“Town Hall” Research-Based Conversation Sequence: General Outline/Flow Chart

Introduction: Perspectives, Stakeholders, and Community Interests

- Introduce School Community-Based Problem with “critical incident” and related article
- Discuss concept of perspectives, stakeholders, shared and competing values and interests
- Identify “types” of individuals within typical school-related community who would have concerns, opinions, perspectives on the problem; assign roles to groups
- Pose overall question: What, if anything, might be done about _____?
- Introduce town hall concept and explain eventual activity
- Pausing Point: Discuss difference between discussion and debate; introduce adversarial vs. cooperative forms of deliberation, rationality vs. reasonability in argumentation
- Have groups analyze their connections to other community groups—who is impacted? Who else’s perspectives, success, comfort, concerns do they value? Then, consider what their own initial thoughts (from perspective of their roles) might be.

Informing Your Perspective—and Weighing Others’, Too

- Provide basic orientation to research processes—initial reading, question development, searching for what’s been written and said, considering how what’s found helps answer initial questions and identify/generate others
- Small groups research in response to overall question, *considering what they find through the lens of their assigned perspective*; students discuss and share findings within group
- Pausing Point: Before town hall, groups reconsider their findings and conclusion through social lenses: What do they most want other groups to know, what do they want to learn from specific groups, etc.
- Review central question being considered and procedures for conducting town hall

Town Hall: Bringing the Community Together

- Organize classroom for town hall, including name tents with students’ roles in the community
- Teacher plays role of town hall organizer-facilitator (as district admin): Introductory remarks, review of norms, commencement of discussion
- Conduct town hall; encourage students to share their perspectives, question others, and use the research they conducted/gathered
- Teacher concludes event WITHOUT VOTE; students reflect on experience, including how it reflects or differs from previous experiences with argumentative *writing*

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