Difficult Conversations - Facilitating Better Conversations

"When Hate is in the Headlines" webinar
https://sharemylesson.com/teaching-resource/when-hate-headlines-resources-k-12-educators-288511?utm_campaign=charlottesville&utm_medium=social&utm_source=fbtwpin&utm_content=cta_webinar
Hosted by Facing History, ADL, SPLC, and AFT on 8/23/17

1. Focus on "dialogue not debate." How do we honor each other's voices. Foster critical conversations.
   a. Use age-appropriate language
   b. Remember sometimes not all difficult conversations wrap up neatly at the end of the period
   c. Teachers should prepare content-wise but also be OK learning together as a class (growth mindset)
   d. *Flood* students with many, diverse perspectives—especially in locations where there is one dominant perspective. This also avoids "politics" because you are analyzing multiple lenses and honoring voices and empathy. Resources:
      i. https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/texts
      ii. https://www.facinghistory.org/topics
      iii. Classroom lesson plans: https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources
   e. Teaching strategies:
      i. Classroom strategies: https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/teaching-strategies
      ii. Classroom strategies: https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies
   f. When difficult topics come up in class:
      i. Feedback for fostering civil discourse: https://www.facinghistory.org/books-borrowing/fostering-civil-discourse-guide-classroom-conversations?utm_campaign=Charlottesville&utm_source=Twitter%20Chat&utm_medium=fcd
      ii. Difficult conversations: http://facingtoday.facinghistory.org/use-these-four-guiding-principles-in-difficult-conversations
2. Co-constructed norms (guidelines) for each classroom space that emphasize all students' humanities (including those in other schools and communities)
   a. Combat adultism by supporting students' own agency, leadership, and power in the classroom and beyond
   b. Have these norms set early before difficult events happen because they are easier to implement later.
   c. Re-refer to these norms (as in via a poster) if situations in the classroom change or if someone breaks a norm. Address it gently once as a class. If it happens again, address it specifically with that student/s in the hall.
   d. Additional resources here: http://facingtoday.facinghistory.org/8-components-of-a-reflective-classroom

     e. Make this a schoolwide culture & norm, not just a few teachers; students feel safer. Create school-wide shared language for students to address concerns when they happen.

3. Constant surveying and reflection with students
     a. Without socialized SEL, security, respect, students will have difficulty learning
     b. Reflection: does the curriculum I teach show positive, respectful voices of all students or does it reinforce stereotypes or minimize voices
     c. SEL in the classroom/school cannot be an "add-on."

4. Awareness and reflection of one's own biases
     a. Know your students and where your identities do not intersect with them. Be yourself.
     b. Analyze your own privilege, bias, and potential blind spots (growth mindset)
     c. Keep equity as the focal point of all teaching and conversations
     d. More workshops and webinars: https://www.facinghistory.org/professional-development
     e. More workshops and webinars: https://www.tolerance.org/professional-development

5. With admin, parents, and peers: be transparent, show parents the intersection of topics and your curriculum (reading/writing/speaking/etc), be clear on norms and conversations, invite feedback.
     a. Resources: Table Talk from ADL: https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/table-talk

6. Why do we talk about these conversations?
     a. "Hate is not a difference of opinion. Not every idea has to be tolerated."
     b. Keep the focus on philosophy and relationships, not specific people/politicians
     c. Race is a social construct
     d. Not to hold anyone "accountable" or assign blame or shame, not for shock
     e. Goal is civic engagement
     f. To confront and deconstruct racism, create equity and equality
     g. Our students are being targeted by hate groups via memes and social media
     h. It isn't about "politics"

Notes from Collab Lab Teaming on Tuesday
September 26th 2017

M: Unit on Culture Forum: Race and Culture. Impact of words.

L: Empathy. How can we can foster empathy? How can we listen better? Exchange differing viewpoints and listen to understand and find common ground. Jim Knight's book "Better Conversations" is a good resource for this.

MP: We face challenge as teachers when student says something challenging/inflammatory. Addressing it can bring more attention to it. Saying nothing can condone it.

MH: Sometimes clarification can facilitate conversation. Ask questions to model to students the importance of asking questions to ensure understanding even when viewpoints differ.

We need to help create conditions for all voices to be heard.

K - Setting Norms

A: Empathy. Lens. Putting themselves in others shoes. Finding common ground.

KG: Teaching 1000 Splendid Suns. Student shared her experience and was open to having students ask her questions. Can be a good idea to give admin a heads up in case controversial issue conversations in classrooms might cause parent concern or parent contact to admin.

K: To avoid conflict with parents, foster communication with them via syllabus.

A: Having clear goals & clear purpose

MP: Responding to conversations that pop up unrelated to class learning targets. DACA, NFL. Can be challenging because you want to foster dialog, and support students . . . but can be difficult.

LR: Sometimes you have to talk because the environment is so charged / emotional that it interrupts learning. As teacher it was challenging and tried to navigate by discussing respect.

C: Acknowledge issue. Consider giving time limit? And allow students to say their view. Invite counterpoints. At time limit, let students know that if they have other comments or questions that they can make arrangements to talk with T later.

R: Sometimes one on one conversations can be difficult.

D: Student shared example of student who revealed being transgender. Short conversation to acknowledge and thank for sharing and open door for further conversation for student to initiate if wants to talk

L: Idea to establish norms as a class with students.

K: Be willing to admit as a class that T doesn't know all the answers. Willingness to be vulnerable with students.

S: Challenge of students not being self-aware, but establishing norms can facilitate self-reflection on how they communicate.

M: Allow for extremes too. Norms can help us honor and listen to all perspectives and build understanding.