



Crafting a Check-In Question

Overview

In every class we start the small-group component with a check-in. This check-in serves to remind all students, teachers, and volunteers of each other's names, and to give everyone an opportunity to speak and listen to one another. The check-in should be a brief, simple, and enjoyable experience for the students, teacher, and volunteer.

Question Criteria

We design our check-in questions to be:

- Interesting and fun to hear multiple answers to.
- Easy, approachable, and not intimidating to answer. If every student cannot easily come up with an answer, then it may not be a good check-in question.
- Answerable by all students. There should not be a right or wrong answer to the question. Students should not have to have any specific previous experience to be able to answer the question. Every student's answer should be respected and valued evenly. The validation of their experience and answer creates access and engagement for all students.
- Safe and comfortable for all students to answer. Some well-intended questions like "What are you planning on doing this summer?" can bring up inequity and insecurity for some students. We want our questions to be inclusive and accessible to all students.

Facilitating a Check-In

Once you have crafted a check-in question follow these steps:

1. Invite the students to have a seat at the table and introduce the check-in question.
2. Remind the students that the expectations during check-in are to listen to other students quietly and speak only when it is their turn. This means no replies or responses to people's answers.
3. Ask for a volunteer to go first, or start by answering the question yourself. Have the first person to answer indicate which direction they want to pass it.
4. Appreciate, verbally or with a smile, every student for their answer without commenting on it. Try to thank each student evenly so as to avoid praising different answers.

Example Check-In Questions

- What is your favorite meal to eat on your birthday?
- If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you go?
- What is your favorite fruit or vegetable to snack on?
- Do you have a favorite kind of dog?
- What is your favorite holiday?
- What is your favorite flavor of ice cream?



Teaching Notes

- If you ask a question that you think some students may not have an answer to, normalize not having an answer by modeling it as a potential response.
 - e.g. “What is your favorite Chinese food? You could answer chow mein, fried rice, I don’t have a favorite Chinese food, or I haven’t tried any Chinese foods.”