

Successful Discussion Requires Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

University of Wisconsin-Madison
Diversity Forum

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Wisconsin Center for Education Research
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION | UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Classroom Discussion Requires DEI

DEI Requires Classroom Discussion



Why would diversity, equity, & inclusion require us to have good classroom discussions?

Write your thoughts for 30 seconds.



The Classroom is the Crucible (in a good way!)



What is the Discussion Project?

Free Professional Learning Series
for any UW-Madison instructor

- In-person (3 full days)
- Online (seven 2-hour zoom sessions)



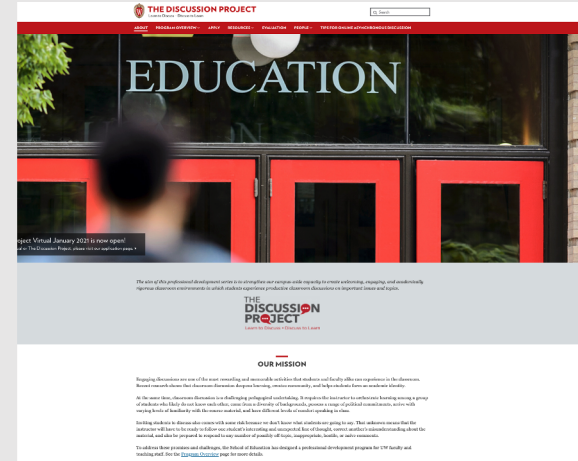
Teaching Team



What is the Discussion Project?

Research Study supported by

- Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
- Dean of the School of Education
 - Karen A. Falk Distinguished Chair of Education Fund
 - Hilldale Fund
- UW-Madison Provost and Chancellor (for online)



discussion.education.wisc.edu



Why does the Discussion Project Exist?

1. Campus climate

- UW-Madison Climate Survey, 2016

The Discussion Project directly and intentionally addresses the first recommendation.

- *Promote instructional best practices that ensure an inclusive learning environment*

1. Professional learning



Why does the Discussion Project Exist?

3. Research

- A reduced sense of social integration (Tinto, 1975; Braxton et al., 2008).
- Disparities in preparation due to lower quality high school experiences (Flores et al., 2017).
- Competing demands of school and family obligations (Jimenez-Silva et al., 2009)
- Not feeling entitled to reach out for help (Jack, 2014).

Given the link between academic achievement and both a sense of belonging and academic engagement, it is not surprising that research shows students of color, first-generation students, and low-income students have lower GPAs than advantaged students (NCES, 2012) and lower college completion rates.

At The Discussion Project, we posit that discussion builds community, a sense of belonging, and understanding and helps all students, but especially students not from the majority population on campus succeed academically.

Why does the Discussion Project Exist?

4. Students themselves!

I always learn more in a class when the professor sets up good discussions.

I think, well, you know, over the course of time, we get more comfortable with the students in your class. So, you become a little bit less self-conscious. And [instructor] was really great at cultivating an environment of just, like, this no-judgment-here.

All of us are willing to talk. None of us are very shy anymore, cuz We're very comfortable with each other. And that's like, what a good part of a FIG should be, is that we're all comfortable with each other.

Discussions provide a time for students to ask questions we wouldn't be able to in a larger lecture. Having a teacher set up an organized and functional discussion greatly improves the classroom dynamic and allows students to take a more active role in the classroom and in their education.

Discussion & Equity



Wherever you are taking notes today, write about the following prompt for 30 seconds.

PROMPT: How might discussion enhance equity for the students you teach?



Learn to Discuss

Discuss to Learn



Discussion Project Findings

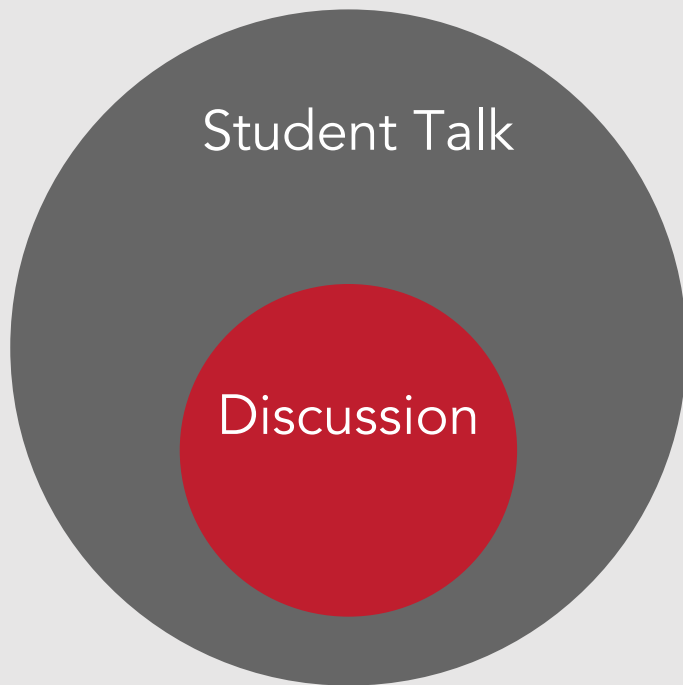
- Students can engage more in discussion when they feel comfortable with their classmates.
- More students are able to engage in discussion more effectively in small groups.
- Most students need structure and guidance to engage well in discussion.



What is Discussion?



Student Talk and Discussion



The Discussion Project's Definition of Discussion

Discussion is focused inquiry through speaking & listening that is purposeful, broadly collaborative, and that leads to deeper understanding through analysis of different perspectives.



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How do these features of discussion help promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in our classrooms?



NORMS

1. Presume Positive Intentions
2. Listen attentively
3. Aim for shared participation
4. Engage respectfully
5. Respect boundaries

Is the internet compromising our learning
& intelligence?

THE
DISCUSSION
PROJECT

Avra Reddy

Lucia Estrada

Augusta Ike

Evan Sadlon

AVRA: And do you think that quickness

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Ingredients for High Quality Discussion

1. Community / Trust --Norms & Working Agreements

Norms conditions for shared learning	Online Working Agreements agreed upon procedures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presume positive intentions • Engage respectfully • Listen attentively • Aim for equal participation • Respect boundaries • Provide evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use your video camera • Use names to address each other • Use features -mute, raise hand, chat, etc.- appropriately • Be ok with silence • Start & end on time

Be sure to make your Norms and Working Agreements explicit and revisit them with your students to reinforce and / or adjust. You can also build them *with* your students.



Ingredients for High Quality Discussion

1. Community / Trust --Norms & Working Agreements
2. Purpose --Clear curricular purpose
3. Planned and structured processes from the beginning to maximize participation and learning

Small Groups --Why & How

Planned and paced protocols

1. Effective prompts and questioning techniques
2. Reflection and formative assessment for improvement

Why Discussion Matters



Modules

1. Building Online Community
2. Defining Discussion
3. Structuring Discussion & Crafting Questions
4. Whole Class Facilitation
5. Discussion Plans & Assessment
6. Planning a Discussion
7. Maintaining Community



Learn to Discuss • Discuss to Learn

Courses (in-person and online) will run starting in January 2022 and throughout Semester 2.

Applications are now open!



KATHY CRAMER

Professor, Political Science, UW-Madison

"I was fortunate to take part in your training last month. I am not exaggerating when I say it has changed my life. I am teaching a 15-person and a 50-person undergraduate course this term, and I am using the skills you taught me each class session. It has made me think differently about my teaching and I am quite sure the students' experience is all the better for it. Thank you! You all are providing a fantastic service."



KANDYCE ANDERSON AMIE

PhD student and teaching assistant in
curriculum and instruction, School of
Education, UW-Madison

"The opening activities to promote immediate class engagement, rubrics for virtual learning, experiences engaging with different discussion techniques, rather than just reading about them – they were all extremely useful for my practice. Our discussions allowed us to collaborate with other teachers in various fields across UW to lesson plan and brainstorm great ways to structure our time and create inclusive learning environments."



BRANDON BLOCH

Assistant Professor of History, UW-
Madison

"I would strongly recommend The Discussion Project to every UW-Madison instructor who teaches discussion-based classes, or wants to integrate more discussion but isn't sure how to go about doing it. The workshop not only offers practical strategies that can be implemented immediately in the classroom, but access to a network of colleagues across campus who are passionate about teaching and learning. I left with a much firmer understanding of why discussion is important, and how to foster a classroom community that celebrates the voices of all students."

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Citations

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