

## What is Dialogue?

Dialogue is focused conversation with the goal of increasing understanding, addressing problems, and questioning thoughts or actions. When two or more people engage in meaningful dialogue, they are expressing their ideas, thoughts, and feelings around a complex topic and are open to modifying deeply held convictions. Debate, in contrast, asks participants to choose sides. It becomes a win/lose engagement. In dialogue, everyone gains a new sense of understanding.

Antiracist educators understand that engaging in and teaching dialogue requires preparation.

For instance, it is crucial that you take time to reflect on your identities and experiences with race and racism before beginning or participating in dialogue about race. Taking the time to prepare mentally and emotionally will help in the moments when you may be challenged or feel uncomfortable.

Dialogue is an antiracist practice that can affirm the dignity and humanity of all people and help to develop one's critical consciousness. We hope this guide will help highlight specific criteria used during meaningful dialogue so that dialogue becomes a common practice in schools. We invite you to read more about the [art of dialogue](#).

## CARE's Criteria for Engaging in Dialogue

### Preparation:

I came to the conversation with a clear understanding of the purpose.

### *Evidence shows I...*

- Completed pre-conversation questions
- Displayed a willingness to engage in dialogue
- Approached the conversation with respect for all participants
- Remained open to thoughts other than my own.

### Engagement:

I used my knowledge and skills to gain clarity and purposeful advancement from the conversation.

### *Evidence shows I...*

- Displayed active listening skills
- Participated with honesty, curiosity, and empathy
- Explained personal thinking and thought with depth and clarity
- Provided detailed clarification if needed
- Embraced tensions and was courageous

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### Pre-Conversation:

1. What is the topic?
2. Define the purpose of this conversation?
3. What personal thoughts and feelings may surface during this conversation?

### Post-Conversation:

1. How did you keep the conversation going? How did you make sure others were heard?
2. Did you experience tension? Name it and reflect on your emotions. Did you overcome or avoid?
3. Reflect on your biggest conversation takeaway: Do you feel like you gained personal clarity and/or purposeful advancement from the experience?
4. Describe one aspect from the conversation you will commit to learning more about (Ex: As a result of this conversation my questions are ... OR I want to learn more about ...)