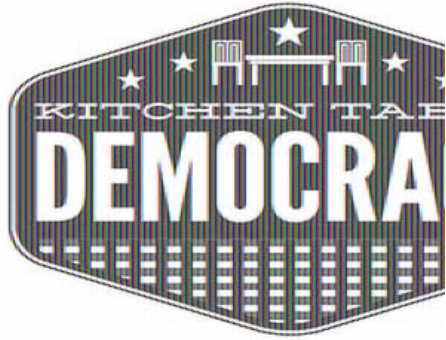

Educated in Oregon

Discussion Guide



Oregon Humanities

This program was made possible in part by a grant from Oregon Humanities (OH), a statewide nonprofit organization and an independent affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, which funds OH's grant program.

Thank you for hosting an *Educated in Oregon* discussion!

***Educated in Oregon* aims to give participants an opportunity to imagine themselves inside of others' experiences and discuss education issues and policy from an empathetic stance. Our hope is participants walk away from the conversations with new insight into individual's experiences and greater connection to the future of education in Oregon and to their community.**

This discussion guide was designed by Kitchen Table Democracy, a national non-profit that promotes collaborative and democratic governance so people can bring their ideas, feedback, and resources together to improve their communities. We hope you'll take the opportunity to host a discussion about exploring what students' experiences tell us about schools now and what schools could be in the future at your table.

This packet provides instructions, tips, and tools for your discussion on *Educated in Oregon* and assumes you may never have led a community discussion before. If so, you might want to start with a small group (around 10 or 12 people). The tips and instructions should help give you an idea of steps to take.

What does a discussion host do?

Here is a quick look at the 8 things you'll need to do as host. More details coming up!

1. Decide on a location and time for your discussion
- we encourage mealtime, but a meal can be as simple as tea and cookies!
2. Send invitations and send a reminder about the discussion.
3. Keep track of who agrees to attend.
4. Make arrangements for food/drinks and other items if you like.
5. Help get a discussion going with your group—you do not have to be an expert on issues. The discussion should take one hour to ninety minutes.
6. Send a thank you to guests after the discussion.
7. Share any pictures or great quotes you have from your *Educated in Oregon* discussion with Kitchen Table Democracy (email to educatedinoregon@gmail.com)
8. Take a few minutes to let us know how your discussion went -
<http://www.kitchentable.org/initiative/educated-oregon>
- and let your participants know they can let us know their reactions here, too.

Setting your table

Planning for the discussion

- **Decide on a location and time for your discussion - we encourage mealtime, but a meal can be as simple as tea and cookies!**
 - **Send out your invitations and send a reminder about the discussion.**
 - **Keep track of who agrees to attend.**
 - **Make arrangements for food/drinks and other items if you like.**
-

Setting your table: Planning for the event

The Day / Time / Place

Educated in Oregon discussions can take place over breakfast, lunch, dinner or any time in-between. Make sure your location is accessible to any guests who have disabilities. Make sure you have enough seating. If you're not using your actual kitchen table or dining room table, consider organizing chairs in a semi-circle or circle so people can talk face-to-face. Make sure you have enough food and beverages for everyone who has told you they will attend. Aim for 1 to 2 hours for your conversation.

The Guests

The invite list is up to you! Start with people you know – friends, family, colleagues and neighbors – or expand your circle. Consider co-hosting your event with a local church or nonprofit, asking your guests to bring a friend or inviting people from your network that don't already know each other. Anywhere from four to twelve guests per table (depending on the size of your “table” or space) is ideal so that everyone has a chance to speak and be heard.

Setting your table: Planning for the event

RSVPs

You might want to make use of online RSVP tools to help you track who is coming. Facebook Events, Eventbrite, or Evite are all examples of online invitation / registration tools. We recommend sending your invitations about 1-2 weeks before your event and then reminding your guests the day before that it's happening.

Sharing

If you have a camera or phone with a camera available, please consider capturing your discussion. Email your photos from your discussion to . ***It is important to have guest sign a photo consent form before taking any photos - the consent form is at the end of this packet.***

Gathered at the table

Having the discussion

- Help get a discussion going with your group—you do not have to be an expert on issues. The discussion will take about ninety minutes.
-

Gathered at the table: having the conversation

Conversation Guidelines

First, our questions are left open-ended in order to encourage everyone to think creatively and reflect on possibilities.

Second, remember that every guest's ideas and stories are important, and the discussion should provide an opportunity for all participants to reflect on what you hear in the audio stories and from each other.

Third, think of the discussion as an opportunity for people to try to view school / education through the student perspective.

And finally, as host, you know your guests the best! But try to make sure everyone has a chance to talk (one at a time) and recognize people may disagree but encourage them to assume best intentions and to try to listen to understand each other.

Gathered at the table: having the conversation

Opening up the conversation

- **Thank people for coming!** You might simply say, *“Thank you for taking the time to share your voices on education in our state. We all want the best education possible for our kids.”* You might want to include some of your own words about why you’ve decided to host the discussion. Make sure to point out where food and restrooms are if people aren’t familiar with your location.
- Everyone at your table may already know each other, but **a good starting question** is, *“What’s your name and one word or image that comes to mind when you think about school?”*

Moving to the conversation questions / prompts

- **Give a little background.** You might want to share a little bit about this project and its aims. There’s an information sheet at the end of this guide.
- There are some **central questions** that we’re asking as starting points to reflect on education in our communities and what the students are sharing in the audio stories.

Gathered at the table: having the conversation

Beginning Reflections

Some people might be more comfortable with writing out their thoughts; others might prefer to draw something.

- *QUESTION FOR REFLECTION: What's important in your mind about the middle school experience?*
 -
 - Give people about 5 minutes to reflect individually before transitioning to the audio stories.
-

Gathered at the table: having the conversation

Introducing the Audio Stories

You might say a few words to transition and invite people to leave behind their own experiences and concentrate on what they hear in the stories.

- *As we move into the audio stories, you'll hear both positive and negative experiences from the students' perspectives. They may be surprising to you or not. You may have strong feeling about the student's interpretation, especially based on your own experiences. For the sake of this conversation, we're asking you to do the best you can to clear your mind now and to try to imagine yourself in the student's shoes and invite yourself to really reflect on what they are saying.*
-

Gathered at the table: having the conversation

Listening & Being Heard

Introduction / Episode 1

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- *What stood out to you about what you just heard?*
 - *How do others create spaces where you feel listened to and heard?*
-

Gathered at the table: having the conversation

Joy & Connection

Episode 2

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- *What surprised you in the stories you just heard?*
 - *What are you curious about after hearing these stories?*
-

Gathered at the table: having the conversation

Change

Episode 3

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

- *Given what you just heard, what do you think is important for students as they grow and change?*
-

Gathered at the table: having the conversation

Closing Reflections

Again, some people might be more comfortable with writing out their thoughts; others might prefer to draw something.

QUESTIONS FOR

REFLECTION: How has your thinking changed about the middle school experience since you walked in the room? What was important in any shifts in your thinking?

Give people about 5 minutes to reflect individually. Then we suggest opening up a discussion about what's changed.

Leaving the table

Wrapping up and finishing your conversation

- Send a thank you to guests after the gathering.
 - Share any pictures or great quotes you have from your *Educated in Oregon Discussion*.
 - Take a few minutes to let us know how your discussion went - <http://www.kitchentable.org/initiative/educated-oregon> - and let your participants know they can let us know their reactions here, too.
-

Leaving the table: wrapping up your conversation

At the end of your conversation

- We anticipate Kitchen Table Conversations will last about **90 minutes** - but that's entirely up to you! And we do hope people will visit with each other and enjoy each other's company.
- When the conversation has ended, **thank everyone for coming** and sharing their thoughts with each other.

After your conversation is over

- Share your reflections via the Kitchen Table Democracy website - <http://www.kitchentable.org/initiative/educated-oregon>
- Please **send any photos / photo consent forms** to:
- **Send a thank you in writing** (or electronically). Here's an example: *Dear Friends & Neighbors, Thank you for participating in the Educated in Oregon discussion. I hope we can continue to have discussions like these, especially when we're making decisions about education in our community and our state.*

Warmly, (host name)

Forms and Information

Sample Invitation Language

Background Sample Language

Photo Consent Form

Important Contact Information

Sample Invitation Language

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

You're invited to a community discussion! I know, like me, that you want to best education for your kids and kids in our community. Thanks to a program funded by Oregon Humanities and hosted by non-profit Kitchen Table Democracy, we have the chance to hear some students' perspectives and consider how their stories shape our understanding of what our schools are and could be in the future. So join me to listen to student audio stories and hear what others have to say about education! Thank you and see you soon.

Educated in Oregon discussion

Hosts:

Date:

Time:

Location:

Please contact [name] at [email, phone] by [date] to tell us whether you will join us.

Background on *Educated in Oregon* project

In school board meetings, community listening sessions, and other public processes focused on education, participants are often asked to focus on their own experiences and perspectives, and they aren't necessarily engaged with what others have experienced. Individuals are also commonly focused on very particular components of what is or isn't working in education and haven't been invited to think about the greater purpose of our public education system.

We believe hearing others' experiences with the education system can help individuals reflect and empathize, resulting in broader and more generous conversations. We believe in the power of conversation to connect individuals and create opportunity to connect across differences.

The idea for this project also came out of the recognition that most media outlets don't have the capacity or resources to tell as many stories about what is happening in schools as they used to. Decision makers - including superintendents, school board members, and city and state policymakers - need to be able to hear the stories and experiences of their communities in order to better serve those communities.

Our hope is that this production of audio stories in combination with the public conversations becomes a model for elevating voices that may be missing from the discussions and inviting meaningful public dialogue about important community issues.

Our goal with each conversation is to give participants an opportunity to imagine themselves inside of others' experiences and discuss education issues and policy from an empathetic stance. Our hope participants walk away from the conversations with new insight into individual's experiences and greater connection to the future of education in Oregon and to their community.

Important Contact Info

Kitchen Table Democracy

www.kitchentable.org

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Educated in Oregon Project Manager

Aimee Craig - educatedinoregon@gmail.com

Oregon Humanities

<https://www.oregonhumanities.org/>

Get discussion guide, audio stories, and submit reflections:

<http://www.kitchentable.org/initiative/educated-oregon>

Return photos / photo consent forms:

Email to if you scan / take a photo
educatedinoregon@gmail.com