

Secondary Critical Conversation Guide



Topic

Difficult
Conversations



SEL Competency

Relationship Skills,
Self-Awareness



Theme

CSE, Implicit Bias

Having Conversations on Critical Issues - Secondary

Part of maintaining a safe and respectful environment is ensuring the skills needed to engage in difficult conversations are reviewed and practiced. Often due to personal discomfort and the strong emotions associated with various current events one may avoid conversations or engage in discussions that create greater divides. Below are points to prepare for those times when students initiate discussions, or when we ourselves need to start a conversation. The following strategies can be applied to various conversations on sensitive topics or issues.

Create a Safe Environment

- People are more willing to have conversations if the culture in which they find themselves is psychologically safe, free from criticism and retaliation

Do Research

- Learn about the experiences of those who are members of historically marginalized groups
- Locate the necessary resources so that you can provide your students further information as requested

Start the Conversation

- Don't let fear of saying the wrong thing prevent the conversation; be comfortable being uncomfortable

Ask Questions

- Ask questions with genuine curiosity, be authentic

Actively Listen

- Give members of historically marginalized groups space to share thoughts and emotions without interruption

Respect, Reflect, and Resign

- Approach conversation with respect
- Embrace discomfort of not knowing

Rest and Reboot

- Internalize what you've learned
- Commit to change
- Treat yourself kindly

Recognize Bias and Privilege

- Acknowledge your privilege
- Get comfortable with your story

Research and Relearn

- Find out what you don't know