



Center for Leadership & Educational Equity

Wagon Wheels Brainstorm

Developed in the field by educators.

Purposes

- To stimulate lots of generative thinking in a very short time
- To stimulate powerful thinking between people who might not know each other
- To create a “vivid image bank” of a new idea in action to inform the planning process
- To develop a sense of team with a common purpose

Note: Wagon Wheels may also be used to explore a text. Can also be used as a text discussion (See Wagon Wheels: Adapted for Texts).

Set Up

- Four chairs back to back at the hub of the wheel and 4 chairs on the outer circle facing the chairs at the hub.

Directions

1. Facilitator chooses topic question or focus for exploration. This might be a single focus or divided into various dimensions.
2. Have participants bring paper and pen and fill in the seats in the wheel(s).
3. Ask them to take notes of both their own ideas as well as their partner's.
4. The people on the outside of the wheel will be moving one seat to the right at each rotation; people at the hub remain in their seats.
5. Explain that they will be working on one topic with each partner for approximately 5 minutes — i.e. they will work with 4 different partners during the activity.
6. For each topic have the participants reach a common understanding of what the topic means and then brainstorm what it would look like in action.
7. At the end of each rotation, ask each participant sitting on the outside of the wheel to rotate one seat to the right. After they settle down, give them the next topic and ask them to reach a common understanding before brainstorming.

Going Deeper

Have participants pick their favorite ideas for each topic and write them down on sticky notes. Make sure they label the top of each sticky note.

Put large flip chart sheets with topic titles on the top around the room and have participants post their favorite ideas on the appropriate sheet.

Create focus groups to further explore a specific topic and to plan how to put the powerful ideas into action.