



## CREATING A BRAVE SPACE FOR DIALOGUE

Acknowledging a brave space is critical when teaching about identity and American values. A brave space is inclusive to all races, sexes, genders, abilities, immigration status, and lived experiences. A brave space allows students to express themselves, challenge one another in a positive way, and learn from one another. This facilitator's guide is useful for educators as they guide the conversation in a way that encourages respect, inclusion, compassion, and courageous intervention.

### **ASSUME THE BEST INTENTIONS**

Many students are familiar with how norms, rules, or expectations work in a classroom. When collaborating and establishing norms, students will get to be a part of the decision-making process. Thus, they will be more likely to follow them. Assume the best intentions when students do not follow norms established in the classroom. Instead of resorting to consequences established in the norms or classroom expectations, teach in context. Students may have a difficult time understanding what the norms mean and may need to practice it a few times. Take the time to explain and/or intervene when there is conflict between educator and student or student and student.

### **TIME IS VALUABLE**

There is a set amount of time allotted for this conversation. As facilitator, you are able to determine how much time is set aside for each piece of the conversation. You want to get through the entire lesson, but there may be something that comes up that is worth spending a little bit more time unpacking with your students.

### **AFFIRMATION**

Facilitators do not take part in the conversation, they guide it. One way to demonstrate that you value what is being said in the space is to repeat what is being said in your own words. This helps to clarify understanding for other students.

### **WAIT TIME**

Give students time to think before requiring them to respond to you or other students. This will help enrich the conversation. Moreover, English language learners will have an opportunity to participate in the conversation.

### **DRAW EXPERTISE FROM YOUR STUDENTS**

Each student has their own lived experiences that will contribute to the conversation. Many students do not have the opportunity to share about their lives, identity, or experienced at home. Therefore, once students feel comfortable in your classroom, asking a student to share about the topic you are discussing will acknowledge the expertise and help them feel valued as human beings.

### **CHECK YOUR PRIVILEGE**

As educators, we want to hold space for those who are most impacted by systemic oppression. Therefore, it is important to begin the difficult work on ourselves first before beginning the discussions in our classrooms. Check out Amplifier's resource guide on exploring privilege and implicit bias for tools and tips. The teacher has the most perceived power in the classroom. Establishing norms and creating a brave space help to empower your students as well.

## **HOLD EVERYONE ACCOUNTABLE**

As you guide the conversation, ensure the norms that were agreed upon by everyone in the space stay in practice. You can ask students to reflect on whether they are honoring the norms everyone agreed to. Is there one norm that students are doing really well? Is there a norm that everyone is having a difficult time committing to? These each provide an opportunity for dialogue and to renew student commitment to the norms.

# **THE ACTIVITY**

## **MATERIALS NEEDED**

Teacher:

- Marker
- Butcher paper or Anchor Chart paper

Students:

- Writing Journal or Sheet of paper
- Pencil

## **VOCABULARY**

**Brave Space:** A brave space is a space where participants feel comfortable learning, sharing, and growing. A brave space is inclusive to all races, sexes, genders, abilities, immigration status, and lived experiences. Everyone in the space acknowledges that there may be some discomfort due to discussing topics that may be uncomfortable in nature. In the established brave space, participants honor each other's experiences and opinions with respect to achieve a place of understanding. The most important part of a brave space is inclusion of all.

**Norms:** In an effort to create more spaces that mimic the world we want to see, collaboratively establishing expectations can encourage behaviors that honor the varied life experiences and opinions in the classroom. Norms are expectations that allow everyone to hold each other accountable in the brave space. Norms can include ways to hold each other accountable when a participant finds upholding a norm challenging.

## **ACTIVITY**

- 1) Have a discussion with the students by drawing on the expertise of the room. Ask students, "Does anyone know what a brave space is?"
  - a) If no one knows what a brave space is, ask students to jot down some ideas based on context clues.  
Guiding question: "Think about the meaning of the word brave and space, what do you think 'brave space' means based on your own experiences?"
  - b) Think-Pair-Share: Ask students to share their answers with a partner and then ask for volunteers to share with the class.
- 2) Share definitions above with the students. Feel free to adapt definition to grade-level. ELL SUPPORT: use visuals along with the definitions, include a Spanish and English word bank. Check for understanding: Ask students to write the definitions in their own words.
- 3) Begin collaborating on norms by sharing one with the class. For each norm, ask the students, "Is everyone okay with this norm?" Every single student must understand and agree to each norm before writing it on the piece of butcher paper.

- 4) Once the list is complete, you can begin your conversation. Periodically, ask students to reflect if they are honoring the norms everyone agreed to. Is there one norm that students are doing really well? Or, is there a norm that everyone is having a difficult time committing to?

#### **EXAMPLES OF NORMS**

- 1) Speak from the “I” or Address the topic, not the person
- 2) Speak from a place of love and respect. Start your comment with phrases like “Thank you for sharing!” or “Tell me more about\_\_\_\_\_”
- 3) Give everyone the opportunity to speak
- 4) Ask yourself if sharing your thoughts will contribute to the conversation in a positive way
- 5) Assume everyone in the space has good intentions
- 6) Give everyone time to think about a response before raising your hand
- 7) **DICTIONARY:** Raise your hand and say, “dictionary”, if you don’t know what a word means or would like clarification
- 8) **Confidentiality:** What is said here, stays here. What is learned here, leaves here.