

TOPICS for Small Group Discussions

Each Small Group (4-5 participants) will be asked to discuss for FIVE minutes ONE of the following ASPECTS of education. Groups should READ all of the questions on their TOPIC and then DISCUSS the 3-5 questions that interest them the most. A Reporter will share the group's comments and a Recorder will take notes (which will be handed in and compiled).

GROUP #1: REAL WORLD APPLICATION:

How can schools prepare you for the real world that you will face after graduation?

SUB QUESTIONS:

What academic skills and knowledge are needed to be prepared for college?

What skills, behaviors, mindsets, knowledge will help you be successful in your future career(s)?

What skills, behaviors, mindsets, knowledge will help you with your personal life in the future?

How can schools prepare students to be leaders - both now and in the future?

How can schools help make all students into knowledgeable and active citizens?

How can schools help students become ethical and global citizens?

How can schools provide more opportunities for explorations of what the world is really like?

GROUP #2: REQUIREMENTS/CREDITS:

What knowledge or experiences should be required of today's student?

What makes an experience (inside or outside the classroom) worth credit?

SUB QUESTIONS:

What educational value do extracurricular activities (band, drama, clubs, sports, etc.) have?

What educational value do internships and jobs have?

What are ways in which students can explore interests through independent study with mentors?

Should students learn things they don't necessarily 'want' to?

Is there a universal standard for academic requirements all students should always meet, or should learning be entirely independent?

How can schools be sure that students get a well-rounded education (and cannot just opt of things) but still have more choice and variety that picks up on their interests?

Does picking a pathway work for students who have no idea of what they want to focus on since their interests may change?

GROUP # 3: ASSESSMENT

What is the purpose of testing? What are the best ways to assess skills and knowledge?

SUB QUESTIONS:

What sort of testing is effective in helping students actually acquire new skills and concepts (as opposed to just determining what they already know)?

What is the purpose of grades?

What kinds of feedback on the work that they have produced help students learn the most?

How can students be motivated to learn for the sake of learning (as opposed to just getting a grade...)?

How can schools be held accountable by the state for the job they are doing in educating students?

What is the best way to "prove" that students are learning what they need in order to be successful?

What proof do colleges need of students' skills and knowledge?

What proof do employers need of students' skills and knowledge?

How can education be less focused on testing and more focused on learning important information and gaining deep understanding of concepts?

Should schools focus on progress and growth, rather than on just achievement? If so, how?

How can assessment be used for learning (a check-up rather than an autopsy)?

How can exhibitions, investigations, demonstrations, journals, and portfolios be used to show learning?

How else can learning be demonstrated?

GROUP # 4: CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

How can classroom instruction be improved to meet the needs of all students?

SUB QUESTIONS:

If you were a teacher, what would you do to keep students engaged and help them learn?

What have teachers done that has been helpful to you and why?

How can the atmosphere of individual classrooms be improved?

How can students become more interested in subjects that they are not already interested in?

How can technology be used to help students learn more effectively and efficiently?

How can schools provide more connections between classes (an interdisciplinary approach)?

How can the time spent in school be maximized so that less time is spent outside of school on homework?

What different types of learning – traditional, self-paced, project-based, peer led, virtual – work best?

When, where, how, why does learning take place most effectively?

What inhibits/restricts learning and makes people unwilling/unable to explore new ideas and change/grow?

Should elements of the Project Based Learning Model (challenging problem or question, sustained inquiry, authenticity, student voice and choice, reflection, critique and revision, public product) be incorporated more widely in the educational system? If so, how?

GROUP # 5: SCHOOL CLIMATE

How can the general climate / culture / atmosphere of schools be improved?

SUB QUESTIONS:

What importance is there in having a place where people come together to interact in a community?

How can all students be made to feel like an important part of their learning community (not just a cog in a machine)?

Should schools support/facilitate/help students form their own opinions and think critically about themselves and the world? If so, HOW?

How can schools develop a culture that empowers students?

How can students become self-directed, goal-directed, and resilient (develop “grit” so they can face set-backs and not give up)?

How can students develop a “growth mindset” (seeing challenges as an opportunity) rather than a “fixed mindset”?

What can be done to improve the climate of schools by teachers? by school administrators? by division and state leaders?

How much voice do you as students currently have in your own education?

How much power do you feel you have to change the problems you see in schools today?

How can students’ voices best be heard?

How can students become better advocates for themselves and for other students?

How can parents, teachers, administrators, and state leaders better support student concerns?