

I felt most engaged in all of the discussions because I was well prepared and felt like I was being heard. Especially in the Purple Hibiscus discussion.

Hello. Welcome. Let's talk!



>> True or False

...And why? Exploring Today's Convo Crisis

>> Intros

...It all started during second period

>> What's at stake re: discussion in schools?

... Quotes from the ground

... Research perspectives

>> How to design a strategy for discussion in schools?

... Philosophy: name your values

... Program: mission-aligned program

... Punchlines: be proactive in sharing impact

>> Discussion Philosophy MadLibs

...hope you know your mission statements!

>> Q&A (we love a good discussion!)

TRUE OR FALSE:

Our world is in a conversation crisis.

TRUE OR FALSE:

Our world is in a conversation crisis.

WHY? Talk to a partner about your answer.

TRUE OR FALSE:

Our world is in a conversation crisis,
and **our schools are caught in it too.**

WHY? Talk to a partner about your answer.

TRUE OR FALSE:

Our world is in a conversation crisis,
and **our schools can help.**

TRUE OR FALSE:

Our world is in a conversation crisis,
and **our schools can help.**

How? Talk to a partner about your answer.

Our Plan Today:

>> **True or False**

...and why? Exploring Today's Convo Crisis



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My story: teacher, nerd, builder.

- >> **Teacher + School-based Leader:** teacher of middle school humanities, high school English, leadership studies. Additional experience serving as dean in student life and in advancement.
- >> **Discussion Research Nerd:** always asking why and searching for answers in unusual places. Integrates edu-research with real-world findings, and believes in power of action research and complexity - and necessity - of learner-centered teaching. Digs into big questions, like *how can I break the art of great discussion into teachable skills?**
- >> **Builder:** Now building **R.E.A.L., and equipping educators to teach the discussion skills today's students need for success in school - and real life.** Currently working with 40+ independent schools.
- >> **Other footnotes:** Independent school graduate. Active board work includes: Trustee and Committee Chair at Nashoba Brooks School; Advisor at Shady Hill Teacher Training Center and A+ Squash.

*R.E.A.L. is my answer to this question :-)

TRUE OR FALSE:

Our world is in a conversation crisis,
and **our schools can help.**

My answer? 100000% true. But this is **high-stakes work**.
It will require a **thoughtful strategy**.

Our Plan Today:

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So, what is at stake, exactly?

✧ Research shows discussion is *everywhere* in schools!

- >> **It's at the center of the best teaching + learning.** Discussion is a tool for Deep, Learner-Centered instruction. *Key footnotes: John Hattie, Kath Murdoch, Ron Ritchhart, Glenn Whitman.*
- >> **It's at the heart of belonging cultures (DEI).** Thoughtful convo is how humans build deep relationships and “bridges” across difference. *Key footnotes: Zaretta Hammond, Joe Feldman, Rosetta Lee.*
- >> **It's foundational to student wellness (SEL).** Gen-Z students have new needs when it comes to strategies for self-expression and regulation. *Key footnotes: CASEL, Dweck, NAMI, Common Sense.*
- >> **It's how to prepare students to thrive in society.** Today's students are tomorrow's citizens, professionals, leaders, and parents. Experts predict a premium on soft skills - like discussion - in the future workforce. *Key footnotes: Deming, Pearson 2020, McKinsey 2021.*



Which of these feel the most urgent for your school right now?

- » **It's at the center of the best teaching + learning.** Discussion is a tool for Deep, Learner-Centered instruction. *Key footnotes: John Hattie, Kath Murdoch, Ron Ritchhart, Glenn Whitman.*
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- » **It's how to prepare students to thrive in society.** Today's students are tomorrow's citizens, professionals, leaders, and parents. Experts predict a premium on soft skills - like discussion - in the future workforce. *Key footnotes: Deming, Pearson 2020, McKinsey 2021.*

... “they don’t see each other. I see them all being lonely, together. I read about mental health crisis. My heart breaks.”

... “It’s not learning loss, exactly - these students work hard enough to get through content. But **it’s a behavioral deficit. They lack basic social skills.** They missed two years of development, even in-person last year.”

... “in terms of leadership, my 8th graders have the maturity of 6th graders. It’s tough.”

... “I keep hearing that students don’t feel comfortable expressing themselves in my classroom because of my political views. It’s ridiculous but it’s clearly real to them given our polarized world, and I want to respond to their fear. Plus, intellectually, they have to learn how to do this to be prepared for college!”

... “Remember: **these kids don’t know how to be in groups.** So give them grace but also make sure they represent the school well on the field trip and that you give ‘extra support’ on group projects.”

... “my child doesn’t feel heard and is scared of repercussions for speaking up.”




A photograph of two people. The person on the left is wearing a green hoodie with the text 'ALWAYS CUTTY' in white. The person on the right is wearing a blue fuzzy jacket over a blue and white striped shirt and is holding a smartphone, with their hands positioned as if they are using it. The background is slightly blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting.

PUT DIFFERENTLY:

**Discussion is so high stakes,
it's actually mission-critical.**

...which means that, IMHO, it's worth a strategy.

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Getting Strategic

... **Philosophy:** how does teaching discussion skills enable your mission?

... **Program:** where and how are you *teaching* discussion skills in your school?

... **Punchlines:** how are you proactive in sharing the process and impact?



PHILOSOPHY

Find your school's
mission statement.

(Yes, you can take out your phone).



PHILOSOPHY

What *values* articulated in your mission require discussion skills to be *a reality*?

Turn and talk with a partner.

Discussion Philosophy MadLibs

» Given our value(s) of _____, discussion

_____.

Why does teaching and practicing discussion skills align our program with our mission?

» Learning to _____ through
discussion _____ students to _____.

What specific school values come alive when we teach and practice discussion intentionally?

» As a community, we expect that discussion will be
_____ and encourage _____.

What are our community "guardrails" for when discussions get challenging?

Discussion Word Bank

Belonging

Confidence

Communicate

Citizen

Curiosity

Equity

Human(ity)

Voice

Growth

Leadership

Listening

Relationship

Viewpoint

Academic

Character

SEL

Reflection

Community

Challenge

Ideas

Skills

Diversity

Individual

Rigor

Excellence

World

Question

Learning

Examples of Awesome



About

LEADERSHIP

GREATEST GOOD MCDONOGH

THE MEMORIAL TO THOSE ENSLAVED AND FREED

EQUITY & INCLUSION

MCDONOGH VOICES

ROOTS FARM

CAMPUS & FACILITIES

MEDIA HUB

HISTORY OF MCDONOGH SCHOOL

CONTACT

Freedom of Expression Statement



FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION & CIVIL DISCOURSE

McDonogh School teaches students how to think and not what to think. As LifeReady, our academic vision, promises, McDonogh graduates critical thinkers who can form, test, and revise their ideas—for themselves, and in the service of others. To develop these abilities and be inclusive and respectful, teachers and students must invite and analyze all debatable ideas and points of view. Critical reasoning remains competency for college and career, but just as importantly, the ability to understand, evaluate, and act on ideas responsibly prepares for healthy democratic participation for life.

While a culture of inclusion protects freedom of expression, such protection does not render all knowledge and opinion equally "true." To construct the most complete understanding of a discussable issue or concept, they must build such knowledge for themselves. This requires

RIVERDALE

WHY RIVERDALE

PEOPLE

PROGRAMS

ADMISSION

SUPPORT

CAMPUS

CAREERS

PLUSSED+

The most critical points of this pamphlet for all community members to understand are:

1

As a school, our priority is to foster discourse that yields learning. At Riverdale, students develop social, emotional, and intellectual skills that enable them to build relationships and collaborate in the service of learning.

2

4

Riverdale students learn that arguments that challenge or threaten their interests or values are not necessarily hateful arguments. The school welcomes legitimate political speech that might affirm or critique specific beliefs or actions and the activists, voters, and politicians who support those beliefs or actions.

PROGRAM

Where / how does your school *teach* discussion skills? Are standards consistent and clear? Assessable and assessed? Accessible to all?

Turn and talk with a partner.

A background image showing a group of students sitting at desks in a classroom, viewed from above. The image is semi-transparent and serves as a backdrop for the text.

PUNCHLINE

How does your school tell “the story” of discussion on your campus to stakeholders?
Students, parents, teachers, staff, alumni?

Turn and talk with a partner.

Perspective Taking:

How might different stakeholders in a school community think differently about **why** and **how** discussion skills are taught in schools?

... Faculty

Consider: Humanities, STEM, etc.

... Student Support Staff

Consider: DEI, Counselors, Specialists, etc.

... Parents

What's in it for parents?

... Students

What do the kids themselves think?

Punchline Examples

Student Perspectives: First, they're relieved. Then: proud!

"I can't believe I used to be scared of talking in class." "REAL is teaching me real life skills, like for jobs and meetings."

"R.E.A.L.® makes everyone feel the same comforting awkwardness."

-9th grader

My biggest win with REAL has been effectively relating my ideas to not only my peers' ideas but also relating them to the world. Making connections to the real world allows us to give meaning to the themes we discuss and more readily apply those ideas.

"REAL helps me listen first which is good for everything from the debate team to arguing with my Mom about chores."

"I think REAL discussions serve as a draft for analytical writing, especially in how we use quotes, and they are a great place to speak your ideas and see how your peers react to it: similar to a band testing out songs at a concert before they release the studio version."
- 9th grader

"R.E.A.L. helps us engage with each other and everyone gets a better understanding of the text when they look at it from different points of view. Personally, I have an issue with shutting down the ideas of others without considering them, but R.E.A.L. helps with the life skill of realizing there are multiple correct answers, multiple ways to solve a problem."

This is your wildcard metric.

We asked your students whether they identify as an introvert or extrovert.

Some interesting stuff happened:

16% Introverts agree or strongly agree that they will be able to get their voice in if they have something to say in discussion.

43% Introverts feel comfortable asking a question in class discussion

3 Number of times introverts use RELATE per discussion

Student Self-Reported Breakdown of Personality Types



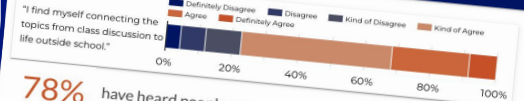
25% Extroverts agree or strongly agree that they will be able to get their voice in if they have something to say in discussion.

73% Extroverts feel comfortable asking a question in class discussion

4 Number of times extroverts use RELATE per discussion



Relate



78% have heard people use REAL skills in life outside class

46% feel confident speaking up in the class discussions

45% feel comfortable disagreeing out loud with a peer in class discussion

18% Definitely Agree with: "I know I'm going to be able to get my voice in if I have something to say"

17% Definitely Agree with: "I feel like my classmates listen to me when I speak in discussion"

"We have all begun to know each other better. We have learned that we are all different, and that's okay."

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Questions?

(Norm in this room: no such thing as a dumb one!)

Thank you for your presence + brainpower today!
Continue the convo @ Liza Garonzik: Liza@REALdiscussion.org

R.E.A.L.Discussion 



SAIS

SERVING &
ACCREDITING
INDEPENDENT
SCHOOLS

R.E.A.L.® is a program for teaching students the discussion skills they need for success in learning and real life.

In our tech-centric, polarized world, **human skills** - like the ability to engage in great discussion - **matter more than ever.** We are on a mission to make them teachable + talk-about-able.



R.E.A.L.® distills great discussion into teachable skills.



One language. Skills for learning + life!

 **R.E.A.L.® Skills**
(Different versions for different ages).



R IS FOR RELATE.

R1: RELATE TEXT TO SELF, WORLD & TEXTS.

R★: RELATE YOUR IDEAS TO YOUR PEERS'.



E IS FOR EXCERPT.

E1: EXCERPT WITH EFFICIENCY.

E★: EXCERPT WITH EDITORIAL.



A IS FOR ASK.

A1: ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE TEXT.


A★: ASK QUESTIONS OF YOUR CLASSMATES.



L IS FOR LISTEN.

L1: LISTEN VISIBLY (THREE TYPES OF NVC).

L★: LISTEN TO FACILITATE (THREE T'S).

 R.E.A.L.® starts in Humanities class giving 7th-10th graders a method for leading rigorous, equitable, and relevant convo about course content. These skills transfer beyond class, fast!

R.E.A.L.Discussion