

## Speak Up! Facilitating Youth Discussion

One of the most powerful tools in any personal toolkit is your voice. It is important that students, like yourselves, know that your voice matters and can be used to affect positive change in the world. Using your voice is a skill that you can continue to improve on as you get older, and you can never start practicing too early! Facilitate a conversation with students at your school to demonstrate the impact of their voice and use it to advocate for a better world.

- **Area of Care:** Education
- **Time:** (2-3 hrs. prep; 45 mins. execution time)
- **Sample materials:** Paper, pens, poster board, chairs, quiet space



### 1. **Investigate:** What issues are important to your school? How will you frame them for other students?

- If you don't have clearly defined topics, then your discussion can be used to generate ideas about what issues warrant discussion.
- If possible, examine issues with actionable solutions. Could the cafeteria be improved with a student clean-up initiative? Could the school spirit be improved by making positive signs for administrative staff?

### 2. **Prepare:**

- Who do you need to involve in this project? How can you get multiple grades (and even teachers) to participate? Will you invite school staff members, such as custodians or cafeteria staff, to participate?
- What is the structure of this discussion? Who, from your group, will be the moderator? How will discussion participants communicate when they have something to say? How will you keep the conversation flowing? How can the moderator help make sure everyone gets a chance to speak, and that all voices are heard and acknowledged?
- Where and when will this conversation take place?
- After you make a plan, make sure you have a list of questions or discussion topics. Some examples include:
  - How would you describe our school community? What about school makes you happy? Unhappy?

- What would it take for this school to be a place that makes everyone feel like they matter?
- If you could wave a magic wand, what would you change about our school?

**3. Execute:** Discussion time!

- Make sure the space is set up and there are chairs for everyone.
- Go over the guidelines before introducing discussion topics (and consider having them displayed for reference).
- Depending on the group size, start with a short icebreaker.
- Begin asking questions and make sure to have a notetaker. Give participants space to share their thoughts and positive encouragement throughout the discussion.
- At the end, recap the discussion and any action-items or next steps that have come out of the discussion. Thank everyone for participating.

**4. Reflect:**

- *Debrief:* As a team, spend 15 minutes discussing how the project went (highs, lows, things you would change).
- *Reflect:* What was the impact on the people who participated in the discussion? What was the impact on you and your teammates? What did you learn (about yourselves, your community)? What leadership skills did you use/improve?

**5. Share:**

- Report your impact. Think about the number of people served and the impact on the beneficiaries. Also, gather quotes and stories when possible.
- Share: Tell others about your project and the impact made, through social media and your school channels, etc.