

NAVIGATING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS WORKSHOP

Facilitator's Guide

SUMMARY

This workshop aims to address the high volume of complaints the school is receiving about the nature of dialogue in classes in the social studies department. Comments around politics, identity, and culture that could have been perceived as offensive were not dealt with in a way that satisfied students and parents. Teachers need support in navigating these tricky subjects, as they broach potentially sensitive topics such as race, gender, and religion. The team is very much on board and ready to improve their dialogue facilitation skills.

TARGET AUDIENCE

An academic department at a private K-12 school. The social studies team for 6th-12th grade is comprised of 15 educators. They vary widely in age, background, and experience.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of the session, learners will be able to

- **manage conflict** amongst members of their classes.
- **confidently facilitate** difficult conversations in their classroom.
- **skillfully apply** strategies for navigating offensive speech.

FORMAT

Half day workshop, 8:00-12:00, with a 30 minute break.

MATERIALS

- Facilitator's and Participant's Guide
- Computers (w/ working microphones and cameras)
- Zoom and [Google Slides](#)
- [Intent vs. Impact Reading](#)
- [Role Goal Soul Handout](#)

PREPARATION

Share the slides and Participant's Guide in the weeks leading up to the workshop a few times.

Send out a Calendar invite with a Zoom link attached.


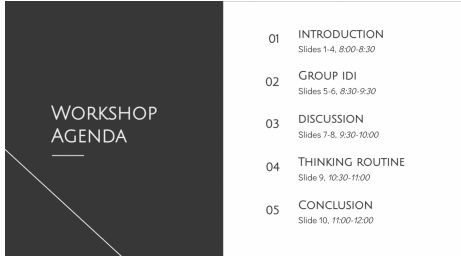

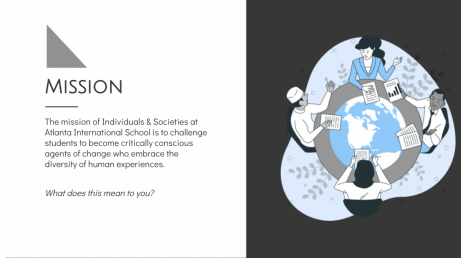
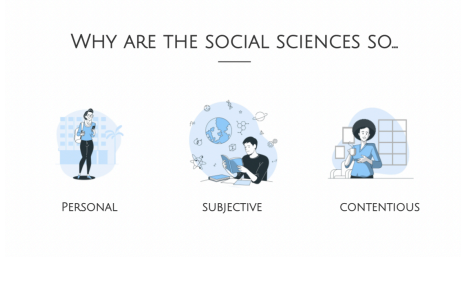
Communicate that the workbook is digital but they can print it out and follow along.

Assign the 'Impact vs. Intent' reading to be completed before the workshop.

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8:00-8:30: INTRODUCTION SLIDES 1-5

 <p>NAVIGATING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS</p> <p>A Virtual Workshop</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Welcome participants to the Zoom workshop-Introduce yourself, confirm that everyone knows each other-Ask what participants know about WHY they are here, and why educators should risk engaging in difficult conversations about race, class, religion, gender, politics, etc. Wouldn't it be easier to avoid difficult conversations all together?-Check that everyone has the slides and Participant's Guide
 <p>WORKSHOP AGENDA</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">01 INTRODUCTION Slides 1-4, 8:00-8:3002 GROUP IDI Slides 5-6, 8:30-9:3003 DISCUSSION Slides 7-8, 9:30-10:0004 THINKING ROUTINE Slide 9, 10:30-11:0005 CONCLUSION Slide 10, 11:00-12:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Everyone reviews agenda-See if anyone has questions-Mention that you will respect their time
 <p>WHAT IS YOUR INTENTION FOR TODAY?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Ask everyone to take a few minutes and record this in question 1 of the participant guide, mute microphones-Call everyone back after 3 minutes, ask volunteers to share
 <p>MISSION</p> <p>The mission of Individuals & Societies at Atlanta International School is to challenge students to become critically conscious agents of change who embrace the diversity of human experiences.</p> <p>What does this mean to you?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Group discussion, remind team that they all have the same mission they are trying to achieve-Ask for examples of how they have demonstrated the team mission in their own classrooms-Summarize discussion before moving on
 <p>WHY ARE THE SOCIAL SCIENCES SO...</p> <p>PERSONAL SUBJECTIVE CONTENTIOUS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Ask their opinion, allow a few minutes to share thoughts-Provide your own explanation: In social sciences, each student is drawing from their own unique experiences and identity.-Unlike math or natural sciences that rely on quantitative data, the social sciences rely on more qualitative methodologies like surveys, observations, and feedback, which are vulnerable to human bias.-Mathematical formulas might not affect students personally, but politics will.

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8:30-9:30: GROUP IDI SLIDES 6-7

<p>COMMENTS FROM THE LAST TWO YEARS</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>TOO SENSITIVE/ NOT SENSITIVE ENOUGH</td> <td>UNAMERICAN</td> <td>NOT TRADITIONAL ENOUGH</td> </tr> <tr> <td>TOO BROAD</td> <td>TRIVIALIZING</td> <td>TOO LIBERAL/ TOO CONSERVATIVE</td> </tr> </table> <p>What reaction does this evoke?</p>	TOO SENSITIVE/ NOT SENSITIVE ENOUGH	UNAMERICAN	NOT TRADITIONAL ENOUGH	TOO BROAD	TRIVIALIZING	TOO LIBERAL/ TOO CONSERVATIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Group discussion -Ask if this is a surprise, or if anyone has an example they would not mind sharing -Ask everyone to take a few minutes and record a response in question 2: What reaction does this evoke? -Call everyone back after 3 minutes, ask volunteers to share -Stress that this is not a judgment on their teaching, these are just some opinions presented in an overly simplistic manner
TOO SENSITIVE/ NOT SENSITIVE ENOUGH	UNAMERICAN	NOT TRADITIONAL ENOUGH					
TOO BROAD	TRIVIALIZING	TOO LIBERAL/ TOO CONSERVATIVE					
<p>GROUP RESULTS: INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT INVENTORY</p> <p>The Orientation Gap between the group's Perceived Orientation score and its Developmental Orientation score is 27.97 points. The group substantially overestimates its level of intercultural competence.</p> <p>What do you SEE? What do you THINK? What do you WONDER?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -State that this is simply a quick overview, the team will have another session at a later date to dive deeper into their individual results and map growth steps -Thinking Routine, question 3 of Participant's Guide -3 minutes of silent reflection, then 3 small breakout rooms -Give 10 minutes for small group discussion, then call everyone back to the main room to debrief 						

9:30-10:00: DISCUSSION SLIDES 8-9

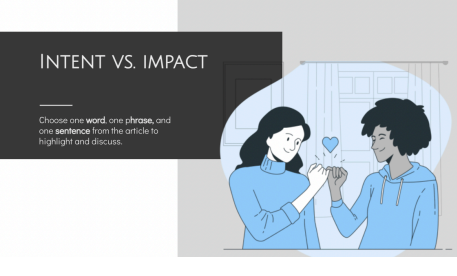
<p>3 DIMENSIONS OF CONFLICT "change does not happen in the absence of friction"</p> <p>WHICH OF THESE CAN WE CONTROL?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MATERIAL "things", structures, laws, systems, policies SYMBOLIC identity, worldviews, meanings, values RELATIONAL Communication, interaction, interdependence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -State that this most conflict in the classroom probably comes from one of these three dimensions -Recognizing the root cause of conflict helps us intervene in an effective way -3 minutes of silent reflection in question 4: Which of these can we control? -Discuss as a group
<p>THREE TOOLS FROM LEARNING FOR JUSTICE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> OUCH Create a class routine that halts conversation immediately in which a student says 'ouch' if they are uncomfortable. WHAT MAKES YOU SAY THAT? Practice asking this question when a statement is made that may be perceived as offensive. DON'T CALL OUT. CALL IN Develop the commitment to grow together, make mistakes, and learn from each other respectfully. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -5 minutes, take notes in question 5 on strategies -Role play scenario -Ask for example of edgy or borderline comments made in class to use in this activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Other example: student complaining about school's eco-friendly policies, arguing against climate science -Ask for volunteer to role-play offending student, everyone else takes turns playing other students/teachers, using these three strategies to disrupt offensive speech

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10:30-11:00: THINKING ROUTINE

SLIDE 10

 <p>INTENT VS. IMPACT</p> <p>Choose one word, one phrase, and one sentence from the article to highlight and discuss.</p>	<p>-<u>Intent vs. Impact Reading</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-5 minutes to read & fill in question 6, then 3 breakout rooms-Give 10 minutes for small group discussion, then call everyone back to the main room to debrief-Ask if they agreed with the article, major takeaways-Share the words/phrases/sentences they extracted-Summarize: what matters the most is the impact of our actions, this goes for us as educators as well as the students in our classes
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11:00-12:00: CONCLUSION

SLIDE 11

 <p>Get yourself grounded and you can navigate even the stormiest roads in peace." -Steve Goodier</p> <p>PERSONAL REFLECTION:</p> <p>ROLE GOAL SOUL</p>	<p>-<u>Role, Goal, Soul Handout</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-This final activity dives deep into how all of this content relates to each educator's unique experience in their own classroom-Tell participants to mute themselves for 20 minutes while they complete this final task, they can play music or you can-Take time to allow each individual to share the most meaningful takeaway from the workshop-Participants should take photos and share these later- in a Google Slideshow or on an office bulletin board
 <p>THANKS</p> <p>Do you have any question? mckenzie-ady@gmail.com (239) 233-7814 mckenzie-ady.com</p> <p>CREDITS: This presentation template was created by Slidegep including icons by Flaticon, infographics & images by istock</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Thank the group for their time, for being vulnerable and being willing to grow together-Provide your contact info and remind learners of next steps:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Upload Role Goal Soul to a shared platform• Upcoming session on IDI individual results

INTENT VS. IMPACT READING

Imagine for a moment that you're standing with your friends in a park, enjoying a nice summer day. You don't know me, but I walk right up to you holding a Frisbee. I wind up – and throw the disc right into your face. Understandably, you are indignant. Through a bloody nose, you use a few choice words to ask me what the hell I thought I was doing.

And my response? "Oh, I didn't mean to hit you! That was never my intent! I was simply trying to throw the Frisbee to my friend over there!" Visibly upset, you demand an apology. But I refuse. Or worse, I offer an apology that sounds like "I'm sorry your face got in the way of my Frisbee! I never intended to hit you."

Sound absurd? Sound infuriating enough to give me a well-deserved Frisbee upside the head? Yeah. So why is this same thing happening all of the time when it comes to the intersection of our identities and oppressions or privileges?

From Paula Deen to Alec Baldwin to your annoying, bigoted uncle or friend, we hear it over and over again: "I never meant any harm..." "It was never my intent..." "I am not a racist..." "I am not a homophobe..." "I'm not a sexist..." I cannot tell you how often I've seen people attempt to deflect criticism about their oppressive language or actions by making the conversation about their intent.

At what point does the "intent" conversation stop mattering so that we can step back and look at impact? After all, in the end, what does the intent of our action really matter if our actions have the impact of furthering the marginalization or oppression of those around us?

In some ways, this is a simple lesson of relationships. If I say something that hurts my partner, it doesn't much matter whether I intended the statement to mean something else – because my partner is hurting. I need to listen to how my language hurt my partner. I need to apologize. And then I need to reflect and empathize to the best of my ability so I don't do it again.

But when we're dealing with the ways in which our identities intersect with those around us and, in turn, the ways our privileges and our experiences of marginalization and oppression intersect – this lesson becomes something much larger and more profound. This becomes a lesson of justice. What we need to realize is that when it comes to people's lives and identities, the impact of our actions can be profound and wide-reaching. And that's far more important than the question of our intent.

We need to ask ourselves what might be or might have been the impact of our actions or words. And we need to step back and listen when we are being told that the impact of our actions is out of step with our intents or our perceptions of self.

For people of identity privilege, this is where listening becomes vitally important, for our privilege can often shield us from understanding the impact of our actions. After all, as a person of privilege, I can never fully understand the ways in which oppressive acts or language impact those around me. What I surely can do is listen with every intent to understand, and I can work to change my behavior.

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Because what we need to understand is that making the conversation about intent is inherently a privileged action. The reason? It ensures that you and your identity (and intent) stay at the center of any conversation and action while the impact of your action or words on those around you is marginalized.

So if someone ever tells you to "check your privilege," what they may very well mean is: "Stop centering your experience and identity in the conversation by making this about the intent of your actions instead of their impact." That is: Not everything is about you.

The incredible Ill Doctrine puts it well when he explains the difference between the "What They Did" conversation and the "What They Are" conversation, which you can watch here. In essence, the "intent" conversation is one about "what they are." Because if someone intended their action to be hurtful and racist/sexist/transphobic/pickyourpoison, then they must inherently be racist/sexist/transphobic/pickyourpoison.

On the other hand, the "impact" conversation is one about "what they did." For you, it takes the person who said or did the hurtful thing out of the center and places the person who was hurt in the center. It ensures that the conversation is about how "what they did" hurts other people and further marginalizes or oppresses people.

And it's important for people to understand the difference. Just because you did something sexist doesn't mean that you are sexist. Just because you said something racist doesn't mean that you are racist. When your actions are called into question, it's important to recognize that that's all that is being called into question – your actions, not your overall character.

Listen. Reflect. Apologize. Do Better. It doesn't matter whether we, deep down, believe ourselves to be _____-ist or whether we intended our actions to be hurtful or _____-ist. It Doesn't Matter. If the impact of our actions is the furthering of oppression, then that's all that matters.

So we need to listen, reflect, apologize, and work to do better in the future. What does that look like? Well, to start, we can actually apologize. I don't know about you, but I am sick of hearing the "I am sorry your face got in the way of my Frisbee! I never intended to hit you" apologies. Whether it's Paula Deen weeping on TV or Alec Baldwin asking us to simply trust that he's not a "homophobe," those are not apologies.

That's why I was incredibly inspired and relieved to see a major organization do it well when Kickstarter apologized and took full responsibility for their role in funding a creepy, rapey seduction guide. They apologized earnestly and accepted the role they played in something really terrible. They pledged to never allow projects like this one to be funded in the future. And then they donated \$25,000 to RAINN. At the interpersonal level, we can take a cue from Kickstarter.

When we are told that the impact of our action, inaction, or words is hurtful and furthers oppression, we can start by apologizing without any caveats. From there, we can spend the time to reflect in hopes of gaining at least some understanding (however marginal) of the harmful impact. And we can do our best to move forward by acting more accountably.

[Source here.](#)

ROLE GOAL SOUL HANDOUT

ROLE

What part do you play in navigating difficult conversations in the classroom?

GOAL

What do you hope to achieve by navigating difficult conversations in the classroom?

SOUL

What are your core values as an educator, and how do they relate to this training?