target, how could you improve your participation in our next discussion circle?"</li></ul></li><li>• Cold call a few students to share out.</li><li>• Preview the homework.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Allowing students to work in small groups provides the opportunity for all students to share their voices.</li></ul> |
| Homework  | Meeting Students' Needs  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue reading your independent reading book.</li><li>• Continue completing your Independent Reading recording form.</li></ul>  |  |



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## Supporting Materials



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Preparing Evidence and Questions for the Discussion Circle

Name:

Date:

**Question:** What's one thing we can do to ensure that everyone has access to clean water?

One thing I think we should do to ensure everyone has access to clean water is ...

My Reasons ...

Evidence from my research texts, *One Well*, and recording forms

What I wonder about one thing we should do to ensure everyone has access to clean water:

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**Discussion Circle/Concentric Circles Protocol**  
For Teacher Reference

Tell students that they are now going to participate in a Discussion Circle, like real experts do. Remind students that this process is similar to the Science Talks they engaged in during Module 2A.

Have students gather in two concentric circles on the floor, with their Preparing Evidence and Questions for the Discussion Circle recording forms. Be sure each student in the inner circle is facing a partner in the outer circle.

Each person will share their opinions and reasons from their recording form. Then, partners will have a discussion by making connections to what their partner said or asking a question.

Pose the question:

- “What’s one thing we can do to ensure that everyone has access to clean water?”

Invite students to begin the discussion.

After 5 minutes, ask students in the inner circle to move two places to the left. They now will be facing new partners.

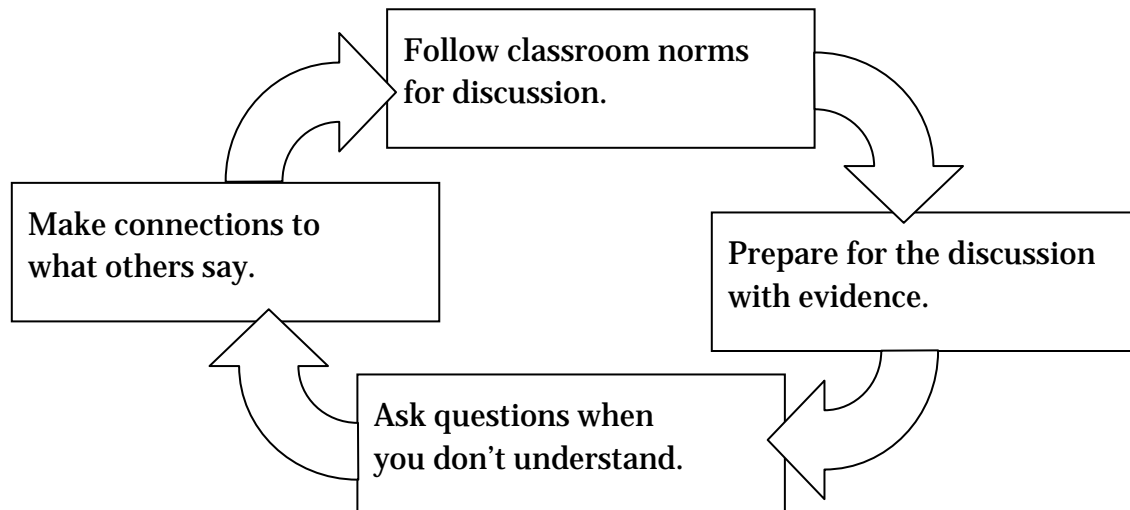
Ask these new pairs to discuss the same question.

After 5 minutes, ask students in the inner circle to move two places again.

As students talk in their pairs, circulate to note which students are speaking and what ideas they are sharing. Record on sticky notes any particularly intriguing comments and additional questions that may arise. Refer to these in future lessons.



Participating in a Discussion Circle Anchor Chart





Discussion Circle Criteria Checklist  
For Teacher Reference

**Learning target:**

I can effectively participate in a discussion circle about one thing we should do to ensure there is clean water for everyone. This means:

- I can follow our class norms when I participate in a conversation. (Review from Module 1.)
- I can prepare for the conversation by using evidence from research texts and *One Well*.
- I can ask questions so I am clear about what is being discussed.
- I can ask questions on the topic being discussed.

| Student name | Norms                    | Prepare with evidence    | Ask questions to clarify understanding | Make connections to what others say | Teacher comments |
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