INCLUSION TAKES A COMMUNITY

Community Conversation Toolkit

Prepared for the Inclusionary Practices Professional Development Project by Roots of Inclusion, a member organization of the Family Engagement Collaborative

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Introduction

Young people achieve their best in inclusive schools where they can participate fully, bringing the complex set of abilities, experiences, cultural values, and languages that make them who they are. In inclusive schools, young people not only develop individual skills and achievements but also learn from others who bring abilities, perspectives, and experiences that are different from their own.

Building inclusive schools does not fall to educators alone: It takes a community of people who know and care about young people and what they need to thrive in school and in life. Families are especially essential partners in this work. They bring a wealth of information and assets that can support the inclusion and success of their children.

Making our schools more inclusive for students of all abilities, races, cultures, and linguistic backgrounds will require many diverse community members to work together. The first step is building a shared understanding of inclusionary practices and a shared ownership for change.

The Inclusionary Practices Professional Development Project and Family Engagement Collaborative

Research tells us that when children with and without disabilities are included in our schools and classrooms, everyone learns more. Despite the evidence, inclusion in school settings remains low. Washington is one of the least inclusive states, ranking 44 out of 50.[1] Only 57 percent of students who receive special education services in Washington public schools are included in general education settings for most of the school day.

To address this concern, the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) established the Inclusionary Practices Professional Development Project (IPP) in the 2019–20 school year. Through the multi-year project, OSPI partners with organizations and local education agencies across the state to support efforts to make schools more inclusive.

One focus of the IPP is family and community engagement. Family-school partnerships are critical for inclusive schools: Families bring valuable information and experiences that help schools center students with disabilities and their families, especially students of color and groups who have traditionally been denied a voice in decision-making. When diverse families, community members, and educators come together to share their perspectives and learn from each other, communities can begin to transform their schools to be more inclusive.

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[1] Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. (2019). Special education federal child count.

In July 2020, the IPP established the Family Engagement Collaborative to provide additional support and guidance on family and community engagement. Organized by Partnerships for Action Voices for Empowerment (PAVE), the collaborative includes Open Doors for Multicultural Families, Roots of Inclusion, and Education Northwest.

> **"**
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> *For inclusion to be successful, personnel from paraeducators to district superintendents, and families, need to know what inclusion is and how their role is expected to support an inclusive learning environment."*
>
> **– OSPI IPP**

Defining Inclusion

When we talk about inclusion in our schools, we often search for a common definition. However, inclusion means different things to different people and communities. That is why it is critical that communities come together to build a shared understanding of what they want inclusion to look like, sound like, and feel like in their schools.

While building a shared definition, communities should hold true to four key elements of inclusion:

- See every student as competent, capable, and a valued learner in general education classrooms

- Build and uphold an equitable and inclusive culture across the entire school and community

- Ensure meaningful access to, and involvement in, academic and social opportunities with additional support as needed

- Welcome every student and family in all aspects of school life so they feel a deep sense of belonging

OSPI and IPP use the definition of inclusion that appears below. We welcome you to use this definition as a starting point for thinking about inclusion in your own community.

Inclusion is the belief that all students have a right to meaningfully participate in the general education setting, both academically and socially. Inclusion is realized when all students, regardless of their designation to receive special education services, are provided with targeted services, supports, and accommodations; allowing them to learn in the general education classroom, interact with peers, and engage the core curriculum. Inclusive instruction rebukes the problematic perspective that students receiving special education services need to 'fit in' or 'earn their way' into general education classes. The belief that general education instruction is not malleable and that students should be making adaptations to be included in the general education setting has contributed to the continuation of two parallel systems of education in which students receiving special education services are marginalized and devalued because of their environmental segregation.

Roots of Inclusion developed this toolkit for the IPP to give families, educators, and community leaders a set of tools to plan and hold a Community Conversation on inclusion. The goal of the conversation is to build a shared understanding of the importance of inclusive practices and systemic change that addresses the needs of the whole school community.

What Is a Community Conversation?

A Community Conversation[2] is an event that brings diverse community members together to collectively listen, learn, and brainstorm strategies and resources that can address an adaptive challenge. An adaptive challenge is one that involves changing the values, beliefs, and actions of people who are part of a complex system. Adaptive challenges differ from technical challenges, which have clear answers. Think of a technical challenge as something an expert can jump in and solve, like if a school website isn't working. By contrast, adaptive challenges require leaders to work with and learn from the various people involved in the system. Building inclusive schools is an adaptive challenge because it requires coordination from many people involved in school systems, including administrators, teachers, families, and community members.

Community Conversations bring together natural community partners: members of the community who are involved in the systems that impact young people. This might include families, educators, business owners, representatives of community-based organizations, staff members of state and local agencies, and other community members.

Community Conversations typically last two hours. They are a fun, engaging way to identify new opportunities and partners for creating welcoming and inclusive schools and communities.

The primary objectives of a Community Conversation are to:

1. **Identify natural community partners:** Engaging and involving people who have an interest in and are most impacted by an issue is essential to identify what needs to be done differently.

2. **Engage the community:** Bringing together diverse people, organizations, and community partners provides an opportunity to build new relationships and strengthen discussions.

3. **Build a shared understanding of inclusion:** To collaborate effectively and efficiently, community members need to understand the work ahead.

4. **Find new partners:** Sharing information about inclusionary practices work in your school and community creates opportunities and connections.

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[2] The Community Conversation model is based on a project of the Natural Supports Project, the University of Wisconsin-Madison Waisman Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, and Tennessee Works, a collaboration supported by the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities.

5. **Encourage further dialogue and develop opportunities for collaboration:** Creating pathways for people to contribute and building capacity to work together differently allows inclusion to be more than a project—it becomes a cultural shift.

Why Engage Families and Communities?

Families and communities hold great wisdom, cultural strengths, connections, and resources. Their input and involvement should inform decision-making and build the relationships and understanding needed for inclusion to be successful. Engaging families and community members will help identify:

- People's aspirations for inclusive practices

- People's concerns about inclusive practices

- How people think and talk about inclusion in relation to the community

- What changes are needed

- What people believe can be done and who they can trust to take action

What Is in This Toolkit?

This toolkit is a practical guide for families, educators, and community leaders who want to improve inclusive practices in their schools. It describes the essential components of a Community Conversation and includes detailed planning tools and resources for both in person and virtual events, including:

- Planning tool (timeline, material checklist, venue checklist)

- Accessibility checklist

- Language access resources

- Tips for working effectively with interpreters

- System mapping tool

- Sample invitation

- Event protocol with annotated agenda (in-person and virtual options)

- Group agreements table tent printable template

- Sign-in sheet

- Table host guidelines

- Slide deck

- Harvest tool

- Ticket out the door

- Evaluation tool

- Reflection on your Community Conversation

How Will Input From Community Conversations Be Used?

Community Conversations are designed to engage families, educators, school leaders, and community members; invite new people into the conversation; and build the relationships necessary for inclusive practices to flourish. Feedback and ideas discussed in Community Conversations help local education agencies and their communities identify what actions to take and which issues to consider as they work toward more inclusive schools.

Foundations of a Community Conversation

The goal of Community Conversations is to help solve the adaptive challenge of making our schools more inclusive. That means Community Conversations need to move communities toward changing the values, beliefs, and actions of people who are part of the complex education system. To do this effectively, it is important to understand several foundational elements that the Community Conversation was built on. These are key ideas and approaches that help communities think about adaptive challenges and work together to make lasting change.

Before you host your own Community Conversation, spend time learning about these four foundational elements:

- Understanding systems
- Engaging natural community partners
- Creating a space of belonging
- Considering access and inclusion

Understanding Systems

Education is a complex social system that involves many people and organizations. Understanding the systems in our schools and communities, and how to effect change in those systems, is essential for moving toward equity, access, and inclusion.

Before hosting a Community Conversation or addressing adaptive challenges, we want to think about three parts of a system: people, relationships, and rules and structures.

- People exist in systems. They are impacted by systems and also affect how systems function.
- Relationships in a system help maintain existing behaviors, or the status quo. By understanding what relationships currently exist, we can begin to consider what relationships need to be created or reinforced to change behaviors to be more equitable and inclusive.
- Rules and structures bind the system to its current outcomes. When we understand the existing rules and structures, we can modify them to result in more equitable outcomes.

In every system, these parts align to produce certain outcomes. Understanding each part of the system we want to change will help ensure that the changes we make are equitable, include all the people who will be impacted, and will last for a long time.

> **Watch "The Systems Mapping Training Module"** for more guidance on taking a system approach to a problem and thinking about schools and communities as systems: https://www.fecinclusion.org/facilitator-video-modules.html

Engaging Natural Community Partners

Communities are made up of many interconnected systems, some small and some large. These include families, neighborhoods, organizations, classrooms, schools, and local education agencies. Each system is made up of natural community partners: people who have an interest in or are impacted by an issue in the system.

The systems within communities are diverse, as are the people, relationships, structures, and rules in each one. Given this diversity, building a system where each person feels included requires intentional engagement and conversation. This means that schools that commit to inclusion must listen to and work with the natural community partners involved in the systems that impact young people. All young people benefit when the natural community partners focus on shared goals and work together in a coordinated and responsive way.

NATURAL COMMUNITY PARTNERS IMPACT POSITIVE STUDENT OUTCOMES

Healthy relationships with:

- Peers
- Adults
- Parents/caregivers

School and life success

- Engaged and supported socially, emotionally, and academically
- Positive self-identity
- High expectations for every young person

Active community involvement

- Interconnected systems (no gaps)
- Coordinated and responsive
- Shared responsibility and ownership
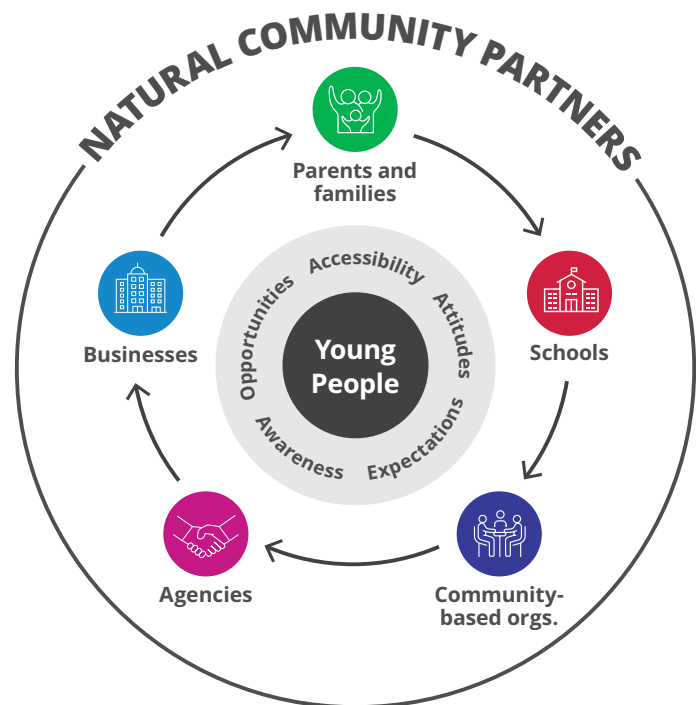
Image description: A graphic representation of the natural community partners that intersect with the lives of young people and impact positive student outcomes. The partners include parents and families, schools, community-based organizations, agencies, and businesses.

Creating a Space of Belonging

When communities gather to solve a problem, no matter the size or scope, it is important to create an accessible and inclusive environment where people can build relationships and work better together. Any time people with different perspectives come together, they can experience conflict or stress, even when they agree on a shared goal. Building an environment where people feel a sense of belonging can decrease stress and make it easier for everyone to participate fully.

We can create a space of belonging using a process modeled on the Gracious Space approach, developed by the Center for Ethical Leadership. Gracious Space is a highly effective way to foster authentic dialogue and engage a diverse group in deep listening and shared learning in times of complexity and change. The Center for Ethical Leadership defines Gracious Space as "a spirit and a setting where we invite the stranger and embrace learning in public."[3]

Shifting to inclusive schools and communities demands that we work together in different ways. Using Gracious Space in a Community Conversation centers relationship building and ensures we value:

- **Building trust.** We each have something to learn from one another. No two individuals have the same experiences or life story. Taking time to listen to and learn from others allows us to build trust as we tackle complicated challenges.

- **Having a space to listen.** In a space of belonging, we invite people to listen deeply, ask questions, and learn from one another. This challenges us to consider other perspectives and to improve our ability to empathize and understand the complexities of a problem.

- **Promoting the common good.** When we hear perspectives other than our own, we better understand the status quo that upholds the system and outcomes that we seek to change. Without diverse perspectives, we are likely to address a problem with gaps in our understanding. The collective wisdom of diverse people with different perspectives will lead to a better solution anchored in equity and fairness.

We create a Gracious Space that allows us to build trust and learn from one another when we engage in conversations that highlight inquiry, reflection, and listening. To foster these kinds of conversations, the Community Conversation uses three discussion questions. Each question was designed to be clean and open, meaning it does not influence or mislead participants and allows for multiple different responses. The resulting dialogue provides opportunities for participants to listen deeply to one another and build trust in a group.

Watch the "Introducing Gracious Space" training module for an overview of Gracious Space and how the concepts have been incorporated throughout this toolkit: **https://www. fecinclusion.org/facilitator-video-modules.html**

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[3] Center for Ethical Leadership. (n.d.) Gracious space. **http://www.ethicalleadership.org/gracious-space.html**

- Hughes, P. M., & Grace, B. (2010). Gracious space: A practical guide for working better together.

- The Center for Ethical Leadership: **https://www.ethicalleadership.org/**

Considering Access and Inclusion

Each choice made while planning a Community Conversation matters for the event to be accessible, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of the community.

The most important initial choice is who will be on the planning team. Identify who in the community is not typically heard from. Use the planning of the event as an opportunity to build new relationships and partnerships. Planning teams are more likely to be aware of possible barriers to meaningful engagement and participation if they include individuals who hold relationships with the community members they want to engage.

Creating spaces that are welcoming, accessible, and offer all participants a sense of belonging is critical for the Community Conversation. The accessibility checklist (appendix 2) and language access resources (appendix 3) provide detailed considerations for physical space, interpretation, translation, accommodations, and support needed for all participants to meaningfully participate.

Watch the "Accessible and Inclusive Events and Trainings" training module to consider which aspects of accessibility and inclusion will be help ensure that all members of the community feel welcome at your Community Conversation: **https://www.fecinclusion.org/ facilitator-video-modules.html**

Community Conversation Planning Guide

Roles and Responsibilities

Every Community Conversation has four main roles: planning team, facilitator, table host, and participant.

PLANNING TEAM

A Community Conversation provides an opportunity for a team of diverse individuals to work together, each bringing knowledge, skills, and resources to plan an accessible, engaging, and asset-focused event. The planning team organizes the meeting, finds the venue, and invites a group of people to share their values, experiences, and ideas. The planning team also identifies table hosts, supports the harvest of ideas, and follows up with event participants.

Before the event, the planning team will also map the system in their school, district, or community. This will provide insight into who in the community is impacted by inclusionary practices, as well as the relationships that currently exist in the system and those that need to be created. System mapping will help the team ensure that the people who need to be part of the work to advance inclusive practices are included in the conversation.

FACILITATOR

The facilitator runs the event. They remain neutral and refrain from sharing their personal views. The facilitator welcomes attendees, explains the process, keeps track of time, moves the dialogue along, and facilitates the harvest at the end of the event. During the harvest, the facilitator may record all the ideas shared, or someone else can be asked to take notes. The facilitator can be a member of the planning team.

TIP FOR FACILITATING

Think of facilitating as simply guiding participants through a process. You can build trust and help participants feel safe enough to learn together and engage honestly by:

- Remaining neutral
- Orienting your body and attention toward the person who is speaking
- Acknowledging participants so they know they have been heard
- Asking clarifying questions
- Summarizing key points heard
- Reframing issues as needed

TABLE HOST

The table hosts stay at a table to facilitate small group discussions. They are responsible for taking notes on the conversation, encouraging everyone to share, and keeping the conversation on topic and focused on building relationships and solutions.

PARTICIPANT

Participants are at a Community Conversation to share their knowledge, experience, lived reality, and opinions. Participants should be willing to follow community agreements set by the facilitators and to engage in the process.

Identifying Who to Invite

Community Conversations are a powerful way to get to know different parts of your community and learn from people you usually don't hear from. System mapping is a process that can help you identify different community partners to invite.

By thinking about your community as a system and exploring that system and the different systems that intersect with it, you will identify more and different people to engage. System mapping will also help you examine the rules, structures, and relationships that need to be established or changed to support inclusion. At its core, system mapping helps you to identify the resources and relationships that are necessary for meaningful inclusion to take root and flourish. Use the System Mapping Tool (appendix 5) to identify the key voices to include in your Community Conversation.

After you identify individuals and organizations you want to invite, think about the individuals or groups who could help you reach those people. Ask yourself, "Who knows the organizations or people we want to invite?"

It is important to extend personal invitations to people and organizations who may not readily see their connection to inclusive practices. As individuals commit to attending, revisit your System Mapping Tool to see which voices are still missing. Make every effort to hear from people in the community who you don't typically hear from.

A sample invitation appears in appendix 6. If you co-host your Community Conversation with other key partners, try to include their logos on the invitation. Consider using an electronic invitation platform to track confirmed attendees.

Choosing a Date, Time, and Venue

One of the most important factors in planning the Community Conversation is choosing a date and time that works for the people you want to attend. That may be an evening or a weekend. Be sure to choose a date that does not conflict with any cultural holidays or other events. Most local education agencies and schools have calendars you can check for important holidays and events.

OSPI Common Religious and U.S. Public Holiday Calendars

Community Conversations are more engaging when the location and setup are inviting, accessible, and functional. Venues do not need to be expensive; libraries and community centers are often free or charge a reasonable rate. When choosing a space, consider the following factors:

- Is the location well known in the community?
- Does the space feel safe and comfortable for participants?
- Is it near public transportation?
- Is the space accessible?
- Does the space allow you to offer child care?

TIPS FOR EXPANDING ATTENDANCE

- Invite people personally and encourage others on the planning team to do the same
- Contact people on your email lists or via social media
- Set clear expectations in the invitation
- Ask if people prefer to be contacted through email or text for follow-up communication
- Send a reminder email or text to attendees one week before and then again one day before
- When possible, try to invite people at least six weeks before the event

Choosing a Facilitator

A Community Conversation facilitator does not need to be an expert on inclusion. They are there to guide the conversation, ensure all voices are heard, honor the diversity of perspectives, and capture what is shared. Choose someone who is comfortable presenting and has experience guiding large group conversations.

Choosing Table Hosts

As your list of confirmed attendees grows, think about who you could ask to be a table host. Prioritize people who hold relationships in the community and who may have experience guiding small group conversations.

Setting up the Space

GREETING TABLE

Help every participant feel included as they arrive by greeting them with a personal welcome, having a sign-in sheet, and introducing them to other participants in the room.

TABLE SIZE

Most venues come with tables and chairs. Ideally the tables will be round, but rectangular tables work, too. Aim to have four to six people per table (no more than eight). The goal is to have enough people for a meaningful discussion, but not so many that everyone does not have time to share or feel comfortable speaking.

LAYOUT

Tables and chairs should have enough space between them so that people can move around easily, including people who use mobility devices. Participants should be able to easily access food and restrooms. They should also be able to hear individuals at their table without being too distracted by conversations at neighboring tables. You can use the accessibility checklist (appendix 2) to set up your space.

TIP

Making your event accessible will benefit everyone and minimize the need for special accommodations. By planning for accessibility, you make sure everyone:

- Feels welcome

- Can get to and navigate within the venue to fully engage in the event

- Can use equipment and software, if holding a virtual event

DECORATING

Consider bringing a couple of plants from home to add some greenery to the space. Use chart paper on tables and scatter colorful Post-it notes and markers so that people can draw and take notes. Keep things simple at the tables so people have space to write things down, draw pictures, and eat snacks.

FOOD

When you gather people together, you should always have food. When deciding what to provide, consider the time of day, how many people are coming, what matters to families in your community, and whether your venue has any limitations around food. You can provide snacks, baked goods and beverages, or a simple meal. Consider providing options for people with food intolerances and allergies. Be sure food and beverages are set up before people begin to arrive.

CHILD CARE

Some people may only be able to participate in the Community Conversation if they can bring their children. Offering child care and/or allowing participants to have their children with them will make the event more inclusive. You may be able to work with partners in your community to offer child care. The accessibility checklist (appendix 2) provides additional details.

Community Conversation Facilitator Guide

Effective facilitation is essential to the success of a Community Conversation. A facilitator frames the importance of the event, guides participants through the process, and harvests the ideas, connections, and themes.

The facilitator should remain neutral and listen to understand participants' points of view. When participants and table hosts share out, the facilitator will reflect back clearly what they said so that participants know they were heard. Reflecting what was shared back to the group helps identify patterns and insights from the conversation. When a facilitator shows they are listening and people feel heard, they build trust.

Event Protocol and Agenda

An event protocol is the road map for the Community Conversation. The agenda gives participants a clear understanding of how the conversation will go and what to expect. To respect everyone's time, a Community Conversation should always begin and end on time.

The Event Protocol with Annotated Agenda appears in appendix 7. Ideally, Community Conversations should be held in person to strengthen connections and relationships. If in-person gatherings are not possible, use the Virtual Event Protocol and Agenda (appendix 8).

Group Agreements

Group agreements are a useful tool to make sure participants have a common understanding of how interactions will take place during the Community Conversation. Group agreements will help people focus on building relationships, listening, and learning from other perspectives. They also give the facilitator something to refer back to in case any conflict arises.

At the beginning of the event, give participants time to review the agreements and ask the group to accept them. You can start by proposing the set of agreements below, which are also available as table tents in appendix 9. Ask everyone to follow the group agreements during your time together.
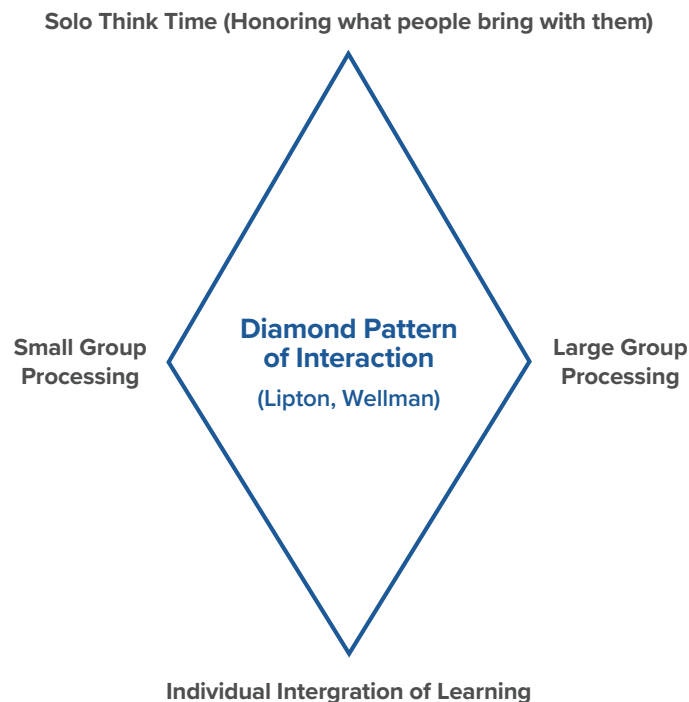
SUGGESTED GROUP AGREEMENTS

1. Be inclusive, allowing everyone to share.

2. Share from your own perspective using "I" statements.

3. Listen to build understanding and learn from others.

4. Practice self-care. Attend to your personal needs.

5. Respect confidentiality. Personal information that is shared should remain in the meeting room.

6. Enjoy the time together!

Diamond Pattern of Interaction

The Community Conversation offers opportunities to interact and engage in multiple ways, which makes participation accessible to people. The facilitator w ill guide participants through a process that includes individual reflection, small and large group discussions, and integration of learning. This process is modeled after the Diamond Pattern of Interaction, "a sequence of individual work, followed by structured sharing, ending with an opportunity for individual integration of new ideas."[4] By using this process, participants have the opportunity to share their ideas and reflections verbally, in writing, and through drawing.

Solo Think Time (Honoring what people bring with them)

Small Group Processing

Diamond Pattern of Interaction
(Lipton, Wellman)

Large Group Processing

Individual Intergration of Learning

Image description: A graphic representation of the Diamond Pattern of Interaction by Lipton and Wellman. The interactions include solo think time, small group processing, large group processing, and individual integration of learning.

Clean and Open Discussion Questions

Clean and open questions are not leading, meaning they do not reflect the opinions of the planning team. They cannot be answered by a simple "yes" or "no." Instead, they invite people to think and reflect on their answers, allowing multiple perspectives to be shared. Clean and open questions allow participants to see potential in the system rather than focusing on the problems.

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[4] Wellman, B. & Lipton, L. (2017). Data-driven dialogue: A facilitator's guide to collaborative inquiry. MiraVia, LLC.

Below are clean and open questions you can use for your Community Conversation. One is for Gracious Space and the others are for group discussions. These questions were intentionally designed to provide opportunities for learning rather than simply gathering information. They can help you develop a broader, more comprehensive understanding of what is important to your community and how to achieve more equitable outcomes.

GRACIOUS SPACE QUESTION

- What wisdom do you bring to this conversation?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What does inclusion and belonging look like, sound like, and feel like to you?

- What relationships need to be developed and strengthened so that students can thrive as learners, future employees, and community members?

- As we move through this work together, what are we missing?

SLIDE DECK

The Community Conversation slide deck is included in appendix 11. Additional slides can be added to fit the event and community as appropriate. Keep in mind that adding slides will add time to the event.

HARVESTING, EVALUATION, AND CLOSING

During the last portion of the event, the facilitator will reflect on what was heard and elevate key ideas and concerns. This is called harvesting. Facilitators can begin the harvest by making connections with statements like:

- "It sounds like there was a lot of great discussion. Let's think about next steps we can take as a community."

- "What did you hear today that resonates with you?"

- "What ideas did you hear that we can work together and take action on?"

- As ideas and next steps are discussed, make sure the facilitator or another person takes notes.

The facilitator is also responsible for bringing the conversation to a close at the end of the harvest. Facilitators should ask participants to fill out a Community Conversation "Ticket Out the Door" form (appendix 13). Let participants know that within two to three weeks they will receive a follow-up communication with a summary of themes and next steps. Ask participants to leave all notes, drawings, and evaluation forms on the table. Facilitators and members of the planning team should collect those items from each table to further harvest ideas from the event.

Consider taking pictures of any drawings participants make. When you send a follow-up communication summarizing the event, you can include some pictures to illustrate what ideas participants shared.

Image description: A sample drawing from The Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Conference, September 2018. The drawing depicts a school building listing the elements of an inclusive school community including student centered, engaging and informing, and offering different ways to communicate with families.
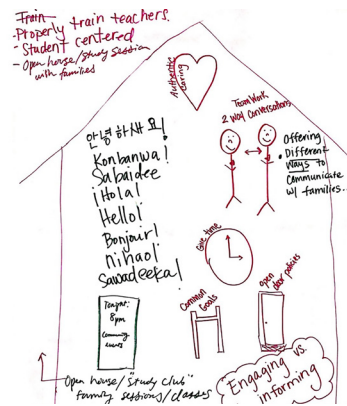
After the Community Conversation

Community Conversations can build excitement around inclusion and the importance of inclusive practices to the community. Some people will feel excited and ready to take action, while others may feel overwhelmed about the work that lies ahead. After the event, bring the planning team back together to review all the notes and drawings and reflect on what was shared. Use the Harvest Tool (appendix 12) to identify action steps, strategies, partners, and other items needed to act on ideas from the conversation.

The Harvest Tool will also help to organize what to share in follow-up communication. The event summary should include ideas and information harvested from the conversations as well as the identified next steps. Share the summary with all participants, people who were interested but unable to attend, school and district leaders, the school board, parks and recreation departments, city council, and all other groups who would be interested in the community's perspective on inclusion. Feel free to include pictures of drawings or quotes from the event. You want to show all the great work that happened at your Community Conversation!

The planning team should also evaluate how the event went. Reflect on the planning process and the event itself using the "Reflection on Your Community Conversation" form (appendix 14).

Taking Action

Taking action on issues identified in the Community Conversation shows families and community members that their voices were heard and that their feedback matters. Aim to act on two or three ideas or next steps using strategies and partners outlined in the Harvest Tool.

Don't be surprised if people want to come together again. Community Conversations should continue. Once you begin to build relationships, you want to nurture and strengthen them. We are stronger when our families, schools, and community work together!

Final Thoughts

Changing systems to be equitable, accessible, and inclusive is not easy and cannot be done alone. Meaningful and lasting inclusion requires us to understand the people, relationships, rules, and structures within a system that need to change and who needs to be a part of that work. Families bring strong assets, cultural strengths, and connections to our schools and communities. They must be valued as essential partners in the work of inclusion.

The Community Conversation Toolkit is not exhaustive, and every community is at a different place on its inclusion journey. Additional resources that may help you advance this work in your own community appear in the next section.

The most important thing is to take the first step and hold a Community Conversation. We are confident that it will be a rewarding experience for you and everyone who attends. As you begin to build connections with your community, you will find the people and resources needed to make lasting change.

We celebrate your commitment to inclusion and know that many others in your community will appreciate and support your efforts.

Key Terms

The terms below are ideas that are essential to Community Conversations. Some terms have different meanings in different contexts and communities. We are not trying to give a universal definition of any term. Instead, we want to give more context to help you understand why each idea is important for a successful Community Conversation.

Access: intentional design of the space, setting, materials, and events that allows more meaningful engagement of people of diverse backgrounds, abilities, and experiences. Access ensures that people will have what they need to attend and participate in the event.

Adaptive challenge: a challenge that involves changing the values, beliefs, and actions of people who are part of a complex system.

Community Conversation: an event that brings diverse community members together to collectively listen, learn, and brainstorm strategies and resources that can address an adaptive challenge.

Equity: Every family brings strong assets, cultural strengths, and connections to our schools and communities. Equity ensures that families who are impacted by something, but may not have power/influence or typically be engaged, are included in decision-making to determine what would be in their best interest. Equity has a focus on eliminating barriers to engagement, involvement, and participation.

Gracious Space: an approach developed by the Center for Ethical Leadership that allows communities to come together to build trust, relationships, and shared understandings that are needed to enact change.

Inclusion: there is no one consistent definition for inclusion; however, there are four key elements of inclusion that communities should adhere to:

- See every student as competent, capable, and a valued learner in general education classrooms
- Build and uphold an equitable and inclusive culture across the entire school and community
- Ensure meaningful access to, and involvement in, academic and social opportunities with additional support as needed
- Welcome every student and family in all aspects of school life so they feel a deep sense of belonging

Natural community partners: the people, businesses, and organizations that are involved in systems that impact young people and can be convened to work together to support positive youth outcomes.

Systems thinking: a set of habits and practices based in the belief that the parts of a system are best understood in the context of their relationships with each other, and with other systems, rather than in isolation.

Resources

Center for Ethical Leadership. (n.d.) Gracious space. **http://www.ethicalleadership.org/gracious-space.html**

City of Bellevue Washington. (n.d.) Universal design: Best practices for accessibility in trainings, meetings and events. **https://bellevuewa.gov/sites/default/files/media/pdf_document/2020/Universal%20Design%20Booklet.pdf**

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Appendix

Appendix 1. Community Conversation Planning Tool

Planning Timeline

4–5 months before

Organize your planning team and system map.

2–3 months before

Find your venue.

Choose the date and time of your event.

Decide on food, decorating, child care, and discussion questions.

6 weeks before

Invite participants through personal invitations, flyers, posters, press releases, e-invitations, and social media announcements.

2–4 weeks before

Gather all the materials you will need.

1 week before

Visit the venue for a final check. Make sure any technology you plan to use functions and that the planned layout will work in the space.

Day of the event

Give yourself plenty of time to arrive, set up, and solve any glitches that may occur.

1–7 days after

Follow up with participants through email, thanking them for attending.

2–3 weeks after

Bring the planning team together to harvest what was shared at the event.

Send event summary to all participants and other groups who would be interested in the community's perspective on inclusion.

Follow up with any participants who offered to assist with a specific idea or initiative.

Materials Needed

- Poster-sized paper
- Post-it notes
- Markers
- Nametags
- Computer and projector

Venue Planning Checklist

- ☐ Accessibility
- ☐ Equipment and electrical needs
- ☐ Greeting table
- ☐ Child care

Appendix 2. Accessibility Checklist

Creating physical spaces that are welcoming and result in a sense of belonging is an important aspect of the Community Conversation. Every choice matters when it comes to creating an inclusive space.

Planning an In-Person Gathering

When planning a physical gathering, there are many considerations to making people feel welcome and safe. Use the following checklist to guide your planning.

ENSURE THE SPACE IS ACCESSIBLE FOR ALL PEOPLE

☐ Secure a venue that is accessible for people who use mobility devices, including ADA-compliant parking spaces and restrooms.

☐ Ensure everyone has a choice of where they would like to be in the space. All parts of the room and all tables should be accessible for anyone using a mobility device, with ample space between tables and aisles of chairs.

☐ Keep power cords and cables out of the way so people with mobility devices do not need to navigate tripping hazards or barriers.

☐ Make sure the lighting can be adjusted, either dimmed or reduced.

☐ Leave space in the room where people can choose to pace or stand.

☐ Ensure service animals are welcomed in the space.

PLAN FOR INCLUSION

☐ Before setting a date, check a calendar to make sure it does not overlap with any significant cultural holidays.

☐ Schedule breaks to be long enough for all people to meet their needs. Typically, 15 minutes is adequate, but longer breaks may be needed.

☐ Make sure microphones are available and used by all speakers so that everyone can hear what is said.

☐ Advise attendees in advance what accommodations will be provided. Let people know that they can request other accommodations as needed. Allow people to request preferential seating if appropriate for your venue.

- ☐ Partner with your school district to provide interpreters for language access supports.
    - ☐ Share event information with the interpreter in advance, including subject matter and number of participants.
    - ☐ Ask interpreters how they would like to communicate with the presenter.
    - ☐ Arrange seating appropriately for the participants and interpreter.
- ☐ If you are serving food, take dietary restrictions into consideration.

MAKE MATERIALS ACCESSIBLE

- ☐ Use dark text on white backgrounds or white text on dark backgrounds for electronic materials, including PowerPoint presentations and websites.
- ☐ Clearly identify any links in electronic materials.
- ☐ For printed materials, make some copies available in a large font size (22 or larger). Print PowerPoint slides as a full page.
- ☐ Use a sans serif font (like Arial).
- ☐ Make materials available electronically during your event (for example, publish presentations on a website).
- ☐ Add closed captioning to videos.
- ☐ Include visual cues on a printed or electronic agenda.
- ☐ If using nametags, ask participants to include their pronouns (for example, she/her, he/they, they/them).
- ☐ Consider if materials need to be translated to make them accessible to participants. Partner with your school district to make sure you understand the needs of your community and provide accessible materials.

DURING THE EVENT

- ☐ Avoid activities that exclude participants (for example, asking people to stand or to raise their hands).
    - ☐ Consider participation methods that include everyone. For example, have someone walk around with a wireless microphone to allow people to comment or ask questions.
- ☐ Be mindful of people who use a device for communication.
    - ☐ Before the event, ask how these participants would like to signal that they have something to say.
    - ☐ Make the agenda and questions available ahead of time.
    - ☐ Allow ample time for responses.

☐ Use real-time captioning if available.

☐ If you are using interpreters for language access during the event:

    ☐ Make sure presenters allow time for participants to process critical information.

    ☐ Avoid jargon, acronyms, and metaphors.

    ☐ Ask for feedback regarding the accessibility of the event, including from interpreters.

Planning a Virtual Gathering

If you plan an online or virtual event, keep these additional accessibility principles in mind.

ENSURE THE SPACE IS ACCESSIBLE FOR ALL PEOPLE

☐ Evaluate the accessibility features of online platforms. Some things to look for include:

    ☐ Customizable font size in the chat.

    ☐ Allows for use of a screen reader.

    ☐ Platform can be navigated with just the keyboard.

    ☐ Allows for closed captioning (either internally or third party).

    ☐ An interpreter can be visible no matter who is speaking.

☐ Include links to join the meeting in the event invitation.

☐ Send the invitation early enough to plan for accommodations for participants, including captioning.

MAKE MATERIALS ACCESSIBLE FOR A VIRTUAL EVENT

☐ Make sure all documents or videos shared on a screen follow the principles of accessibility.

☐ Distribute slides and other materials in advance.

DURING THE EVENT

☐ Start and end the event on time.

☐ Encourage everyone to use their video when possible.

☐ Model use of pronouns in display name (for example, Jane Smith [they/them]).

☐ Ensure that facilitators use lighting that allows all participants to see them clearly.

☐ Ensure that everyone can hear all participants and speakers. Ask people to mute their microphones when they are not speaking.

☐ Ask participants to state their names before speaking.

- ☐ Explain accessible ways of participating (for example, the "raise hands" feature). Assign someone to monitor the chat.

- ☐ Describe any visuals that were not provided ahead of time.

Note: This accessibility checklist is not intended to be exhaustive. Instead, it provides guidance about how to make events more accessible to a broad group of people. By collaborating with and building relationships with diverse people in your community, you will learn what additional supports are important for making your event accessible and inclusive to everyone.

Find additional resources in this publication from the City of Bellevue, Washington: **Universal Design Booklet.**

Appendix 3. Language Access Resources

> **This resource was adapted from the Washington State Governor's Office of the Education Ombuds document** Communicating With Families With Language Access Needs: Tips for Educators When Using a Qualified Interpreter (Telephonic or In Person)**.**

Overview

Qualified interpreters play an important role in effective communication with and for students and families who either speak a primary language other than English or are deaf or hard of hearing (HOH) and use American Sign Language or another system of visual communication. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, schools and school districts have obligations to provide qualified interpreters for students and families who need them. Understanding and complying with these obligations ensures that events are accessible and inclusive.

Understand Your School District's Process for Accessing Interpreters

Schools and school districts must ensure qualified interpreters are available to help communicate with families when needed. That may include having individuals on staff who are qualified to interpret, having a contract with outside agencies that provide in-person interpreters, and maintaining an account with a telephonic interpreter. It is important to ask families what works best for them.

Many districts have written guidelines for accessing interpretation services for families who use a primary language other than spoken English. You can determine who in your district is responsible for providing language interpreting services. In some schools, it is the English Language Learners (ELL) department. For others, it may be the Americans with Disabilities Act/504 coordinator. Even if the student speaks English and does not receive language learner services, the ELL department is a resource for families who need interpretation in languages other than English. Similarly, the special education department can be a resource for families of students with disabilities.

Schools and Districts May Be Eligible to Use Interpretation Vendors on Contract

Washington state has contracts that state, local, and Tribal governments can access. Qualified districts will have a signed master contract usage agreement (**https://des.wa.gov/services/ contracting-purchasing**).

The Department of Social and Health Services manages statewide sign language interpreter contracts through its Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Below is a list of contracts that are typically accessible to school and school districts:

- In-person, spoken interpreter services for languages other than English

- Telephone-based interpreter services for languages other than English

- Phone interpretation

- Contracts for in-person interpreters for deaf/HOH families

- Telecommunication relay services for deaf/HOH families

- Video remote interpreting services for deaf/HOH families

- Communication facilitator services for deaf/HOH families

Resources

COMMUNICATION MODES FOR DEAF/HOH FAMILIES

- Sign Language Interpreters: An Introduction: **https://www.nationaldeafcenter.org/resource/sign-language-interpreters-introduction**

- Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing: **https://www.dshs.wa.gov/altsa/office-deaf-and-hard-hearing**

- Washington School for the Deaf: **http://www.wsd.wa.gov/outreach/**

- The National Institutes of Health's 10 Tips for Using a Sign Language Interpreter: **https://www.edi.nih.gov/blog/communities/10-tips-using-sign-language-interpreter**

LEGAL OBLIGATIONS FOR LANGUAGE ACCESS

- Schools' Civil Rights Obligations to English Learner Students and Limited English Proficient Parents: **https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/ellresources.html**

- Section 504 and ADA Obligations of Public Schools: **https://www.nad.org/resources/education/k-12-education/section-504-and-ada- obligations-of-public-schools/**

Additional Assistance

Have questions or need more information? Contact the Governor's Office of the Education Ombuds.

Toll-free phone: 1.866.297.2597 (Phone interpreter services available)
Email: oeoinfo@gov.wa.gov | **http://www.oeo.wa.gov**

Appendix 4. Working Effectively With Interpreters

> This guidance was developed by Open Doors for Multicultural Families.
> **Learn more about ODMF: https://www.multiculturalfamilies.org**

Creating physical spaces that are culturally responsive and result in a sense of belonging is an important aspect of the Community Conversation. It is critically important to learn from the perspectives of our culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Providing interpreters will enable all participants to understand and share their thoughts.

The following checklist is intended to guide the use of interpreters at your event. It focuses on interpreters of spoken language, not American Sign Language.

Before the Event

☐ Make sure your planning team includes people who have connections to communities of color or organizations that have built trusted relationships with communities of color. These planning team members will likely be able to recommend logistical considerations (time and place to hold the event) and people who can help with outreach, interpretation/translation, and follow-up with the community. These are important and sometimes labor-intensive responsibilities, so make sure they are distributed across several members of the planning team.

☐ Choose a time, date, and location that will work for participants who have the least flexible schedules and transportation barriers (e.g., after work hours).

☐ Set aside enough time for the event. If you are interpreting back and forth between English and another language, you should double the duration of the event.

☐ Identify the language(s) that require interpretation.

☐ If you are new to planning events with interpreters, start with just one language in addition to English (e.g., Spanish and English).

☐ Schedule in-person interpretation well in advance of the event date. Finding qualified interpreters can take time.

☐ Select an interpreter who has knowledge of disability and special education terminology.

☐ Invest in relationships with interpreters. A good working relationship with qualified and reliable interpreters will help families communicate and make it easier for you to plan future events.

- ☐ Send the interpreters the following information one week before the event so that they have time to prepare:
    - ☐ Purpose and subject matter of the meeting.
    - ☐ Meeting agenda.
    - ☐ The roles of those who will support, including the facilitator and notetaker.
    - ☐ Estimated number of participants they will be interpreting for.
    - ☐ Common terminologies and acronyms used.
- ☐ Arrange seating so that the participant has direct eye contact with presenter, not with the interpreter.
- ☐ Prior to the event, schedule a one-hour meeting with the interpreters, facilitator, and table hosts to:
    - ☐ Review the purpose and subject matter of the meeting.
    - ☐ Review roles of the facilitator, table hosts, and notetaker.
    - ☐ Clarify the expected role of the interpreter(s).
    - ☐ Determine a plan for communicating if people need to slow down and check for understanding (e.g., hand signal or raising hand).
    - ☐ Let the facilitators, table hosts, and interpreters know that participants will be asked to evaluate both the quality of the event and interpretation.
    - ☐ Answer any questions.
- ☐ Remind the participants of the event time and date via phone, text, or social media groups in their language. Email is not a reliable way to communicate and send reminders.
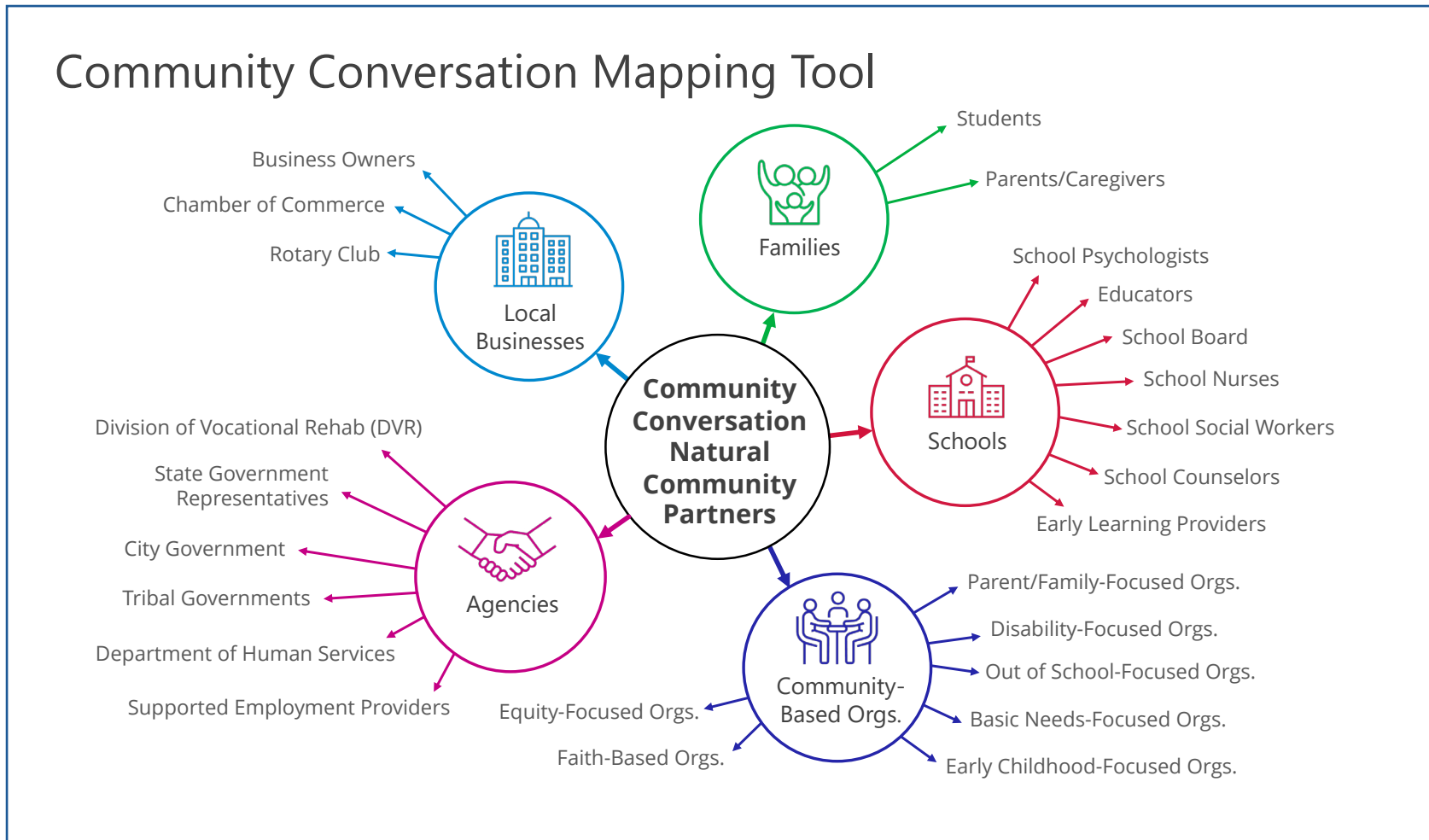
During the Event

- ☐ Presenters should speak directly to the participants, not the interpreter. If possible, the interpreter should sit behind the participants to remind others to speak to the participants.
- ☐ Presenters should speak clearly and concisely.
- ☐ Pause to allow the interpreter to start interpretation or finish their sentence.
- ☐ Check your pace to allow time for interpretation and for the participants to process critical information.
- ☐ Avoid talking in side conversations because they are difficult to interpret.
- ☐ Read body language of the participants. Rephrase if you suspect there might be a misunderstanding.
- ☐ Avoid jargon, acronyms, and idioms that are difficult to interpret or specific to American culture.

☐ Check in regularly with families for understanding.

☐ It's okay for the presenter or facilitator to admit that they are nervous to lighten the mood and show vulnerability.

After the Event

☐ Debrief with the interpreter:

    ☐ Did they receive sufficient information before the meeting?

    ☐ How was the pace of the entire meeting?

    ☐ Was the information presented easy to interpret?

    ☐ Constructive feedback about what went well and suggestions for improvement.

☐ Ask the participants to provide feedback on:

    ☐ The pace of the entire meeting.

    ☐ Whether they understood the information presented.

    ☐ Whether they were able to fully articulate their opinions and thoughts during the meeting.

    ☐ The interpreter's performance. Use the Interpreter Evaluation Form, which has been translated into many different languages.

    ☐ Constructive feedback about what went well and suggestions for improvement.

Appendix 5. System Mapping Tool

Community Conversation Mapping Tool

Community Conversation Natural Community Partners

Families
- Students
- Parents/Caregivers

Schools
- School Psychologists
- Educators
- School Board
- School Nurses
- School Social Workers
- School Counselors
- Early Learning Providers

Local Businesses
- Business Owners
- Chamber of Commerce
- Rotary Club

Agencies
- Division of Vocational Rehab (DVR)
- State Government Representatives
- City Government
- Tribal Governments
- Department of Human Services
- Supported Employment Providers

Community-Based Orgs.
- Parent/Family-Focused Orgs.
- Disability-Focused Orgs.
- Out of School-Focused Orgs.
- Basic Needs-Focused Orgs.
- Early Childhood-Focused Orgs.
- Faith-Based Orgs.
- Equity-Focused Orgs.

Image description: A graphic representation of Community Conversation natural community partners, including families, schools, community-based organizations, agencies, and local business representatives as well as the different groups that reside within each category.

Below is a table that can be used to identify community partners. It is available to download on the Family Engagement Collaborative website at **www.FECInclusion.org.**

Directions: Identify key community partners, how best to engage with them, and what relationship they have to the conversation.

Natural community partners	Organizations with connections	Best means of engagement (Phone call/email)	Relationship to the issue
Families of students with disabilities			
Families of students without disabilities			
People with disabilities			
Educators			
Out-of-school providers			
Community-based organizations			
Business leaders			
Faith-based community leaders			

Appendix 6. Sample Invitation

A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION
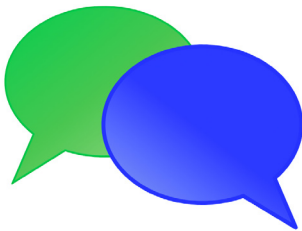
Photo Description: Two overlapping thought bubbles, one green and one blue.

We invite you to a Community Conversation about how our schools and community can increase inclusion and belonging for youth with disabilities.

- Join us for a community wide conversation as we discuss how to schools and our community can be more inclusive and increase opportunities.

[Event Date]

- We want to hear from anyone connected to youth in our community…students, parents, educators, employers, organizations and agencies. All are welcome to attend.

[Event Time]

- Accommodations and interpretation are available upon request. Please contact [name and contact information] by [date].

replace with
LOGO

[NAME AND/OR ORGANIZATION]
[Contact Information – email, website, phone]

Image description: A sample invitation to a Community Conversation.

Appendix 7. Community Conversation Protocol

This protocol is designed to gather input from diverse partners to build a shared understanding of and commitment to inclusion. Each Community Conversation will last approximately 2 hours.

Protocol

GOALS

A Community Conversation creates an opportunity for participants to reflect on:

1. The role of inclusion in helping young people with disabilities develop as learners, future employees, and community members

2. The relationships and understanding needed for inclusive practices work to be successful

Engaging families and community members in a Community Conversation will help you understand:

- People's aspirations for inclusive practices

- People's concerns about inclusive practices

- How people think and talk about inclusion in relation to the community

- What changes are needed

- What people believe can be done and who they can trust to take action

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- Forming a planning team

- Identifying and recruiting participants

- Identifying a facilitator

- Choosing table hosts

- Accessible location

- Accessible date and time

- Planning for child care

- Translation and interpretation

- Materials needed: poster paper, sticky notes, markers, pens/pencils

- Displayed materials (like PowerPoint slides) use strong contrast in text and background

- Food and refreshments

FACILITATION STRATEGIES

- Set up the space, considering accessibility (all parts are accessible for everyone) as well as how it looks and feels.

  - Make microphones available.

  - Make questions available in print on tables (and translated if appropriate).

- Prioritize participants representing a diversity of roles and realities (families, educators, community members, community-based organizations, business leaders, etc.). Encourage people to spread out so different perspectives are represented across tables.

- Establish group agreements and create a space of belonging.

- Use an introduction question.

- Present group agreements.

- Create opportunities for interactivity and multiple modes of engagement that are accessible to diverse participants (individual reflection, small group discussion, large group discussion, and integrate learning).

  - Allow people to participate verbally, in writing, and through drawing.

- Make sure table hosts help take notes and report out.

- Ensure there are clear opportunities for follow up (like emails, text messages, or communications from local education agency).

Agenda

1. **Welcome and framing – slides 1–4** *(10 minutes)*

   a. Review meeting goals and plan for today's session

      i. Share information about the Inclusionary Practices Project

      ii. Discuss what inclusion means to you

      iii. Get your thoughts and advice

   b. Group agreements

2. **Introductions – slide 5** *(15 minutes)*

   a. Share your name and your connection to our community

   b. What wisdom do you bring to this conversation?

3. **Share information about the Community Conversation Process – slide 6** *(5 minutes)*

4. **Share information about the Inclusionary Practices Project – slides 7–9** *(5 minutes)*

5. **Small group discussion at tables – slide 10** *(20 minutes)*

    a. What does inclusion and belonging look like, sound like, and feel like to you?

6. **Large group share-out – slide 11** *(10 minutes)*

7. **Share information on school, family, and community partnerships and about inclusion work in the district/school – slides 12–14** *(10 minutes)*

8. **Small group discussion at tables – slide 15** *(20 minutes)*

    a. What relationships need to be developed and strengthened so that students can thrive as learners, future employees, and community members?

    b. What are we missing as we move through this work together?

9. **Large group share-out – slide 16** *(10 minutes)*

10. **Harvest – slide 17** *(10 minutes)*

    a. Review of key ideas and concerns by all attendees, followed by a large group discussion of common themes

    b. What did you hear today that resonates with you?

    c. What ideas did you hear that we can work together to take action on?

11. **Closure, evaluation, thank you, and next steps – slides 18–19** *(5 minutes)*

Appendix 8. Community Conversation Virtual Event Protocol and Agenda

This protocol is designed to gather input from diverse partners to build a shared understanding of and commitment to inclusion. Each virtual Community Conversation will last approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes.

Protocol

GOALS

A Community Conversation creates an opportunity for participants to reflect on:

1. The role of inclusion in helping young people with disabilities develop as learners, future employees, and community members

2. The relationships and understanding needed for inclusive practices work to be successful

Engaging families and community members in a Community Conversation will help you understand:

- People's aspirations for inclusive practices

- People's concerns about inclusive practices

- How people think and talk about inclusion in relation to the community

- What changes are needed

- What people believe can be done and who they can trust to take action

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- Forming a planning team

- Identifying and recruiting participants

- Identifying a facilitator

- Choosing a virtual platform

    - Consider capacity limits

- Planning for breakout rooms

    - Aim for five participants per breakout room

    - Identify breakout room hosts

- Accessible date and time

- Translation and interpretation

- Displayed materials (like PowerPoint slides) use strong contrast in text and background

- Capture the chat, notes from breakout room hosts, and notes from the harvest

FACILITATION STRATEGIES

- Set up the virtual space.
    - Consider accessibility needs for translation and interpretation, including close captioning.
    - Place participants in breakout rooms to ensure a diversity of roles (like families, educators, community members, community-based organizations, and business leaders) in each one.

- Establish group agreements and create a space of belonging.

- Create opportunities for interactivity and multiple modes of engagement that are accessible to diverse participants (individual reflection, small group discussion, large group discussion, and integrate learning).
    - Allow people to participate verbally and through writing in the chat.

- Ask the breakout room hosts to take notes and report out.

- Ensure there are clear opportunities for follow-up (like emails, text messages, or communications from the local education agency).

BREAKOUT ROOM HOST RESPONSIBILITIES

- Create a space where everyone feels comfortable participating .

- Share questions in the chat so all participants can see them.

- Encourage everyone to participate either verbally or by writing in the chat .

- Monitor the chat for comments and questions.

- Invite the quiet voices to share.

- If the conversation goes off topic, gently bring the conversation back to the question.

- Capture notes of what is shared verbally.

- Share out one or two themes in the large group share-out.

BREAKOUT ROOM HOST RESPONSIBILITIES

- Capture a transcript of the chat.

- Ask breakout room hosts to email all notes to the planning team.

- Email an evaluation to all participants. (The "Ticket Out the Door" document is available as a fillable PDF).

Agenda

1. **Welcome and framing – slides 1–4** *(5 minutes)*

    a. Review meeting goals and plan for today's session

        i. Share information about the Inclusionary Practices Project

        ii. Discuss what inclusion means to you

        iii. Get your thoughts and advice

    b. Group agreements

2. **Share information about the Community Conversation Process – slide 5** *(3 minutes)*

3. **Share information about the Inclusionary Practices Project – slides 6–8** *(7 minutes)*

4. **Breakout rooms, round 1 – slide 9** *(20 minutes)*

    a. Share your name and your connection to our community

    b. Small group discussion

        i. *What does inclusion and belonging look like, sound like, and feel like to you?*

5. **Return to main room for large group share-out – slide 10** *(10 minutes)*

6. **Break – slide 11** *(5 minutes)*

7. **Share information on school, family, and community partnerships and about inclusion work in the district/school – slides 12–14** *(10 minutes)*

8. **Breakout room, round 2 – slide 15** *(15 minutes)*

    a. *What relationships need to be developed and strengthened so that students can thrive as learners, future employees, and community members?*

    b. *What are we missing as we move through this work together?*

9. **Return to main room for large group share-out – slide 16** *(10 minutes)*

10. **Harvest – slide 17** *(10 minutes)*

    a. Review key ideas, concerns, and common themes shared by all attendees

    b. Ask participants to use the chat function to respond to the questions:

        i. *What did you hear today that resonates with you?*

        ii. *What ideas did you hear that we can work together to take action on?*

11. **Closure, evaluation, thank you, and next steps - slides 18–19** *(5 minutes)*

Appendix 9. Sign-In Sheet and Group Agreements Table Tent

Below are the Sign-In Sheet and Group Agreements Table Tent Printable Template. Both can be downloaded on the Community Conversation Toolkit page of the IPP Family Engagement Collaborative website at **www.FECInclusion.org**.

Community Conversation Sign-in

We will be sharing learning from this session and about future sessions to all who provide their contact information below.

Name	Phone number	Email address	Preferred communication (email and/or text)

Group Agreements Table Tent

Community Conversations

Group Agreements

1. Be inclusive, allowing everyone to share.

2. Share from your own perspective using "I" statements.

3. Listen to build understanding and learn from others.

4. Practice self-care. Attend to your personal needs.

5. Respect confidentiality. Personal information that is shared should remain in the meeting room.

6. Enjoy the time together!

Appendix 10. Table Host Guidelines

Goal of the event: To engage families and the community and build the relationships necessary for inclusive practices to flourish. Feedback and ideas will help identify which actions to prioritize and which issues to consider.

The place: *[Insert information about the place/ day/ time here]*. Everyone is welcomed and encouraged to participate in authentic dialogue. We ask everyone to engage in deep listening and shared learning during and after the event.

The facilitators: *[Insert information about those who are hosting the event]*.

Our time together: *[Insert the start time (for example, 6:30 p.m.) and the amount of time the meeting will last]*. Below is a set of guidelines for table hosts. Use the guidelines and your good judgment and be aware of how the conversation is going at your table. The intention is to create a space where everyone feels comfortable participating. All participants are encouraged to write down their thoughts on the notepaper and notepads provided. We will collect these notes at the end of the event for the harvest of ideas.

Discussion questions: The discussion questions were designed to require more than a simple "yes" or "no" answer so we can understand what matters to our community. Give everyone at your table time to share their thoughts. The facilitator will present the following questions to the whole group:

- What does inclusion and belonging look like, sound like, and feel like to you?

- What relationships need to be developed and strengthened so that students can thrive as learners, future employees, and community members?

- As we move through this work together, what are we missing?

Table Host Guidelines

- Seat five to seven people at a table, including yourself.

- Welcome participants. Encourage everyone to introduce themselves, their role in the community, and their reason for attending.

- The facilitator will start with an introduction question *(What wisdom do you bring to this conversation?)*. This activity is designed to build trust at the table and get people oriented to conversation.

- There will be two small group discussions. Each one is scheduled to last 20 minutes. People (including table hosts) are encouraged to write, doodle, and draw their key ideas on the table covers. There will also be large sheets of paper and Post-it notes for people to use on the table.

- Invite the quiet voices. Make sure that everyone feels comfortable contributing to the conversation.

- If the conversation goes off topic, gently bring participants back to the current discussion question.

- After each round of conversation, there will be an opportunity to share insights and discoveries in a large group discussion. This is where we may see patterns begin to emerge.
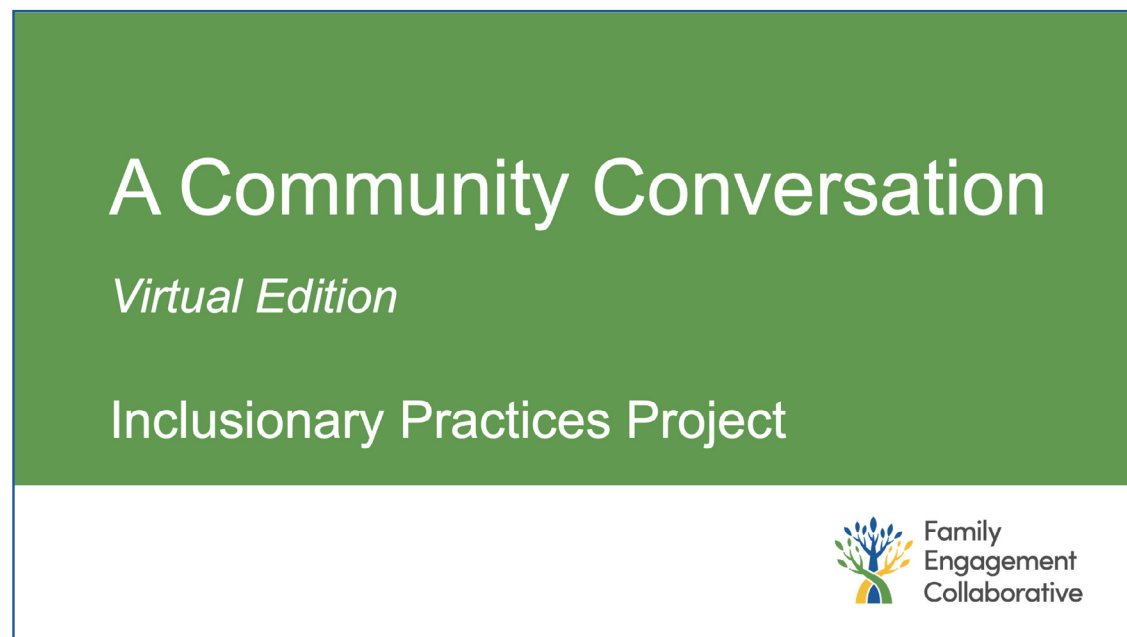
Group Agreements for the Community Conversation

- Be inclusive, allowing everyone to share.

- Share from your own perspective using "I" statements.

- Listen to build understanding and learn from others.

- Practice self-care. Attend to your personal needs.

- Respect confidentiality. Personal information that is shared should remain in the meeting room.

- Enjoy the time together!

Write, doodle, draw – being creative on the table covering is encouraged!

Appendix 11. Community Conversation Slide Deck

*Image description: Below are images of the cover pages of the Community Conversations PowerPoint slide deck for both in-person and virtual events. The documents can be downloaded on the Community Conversation Toolkit page of the IPP Family Engagement Collaborative website at **www.FECInclusion.org**.*

Appendix 12. Harvest Tool

Below is the Harvest Tool for the Community Conversation. The document can be downloaded on the Community Conversation Toolkit page of the IPP Family Engagement Collaborative website at **www.FECInclusion.org**.

Harvest Tool

Directions: Identify key ideas proposed at the Community Conversation, paying particular attention to people, relationships, rules, and structures. Identify action steps, strategies, partners, and any technical assistance support needed for achieving these priorities.

Idea:

Action step:

Strategies	Lead	Critical partners	Timeline	Technical assistance needs

Appendix 13. Ticket Out the Door Evaluation Tool

Family
Engagement
Collaborative

Ticket Out the Door

Please tell us about your Community Conversation on inclusionary practices!

Today I learned ...

What I learned today

Two things I plan to do next

Something I am wondering about

☐ **I want to help!**

Name

Contact Information

Appendix 14. Reflection on Your Community Conversation

Below is the Reflection on Your Community Conversation evaluation form. The document can be downloaded on the Community Conversation Toolkit page of the IPP Family Engagement Collaborative website at **www.FECInclusion.org**.

Reflection on Your Community Conversation

The purpose of this reflection is to help the facilitator and members of the planning team understand what went well and ways to improve future events.

Date: **Community Conversation location:**

1. How would you describe your role(s)? (Please check all that apply)

   ☐ Parent/Family/Caregiver   ☐ Business

   ☐ Administrator   ☐ Community-based organization

   ☐ Educator (e.g., teacher, paraeducator,   ☐ Other:
     specialist, school psychologist)

2. To what extent do you agree with the following statements:

In my opinion, the Community Conversation …	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Increased a shared understanding of inclusion among planning team members and participants				
Provided a respectful space for participants to tell their stories and share ideas about inclusion				
Helped participants strengthen connections and/or build new relationships				
Was accessible to all members of the community				
The event produced ideas and information that will help to improve inclusive practices in our community				
Was a great experience that I would recommend to others				

3. What did you find most useful about the Community Conversation Toolkit? Why?

4. Think about the accessibility of the event. Are there ways to improve accessibility for future events (considering location, transportation, child care, interpreters, etc.)?

5. Considering your role in planning the event, are there ways to improve the process?

6. What recommendations do you have for improving the next Community Conversation?