



Activity World Café Guidelines

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

Investigation.....

Follow the instructions in Climate Change: A Wisconsin Activity Guide for the Community Conversation. But substitute the following investigation procedures and the attached handout for those related to the Revolving Conversation option.

1) Before starting the conversation, remind students of what dialogue is and how this exercise will give them all a chance to practice dialogue and active listening. Let them know you expect them all to take part both in the talking and the listening. If you haven't already done so, hand out the After-the-Conversation Worksheet.

2) Have the participants start by sitting in the chairs surrounding a number of small tables – there should be about 4-6 people at each table and on top of each table should be a large sheet of flip chart or other paper, along with markers or crayons. Distribute the handout on World Café.

3) Introduce the meeting topic, questions, and procedure. Have each table identify a table host. The description of the table host and other duties is in the handout. Make sure everyone understands what they are to do.

4) Ring a bell or chime to have the tables start their conversations. After a suitable time period, ring the bell again to have the students (except the table hosts) move to a different table. Remind them of the instructions and questions and let them continue the conversation. Repeat as often as your available time allows. For the last round, have the students return to their home tables and share what they heard as they moved around the room.

5) Lead a discussion of the entire group, asking probing questions such as what did they learn, did they hear anything that surprised them, were there any common themes that emerged?



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You will be having a special kind of community conversation about climate change using a meeting technique called “World Café”. In the World Café, simultaneous small conversations discuss the topic, but by periodic reshuffling of the participants in each small group, the conversations become part of a web, linking the multiple small conversations into one larger one.

The World Café evolved out of a two-day dialogue in 1995 among a global, interdisciplinary group known as the Intellectual Capital Pioneers. As they reflected on the success of their dialogue, they examined what contributed to its quality and designed the elements of the World Café out of what they learned.

The World Café is designed to:

- Give the participants an opportunity to foster discussion among all the people in the room and incorporate a range of views and perspectives into a discussion about important questions.
- Remove the formal atmosphere that often accompanies big group meetings or conversations, thus inspiring creativity and helping people feel comfortable joining the conversations and contributing to dialogue instead of confrontation. Give everyone in the room a chance to talk with others.
- Combine the conversation characteristics of a few people talking with each other with the need for a larger number of people to be part of the conversation.

This meeting technique is not designed specifically to make decisions. Instead it might be used to foster conversation, discover multiple perspectives, surface commonality, and build respect among a group for each person’s perspective. In other words, it can provide a better sense of what everyone thinks and all the perspectives BEFORE a group tries to decide what to do.

How it works

The room is set up with small tables, each of which can seat about four to six people. On each table is a large sheet of paper and crayons or markers to record thoughts, conversations, and insights. Tables can have table cloths, centerpieces, snacks and beverages, etc. to create the comfort of a café atmosphere. Provide just enough tables and chairs for all expected participants.

Each table will need a table host – someone who stays at the table throughout the entire session. The table host’s job is to remind the group what questions(s) are being discussed, to help keep the conversation flowing, and to carry forward the table’s discussion from one round to another. The host should also be part of the discussion and add his/her own perspectives. (The moderator can identify table hosts ahead and assign one per table or find a volunteer at each table once all participants are seated.)

In World Café discussions are held in multiple rounds, forming a series of conversations. When the moderator rings a bell, all participants except the table hosts randomly move to new tables, mixing up the combination of people with each round of discussion. All tables discuss the same questions at the same time.

The length of each round depends upon the total available time and the nature of the questions. Ideally the participants will return to their “home” table – the one where they started – to share what they heard throughout the rounds, to see what has been added to the notes at their home table, and to reflect on the full-room conversation.

With each round, the participants can discuss a new question that builds on the previous one or can continue on the previous conversation and topic.

handout

Participants add their own perspectives, but also those that they heard in the previous rounds at other tables, bringing along their newly-gained knowledge.

Moderator Instructions

Before the meeting starts, identify compelling questions to explore the topic. If using a series of questions, each should build upon the previous one or explore different aspects of the topic. The questions should help the participants see the issue from each other's eyes. Some potential questions to explore climate change might be:

- What do you already know about climate change? What don't you know that you need/want to know?
- How might climate change impact you directly? What concerns or worries do you have related to climate change? What hopes do you have?
- What, if anything, do you think should be done to address climate change? What do you think you will do – are there steps you will take?

Once participants are seated, introduce the questions(s) to be discussed and give meeting instructions. Help tables identify table hosts (if not already done), answer any procedural questions, and then ring a bell to start the conversation. Ring the bell again to end each round and signal the participants to move to a new table, reminding them what question they will be discussing next.

At the end of the last round, host a full-group discussion, exploring what people learned – What was new or surprising? What recurring themes did they hear? What divergent thoughts were expressed? A potential wrap-up question might be "if this room had only one voice, what would it be saying?"

