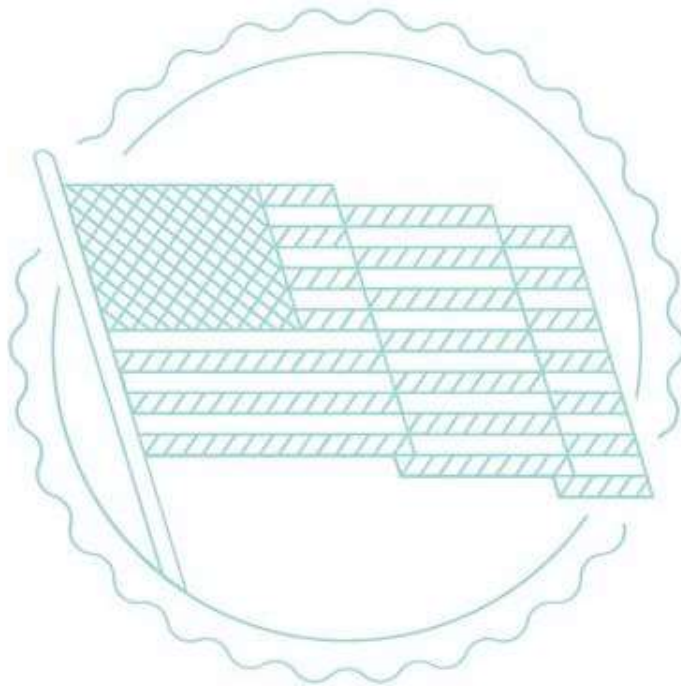


CONSTITUTIONAL CONVERSATIONS AND CIVIL DIALOGUE

CLASSROOM

TOOL KIT



NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER



Inside This Toolkit

This planning packet provides resources, tools, and techniques for holding a Constitutional Conversation through a healthy civil dialogue in various classroom settings.

PAGE 3 About the National Constitution Center and Our Educational Philosophy

- About the National Constitution Center
- Learning Framework #NCCed
- Different Types of Constitutional Interpretations

PAGE 5 Introduction to Civil Dialogue

- What is a Constitutional Conversation?
- Constitutional Conversations vs. Political Conversations
- Why do it?
- How it's graded

PAGE 6 Understanding the Topic

- NCC Resources
- Annotation Guide

PAGE 8 Understanding Expectations and Creating a List of Norms and Non-Negotiable Behaviors

PAGE 12 Understanding Civil Discourse Tools, Techniques, and Assigning Roles

- Discussion Methods
- Room set-ups
- Participation Self-Reflection
- What to Say (and When)
- Student Roles

PAGE 20 Reflection, Civic Engagement Inside and Out of the Classroom (Transference)

- Assigning the Class Grade
- Self-Reflection
- Class Reflections
- Follow up Activities: Extending the Conversation Beyond the Wall of the Classroom

PAGE 24 Authors

About the National Constitution Center

The National Constitution Center is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that brings together people of all ages and perspectives, across America and around the world, to learn about, debate, and celebrate the greatest vision of human freedom in history, the U.S. Constitution.^[MB1]

President Ronald Reagan signed the Constitution Heritage Act of 1988 on September 16, 1988. The act directed the establishment of the National Constitution Center, an institution “within or in close proximity to the Independence National Historical Park” that “shall disseminate information about the U.S. Constitution on a nonpartisan basis in order to increase awareness and understanding of the Constitution among the American people.”

The #NCCed Framework

The National Constitution Center’s framework for learning integrates three main components: Historical Foundations through Storytelling; Constitutional Thinking Skills; and Civil Dialogue and Reflection.

This approach provides a strong foundation in the Constitution’s text, founding stories, and judicial interpretations of the Constitution; teaches learners of all ages to separate their political views from their constitutional views—asking not what the government should do, but what it constitutionally may do; and teaches students to think like constitutional scholars by providing nonpartisan information about the Constitution, educational resources, and platforms to support civil discourse within classrooms and across the country.

WATCH: [National Constitution Center scholar Thomas Donnelly describes framework in this helpful video!](#)

Types of Constitutional Interpretation

How to Think Like a Constitutional Scholar

As you read, interpret, and cite the documents in the *Interactive Constitution*, it is important to think about how the Constitution expands or limits the power of government. This is how constitutional scholars read, interpret, and cite the Constitution. But how can you do this?

Here are some tips to help:

1. As you read the essays, pay close attention to how the scholars express their ideas. Look for common words and terms they use when writing about the Constitution.
2. Try to separate your political views (what *should* be done—a question of policy) from constitutional views (what *can* be done—a question about the Constitution).

Policy question: Should the public-school principal search a student’s locker?

Constitutional question: Does the Fourth Amendment restrict the power of a government employee from searching a student’s locker?

3. Ways to interpret the Constitution: (Adapted from StreetLaw)

When the courts must decide a case, the meaning of the laws in question is not always clear. The 14th Amendment, which guarantees equal protection of the laws, has been particularly difficult to interpret over the years because of the ambiguous nature of the concept of equality. Does treating people equally mean treating them exactly the same? Or are there circumstances when equal treatment sometimes requires different treatment? The courts have come to different conclusions at different points in history and in different cases.

Judges use their reasoning skills to decide what particular laws mean when they rule on cases. Different judges sometimes use different reasoning skills to interpret the Constitution, meaning that judges do not always agree on the meaning of the Constitution. There are seven widely accepted methods of interpretation that shed some light on the meaning of the Constitution.

Historical Interpretation	A judge looks to the historical context of when a given provision was drafted and ratified to shed light on its meaning.
Textual Interpretation	A judge looks to the meaning of the words in the Constitution, relying on common understandings of what the words meant at the time the provision was added.
Structural Interpretation	A judge infers structural rules (power relationships between institutions, for instance) from the relationships specifically outlined in the Constitution.
Doctrinal Interpretation	A judge applies rules established by precedents.
Prudential Interpretation	A judge seeks to balance the costs and benefits of a particular ruling, including its consequences and any concerns about the limits of judicial power and competence.
Traditional Interpretation	looks to any laws, customs, and practices established after the framing and ratification of a given provision.
Moral Interpretation	A judge draws on principles of moral reasoning—whether embodied in the natural law tradition or drawn from a judge’s own independent, present-day moral judgments.

What is a Constitutional Conversation?

A Constitutional Conversation is an instructional approach to constitutional literacy using scholarly writings and civil dialogue techniques to better understand the U.S. Constitution.

Constitutional Conversations vs. Political Conversations

Constitutional conversations start by separating political views (what *should* be done—a question of policy) from constitutional views (what *can* be done—a question about the Constitution).

Policy Question	Constitutional Question
Should a public-school principal search a students' locker?	Does the Fourth Amendment restrict the power of a government employee (like a public-school principal) from searching a student's locker?

Elements of a Constitutional Conversation include:

- Focusing on ideas, interpretations, and understandings expressed in the *Interactive Constitution*.
- Building our abilities to use evidence, especially the Constitution's text, founding stories, and scholarly essays, to support our own constitutional understandings.
- Allowing us to respectfully share our own constitutional views and listen to the views of others.
- Participating in a healthy dialogue, using methods such as the Harkness discussion, a Socratic seminar, or the Fishbowl.
- Tracking participation through techniques like spider web mapping.

Why do it?

By developing the skills necessary to participate in a Constitutional Conversation, students will be able to explore higher order constitutional questions, interpret constitutional arguments using scholarly evidence, respectfully share their understandings with their classmates, and meaningfully reflect on personal constitutional understandings. Research shows that participating in reflective conversations like this allows students to develop a stronger sense of their own perceptions and understandings in connection with others. It is also consistent with the framers' conception of the constitutional system. They hoped for a system driven by civic republican virtue—one that was guided by deliberation, reason, and enlightened public opinion.

How is it graded?

Quantitative Assessment: Since it is a team effort, there will be a team grade. The entire class will get the same grade, with *two exceptions*: students who do not participate at all will be marked down; other students who perform truly exceptional group-benefit feats (for example, "saving" or immensely uplifting a discussion that is going poorly) will be eligible for extra points.

Qualitative Assessment: Students should provide reflective responses to the following questions:

- How have your understandings on the issue changed or been confirmed based on the scholarly essays and constitutional ideas presented today?
- What are some things that surprised you either during your research or during the conversation today?
- What understandings developed because of this Constitutional Conversation that would not have developed if the class performed a debate?

Understanding a Constitutional Topic

When having a Constitutional Conversation, the best place to start is always with the Constitution itself.

Choose a Constitutional Provision and Identify a Constitutional Question

You should first identify which constitutional provision or topic will be at the center of your conversation. This could be a topic that’s coming up in your curriculum or an issue that’s been in the news.

Once you have chosen a topic, you should next identify *constitutional questions* related to it. Remember, these questions are related to what is permitted under the Constitution.

Below are some examples of possible topics and their related constitutional questions.

Topic	Constitutional Question
First Amendment – Free Speech	When and why can the government limit speech—and when can’t it?
Second Amendment	When can the government limit the individual right to possess guns and other firearms—and when can’t it?
Civil Liberties	What is the role of the Constitution in protecting some of our nation’s most cherished rights?

Centering the discussion on these types of questions will not only give you a natural starting point for the classroom dialogue, but will also help to keep the students focused on the constitutional arguments, rather than their own political opinions.

The National Constitution Center’s [Interactive Constitution: Classroom Edition](#) has over 30 topics to choose from—with related constitutional questions—to help get you started.

Understand the Arguments

Before the students participate in their Constitutional Conversation, it’s important that they understand the Constitution’s text, the foundational history, and the modern arguments surrounding the provision they will be discussing.

The [Interactive Constitution: Classroom Edition](#) can help! Our leaning modules offer extensive resources, including:

- **Scholarly Essays** on each topic, exploring arguments from across the political spectrum
- **Video Lessons** taught by the Center’s team of experts
- **Podcasts, Blog Articles, and More!**

All of these resources can be assigned as independent work or incorporated into a separate lesson on the topic. You can also explore constitutional topics during a [LIVE Scholar Exchange](#) with the National Constitution Center.

More Tools: Student Annotation Guide






As your students explore these resources, we recommend they take notes on readings and videos. On page 7 of this packet is a handout with tips to help your students with their note taking. They should be prepared to reference their notes during the discussion. You may also choose to collect their notes for assessment—a scoring rubric is included in the assessment section of this packet.

Annotation Guide

Directions:

As you read a text or watch a video, use the following symbols, or create your own, to note your thoughts and ideas on the content.

Make sure to take clear notes—you will reference them later while participating in a Constitutional Conversation with your classmates, and your instructor may also choose to collect your notes and score you on them.

SYMBOL	MEANING
!!!	Very important information or ideas.
↔	Connection – This connects to something else I know. (text to text, text to world, text to self)
???	Question. I don't understand.
	Shocking – I was shocked or surprised when I read this.
	I agree with this idea. I like this idea.
	I disagree. I don't like this idea.
	I understand this idea.
	Vocabulary word. Unfamiliar word I need to look-up.
WORDS TO WRITE IN THE MARGINS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I wonder ..." "I'm thinking..." • "I'm feeling..." or ... • Write a one-word summary for the paragraph. • Create titles for the paragraphs, sections, or pages. 	

Setting Expectations

Before a Constitutional Conversation, it is important to make sure everyone understands their role, and how they will be expected to participate.

Students will be expected to:

- Help establish the norms of a successful Constitutional Conversation.
- Participate in the discussion, working as a team to ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to share.
- Carry out any specific role that they have been assigned.
- Reflect on their own performance, noting helpful contributions and areas for improvement.
- Reflect on their developed understandings of constitutional texts.

Teachers will be expected to:

- Help establish the norms of a successful Constitutional Conversation.
- Model the skills associated with the conversation throughout the class.
- Observe and record the flow of the discussion and the credit earned by the students.

Norms and Non-Negotiables

As stated above, in addition to understanding their roles, all participants work together to create a list of norms—or guidelines for the conversation—that everyone then agrees to follow.

Creating norms is a great first step in preparing for your Constitutional Conversation, and the norms you create together can even be used for all classroom activities throughout the year.

- **Practical Guidelines:** Some norms will be more practical, meant to better facilitate the conversation in your classroom. An example of this could be that everyone must speak once before anyone can speak twice. But remember, these guidelines must work for your classroom—in a 100-person lecture, it will be hard to ensure every single person has spoken, so this guideline may be modified to say that at least 10 people must speak once, before any student can speak again.
- **Non-Negotiable Habits:** Other norms will be the non-negotiable, essential habits needed to build effective discussions in any classroom. An example of this would be to agree that each student is speaking their own truth, meaning they recognize they are only speaking for themselves, and from their own experiences, and will avoid generalizations.

More Tools

On the few next pages of this packet you will find:

- An outline for a classroom activity to help facilitate a discussion about norms on page 9.
- A handout, on pages 10 and 11 with examples of norms—created by National Constitution Center teacher advisors—that you can use as a guide as you and your students set your own norms.

Classroom Activity

How to Create Norms for a Successful Constitutional Conversation

When developing a list of classroom norms with students, a good place for teachers to start is to watch the Supreme Court Spotlight Video from the National Constitution Center, featuring Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer.

[In this 10-minute video clip](#), Justice Breyer talks about what it is like to discuss cases with his fellow justices.

While watching the clip, students can complete 3-2-1 notes. They should write down:

- 3 Interesting facts about the Supreme Court
- 2 Rules for discussion
- 1 Word that is repeated by Justice Breyer

Once the clip is over, have students compare their notes with their classmates. They should make note of any common information. This will prove helpful when creating the class-wide list of norms.

After students briefly share with each other, begin a class conversation about what should be expected of them during the Constitutional Conversation. This list should be displayed in order to highlight repeated suggestions. In addition to the list already provided, some other norms could be:

- Don't speak twice until everybody has spoken once.
- Stay calm.
- Listen patiently – do not interrupt and do not have your hand up when someone else is speaking.
- Listen actively – take notes on what other people say and cite each other.
- Police your voice – be aware of how long you are speaking.

Norms of a Successful Constitutional Conversation

Norm	What It Is	What It Looks Like What It Sounds Like
<p>Speak Your Truth</p>	<p>Speak for yourself and of your own experiences only.</p> <p>Avoid generalizations.</p>	<p>Sounds Like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “From my experience_.” • “From my perspective_.”
<p>Stay Engaged</p> <p>Facilitator Role:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redirect when necessary. • Use proximity to aid in student focus. 	<p>Participate by sharing and by practicing active listening.</p> <p>Focus on the issues, not the people saying them.</p>	<p>Looks like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eye contact • Reference peers by name • Lean forward ready to participate as opposed to sitting back for a lecture. -Respectful body language* <p>Sounds like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “This is what I hear you to be saying. Is that correct?” • “Could you tell me more about _?”
<p>Listen, Process, Respond</p> <p>Facilitator Role:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage students to allow others to share their responses before speaking twice. • Give roles and jobs to students to ensure participation in light of their processing styles. • Set up engagement strategies such as voting in polls, exit notes, and other non-vocal responses. 	<p>This is a conversation. Instead of thinking about what you want to say in rebuttal, listen to gain knowledge of the speaker's thoughts/experiences.</p> <p>Value collaboration over competition when speaking.</p> <p>Share the responsibility for including all voices in the conversation.</p>	<p>Looks like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nodding your head, or other body language that demonstrates that you are listening and engaged. • Fulfilling your assigned roles by leading the discussion, recording participation, or mapping the conversation. <p>Sounds like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I need a minute to process this.” • “What I heard you say is _” • “Could you further explain your thinking?” • “Sheila, I notice you haven’t spoken yet. I’m interested to hear what you have to say; would you mind sharing?”
<p>Expect & Accept Non-Closure</p> <p>Facilitator Role:</p> <p>Help students understand that this is not a debate, there are no winners or losers, and that in the end there may be more questions than answers. The goal is not to find the answer but to have a discussion where all can be heard.</p>	<p>The discussions are a beginning and will be ongoing.</p> <p>Accept that in some circumstances, there will be no middle ground, but there will often be some common ground with a constitutional question.</p> <p>Resolution isn’t the goal.</p> <p>Asking yourself if you understand the other person’s perspective.</p>	<p>Looks like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying if there is common ground. • Stating facts. <p>Sounds like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I need time.” • “I appreciate your idea, but need to think about it.”

<p>Be Open to Multiple Viewpoints & Perspectives</p> <p>Facilitator Role:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During discussion set up, reiterate the need to be willing to openly listen to others. • Be attentive to ensure students can safely state their views. 	<p>Be open to changing your perspective based on what you learn from others.</p> <p>Appreciate differences, determine if there is common ground, but accept the idea that consensus may not occur.</p>	<p><i>Looks like:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Interactive Constitution</i> essays, like these essays on the Fourth Amendment <p><i>Sounds like:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I can tell we have a different perspective on this topic. Could you elaborate on your thinking as to why you believe __, so I can get a better understanding of your viewpoint?” • “I’m afraid I may offend someone, could you please speak up if I do?” • Avoid saying things like “I have a right to my opinion.”
<p>Recognize your own positionality.</p> <p>Facilitator Role:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher should make sure he/she is recognizing their own positionality as well as students reflecting on their own. • Before the discussion talk about positionality and consider sharing what your positionality is and allow others to share theirs. 	<p>How does your gender, age, class, race, sexuality, ability, and religion impact your views?</p> <p>Unique experiences can add value to the conversation.</p>	<p><i>Looks like:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are recognizing others’ positionality. <p><i>Sounds like:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “My experiences are different from yours, can you tell me more about __.” • “Given our differences, how have our experiences with __ been different?”
<p>Work hard to consider the impact of your words.</p> <p>Facilitator Role:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Triggers need to be acknowledged before each discussion. • Consider this Pear Deck Activity to introduce triggers. 	<p>Language is power.</p> <p>Consider the connotation (both positive and negative) of words/phrases used during discussions. Work to not minimize experiences but acknowledge them.</p> <p>Be mindful of trigger words and topics.*</p> <p>Pay attention to what causes you to shut down.</p>	<p><i>Looks like:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge words may unintentionally and intentionally harm others in the conversation. Speak up during conversation when language is used that may trigger participants or minimize their experience. <p><i>Sounds like:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I understand what you are trying to say but the word/phrase (inset word or phrase) has the following connotation.” • “This topic is a trigger for me, and I’d rather not participate right now.”
<p>Criticize Ideas, Not Individuals</p> <p>Facilitator Role:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intervene if needed. • Provide perspective to aide with student insight by providing information on the origin of the idea and influencing factors. 	<p>Avoiding attacking a person for their point of view. Instead, critique the lens of which an individual may experience or interpret their reality.</p> <p>Look to gain insight on the origin of an idea and the environmental (social, political and economic) factors which influence said idea/position.</p>	<p><i>Looks like:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are analyzing the opinions of their classmates, not questioning their character. <p><i>Sounds like:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “What personal experiences led you to these conclusions?” • “In my experiences...”

Choosing the Right Discussion Method

There are many different types of discussion methods that can be used to have a successful Constitutional Conversation in your classroom. Below we've described a few options, and you can explore the links provided to learn more about each method. Remember, these examples can act as starting points—you can modify one or more of the methods to better fit your classroom's dynamic.

HARKNESS DISCUSSION (or Modified)

This method is based more on equal conversation than being right or wrong. Students are seated in a circle and discuss the essential question with the goal of understanding multiple perspectives instead of facing each other in a debate.

More information about the Harkness model:

- <https://www.exeter.edu/programs-educators/harkness-outreach/harkness-teaching-tools>
- <https://philadelphia.chalkbeat.org/2019/7/23/22186477/brittini-jennings-helps-her-students-connect-their-own-lives-to-history>

FISHBOWL

Students are divided into two groups; one group will form the “fishbowl” in the center, while the other group sits around them. The center group participates in the discussion at hand, while the students in the audience take notes. After a set amount of time, the students switch and the new “fishbowl” discusses the essential question.

More information about the Fishbowl model:

- <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/fishbowl>

SOCRATIC SEMINAR

The teacher (or leader) is responsible for asking the questions, but students should discuss the answers with each other. The teacher's role is to facilitate the conversation, but not participate.

More information about Socratic seminars:

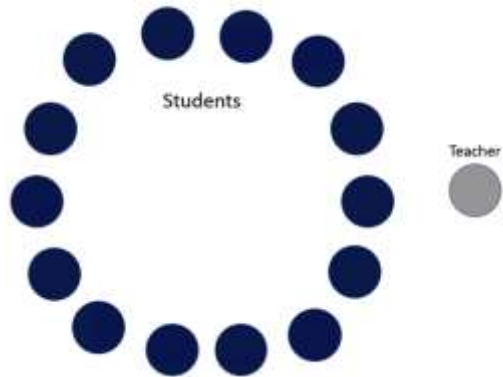
- <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/socratic-seminar>
- <https://jacquimurray.net/2018/03/09/is-the-socratic-method-right-for-your-class>

More Tools: Classroom Set-Up Guide

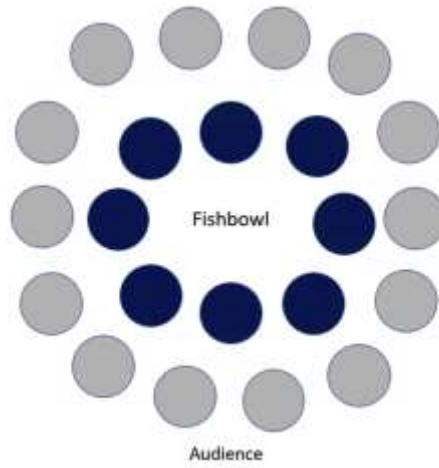
On page 13 of the toolkit, you will find some diagrams of classroom set-ups to correspond with each method above. Once you choose a method, consider rearranging your classroom furniture to help make the discussion a success!

Constitutional Conversation Classroom Set-Ups

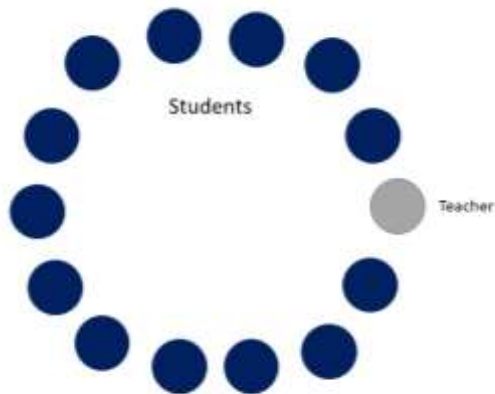
HARKNESS DISCUSSION



FISHBOWL



SOCRATIC SEMINAR



Self-Reflection

During the discussion, students should be mindful of their own participation—this will be helpful during the reflection stage following the discussion. Included on page 15 of this packet is a Self-Reflection Guide students can use during the discussion.

Sentence Starters

Another tool that students will find helpful is our Sentence Starter handout, included on page 16 of this packet, which they can use if they are having trouble finding the right way to start a conversation or phrase a thought. This sheet should be distributed to students along with the Self-Reflection Guide.

Assigning Student Roles

When you have your Constitutional Conversation, you might consider assigning individual students specific roles to play or tasks to accomplish—this will help ensure the discussion remains student driven. Some roles for the students could include:

- Discussion Leaders
- Chat Box Monitor (for Virtual Discussions)
- Discussion Trackers
- Summarizers

After assigning each student a role, provide them with their corresponding hand-out (found on page 17 of this packet). This will outline their tasks and guide them during the discussion.

NOTE: During the discussion, you as the teacher may also choose to monitor class participation (even if it's also an assigned student role) so that you will be able to assign the class a grade after the discussion. You can create copies of the participation tracking tools for both yourself and the student assigned to that role.

Participation Self-Reflection

DIRECTIONS: Make an annotation each time you complete one of the following actions.

Verbally Participated in the Discussion	
Participated Non-Verbally <i>(Raised my hand during a poll, nodded my head in agreement, etc.)</i>	
Actively Listened to My Peers	
Made an Effort to Adhere to the Agreed Upon Norms	
Took Notes or Made Reflections on My Paper or Computer	

Additional Notes, Engagement Strategies Used, or Observations:

Constitutional Conversation Sentence Starters

What to say when I want to...

Skill	Action	Sentence Starter
Communicate Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add relevant details to your answer. Cite the scholar and the evidence. Make connections back to the constitutional question. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "I think _____ because _____" "The reasons I agree/disagree with the statement are..."
Listen Actively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paraphrase what others say in order to show understanding. Build on what classmates say. Reference peers by name. Ask your classmates to explain, restate, or cite something. This can only help clarify for everyone. Comments are not in isolation. Build on them by making connections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Rachel, what I heard you say is ..." "To add to what Kelly said..." "Joey, could you further explain your thinking?"
Move the Conversation Forward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask a question. Make a connection (to another text, or another part of the text, or to what someone else said, or to something else you have experienced). Restate or build on ideas you agree with in your own words. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "I wonder ..." "I think _____ because _____" "I agree with Natalie because I heard her say ..." "To build on what Ryan was saying, I'll add ..."
Take Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear up misunderstandings. Admit if you make a mistake. Take responsibility for your words. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "I miscommunicated my point earlier, I apologize. I intended to say..." "Earlier, I neglected to point out..." "After hearing _____, I realize I was wrong. Now I believe _____" "Can you help me understand?" "From my experience...." "From my perspective..."
Disagree Civilly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disagree with something that was said without making the other person feel attacked or like you are discounting their point of view. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "I disagree with Amy because..." "Couldn't it also be true that..." "I see why Kevin might say that, but..." "While I think Lauren had a point that _____, I disagree with her that _____." "I understand what you are trying to say but the word/phrase (inset word or phrase) has the following connotation." "I need a minute to process this." "I think we should agree to disagree on this topic."
Stay on Task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay focused on the core question. Identify when the sharing strays and redirect the conversation. Refer back to the text or readings often. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "This reminds me of the part in the reading that..." "Let's get back to the question of..."
Write First	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use written research and notes to help add details, specifics, and author's ideas to the conversation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "While I was reading the essay, I took note of..."

Constitutional Conversation Student Participation Guide

My role for today's discussion is: _____

Role for Discussion	Tasks to Accomplish
<p>Discussion Leader</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduce the topic being discussed. ● Begin the conversation by posing the constitutional questions provided. Hint: It may help participants warm up by starting with simple agree/disagree style questions. ● If students aren't responding, consider repeating or rephrasing the question. ● After a classmate answers a question, ask the group if anyone would like to add on to the question or if anyone has a different opinion. ● Give time for students to think before responding. ● Remember, your teacher is your partner in facilitating the conversation—they can help if you feel stuck.
<p>Discussion Tracker</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create a Diagram to Show the flow of conversation. (Create and give an extra copy to the teacher before discussion begins.) ● Add checkmarks next to the name each time a student participates. ● Analyze data. Examples: Did more girls participate than guys? Did leaders give enough time for students to respond? Did you see any trends? Did one side of the room participate more than the other?
<p>Summarizers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Take bullet point notes of discussion. ● On topics that are controversial or lengthy wrap up key points before discussion moves forward if leader requests this. ● The day after the discussion, provide a discussion summary. ● Analyze the questions and responses to see what type of question led to the most beneficial discussion. ● Lead class in determining consensus.
<p>Chat Box Monitor</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Read student responses in the chat box. ● Acknowledge whose response it is. Example: John said... ● Do your best not to interrupt leaders or responders.

Tracking Participation – Sample Rubric

Use this template to create a participation rubric for your class. Begin by listing the students' names in the left-hand column. During the discussion, make a hash mark in the appropriate column whenever a student completes the corresponding action.

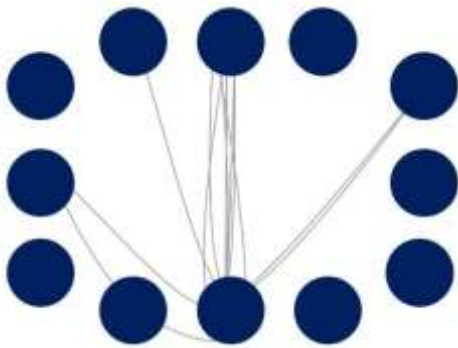
Student Name	Actively Participated in the Discussion	Fulfilled Their Assigned Role Successfully (If Applicable)	Made an Effort to Adhere to the Agreed Upon Norms

Tracking Participation With Spider Web Mapping

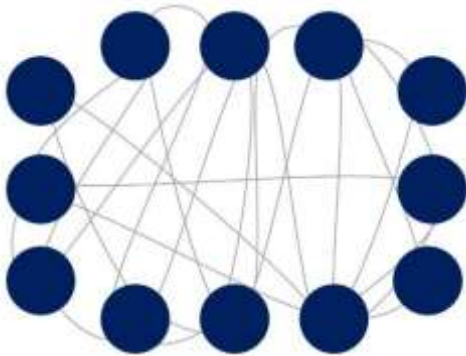
Spider webs are also a way for teachers to map discussions. It provides a visual representation of who spoke, how many times they spoke, and which students exchanged ideas the most. This method also allows for teachers to make their own notes reflecting the level of the response and how beneficial they were to the overall discussion.

During classroom discussions, trackers observe and record participation. You can record students' names as they are arranged in the classroom and draw lines connecting students who interact with each other. This includes answering a question, adding to a response, or clarifying an answer.

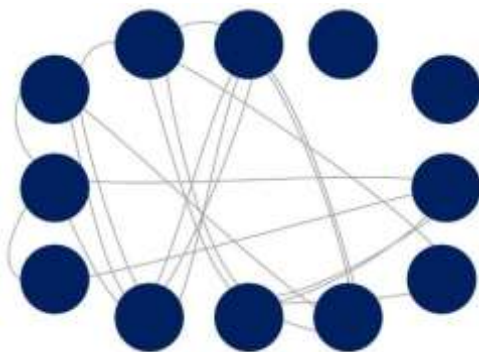
Trackers can also develop their own shorthand for recording students who ask questions and ranking student responses.



Example One: In this map, it is clear that there are one or two students dominating the conversation, and other students are only speaking because they are required, or not at all.



Example Two: This is an example of a much healthier dialogue; you can tell because the map actually looks like a spider's web! All the students are participating in the conversation.



Example Three: This example shows how the mapping exercise may help identify other factors that are affecting the conversation. If you notice a lack of participation from students in one corner of the room, it might mean it is hard for them to hear, or that there is some sort of distraction.

Reflections

Self-Reflection

The link between cognitive self-reflection and academic achievement is well documented for secondary school students. Critical thinking can involve both self-reflection and reflection upon other material concurrently.

Students were asked to record their own contributions during the conversation. Following the discussion, they should be asked to reflect on their overall performance. This should occur as soon as the conversation is over to ensure students remember as much as possible.

Class Reflection

After students have time to complete their reflections, present the following questions to the class:

- How have your understandings on the issue changed or been confirmed based on the scholarly essays and constitutional ideas presented today?
- What are some things that surprised you either during your research or during the conversation today?
- What understandings developed because of this Constitutional Conversation that would not have developed if the class performed a debate?

Assessment

After your Constitutional Conversation, you will assess their performance as a class, and assign them a group grade.

Things to consider:

- Did each student participate?
- Did the students carry out their assigned tasks successfully?
- Did the students adhere to the agreed upon norms?

Remember there can be two exceptions to the group grade: students who do not participate at all will be marked down; other students who perform truly exceptional group-benefit feats (for example, “saving” or immensely uplifting a discussion that is going poorly) will be eligible for extra points.

You may also wish to collect the notes they prepared for class, and factoring that work into your assessment. You can use this rubric for when scoring students notes:

- +20: Well annotated, thoughts and ideas are written on the paper, symbols are clearly used. Words as well as symbols are used. Shows evidence that you read and thought deeply about the text.
- +15: Many meaningful symbols used. There are several words, but not many thoughts or ideas are written. Shows evidence that the text was read and analyzed.
- +10: Symbols are used throughout the text. Shows evidence that the text was read.
- +5: Only a few symbols. Not evident that the text was read.
- 0: No notions or symbols.

Follow-Up Classroom Activity

Extending the Conversation Outside the Classroom

Introduction

In this lesson, students will develop a strategy for extending the Constitutional Conversation beyond the walls of the classroom. They will work with a choice board to select a strategy for continuing the conversation. Using the strategy, students will lead their own conversation, collect data, or record ideas presented, and then reflect on their experience. They will report back to the class their findings.

Materials

- Smart board/Projector
 - Internet Access
 - Handout: Action Plan – Choice Board
-

Procedure

1. Reflection: Preview/Hook Activity/Do Now:

Think about yesterday’s Constitutional Conversation and the inquiry question. In your notebook, describe what you experienced during the conversation. What ideas did you agree with? Which ideas challenged your thinking? Did you change your mind? Were your ideas supported by what others said? What do you think are the key issues that need to be considered when answering the inquiry question?

2. Share:

Turn to your neighbor. Exchange journals/notebooks/written reflections. Read your partner’s written response carefully two times: once for your head to understand what your partner was thinking; and once for your heart to understand how your partner was feeling. Give your partner one sentence of written feedback on their paper. You can tell them what you like about their reflection. You can tell them how their ideas connect with something you may have experienced. Or you can tell them any new ideas you have as a result of reading their response. Be prepared to share your written feedback with your partner and the class.

3. Whole Class Share:

The teacher can call on individual students to share what they wrote for their response or the feedback they gave to their partner. At this point, all students should have received some feedback from a partner and the teacher can call on individuals to share out with the class and practice their public speaking skills. After three to five students have shared, ask the class, “How can we extend the conversation we started in class yesterday outside of our classroom? How can we share what we learned from one another with other people? How can keep the conversation going?”

4. Teacher Introduction of Today’s Focus:

In today’s class, we will explore different ways to extend the conversation outside of our classroom. Students will generate their own ideas as the class creates a choice board of action plans. Students will choose a plan and complete the activity. They will report back to the class on their experiences.

5. Small Group Work:

In small groups of 3 – 4 students, examine the options posted on the choice board. Discuss the advantages and challenges of each option. Then work together to create your own option. Be prepared to explain the advantages and challenges of your plan.

6. Small Group Share:

A representative from each small group will describe their plan for how to extend the conversation outside of the classroom.

7. Exit Ticket:

Action Plan – Students will choose a plan from those proposed during class and describe why.

Extending the Conversation Outside the Classroom: Action Plan Choice Board

DIRECTIONS: Examine the action plan options below. In your small group, discuss the advantages and challenges for each option. As a group, create another action plan in the blank space.

<p style="text-align: center;">TWEET IT OUT</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a Tweet that summarizes your position on the topic. Include a link to an article that supports your position. 2. Try to get at least 3 people to respond to your Tweet. 3. Retweet supporting evidence such as a newspaper article or NCC Blog post that connects to the original Tweet. 4. Tell your why or connect your Tweet to the U.S. Constitution. 	<p style="text-align: center;">LUNCH TABLE TALK</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Invite students who are not in our class to sit with you during lunch. 2. Introduce the topic discussed. 3. Ask at least 3 students to share their thoughts and ideas on the topic. 4. Model listening and discussion skills. 5. Document the talk: video/picture and notes. 6. Write a reflection on the talk. 	<p style="text-align: center;">DINNER TABLE TALK</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Invite your family members to sit down to dinner together and discuss the topic from today's class. 2. Summarize the arguments presented in class. 3. Ask your family members what they think. 4. Document the talk: video/picture and notes 5. Model listening and discussion skills. 6. Write a reflection on the talk.
<p style="text-align: center;">CREATE A PODCAST</p> <p>Create a 5-minute podcast about the conversation we had in class.</p> <p>Introduce the topic. Summarize different perspectives and arguments. Share your podcast with at least 3 other people. Ask them to comment on your podcast.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">WRITE-IN HERE</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">WRITE AN EDITORIAL</p> <p>Write an editorial in which you introduce the topic discussed in class. Summarize different perspectives and arguments. Take a position and support your argument with evidence. Email the editorial to at least 3 news outlets.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">MAKE A VIDEO</p> <p>Create a short video that summarizes the topic and arguments from the class discussion. The video could be a Vine or YouTube clip. Share the video with at least 3 other people. Ask them to comment on the video.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">CREATE A TOWN HALL POSTER</p> <p>Using the National Constitution Center's Town Hall Poster as a model, create a poster that introduces the topic and arguments posed in class. Summarize the evidence for different perspectives. Use post-its and ask others to post their ideas.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">CREATE A SURVEY</p> <p>Introduce the topic discussed in class. Summarize arguments and evidence for different perspectives. Create survey questions that allow participants to share their ideas. Share the survey with at least 10 people. Analyze their responses.</p>

ASSIGNMENT: Circle the action plan you will complete. Be prepared to share your experience with the class in a 3- to 5-minute presentation. Describe how you extended the conversation beyond the classroom and how others responded.

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