

Interactivity Foundation

COLLABORATIVE DISCUSSION --- PROJECT

OCTOBER 2023 // PREPARED BY
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The Collaborative Discussion Project

Summary Report October 2023

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Building collaborative intelligence for 21st century workplaces, classrooms, and communities.
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Open access resource with 60+ learning activities designed by educators & civic practitioners.
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Interactive 15-hour training, certifying Collaborative Discussion Coaches who offer certificate programs in classrooms, workplaces, and communities.
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Network of educators and civic practitioners coming together in monthly gatherings, working teams, conferences, and projects. Staying connected through our weekly newsletter.
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The Interactivity Foundation and our mission.

What educators are saying...

For years, I struggled to identify the most effective ways to teach and allow students to practice collaboration. I wanted to teach a number of concepts as well as content, but only had background in my subject matter...I have found that the Collaboration Toolkit had an amazingly positive influence on students' experiences and perceptions of collaboration skills. What is typically seen as a negative aspect of the classroom, is now seen through the new and exciting lens of the powerfully positive effect and outcome of working with others. I have incorporated the model three times in different types of courses, both graduate and undergraduate and have received rave reviews every time.

--Megan Smith, Lecturer, UNC Charlotte

The Collaborative Discussion Project

What does it mean to build collaborative intelligence together?

We are living in an age of increased political, social, environmental, and economic interdependence. Never before have we had a greater need to think, talk, and work together in productive ways. Yet, modern technology, social trends, conflicts, and political divisions have pushed us further apart. We must anticipate and build the collaborative discussion skills and mindsets needed to address [civic](#) and [workforce](#) challenges in the 21st century.

In May 2021, the Interactivity Foundation launched the Collaborative Discussion Project in partnership with a team of dialogue and deliberation experts, practitioners, and educators. The project includes an **open access toolkit** containing over 60 ready-to-use, interactive, learning activities designed to support creative, critical, culturally responsive, and civic collaboration skills. The activities in the toolkit can be used independently or combined to offer a curated learning experience as part of an **IF Certificate Program in Collaborative Discussion**. These programs are offered by **Collaborative Discussion Coaches** in classrooms, community programs, and through professional development workshops.

Participants who earn certificates in collaborative discussion have demonstrated growth across 17 metrics designed to measure collaborative discussion understanding and discussion practices. In general, participants share

- deeper understanding of core concepts associated with collaborative discussion
- greater awareness of how they show up and present themselves in discussion
- increased appreciation for divergent thinking and creating inclusive spaces
- the ability to model specific discussion behaviors that improve creative, critical, and culturally responsive discussion
- refined understanding and appreciation for community and importance of civic engagement

The IF Collaborative Discussion Project is an on-going, developmental experiment aimed at supporting the discussion skills and mindsets that are necessary to function in democratic societies. Like all skills, they improve over time through practice and with directed reflection and feedback. IF continues to also work with partners to offer spaces to practice collaborative discussion and to continue to expand dimensions of this project.

What curriculum contributors are saying...

The Interactivity Foundation's training program has brought a wealth of new tools and perspectives to our school programming. The sequence of modules provide concrete directions, key steps, clear concepts, and evaluative measures for easily integrating collaboration into your classes or curricula.

--Don Waisanen, Baruch College, City University of New York

Collaborative Discussion Project

Building Collaborative Intelligence (CI) Together



The 3-Part Initiative

1

OPEN ACCESS TOOLKIT

Designed by educators and dialogue practitioners, this toolkit contains over 60 ready-to-use, interactive discussion activities for the classroom, workplace, or community. The activities are designed to enhance creative, critical, culturally responsive, and civic discussion skills. Each activity can be completed in less than 60 minutes and includes learning goals, facilitation instructions, group debriefing questions, reflection prompts, practice journal exercises, suggested readings and activity clusters. Each activity has been tested in multiple settings and revised by review teams.

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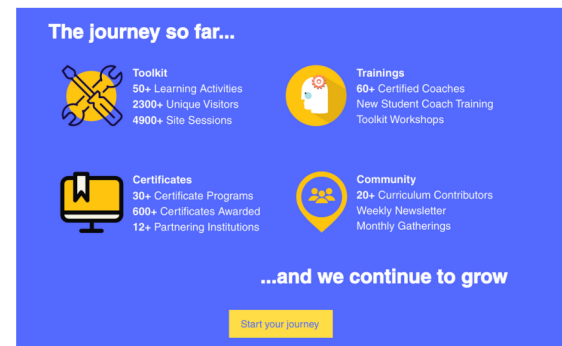
TRAININGS & CERTIFICATES

We have certified over 60 coaches across 37 colleges and universities. Since 2021, coaches have awarded 600+ certificates in collaborative discussion. Certificate programs have been incorporated into courses, co-curricular programming, and leadership programs. By institutionalizing the collaborative discussion curriculum, our coaches are helping to sustain and expand this project.

3

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Our website and weekly newsletter serve as the hub for our community of educators and practitioners. We host monthly gatherings for collaborators to share best practices. Working teams are formed to help advance specific components of the project, such as assessment or coach training teams. Our community members also review and contribute new curriculum, coach resources, and materials.





3K+ Unique Toolkit Users
6K+ Toolkit Sessions

60+ Certified Coaches



600+ Certificates Awarded

30+ Colleges & Universities



"I loved this program! It was so informative and it will impact my instructional style for the rest of my teaching career!"

"Overall, I just love that IF exists and that I was able to do something like this. What a privilege. I am so grateful and truly feel honored to have been a part of this training. Thank you so much!"

"I can't wait to continue learning, developing my own program, and being a part of this community. I do think it will take me some time to debrief and digest it all and decide the next right step. I am glad that there will be a community for me to continue to learn from and alongside."

"I thought the biggest draw to this program for me --and the reason I'll recommend to others--is that we will be certified as coaches and able to offer certificate programs to our students (and others). This is a huge benefit. I also look forward to seeing more activities/tools in the toolkit as you move along with this initiative. I'd love to see some activities that are games."

Introduction to Collaboration

1. What is Collaborative Learning?
2. Collaborative Perspective
3. Forming Group Guidelines
4. Identity in Discussion
5. The Role of Values in Discussion
6. Understanding Values in Context
7. Taking Inventory of Skills
8. Evaluating Your Discussion Style
9. Goal Setting

Creative Collaboration

1. Promoting Curiosity
2. Embracing Contradictions
3. Seeking Innovation
4. Taking Risks
5. Cultivating Play
6. Building on Ideas
7. Expanding Thinking
8. Bold Imagination
9. Challenging Taboos

"The activity resources are such a treasure!"

Critical Collaboration

1. Critical Thinking
2. Critical Feeling
3. Context, Bias, & Assumptions
4. Comfort with Ambiguity
5. Divergent Thinking
6. (Un)Intended Consequences
7. Generosity of Interpretation
8. Mapping Complexity
9. Purposeful Skepticism
10. Performance Measurements

Culturally Responsive Collaboration

1. Social Identity
2. Listening to Understand
3. Perspective Continuum
4. Intersections
5. Intentional Empathy
6. Promoting Curiosity
7. Power Imbalances
8. Confidence & Humility
9. Perspective of Other

Civic Collaboration

1. Identifying Civic Passion
2. Awareness of Stakeholders
3. Identifying Communities
4. Communities as Partners
5. Knowledge in Community
6. Shifting the Discourse
7. Practicing Deliberation

What participants are saying...

Activity 2.8 Encouraging Bold Imagination taught us to think of an end result we are trying to produce and work your way backwards and break it down into smaller steps. Probably the best skill I have ever gained. It not only helps problem solve but also changes your mentality and makes you see the end result as more obtainable. I do this with everything now! Homework assignments, gym goals and dietary goals and it has been amazing!

--College Unbound Student, Providence, RI

Visit our website at www.collaborativediscussionproject.com to access our interactive learning activities and endless coach resources and materials. Look for a new Coach Resource page this fall!

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1.1

What is Collaborative Learning?

Submitted by [Nicholas Longo](#)

It is said that, "the many are smarter than the few," but under what conditions? This activity encourages participants to reflect upon their own collaborative successes and failures for the purpose of determining which factors help to achieve effective collaboration.

5.0 ★★★★★ 8 rating(s)



Learning Goals





- Describe strengths, benefits, and challenges of collaborative learning.
- Identify key attributes associated with successful and unsuccessful collaborative learning.

Previous Next

TIME
40 min

MODULE
Introduction to Collaborative Discussion

Download PDF



[Instructions](#) [Reflection Journal](#) [Practice Journal](#) [Additional Resources](#) [Activity Cluster](#)

Instructions

Set Up: Prepare for the Activity

Prepare to record the discussion on a white board, flip chart, or Google Jamboard.
Begin by introducing the learning goals of this activity.



The Collaborative Discussion Coach Trainings are designed to certify and empower coaches to offer certificate programs in collaborative discussion. Coaches help their participants to develop collaborative discussion skills and habits of mind. Their programs can take place in classrooms, communities, and workplaces.

The Coach Training is a 15-hour, small group, & interactive workshop designed to

- introduce participants to key collaborative discussion concepts
- dive deep into the Collaborative Discussion Toolkit and IF pedagogy
- model how to facilitate collaborative discussion activities
- share practical and ready-to-use collaborative discussion resources
- practice collaborative discussion skills and habits in small working teams
- connect participants in a learning experience and broader community of practice
- help coaches design their own, unique certificate program

All Coach Trainings include a welcome packet, workbook, introduction to additional coach resources, and sustained 1-on-1 support post training.



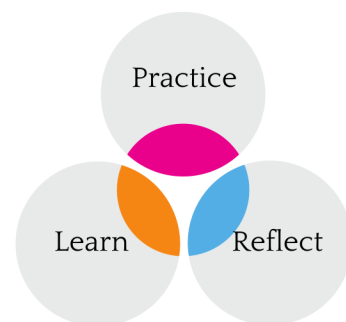
Who applies to become a coach? We have over sixty coaches. The majority of our coaches are faculty and staff in higher education. However, we also have coaches representing K12 education, community librarians, consultants, administrators, student leaders, and civic professionals. Anyone interested in offering a certificate program and helping others to develop collaborative discussion skills are encouraged to join a coach training. We offer open application trainings throughout the year and we offer cohort trainings upon request.

The Collaborative Discussion Training opened up a wealth of information, tools and discussions which addressed the tricky area of interpersonal and group decision making and project design. It hit the essential areas of ethics, philosophy and practicality which both stretched and enlightened our group of librarians. Thanks to the expert and inspiring guidance of the facilitators!

--Stephanie Ralph, Library Director of Summit County, Colorado

Certificates in Collaborative Discussion are awarded by certified coaches to participants who have successfully completed an approved certificate program, which can vary according to coach. All programs share some common characteristics:

- Embrace the IF pedagogical approach which prioritizes learning by doing and guided reflection.
- Include at least eight activities from the toolkit, including a final practice or project exercise.
- Require at least two forms of assessment, including the required participant survey and coach evaluation.



Participants who earn a certificate in collaborative discussion are better equipped to

- deeper understanding of core concepts associated with collaborative discussion.
- greater awareness of how they show up and present themselves in discussion.
- increased appreciation for divergent thinking and creating inclusive spaces.
- the ability to model specific discussion behaviors that improve creative, critical, and culturally responsive discussion.
- refined understanding and appreciation for community and importance of civic engagement,

Upon completion, successful participants receive

- individualized certificates of completion.
- electronic badge in collaborative discussion.
- Congratulations email describing how their certificate might be described on a resume with sample talking points for a potential interview.



The Interactivity Foundation has created the Collaborative Discussion Certificate to be focused yet flexible. The certificate focuses on different modules, with activities to suit a variety of demographics in settings such as education, community, non-profits, and leadership development. Being trained as a Collaborative Discussion Coach has offered me a valuable tool for my work with community.

--Sara Drury, Director of Wabash Democracy
& Public Discourse at Wabash College

A Sample Classroom Certificate Program

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SELF + SELF W/ OTHERS + SELF IN COMMUNITY



Activity 1.1 Introduction to collaboration



Activity 1.3 Forming Group Guidelines



Activity 1.2 Developing Collaborative Perspective

Stage 1: Self-Knowledge Activities

Activity 2.6 Building on the Ideas of Others



Activity 1.7 Taking Inventory of Collaboration Skills



Activity 1.6 Understanding Values in Context



Activity 2.7 Expanding Thinking with Metaphors

Stage 2: Self w/ Other Activities

Activity 3.5 Seeking Divergent Thinking



Activity 4.7 Recognizing Power Imbalances

Activity 4.2 Listening to Understand



Activity 5.3 Identifying Your Communities



Stage 3: Community

Activity 5.4 Seeing Communities as Partners



Final Reflection Journal or Final Project



Activity 5.2 Developing an Awareness of Stakeholders



79% of coaches stay connected after their coach training. How?



Virtual monthly gatherings to connect, share best practices, and learn from one another.



Working teams that shape the future of our collaborative project. Current open teams: 1) Assessment, 2) Coach Resources, & 3) Spring Training Teams.



Collaboration on upcoming conference sessions, workshops, and grant proposals.



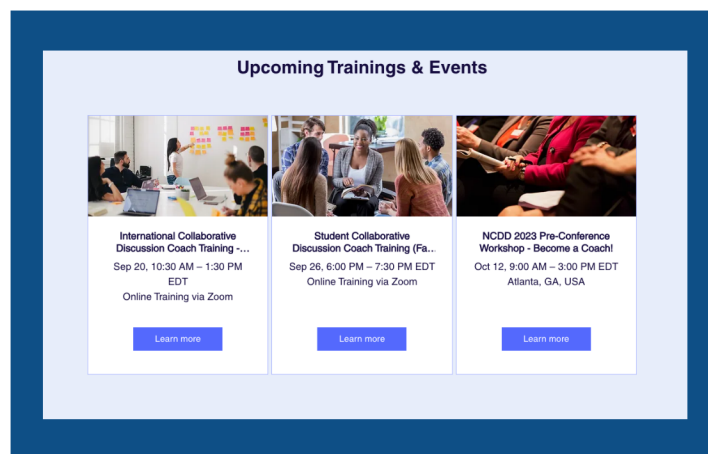
47% open rate of our weekly newsletter.

Subscribe to our newsletter!



Join Us

Check out our calendar of events



We, at the Interactivity Foundation (IF), believe in the importance and power of civic discussion. We believe in the capacity of citizens to engage in meaningful discussion about issues that matter for their communities. Our mission is to strengthen democracy through facilitated, small group exploratory discussion. We advance this mission by organizing community conversations, offering sustained developmental programs, and training citizens to facilitate and collaboratively participate in discussions together. To learn more, visit www.interactivityfoundation.org



CDP COLLABORATORS

To see the full list of our collaborators, please visit our website at www.collaborativediscussionproject.com



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