

How to facilitate a meeting or workshop about critical thinking

This group discussion task gives the opportunity for parents to apply a selection of critical thinking questions to a scenario.

Preparation

- Pre-select scenarios suitable for your community. Ten are provided though it is not anticipated that all will be used.
- Consider removing scenarios that may be confronting or insensitive for some members of the community.
- Consider changing the scenarios to reflect local and topical situations.
- Print off the selected scenarios and questions — the number of copies will depend on number of attendees and individual group size. Print enough for everyone in each small group to have a scenario and set of questions.
- As an alternative to the scenarios, recent newspaper headlines and images with wellbeing related themes could be used.

Process

- Use the previous information sheet to explain what critical thinking is. Also provide any definitions of critical thinking used by your school and if your school uses a SOLO taxonomy (or other) approach within Health and Physical Education (HPE) or across the curriculum. Highlight how this helps students to develop the cognitive skills required for critical thinking.
- Organise attendees into groups of 3-4 people.
- Allocate each group a scenario and set questions.
- Have the group read their scenario and engage in a discussion using the questions. Encourage groups to get to the final questions which is seeking a solution to the issue.
- If time allows, repeat the process so that groups have access to different scenarios.

Debrief after activity

- How was that activity similar or different to your own experiences of health education at school?
- What benefit do you see that an approach like this has over a transmission/expert knows best/'tell the students what they need to know' approach?
- What questions do these scenarios raise for you as a parent, an adult, or as a member of this community?

Heated conversations

When the subject matter amplifies conversation, acknowledge that this is a small part of one activity that would sit within a much broader programme of learning, and that the issues being raised would be worked through across the learning programme. If concerns focus on the teacher pedagogy that seeks to develop students to become critical thinkers, refer to the teacher standards and code and the expectations of contemporary teaching practice, and the key competencies in the NZC.

Closing the workshop

- Complete the activity by acknowledging the place and importance of critical thinking in health education. Where possible link back to information and comments made earlier in the meeting.
- Direct parents to further sources of information about critical thinking.

Student examples of critical thinking

- Have examples of student learning artefacts to show the learning that results from a critical thinking process — from a collection of year 9 health promotion posters to a year 13 Level 3 NCEA assessment or HPE Scholarship report.