

Maker Ed

Facilitator Guide: Panel Conversations

The 2019 Maker Ed Convening

October 12th & 13th

Pittsburgh, PA

Panel Conversations (1 hour and 15 minutes)

Panels are facilitated conversations between 3 to 5 people on a specific topic. Panel conversations stage questions about issues which are current and relevant in the field of maker education and which are enriched by multiple, and sometimes even competing, perspectives. For at least a third of panel conversations, the audience should be actively invited to engage or participate in the conversation, (this can be through a number of mechanisms: for example, Q&A sessions, facilitated reflection, etc.).

Session Planning

Selecting your Topic

Start by considering what topic or question you would like your panel to address. How timely is this topic? Do the questions your topic raise have relevance to other topics in the field? Your topic should be applicable to a variety of audiences within the maker educator community.

Composing your Panel

As you refine your topic, consider whose voices will offer valuable perspectives and make meaningful contributions to the conversation. Determine whose voices are typically heard, or over represented, in the conversation you wish to have and explore means of diversifying your panel by elevating and amplifying the voices of those historically excluded from participation in the topic. What outreach strategies can you employ to reach, tap, and access different (competing or complementary) perspectives?

Session Design

Core Element – Share

Participants have the opportunity to learn about a key learning, challenge, or element of panel member's work.

Topic – However you facilitate your panel conversation, make sure that your topic is clearly defined.

Norms – Set norms with panel members in order to ensure equity of voice during the panel. It is good practice to create a signal that the facilitator and panel members can use when someone's time is up or to create space for another panel member's voice to be heard.

Present & Context Setting – The facilitator presents an overview of the topic and may introduce panel members. Often each member of the panel will introduce themselves and give a short (5 min) overview of their program and how it connects to the topic.

Conversation – The bulk of the panel time is spent in conversation. The conversation is built by panelists through co-creation of questions or areas of discussion in preparation for the panel and possibly through participatory processes with attendees (see below). Facilitation of the panel is based on the agreed upon norms.

Core Element – Reflect and/or Apply

Attendees understand, articulate, and make meaning out of their experience, discover the relevance of their experience to their own practice, and/or envision applying a new idea to their own learning environment.

Attendee Participation – How will you invite your audience into the conversation. Once key voices and questions have been aired, how can you engage the rest of the room?

- Timing – How do you offer ample time for the panel conversation and for participant synthesis, discussion, and application? We suggest spending at least $\frac{1}{3}$ of the session interacting with participants.

Application – How will you invite the attendees to reflect on the topic and apply what they learned to their own context? What will they reflect on? Will the reflection focus on pure introspection, sharing their learning and/or applying their learning to their own context?

- How will you structure attendee reflection & application? Will you ask a 1-2 questions, use a thinking routine, or leave space for open reflection?
- Will you give them time to reflect & apply individually, in small groups, in the whole group?
- How will you make their reflections & applications visible to the group?

- Will you project questions or create a handout?

See the resources section for possible structures.

Core Element – Intro & Closing

Attendees feel welcome, understand what to expect from the session, and have an opportunity to synthesize the experience at the end.

- Intro – How will you welcome and orient attendees? What information do you need to share at the beginning? What information can wait until after they have experienced parts of the session?
- Closing – How will you support participants to synthesize learning and come back to the topic?

Optional Elements + Other Design Considerations

These components can happen as part of any of the above components or independently, but may not be included due to limited time.

- Document – Attendees record their process and make it visible.
- Share – Attendees share with each other and/or facilitator shares experience with group to inspire others and connect with people and ideas.
- Apply – Attendees discover the relevance of their experience to their own practice and/or envision what making can look like in their own learning environments.

Facilitation

How the panel session is facilitated is as important as the design of the session.

How do you plan to facilitate the session? How are you creating a space where attendees are able to figure out key learnings for themselves, where attendees are learning from each other, where community is being built while learning, or where the tools and materials themselves are teachers? What role will you play in this space?

Facilitation Resources: We often draw from the following resources when planning for our workshops:

- [Setting up and Facilitating Tinkering Workshops with Educators](#) (pgs 14-18)
- [Thinking Routines](#)
- [Agency by Design Educator Resources](#)
- [Liberating Structures](#)
- [National School Reform Faculty](#)