

# 2.1

**Perception checks:** Regularly stop the class group and ask 'Has anyone found another way to do this?' or 'What would happen if we added ...?' or 'Has anyone identified an issue with this idea?'.

This is useful for getting specific feedback. It can uncover a pressing issue or individual concern, and promote reflection, evaluation and the processing of ideas. This can be a circle or paired activity or the questions can be written.

**New angles:** This activity is based on the film *Dead Poets' Society* when Robin Williams' character stood on his desk to see a new perspective. Ask students to look at an object from a variety of angles: sitting, standing, lying on their sides. This activity may be extended by asking students to sketch an object from three or four different angles. Another extension of this activity is to set students the problem of photographing an object from three or four different angles, showing these photos to others and asking them to guess what it is.

The central concept of these activities is that where we stand can change what we see, thus encouraging students to see people from differing perspectives and to have a new appreciation of their peers.

## Student-initiated challenges:

Establish opportunities for students to work strategically together to achieve a common goal (eg online games, team technology tasks or physical games where students think, plan and act together).

**Hearing all voices:** This is a good strategy for starting learning conversations with a new group of students. Participants sit in a circle and can talk about themselves for two minutes or respond to a specific question. One person speaks uninterrupted for two minutes, with the next person in the circle following. The activity supports students in getting to know others while controlling how much they wish to share about themselves.

**Partner learning talks:** Give students time to share their learning on a task with a partner. They can share progress, seek feedback, ask for help, provide encouragement, ask challenging questions or give another perspective on the topic. Follow-up time is then given for students to refocus on what their next step will be.



## Language that teachers can use to develop democratic relationships

- What do you think? We value your opinion.
- What other perspectives might there be?
- What support would you like me to give?
- Could you teach this to someone else?
- How do you feel about your achievement?
- Making mistakes really helps us learn.
- If that didn't work, can you find another way to ...?
- Would someone like to volunteer to ...?
- When you say those things, how might other people feel?
- We're all in this together.
- In this class, we've agreed to ...

## This element is not demonstrated if:

- The teacher places all the onus on students to solve their own learning issues or behaviour problems
- Students believe that they have the 'rights' and teachers have the 'responsibilities'
- The teacher is defensive or uses autocratic behaviour when challenged
- Class meetings are held but decisions are not acted upon or items discussed are low level and disconnected from learning
- Voting procedures reflect popularity rather than expertise
- Class discussion is dominated by the teacher or by particular students



*Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.*

Nelson Mandela

## Practice check

- Is negotiation real in my classroom? Do students ask for help when they need it?
- Do I create an atmosphere for all students to be equitably engaged?
- Do I talk too much? Might I be the discipline problem?
- How are students supported to make their own decisions?
- Does my teaching style advantage some students over others?
- Is it safe for students to disagree with me or their classmates?

share power