



MAKER EDUCATOR CONVENING 2020: GUIDE FOR DISCUSSIONS

Discussions are 45 minutes in duration, where the focus of the session is to spark and engage in deliberate discussion around a certain topic or question.

Discussions are opportunities for participants to debate and play with an idea or designated topic, to learn from each other's experiences and perspectives, and/or to problem-solve together towards actionable outcomes. Discussions should clearly include a large majority of time for participants to actively engage with one another and the ideas presented.

Discussions can be focused on a specific question or topic and be facilitated by presenter(s). They may include short presentations to spark conversation, or integrate images, graphics, or short readings to respond to.

Durations have been shortened for a virtual format.

Maker-centered learning is learner-driven and hands-on, and Maker Ed designs our discussions to model to this style of learning. We request that, as much as possible, our partners design discussions similarly for the convening! Please use this guide as a starting place, and feel free to reach out to us at convening@makered.org with any questions!

SESSION PLANNING

Start by thinking about the objectives of your session. What do you want participants to walk away understanding? Is it a specific concept, a process, or a new perspective you would like them to try on? Are they learning from each other? Take a look at your proposal and think about all the things you would like participants to learn; then boil it down to 1-2 big ideas that you want to design towards. What is the core objective of your discussion?

Core Element: SHARE

Participants share ideas, experiences, and learnings with each other and/or facilitator shares experience with group to inspire others and connect with people and ideas.

This is an opportunity for you to share your work and create a space where participants can engage with your ideas. Think about how you can present your work clearly and concisely; this generally means focusing deeply on the 1-2 big ideas you identified as your objectives. Be sure to provide enough context so participants understand your big ideas, but keep it focused! Use up to half the time to present your work.

In a virtual environment, be aware of your participants' attention spans. Try to mix up the format and media of your presentation, and consider transitioning between:

- "Talking head," where participants are seeing your face and watching you speak.
- Multiple presenters, where participants see multiple faces and listen/watch a more conversational or shared presentation, instead of one person speaking for an extended duration.

- Screen-share, where participants can see your screen. The screen could show a slideshow or slides, a demo, a webpage, photos or video, etc.
- Different camera views, where participants may be able to see -- via a document camera or other method -- your hands engaged with materials, your physical space, or other props.
- Opportunities for participant engagement, whether reflection, hands-on engagement, Q&A, sharing on a different platform or in a chat window, or others. See below for more elements.

Core Element: DOCUMENT

Participants record their process and make it visible.

In a virtual environment, this could be a shared Google Doc, Google Slides, or other platform for sharing and collaboration.

How will you invite the participants to share in documenting together, or share their individual documentation? What purpose will that record serve? Making thinking visible can enable new or deeper strands of dialogue.

Other questions to consider:

- How will you format or structure documentation?
- What responsibilities will each participant have, or is there a group documentarian?
- How might verbal and text-based conversation happen simultaneously?

Core Element: INTRO & CLOSING

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

OPTIONAL ELEMENTS & OTHER DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

There are other elements that you may be able to incorporate into your presentation.

- Make/Do – Participants engage in a hands-on and minds-on thinking process. We highly encourage the use of make/do even if it is in a brief activity.
- Reflect – Participants 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.

These are other considerations and resources for you as you prepare for your session at the convening.

- Timing – How do you offer ample time for the core elements of share and reflection/application? Plan your presentation so it doesn't feel rushed.
- Getting Started – Give participants an opportunity to actively engage early on. This will set the tone that everyone is expected to actively participate in the presentation.
- Participation – It is important to vary participation to maximize individual participation. One way to accomplish this is to shift between individual, small group, and whole group during your presentation.

FACILITATION

How the discussion is (or isn't) 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 participants are able to figure out key learnings for themselves, where participants 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 presentations:

- [Thinking Routines](#)
- [Agency by Design Thinking Routines + Tools + Practices](#)
- [Liberating Structures](#)
- [National School Reform Faculty](#)
- [Storytelling Tips & Tricks – The Moth](#)
- [Why Bad Presentations Happen to Good Causes](#)