

Café Conversations



What are they?

Conversation Cafés are intended to restore something missing from our culture; to nudge us towards the classic American values of generosity, safety, friendliness, creativity, pragmatic decision making—in short, democratic collaboration.

They are reflective conversations that increased participants' capacity to engage in respectful and inquisitive conversations on specific topics that will expand their knowledge and awareness of current practice.

The resulting Conversation Café agreement sounds a bit like what one learned in kindergarten about getting along with others. They are guidelines for group settings that hold a space for sharing ideas that are working and collaboration to expand what works to other settings:

Open-mindedness: *Listen to and respect all points of view.*

Acceptance: *Suspend judgment as best you can.*

Curiosity: *Seek to understand rather than persuade.*

Discovery: *Question assumptions, look for new insights.*

Sincerity: *Speak what has personal heart and meaning.*

Brevity: *Go for honesty and depth, but don't go on and on.*

How do they work?

- Choose your 3 top interest topics.
- Locate the appropriate table by the table tent.
- Each table has a host, who will lead off with a 10-12 minute overview on the topic and a facilitator, who will keep the discussion on track during each 40 minute conversation.
- Participants listen and then engage in an interactive conversation to further their understanding of the topic.
- Use your advanced organizer to record ideas, questions, etc.
- At the end of the first conversation the host and facilitator remain and the participants move to their next topic choice.

- **Participants will have an opportunity in the afternoon to share collective discoveries and insights as a district team. The result is a sense of the larger whole. New possibilities for action emerge.**