



Detailed Facilitation Guide



Thank you for having a Big Education Conversation!

Everyone is able to host a Big Education Conversation and we've made this detailed guide to support you. You can find other resources, including Top Tips and a short Conversation Guide to share with participants at bigeducationconversation.co.uk

What is a Big Education Conversation (BEC)?

The Big Education Conversation is supporting communities around the world to come together and talk about what education is really for and how it could change in the future.

Why have a Big Education Conversation?

Conversations about the purpose of education are important in transforming education systems. They help different groups, like students, parents, educators, and government leaders, to come together and share their beliefs and hopes. This results in change that includes a wide variety of opinions!

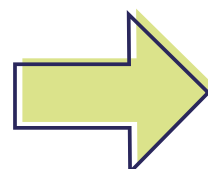
It's going to take millions of voices and ideas to reimagine and transform education. Through Big Education Conversations anyone can contribute to creating a shared purpose and vision for education.



Whether it's your first time or your 1000th time facilitating, we hope you have fun being playful with it, and learn something new!

The guide comes in five sections:

1. Learn
2. Invite
3. Prepare
4. Host
5. Share



1. LEARN



A #BigEdConversation:

- Includes the participation of young people. If this is not possible in the first conversation then it is important to plan as a next step! Youth voice has been shown to be deeply unrepresented in education decision making, despite being the users at the centre of the system.
- Is a suggested size of 3-12 people, but can be larger if enough space and time is provided for everyone to be heard. A BEC event might include 100s of people and many conversations.
- Has a host/facilitator who ensures the conversation is: open minded and authentic, inclusive and imaginative, enjoyable and playful, intentional and empowering.
- Gathers data (via an online survey and global map) to help build national and global pictures on what different groups believe the purpose of education should be and to inspire action.

Why have a Big Education Conversation?

Education can be transformed. Many systems were designed in a different time for a different purpose. Is it time for a system update?

What do you believe is the purpose of education? Big Education Conversations bring diverse actors in education together to explore this key question, and build a new shared purpose or vision for the future of education in their context which they can take action towards.

The simple, supportive structure to hold a Big Education Conversation is designed to ensure participants can imagine beyond the current reality of education, and engage at a deeper level that connects to values, beliefs, motivations and fears.

A Big Education Conversation is a meaningful experience that can build trust, create listening and generate new ideas or pathways for action in a school or community or country.



**Feel like education
needs a system update?**

2. INVITE



Who do you want to invite and why?

- ☐ Students ☐ Parents & caregivers ☐ Educators & school leaders
☐ Employers ☐ Decision/policy makers ☐ _____

Top tip: Pay attention to YOUR purpose for hosting this conversation. This can tell you who to invite into the space. Is your aim to bring people together who don't usually talk about education? Or are you bringing something new to an existing forum? How might you invite and include those voices who aren't usually heard?

How long will your conversation(s) last?

- ☐ 15 minutes (smaller groups of 4-5) ☐ 30 minutes ☐ 60 minutes ☐ 90 minutes
☐ _____

Top tip: Try and be realistic. It's okay if you only have 15 minutes, small is beautiful! Even a tiny seed can bloom.

How many people will you aim to host?

- ☐ 3 ☐ 8 ☐ 12 ☐ 20-30 ☐ 30-50 ☐ 50+

Top tip: Going for depth? Stick below 12! Going for breadth? Go high but recruit some co-facilitators!

Top tip: It is said that people who turn up are the ones who are meant to be there. Don't worry too much about people who don't turn up. Host with anyone who shows up because that's how it was meant to be.

Where will you host this conversation?

- ☐ Community indoor neutral space ☐ School ☐ Local park/outdoor space
☐ Conference or event ☐ In a podcast recording room
☐ On live television! ☐ At dinner or in a cafe! ☐ _____

Top tip: Spaces hold memories which affect how people act in them. Create and curate spaces that invite imagination and new thinking. Old spaces don't encourage us to break-free with our imagination. Try your conversation under a tree in a park, in an amphitheatre, in a local school where elders rarely go, etc. Try to consider light, access needs and a venue that might help people imagine different possibilities in education, outside the current system. Is it a space where people can talk honestly, openly and freely? Is it a space where people can sit in a circle, move around, maybe do a warm-up activity?

How will you recruit people?

- ☐ Join in an already existing event
- ☐ Share invite on my social media networks
- ☐ Message all my family, friends and local community
- ☐ Word of mouth - tell everyone you see!
- ☐ Propose it as a workshop in a conference / education event / forum
- ☐ _____

- **Top tip:** Try to find other cheerleaders in your community who will uplift your message and spread the word. You could also find unusual allies who are outside your circle of influence. Maybe they're an elder who talks to everyone in the supermarket, or they could be a social media influencer!
- **Safeguarding:** If you are an adult hosting a BEC with young people, make sure you have considered your processes for safeguarding them. Keep the following in mind:
 1. Recruit another appropriate adult to support at the event and/or invite young participants to bring an adult to accompany them.
 2. Always engage with the young person in a group setting, never alone.
 3. While we want every voice in the room to be heard, if a young person chooses to be quiet and just listen in, that is alright.
 4. Create other ways that young people can share their views - writing, art, etc so that the quieter ones also feel engaged.
 5. Help build confidence while being careful not to put them down. The tone, language and voice has to be inviting and not discouraging.
 6. Ask young people what they need to feel safe in this space and how we can all work to create that safety

You could invite people to bring along their favourite childhood snack. Include this in the check in!



3. PREPARE



Intention

The intention is to spark imagination on the purpose of education that inspires. How you get there is up to you as a host/facilitator. Invite creativity, play, curiosity, imagination and joy.

Food and hydration

If possible, snacks and water make people welcome, nourished and fuel our brains

Space

What are the physical cues that will establish it as inviting and trustworthy in your culture? Some colours? A candle or two? Some music in the background? The setup should make participants comfortable, as well as curious and excited that something unique and different might happen here.

Where possible, we encourage you to set up conversations in a circle. For many years humans have sat around fires telling stories. When in a circle, we have the opportunity to see our equality and connect through the faces and eyes of others.

Resources

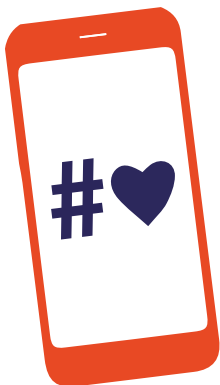
Can you provide some paper and pens for facilitator's +/- participants to capture their ideas together? You can print off Big Education Conversation speech bubble posters for participants to write in and/or take selfies with, QR codes, and other materials from the website.

Accessibility

What are the access needs for this gathering? Things you should be thinking about are, for example, wheelchair accessibility and gender neutral bathrooms. If you can't meet people's access needs, try to let them know ahead of time.

Optional

Bring an extra chair into the space and introduce "the empty chair". This represents the voice of those who couldn't be in the room today. You could reference this as a young person in the school or prison system, a very tired parent or an overwhelmed policy-maker or nature!!



Emergent facilitation

Read the host guide and make a plan but be ready to throw it out the window! Pay attention to where the energy is in the space and go with that. This is where the juice is. Less prep, more presence.

Capture the experience

Have your phone ready to take a photo of the conversation, share it #BigEdConversation and log your conversation to the global map.

There is a conversation in the room that only these people at this moment can have. Find it.

- Adrienne Maree Brown

4. HOST



Tips and Tricks

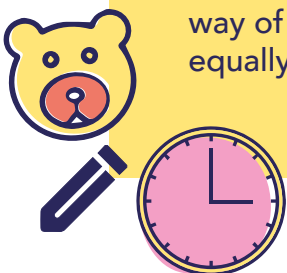
Your role as a BEC facilitator is to support people to find their voice and explore these questions of purpose and change together! It sometimes can be tricky for people to explore and imagine beyond our current reality, especially at first. So where possible use active listening and reflect back to your participant what you've heard so far. Give potential prompts of questions only if necessary.

If things get tense or emotional, practise what Pema Chödrön calls "the pause" — three breaths, in and out, to settle and reset. Create space for pauses and silence. Silences are not awkward, they are moments that help us reflect and go deeper. Invite silence into the space as it also helps the silent members of your conversation time to process and speak, and leads to a richer conversation for all.

Two tools to ensure all voices are heard, especially useful for shorter conversations:

A 'talking stick' supports others to know when it's their turn to speak, when they are handed the stick, rather than interrupting. A talking stick could be anything! A pencil, chalk or a book that reminds you of school, a cuddly toy or a natural object, like a stone or a feather.

Setting a timer that makes a sound after a set time is a clear and fair way of ensuring all voices are heard equally



Hosting your Big Education Conversation

In the next pages you'll find a more detailed version of the Conversation Guide, which you can print for all the participants in your conversation. It includes some extra ideas and guidance for you as the facilitator

- Intros & Intention Setting
- What Is
- What If
- What Now
- Take away

STEP 1: INTRO

- * Welcome everyone
- * Give yourself 2 minutes to introduce the concept of the Big Education Conversation.
- * This is a space and invitation to:
 - reflect on your own beliefs about the purpose of education and listen to the views of others
 - reimagine education, identifying small steps you will take individually or collectively to change education for the better
 - add your voice to a global conversation on the purpose of education
- * A small (1-2 minute) introduction about yourself that is authentic, vulnerable and shows you are engaged and ready to host this conversation. For example, a story from your life that establishes why it's important for you to have a Big Education Conversation.
- * Agree your guiding principles/norms for the conversation. This sets the tone for the way we relate and support each other in having effective and transformative dialogue.

Here are some guiding principles/norms you might want to share with the group:

- **Active listening and curiosity** - Prepare to listen and focus on trying to understand and engage, not to respond.
 - **Mutual care and respect, no assumptions** - Everyone's experience is unique and we want people to bring their full and most authentic self. This will happen when participants feel safe, cared for and respected. Remember that people wear many hats, but are not defined by them.
 - **Encourage and empower** - We all have the agency to make small changes to transform education, and big changes if we work together.
 - **Non-hierarchical** - Each of us is a teacher and a learner. Let's learn from one another.
 - **Be playful, have fun** - We're more likely to remember and share creative ideas when we're relaxed and having fun.
 - **No putting down of self or others** - Let go of the voice in your head that says, 'your idea is not good enough. Best to stay quiet.' There are no right or wrong answers here, it is the exchange of perspectives that is valuable in a Big Education Conversation.
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- * If you're running a longer version of this session you can also invite participants to add and co-create guiding principles as an introductory activity. For example participants can finish the sentence: "I will contribute to creating a safe and brave space today by... "
 - * Remind people to take care of their own needs and only share as much as they feel comfortable. If it's a longer session, encourage everyone to pay attention to their bodies, and stretch or step out to the toilet as needed.

- * **Invite your group to share their names, pronoun(s) and choose an intro question that fits the time you have.**

For example, quick intro questions:

What colour comes to mind when you think of school?

What is the first word that comes to mind when you think of school?

What two words describe how you're feeling right now?

What excites you about being here?

If how you are feeling right now was something from nature, what would it be?

Intro questions that invite longer answers:

Why have you joined this conversation today?

What is a memory from your time in school that you cherish?

What is a learning experience from childhood that left a deep impact on you?

Who was/is your favourite teacher and why?

What hope and fear do you bring to this conversation?

- * **Briefly discuss why you are having this conversation. As a group what do you hope will come from the discussion?**

STEP 2: WHAT IS

Invite participants to go to www.bigeducationconversation.org and answer the 5 question survey. Then, share and discuss the results as a group. Take time to be curious about the views of others.



Offline? Then discuss these questions instead:

What do you believe is the purpose of education? Do others share this belief?

What does the education system currently prioritise and are you happy with this?



STEP 3: WHAT IF

- * **Ask:** If you could reimagine or redesign education what big changes would you make and why?
- * Remind everyone they have permission to be playful in this section of the conversation!

Be playful, creative
and reimagine
education

To encourage their imagination you could also:

Split the group into pairs: so people have more time talk through their ideas and bounce off each other.



Invite some silent reflection time: to create a poem, draw a picture capturing the future of education or hold a visualisation meditation. Tap into your super power as a facilitator, what do you think you could bring that might help people imagine new possibilities for education?

Collective Dreaming: Put on some music and invite people to share their what if questions on pieces of paper, fold them and drop them anonymously in a bowl in the middle. After around 8-10 minutes, turn off the music, and read each other's dreams out of the bowl out loud.

STEP 4: WHAT NOW

- * **Ask:** What is a small step you/your group could commit to making that would positively change education for/in your community? Is there something you personally could do today, this week, this month? Is there a shared action you can take as a group?
- * Invite participants to write their commitments down or record them. Then, take a photo and share on social media with #BigEdConversation, this will encourage and inspire others.
- * Don't forget to add your conversation to the global map and feedback your insights at www.bigeducationconversation.org

STEP 5: TAKE AWAY

- * **Ask:** Can you share one thing you received from this experience that you're taking away today? It could be a quote, idea, joke, something you've learned or that surprised you.

You can split into pairs for this if in a bigger group so there's enough time.

- * **Close:** You might like to share a closing poem or quote, or do a group song that inspires you as a host to reimagine education together!

Or simply thank participants and offer a way to keep in touch.

5. SHARE



Checklist

After your Big Education Conversation make sure that you:

1. Capture the commitments and actions discussed today. Is there a group commitment you can follow up on after the event?
2. Make sure you have a way of contacting participants to share updates and invitations to future conversations. Participation feedback loops are important in building trust and collective action. Share the notes or verbal summary you've made from the group discussion with your event host if you have one. How can the collective insights and ideas from this conversation be used by this community?
3. Make sure you get a snapshot of the conversation you've had to celebrate it on social media with #BigEdConversation and show the world what the Big Education Conversation looks like where you are.
4. Put your conversation on the global map and feedback your insights so they can be analysed at www.bigeducationconversation.org
5. Ask everyone who took part in your conversation to lead a Big Education Conversation of their own!



Scan me to
add your
conversation
to our map

www.bigeducationconversation.co.uk



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More facilitation resources:

['The Art of Gathering'](#) -
a book by Priya Parker

[Free creative facilitation
tools](#) - online from Partners
for Youth Empowerment

[Global Action Circles](#) - to
explore the purpose of
education over several
months with YouthxYouth

Thanks for having a Big Education Conversation!