

Teacher Resources: Strategies for Discussing Sensitive Topics

This is a collection of teacher resources that may be helpful for supporting discussion about social justice issues. This list was compiled by the ***Strengthening Data Literacy across the Curriculum***, a project at EDC in collaboration with the California Polytechnic State University and the Concord Consortium, funded by the National Science Foundation. These resources are not meant to be a comprehensive guide toward addressing social justice topics in the classroom, but are meant to provide a selection that may be helpful.

The first four resources share strategies for facilitating challenging conversations in the classroom in general. The next four resources share strategies for responding to and facilitating student conversations involving biased remarks, particularly on the topics of immigration and race. A final category of resources provides information to support teaching about controversial topics.

For facilitating challenging conversations in general

1. [Establishing Classroom Ground Rules](#)

Washington University in St. Louis, 2009

This short resource offers sample ground rules that can be adapted for different classroom contexts to promote an environment of inclusion and respect. The article also includes a link with additional suggestions for [Facilitating Challenging Conversations in the Classroom](#).

2. [Fostering Civil Discourse: A Guide for Classroom Conversations](#)

Facing History and Ourselves, n.d.

This 16-page guide offers ideas and tools that are designed to help teachers prepare their classroom and students to practice civil discourse.

3. [Let's Talk! Facilitating Critical Conversations with Students](#)

Teaching Tolerance, n.d.

This 44-page resource offers classroom-ready strategies teachers can use to plan discussions and to facilitate critical conversations with students.

4. [Making the Most of "Hot Moments" in the Classroom](#)

University of Michigan, n.d.

This two-page handout offers guidance on how to handle sudden eruptions of tension or conflict in the classroom and how to use it as an opportunity to advance student learning.

For facilitating conversations involving race and immigration

5. [Four Ways to Facilitate Teaching About Immigration](#)

ProQuest, 2017

This brief resource discusses ways to introduce the topics of immigration in the classroom.

6. [Speak Up At School: How to Respond to Everyday Prejudice, Bias and Stereotypes](#)

Teaching Tolerance, 2018

This 31-page educator's guide offers advice about how to respond to biased remarks made by students or other adults and gives guidance for helping students learn to speak up as well.

7. [Race Talk: Engaging Young People in Conversations about Race and Racism](#)

Anti-Defamation League, n.d.

This brief article offers 9 tips for teachers on how to facilitate conversations about race and racism in the classroom. It also includes a [glossary](#) of terms related to race, racism, and bias.

8. [Teaching Race: Pedagogy and Practice](#)

Vanderbilt University, 2019

This guide, targeted to higher education faculty, summarizes some of the common challenges instructors may encounter when teaching racial justice and offers broad pedagogical principles and possible strategies for implementing these principles in the classroom.

For teaching about controversial topics

9. [Teaching about Controversial Issues: A Resource Guide](#)

The Choices Program, Brown University, 2019

This guide provides educators with a set of resource links to support learning and teaching about controversial issues. Resources offer help in understanding the rationale for teaching controversial issues, creating guidelines and preparing students for discussions, facilitating conversations, and gaining support from multiple stakeholders for such learning.

10. [A Pathway to Racial Literacy: Using the LETS ACT Framework to Teach Controversial Issues](#)

LaGarrett J. King, Amanda E. Vickery, Genevieve Caffrey in *Social Education*
(November/December 2018)

This short article provides a teaching framework to support teachers and students in exploring race and other controversial issues.