



Educator Guidelines for Civil Discourse

First: *prioritize building community, trust, and joy.* Students won't take intellectual risks –sharing uncertain ideas, questioning assumptions, or genuinely listening to opposing viewpoints– unless they feel safe to do so. Investing time into building your classroom community creates the conditions where students actually want to understand each other.

Second: *all skills must be practiced– including discourse.* There should be dedicated moments to discuss, question, and analyze woven into your regular routine, not saved for special occasions. Whether it's a daily “low-stakes” debate, weekly current events conversations, or a summative Socratic Seminar, students need repeated exposure to discourse skills.

Finally: *your role is both facilitator and enforcer.* As a facilitator, you create opportunities for students to discuss, stepping back so **their** voices drive the conversation. But, students also need to know you're maintaining boundaries. They'll feel safer taking risks when they know you won't allow discussion to devolve into personal attacks or chaos.