

13. Stakeholders and Perspectives: Force Field Analysis

Source: Adapted from a workshop resource written by MJ Barrett, Learning for a Sustainable Future

Description

Being able to see issues from all perspectives is a valuable life skill. This activity introduces students to the concept of stakeholders. Stakeholders are groups of individuals who have a vested interest or involvement in particular issues being explored. Once students identify an issue of interest, stakeholders and their different positions on the issue are explored. The activity concludes with a mock debate as students are separated into stakeholder groups and debate the issue at hand.

Background Information

As governmental decision-making processes evolve towards consensus and working with multi-stakeholders, identifying and understanding the position of various stakeholders is essential to strengthen the basis of one's opinions. Environmental issues are never simple, and one way to deal with their complexity is to use tools such as a force field analysis. A force field analysis helps you to determine not only where to start when analyzing an issue and developing an action plan, but also to determine whether you have sufficient resources and allies to tackle the issue successfully.

Materials

- ▶ blackboard or white board for 1-2 squares per stakeholder
- ▶ thick markers (approximately 8cm x 8cm)
- ▶ small squares of paper; enough
- ▶ masking tape
- ▶ name tags for students

Time Allotment

Introduction: 10 minutes

Stakeholders' discussion: 10 -15 minutes

Stakeholders' group work: 10 -15 minutes

Debate: 15-20 minutes

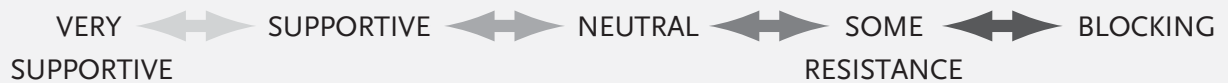
Discussion: 5 minutes

Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. Brainstorm areas in need of positive environmental change within the school as well as noting areas where improvements have already been made. List ideas in as much detail as possible on the blackboard. Democratically select one issue for the class to address.
 2. Make a stakeholders' chart. Set up the blackboard by writing headings in a continuous line across the top – see diagram below.
 3. After selecting a school issue, name the players (stakeholders) who may be involved and write their names on the small squares of paper provided (e.g., a class wants to explore a request that there be no idling of engines in front of the school building). The force field may include: the participating class members, other students, teachers, administration, caretakers, cafeteria and office staff, the school board, parents, other community members, environmental groups, municipal officials, and possibly the provincial government or other communities who have attempted a similar project. Consider both individuals and organizations, as well
- as different levels of power and scope of influence: local, regional, provincial, national and global. *You might want to write some stakeholders down twice since they may fit under two (or more) headings.*
4. Using masking tape, place the stakeholders' names under the appropriate headings on the chart (this will require some discussion, highlighting possible stereotypes and areas where further research is needed).
 5. Divide students into the different stakeholder groups and challenge them to develop a position on the issue.
 6. Agree on class rules for debating and conduct a debate on the issue, allowing each stakeholder group to present its opinion and challenge each other through appropriate questioning.

Note: Doing this activity on a blackboard/whiteboard and using 'sticky notes' or pieces of paper and tape to place the stakeholders on the chart allows them to be moved around as further discussion or research might suggest.

Stakeholder Chart



Follow-up Discussion Questions

- ▶ Which of the stakeholders have the most power or ability to create change?
- ▶ What are the possibilities for students to create change?
- ▶ What factors would influence a stakeholder's position on the scale above (from "very supportive" to "blocking")?
- ▶ How can this analysis allow you to create more effective change?
- ▶ Why would it be beneficial to identify stakeholders when examining environmental issues?
- ▶ Why is it important to include all stakeholders when you are trying to create positive environmental change?

Extensions for additional classroom projects/activities

- ▶ Use this analysis for action projects that the class is currently involved in.
- ▶ Monitor current issues and analyze the stakeholders' positions over time to see if they change.

Curriculum Connections: Clustering of Expectations

GRADE 7: GEOGRAPHY (2004)

- 7g15 • choose an environmental issue that illustrates one of the themes of geographic inquiry and explain why various individuals and groups have different opinions on the issue (e.g., *theme of interaction*: wilderness conservationists versus loggers)
- 7g40 • describe positive and negative ways in which human activity can affect resource sustainability and the health of the environment
- 7g41 • describe a variety of ways in which people use and manage renewable, non-renewable, and flow resources to meet their needs