# Facilitator Guide:

## Foundations of Socratic Circles and Social Justice Education

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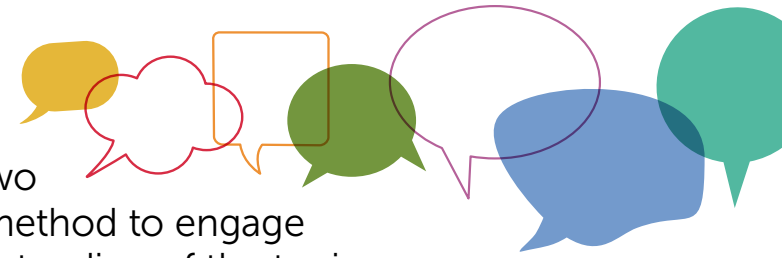
# Socratic Circle PD

This facilitator guide outlines the content and instructional process for two 90-minute modules. The facilitator will largely use the Socratic Circle method to engage the participants in discussions and guide them towards a deeper understanding of the topic.

## Overview

This training is designed to provide educators with a comprehensive understanding of social justice issues in education, focusing particularly on race and racism. The training consists of two modules that are designed to be delivered in three sessions. The modules will delve into the history of race and racism in schooling, exploring how these elements have shaped the present-day education system. Using a mixture of instructional content, multimedia resources, and interactive activities, educators will have the opportunity to reflect on their understanding and explore ways to address these issues in their classrooms. The facilitator will largely use the Socratic Circle method to engage participants in discussions and guide them towards a deeper understanding of the topics.

### Structure Recommendations

Create an arc of learning that provides teachers with essential information and guidance to conduct Socratic Circles that promote healthy racial dialogue in their classrooms as a mechanism to discuss social justice topics with students.

### Implementation Recommendations

Create a cohort of educators to complete the professional learning experience together and create an online space for the sharing of resources, ideas, and collective learning. Options for an online learning space include:

- Shared Google Drive, this option is low or no cost and provides a familiar platform for engagement.
- An online collaboration space, such as Mighty Networks[1]. There is a cost associated with this option, but it also provides more robust collaboration features and built-in engagement analytics.

With either option, provide participants with a journal space to record and share learning throughout the experience.

# Table of Contents

By the end of this professional development series, participants will be well-equipped to implement Socratic Circles in their classrooms to address race, racism, and other social justice issues. They will have gained valuable insights and skills for creating safe and inclusive learning environments, facilitating meaningful discussions, and supporting student growth. Additionally, educators will be empowered to advocate for equity and social justice within their schools and communities.

The Arc of Learning for teacher professional development organizes the learning experience in a way that provides both theoretical and technical information to equip teacher participants with the knowledge and dispositions required to implement Socratic Circles in their classrooms. In addition to Modules 1 and 2, which are designed to be delivered synchronously using this guide and the accompanying slide decks, Modules 3-6 provide additional information on preparing for, facilitating, and following up on implementation of classroom Socratic Circles.

These modules were created for a project with the purpose of supporting teachers in utilizing a Socratic Circle model to engage in healthy dialogue on racial equity and social justice in the classroom. The content was developed by subject matter experts and referenced from a variety of sources. All sources are documented with citations.

# Module 1, Session 1: Introduction to Socratic Circles

⧗ Time: 90 minutes

## Objectives

- Understand the Concept of Socratic Circles: By the end of the session, participants will be able to explain the concept and structure of Socratic Circles, including their origin, key elements, and the role of the facilitator.

- Recognize the Application of Socratic Circles to Social Justice Education: Participants will understand how Socratic Circles can be used to foster in-depth discussions on complex social justice issues, emphasizing critical thinking, respectful discourse, and evidence-based arguments.

- Identify the Elements of an Effective Socratic Circle: Participants will be able to identify and explain the essential components of a successful Socratic Circle, including learner-centered group discussions, text-based or essential question-based dialogues, and the importance of active listening.

- Demonstrate the Ability to Set Up a Socratic Circle: Participants will learn how to physically set up a classroom to facilitate a Socratic Circle, creating an environment that encourages face-to-face dialogue and allows the facilitator to observe without imposing.

- Participate in a Socratic Circle: Participants will engage in a Socratic Circle discussion during the training, demonstrating their understanding of the process, their active listening skills, and their ability to contribute to the discussion in a respectful and constructive manner.

- Reflect on the Experience of a Socratic Circle: After participating in a Socratic Circle, participants will be able to reflect on their experience, identifying what worked well, areas for improvement, and strategies they could use in their own classrooms.

## Materials

- Projector for PowerPoint presentation
- Copies of relevant readings for participants
- Video/audio setup for podcast listening
- Pens and notebooks for participant note-taking

# Introduction

⏳ Time: 10 minutes

Facilitators should start the session with an introduction of themselves, and have participants introduce themselves as well. Ice-breakers can be used to allow participants to get to know each other better. Facilitators should then provide an overview of the training session, its purpose, and objectives.

## Sample Script:

*"Today, we will explore a teaching method that has its roots in ancient philosophy but remains just as relevant and powerful in the 21st-century classroom. We're going to delve into the world of Socratic Circles, a unique approach to classroom discussions that fosters critical thinking, encourages active participation, and promotes respectful discourse.*

*This method was named after the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates who believed in the power of asking questions. In our session, you'll learn about the key elements of Socratic Circles, how they work, and how you can use them to inspire deeper learning in your classrooms. But this isn't just about theory. We're also going to see how Socratic Circles can be used as an effective tool for discussing complex social justice issues, providing your students with a safe and respectful platform to express their views and understand the perspectives of others.*

*Now, before we get started, let's do a quick ice-breaker to get to know each other better. I'd like each of you to introduce yourselves and share one memorable classroom discussion you have facilitated or been part of. It can be an instance where you saw a real breakthrough in understanding, a moment of genuine connection between students, or simply a time when the discussion took an unexpected yet enlightening turn.*

*I'll start…"*

# Theoretical Background

⏳ Time: 15 minutes

Facilitators should provide a brief overview of what Socratic Circles are and how they work, drawing on the information provided. They should highlight how Socratic Circles promote critical thinking, active listening, respectful discourse, and a deep understanding of complex topics. The facilitator might use the whiteboard or flip chart to list these key elements for ongoing reference.

## Sample Script:

*"Now that we've all had a chance to introduce ourselves, let's delve deeper into the philosophy that underpins our session today— the Socratic Method.*

*The Socratic Method, the namesake of the Greek philosopher Socrates, is a form of dialogue-based learning where probing questions are used to encourage critical thinking and to illuminate ideas. It's not about teaching rote facts or 'the right answer.' Rather, the Socratic Method encourages learners to deeply examine and understand the foundational principles that support their knowledge and beliefs.*

*Socratic Circles, therefore, are a modern manifestation of this ancient method. These discussions aren't merely about surface-level comprehension. They challenge participants to think critically, interpret and analyze complex ideas, and engage with their peers in a thoughtful and respectful dialogue.*

*A Socratic Circle involves a few critical components:*

- *First, it's centered around an essential question or a text. This provides a common ground for all participants and forms the basis for the discussion.*

- *Second, it involves active participation from all members. Unlike traditional classroom discussions, learners are not passive recipients of information. They're active contributors, thinkers, and collaborators.*

- *Third, it emphasizes active listening. The goal is not just to voice your opinions, but to truly understand and engage with the ideas presented by your peers.*

- *Finally, it demands respectful discourse. Disagreements are not only allowed but encouraged, as they can lead to deeper understanding. However, it's essential to remember that differing opinions should be met with respect and open-mindedness.*

*Now, why does all this matter? Because Socratic Circles can help cultivate critical thinking, improve communication skills, foster empathy, and promote a deeper understanding of complex topics. They're particularly effective when discussing sensitive and multifaceted issues like race and racism, which we'll be exploring in depth today.*

*Remember, your role as an educator is not to deliver knowledge, but to guide your students on a journey of discovery. By using Socratic Circles, you can shift from being the 'sage on the stage' to the 'guide on the side', facilitating a learner-centric environment where students feel empowered to explore, question, and learn.*

*We'll unpack all these elements in greater detail as we progress through the session, but keep this framework in mind as we move forward."*

# Importance of Socratic Circles in Social Justice Discussions

⏳ Time: 15 minutes

The facilitator should then talk about the importance of using Socratic Circles for social justice education, emphasizing how this method fosters inclusive and respectful dialogue, allows for the exploration of complex social justice issues, and promotes critical thinking and evidence-based arguments.

## Sample Script:

*"Now that we have a good understanding of what Socratic Circles are, let's discuss why they are particularly useful when tackling discussions about race, racism, and social justice.*

*Social justice topics are typically complex and multifaceted. They require us to analyze multiple perspectives, confront our biases, and evaluate systemic structures that often go unnoticed. Traditional teaching methods, while effective in many scenarios, may not fully serve these discussions as they often emphasize a single, 'correct' perspective or narrative. This is where Socratic Circles come into play. The very structure of a Socratic Circle encourages the exploration of diverse perspectives. By engaging in dialogue, participants can challenge their own viewpoints and gain a more nuanced understanding of the topic at hand.*

*Critical thinking is the cornerstone of Socratic Circles and is essential in social justice discussions. Through asking open-ended, thought-provoking questions, we prompt participants to think beyond the surface level. They engage with the root causes, underlying systems, and structures that contribute to the social justice issues we see today.*

*Another critical aspect of Socratic Circles is the emphasis on evidence-based arguments. This practice reinforces the importance of grounding arguments in fact, rather than opinion, promoting logical reasoning and a thorough examination of sources. In the context of social justice, this is crucial in understanding the systemic nature of many of these issues.*

*Moreover, the respectful discourse and active listening fostered in Socratic Circles help create an inclusive environment. This is invaluable in social justice discussions, as it provides a safe space where participants can express their views, even when these views might conflict. Remember, it's not about winning an argument, but about understanding different perspectives and fostering empathy.*

*Finally, the facilitator's role in Socratic Circles is not to lead the discussion but to guide it. This subtle shift is critical, especially in social justice discussions, to prevent the conversation from becoming one-sided or veering off-topic. Socratic Circles are a powerful tool in discussing social justice topics because they promote critical thinking, evidence-based arguments, active listening, and respectful discourse, all within a guided, inclusive environment. This way, participants can delve into these complex topics, expand their perspectives, and engage in productive and meaningful conversations."*

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## Video

⏳ Time: 10 minutes

The facilitator should play the video that introduces Socratic Circles, pausing as needed to emphasize key points or answer questions.

▶ [Edutopia Scaffolding Discussion Skills With a Socratic Circle](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e3IBLKYaK1E)[2] (3:36)

### Discussion Questions:
- What stood out to you in the video?
- What did you notice about the student's role in the discussion?
- What wonderings do you have regarding implementing Socratic Circles in your classroom to discuss race, racism and social justice issues?

## Setting Up the Room

⏳ Time: 10 minutes

The facilitator can then explain how to physically set up a classroom to facilitate a Socratic Circle, perhaps using a small group of volunteers to physically demonstrate the setup. Emphasis should be placed on creating a space that encourages face-to-face dialogue and allows the facilitator to observe without imposing.

### Sample Script:

*"Okay, now that we've explored the theory behind Socratic Circles and their importance in discussions on social justice, let's shift our attention to the practical aspects - one of the first being the setting of the room. The physical space where the discussion takes place plays a crucial role in facilitating open and inclusive dialogue.*

*The goal is to create an environment that encourages face-to-face dialogue and ensures everyone is seen and heard. So, we recommend arranging the seats in a circle so that each participant can make eye contact with the others. This setup fosters a sense of equality and community—there is no 'head' of the table and every participant is equally important.*

*The facilitator, **that's you**, should choose a spot from where you can see and hear everyone, but without imposing a commanding presence on the participants. Remember, in a Socratic Circle, your role is not to dominate the conversation, but to guide it, asking thought-provoking questions and ensuring everyone gets a chance to contribute.*

*If you have a large number of participants, you might want to consider a modified 'fishbowl' setup. This involves having a smaller circle of discussants inside a larger circle of observers. Participants can move between the inner and outer circles, allowing everyone a chance to contribute while also managing the flow of the conversation.*

*Ultimately, the goal is to create a physical space that reflects the values of a Socratic Circle: mutual respect, active listening, and equal participation. By doing so, you'll encourage a more dynamic and engaging discussion."*

*Remember, these are guidelines and suggestions—feel free to adapt the setup based on your classroom's specific needs and constraints."*

2 Edutopia. (2018, November 16). Scaffolding Discussion Skills With a Socratic Circle [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved November 15, 2023, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e3IBLKYaK1E

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# Demo Socratic Circle

⏳ Time: 20 minutes

The facilitator should ask participants to help rearrange the physical space with chairs in a circle to prepare for the discussion.

## Demo Socratic Circle Grounding Text: _I Teach Black Girls Like Me_[3] by Bria Wright

- Provide all participants a handout of the article (or digital copy) and provide 5-8 minutes to allow participants to read and process the information.
- Utilize this Socratic Seminar Capture Sheet[4] as a graphic organizer for the discussion and provide each participant with a copy. Select three questions from the list below, or create your own, to use for the demo discussion.

While the discussion may flourish with engaged sharing of thoughts and ideas, be mindful of the time and that this activity is for demonstration purposes. You may need to interrupt the flow of the conversation to move the group along to the next section. Your role in the demonstration is to highlight how the teacher serves as a mere guide for the discussion. Ask probing questions, encourage equal participation, and ensure that everyone remains respectful and follows the norms of this discussion style.

## Discussion Questions (select 3):

- How does Bria Wright's experience with her seventh grade teacher exemplify systemic racism in the classroom?

- What does Wright mean by the term "Black girl magic" and how was it perceived as a threat by her seventh grade teacher?

- What are the potential long-term effects of racial microaggressions and biased discipline on students of color?

- How does Wright's approach to classroom management differ from that of her seventh grade teacher and how might this difference impact her students' experience of school?

- How does Wright's "multicultural self" map activity contribute to a more inclusive and racially aware classroom environment?

- What are some ways that educators can engage in open and honest conversations about racism with their students?

- How does Wright's teaching approach challenge and counteract racial stereotypes and low expectations for Black students?

- How does Wright's story illustrate the power and importance of representation in the teaching profession?

- What does it mean for a classroom to be "safe, positive, and affirming for all students," and how does this relate to race and racism?

- How can educators encourage students to embrace their racial and cultural identities, and why is this important in the fight against racism?

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## Group Activity: Practice Socratic Circles

⏳ Time: 10 minutes

After the demonstration, participants should be divided into small groups (4-5 members each) and each group should conduct a mini Socratic Circle. The facilitator can walk around to observe and provide guidance as needed.

Participants should use the same grounding text and questions from the large group demonstration in the previous section.

## Reflection and Debrief

⏳ Time: 5 minutes

After the practice session, the facilitator should encourage participants to share their experiences, what they learned, and any questions they have. The facilitator can provide feedback and address any queries or concerns.

Questions the facilitator might ask participants include:

- Reflecting on today's session, how would you describe your understanding of Socratic Circles now compared to the beginning of the session? What concepts stood out to you most?

- Considering your own classroom context, what potential challenges do you foresee in implementing Socratic Circles, and how might you overcome them?

- Discuss the role that Socratic Circles could play in discussing race, racism, and other social justice issues in your classroom. How could they help facilitate respectful and thoughtful conversations on these complex topics?

- Think about a text, topic, or concept from your current curriculum that you believe would be suitable for a Socratic Circle. Why did you choose this particular one? What essential questions might you ask to spark discussion?

- The facilitator's role in a Socratic Circle is key. Reflect on your own facilitation skills: what strengths do you bring to this role and what areas would you like to develop or improve upon?

# Closing

⏳ Time: 5 minutes

To close the session, the facilitator should summarize the key learning points, encourage the participants to try using Socratic Circles in their classrooms, and thank them for their participation.

## Sample Script:

*"We've arrived at the end of our time together, and I want to thank each of you for your active participation, thoughtful insights, and respectful discourse. You've demonstrated the power of Socratic Circles and how they can truly invigorate a classroom, especially when discussing social justice issues.*

*As you return to your classrooms, I encourage you to reflect further on what you've learned today. Think about how you can integrate Socratic Circles into your teaching practices and how they might enhance discussions on social justice issues among your students. Remember, implementing a new approach is a journey, so be patient with yourself and your students.*

*We'll be sending out feedback forms via email shortly. Please take a few moments to complete them. Your input is crucial in helping us improve future training sessions. Also, don't hesitate to reach out if you have further questions or need additional support as you implement Socratic Circles in your classrooms.*

*Have a great rest of your day and remember: you have the power to ignite meaningful discussions and inspire critical thinking in your classrooms. Here's to a future full of engaging and impactful Socratic Circles! Goodbye, everyone!"*

# Post-Session

Following the training, facilitators should distribute feedback forms to evaluate the effectiveness of the training, allowing them to refine and improve future sessions.

# Feedback Form

Thank you for your participation in the Socratic Circles training session. Your feedback is invaluable in helping us improve our future sessions. Please take a few minutes to share your thoughts on the training.

**Your Name (Optional):** _____

**Did the training meet your expectations?**

☐ Exceeded expectations

☐ Met expectations

☐ Partially met expectations

☐ Did not meet expectations

**Please rate the following aspects of the training**
**(1 = Very Poor, 5 = Excellent)**

Relevance of the content to your work:
1  2  3  4  5

Clarity of information presented:
1  2  3  4  5

Effectiveness of the facilitator:
1  2  3  4  5

Usefulness of the discussion and activities:
1  2  3  4  5

Overall training experience:
1  2  3  4  5

**How confident do you feel about implementing Socratic Circles in your classroom after this training?**

☐ Very confident

☐ Somewhat confident

☐ Neutral

☐ Somewhat unconfident

☐ Not confident at all

## Open Ended Questions

**What did you find most valuable about the training?**

**What improvements, if any, would you suggest for future training sessions?**

**Would you recommend this training to other educators? Why or why not?**

**Any additional comments or suggestions?**

Thank you for taking the time to complete this feedback form.
Your input is greatly appreciated!

# Module 1, Session 2: Introduction to Socratic Circles

## Objectives

- Participants will understand the historical context of race and racism in American schooling.
- Participants will examine the effects of the landmark Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court case.
- Participants will explore the lasting impacts of racial segregation and integration on the teaching profession and student experience.

## Materials

- Projector for PowerPoint presentation
- Copies of relevant readings for participants
- Video/audio setup for podcast listening
- Pens and notebooks for participant note-taking

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# Introduction

⏳ Time: 10 minutes

Facilitator introduces the topic of the training and explains the importance of understanding the historical context of race and racism in education.

## Sample Introduction:

*"Good morning/afternoon everyone, and thank you for joining us today. My name is [Your Name], and I will be facilitating this training session titled, 'Introduction to Using Socratic Circles in the Classroom to Discuss Race and Racism.'*

*In this training, we are going to be exploring and dissecting the concepts of race and racism within our education system, their historical origins, and their impacts on today's classrooms. We will also take a close look at the landmark case Brown v. Board of Education and its effects on schooling.*

*I believe this session will help us all gain a broader and more nuanced understanding of how social justice issues shape the experiences of our students and our roles as educators. Our ultimate goal is to empower ourselves with knowledge and strategies that can be used to create more inclusive, equitable classrooms for all of our students.*

*Before we delve into our topic, let's break the ice and get to know each other a bit better. Please take a moment to share your name, the grade level and subject you teach, and one thing that inspired you to become an educator."*

# Presentation

⏳ Time: 45 minutes

Facilitator presents on the historical context of race and racism in schooling, including the details and aftermath of Brown v. Board of Education, and the systemic racial discrimination of Black, Hispanic, and Asian students in schools.

Learning about the history of race and racism in schooling is important for teachers to build racial literacy and understand how our current education system formed into what it is today. This professional learning experience does not provide a full history of the American Education System and challenges regarding racism and systemic oppression. The information provided in this training seeks to provide context to support the importance of discussing race, racism and other social justice topics in classrooms.

# Activity: Podcast Listening and Reflection

⏳ Time: 20 minutes

Participants listen to the podcast on the effects of Brown v. Board of Education on Black teachers, either as "pre-work" or during the session.

▶ [Link to Podcast](#)[5]

Following the podcast, participants take some time to write down their reflections, including new information they learned and any questions they have.

# Group Discussion

⏳ Time: 25 minutes

Facilitator leads a group discussion where participants share their reflections and ask questions raised by the podcast. The facilitator can also further expand on the podcast content and its significance.

## Discussion Questions:

- How did the "separate is not equal" ruling impact the education system in the United States?
- What were some of the immediate and long-term effects of the Brown v. Board of Education decision on American society?

[5] Book of the Day. (2022). The aftermath of Brown vs The Board of Education in "Jim Crow's Pink Slip" [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved November 15, 2023, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rc3gW1AqBG8

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# Race in the Classroom

In this section, we'll look at how race and racism show up in the classroom in terms of inequitable discipline, hidden curriculum, and policing language.

In the previous section, we examined the history of how schools became integrated and the various impacts Brown vs. the Board of Education had on schooling. This context is important for today's educators to understand in order to critically examine how students of color are being impacted in today's schools. Next we'll examine how students are disciplined in schools historically and in the present day.

Nationwide, students of color experience unequal and unjust disciplinary referrals and expulsions in P-12 schools. While there are many factors at play, we'll first look at the statistics.

- Black students are suspended 1.78 times more than White students

  - In K–12 settings, Black children make up 15% of children in schools but 39% of those suspended at least once, 27% of children restrained, and 23% of children secluded (Children's Equity Project[6]).
  - A study in Florida found that 39% of African American students were suspended, compared to 22% of White students, and 26% of Hispanic/Latino students.
  - African American students were also suspended for longer periods of time than other students (Skiba et. al, 2014[7]).
  - There is no evidence that Black children show greater or more severe misbehavior. Instead, research suggests Black children are punished more severely than their peers for the same or similar behaviors as early as preschool (Morris, 2015[8]).

- Hispanic/Latino students are 2.23 suspended times more than White students on average (Skiba et. al, 2014[7]).

To further explore how race and discipline are related, we'll look at statistics that examine the intersections of race, gender, disability, and discipline. In general, if students of color have a disability they are at higher risk for discipline (Skiba et. al, 2014[7]).

- 25% of African American students with disabilities received out of school suspension in 2009- 2010 (Skiba et. al, 2014[7]).

- African American students with a disability receive out of school suspension higher than every other racial/ ethnic group and 16% higher than White students with a disability.

- African-American students had a 31 percent higher likelihood of a school discretionary action, compared to otherwise identical White and Hispanic students (Fabelo et. al, 2011[9]).

Gender and race also intersect for students of color in distinct ways (Skiba et. al, 2014[7]) with Black males being consistently the most at-risk for discipline and arrest. African American and Hispanic/Latina girls were also at high risk of suspension and expulsion; however, Black females were suspended out of school at rates significantly higher than other females, and higher than White and Hispanic/Latino males. Hispanic/Latino females reported rates of suspension and expulsion higher than White females and rates equivalent to White males.

[6] The Children's Equity Project from Arizona State University: National Equity Landscape of State Exclusionary Discipline Policies Across Pre-K-12 Contexts. https://cep.asu.edu/sites/default/files/2023-09/state-discipline-072623.pdf
[7] Russell J. Skiba, Mariella I. Arredondo & Natasha T. Williams (2014) More Than a Metaphor: The Contribution of Exclusionary Discipline to a School-to-Prison Pipeline, Equity & Excellence in Education, 47:4, 546-564, DOI: 10.1080/10665684.2014.958965
[8] Brea L. Perry, Edward W. Morris: Suspending Progress: Collateral Consequences of Exclusionary Punishment in Public Schools, American Sociological Review. Suspending Progress: Collateral Consequences of Exclusionary Punishment in Public Schools - Brea L. Perry, Edward W. Morris, 2014
[9] Tony Fabelo, Ph.D.; Michael D. Thompson; Martha Plotkin, J.D.; Dottie Carmichael, Ph.D.; Miner P. Marchbanks III, Ph.D.; Eric A. Booth, M.A. Breaking Schools' Rules: A Statewide Study of How School Discipline Relates to Students' Success and Juvenile Justice Involvement. July 2011. U.S. Department of Justice. Office of Justice Programs https://cep.asu.edu/sites/default/files/2023-09/state-discipline-072623.pdf

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## Activity: Watch & Discuss

Watch this video from Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality explaining how Black girls are often deemed older, and therefore, receive harsher punishment than White students.

▶ [End Adultification Bias (full version)](#) (4:31)

## Discussion Questions:

- Were you aware of adultification bias?
- What questions did the video raise for you?
- Do you see adultification bias at work in your district? How do you know?
- How might you have engaged in adultification bias before?

**A Note for Facilitators:**
You can make this part of the session interactive by using [flip video discussion sharing](#) to create space for interactive virtual discussion.

**If the session is delivered synchronously, a group discussion using the above discussion questions will support collective dialogue and learning.**

# Optional Jigsaw Activity

Now that session participants have listened to the podcast on the effects of Brown v. Board of Education on Black Teachers, explores race and racism through the lens of inequitable classroom discipline, and they've watched the video about adultification bias, you can use a jigsaw activity to begin planning a Socratic Circle discussion for your students, exploring social justice and racial equity in education.

## Here are initial steps to take to structure your jigsaw activity:

1. Ask participants to form groups of 4-5 people each, with each assigned to work on one component of planning a Socratic Circle for students to discuss the historical context of race and racism in American education and the lasting impacts of racial segregation and integration on the teaching profession and student experience.

2. Each group should work on **one** component of the planning for 15-20 minutes. Initial options for these components are below and you can encourage group participants develop their own planning components as well:

   - Developing a resource collection for students to read/listen/watch in preparation for the discussion
   - Developing discussion question prompts for students to adapt and use during the discussion
   - Developing a set of common understandings about group conduct and participation
   - Developing a plan for summarizing and sharing the key points of the discussion
   - Developing a post-discussion presentation to encourage student feedback and gather suggestions for future Socratic Circle discussions.

3. Next, one member from each of the groups will come together to form new groups who will present a summary plan for their Socratic Circle, encompassing each of the components above. Group members will share information and arrive at their "optimal" plan for planning a Socratic Circle experience for students.
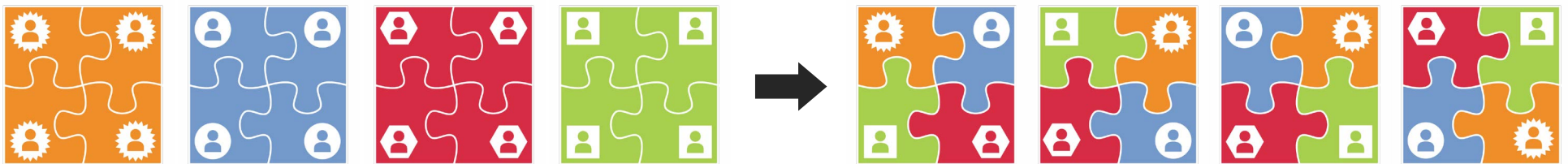


## The Facilitator's Role:

As the facilitator for this activity, your role is to move among the groups to help encourage participation from all.
After the groups present their summary plans, your role is to highlight innovative approaches and potential next steps as each participant plans Socratic Circle activities in their classrooms and schools.

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# Summary and Conclusion

⏳ Time: 10 minutes

Facilitator summarizes the main points of the module and wraps up the discussion, providing some teasers for the next module and assignments if necessary.

## Sample Script:

*"Thank you all for your active participation in today's session. We have explored the historical context of race and racism in American schooling, examined the effects of the landmark Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court case, and begun to understand the lasting impacts of racial segregation and integration on the teaching profession and student experience.*

*Our discussions today have highlighted the significance of recognizing the historical implications of race in our education system. Understanding this history is essential as we work to create more inclusive, equitable, and understanding environments for our students. By taking these steps, we move closer to the ultimate goal of education: fostering a generation of informed, empathetic, and active citizens.*

*I would like to encourage you all to reflect further on what we've discussed today, and think about how this new understanding of historical context might inform your teaching practices and how you engage with your students.*

*Next time, we will delve even deeper into the topic of Socratic Circles and their applications within a social justice framework. We will examine how we can effectively use this method to facilitate thoughtful, respectful, and constructive discussions on social justice issues, such as race and racism, in our classrooms.*

*Before we leave, remember to complete and submit the feedback form. Your insights are crucial for us to improve our sessions and make them more valuable for you.*

*Thank you once again for your time and active participation. It has been a pleasure having you all in this session. I look forward to seeing you all in the next module!"*

# Post-Session

Following the training, facilitators should distribute feedback forms to evaluate the effectiveness of the training, allowing them to refine and improve future sessions. You'll note the feedback form is consistent throughout each training to compare the participant experience over the series of sessions.

# Feedback Form

Thank you for your participation in the Socratic Circles training session. Your feedback is invaluable in helping us improve our future sessions. Please take a few minutes to share your thoughts on the training.

**Your Name (Optional):** _____

**Did the training meet your expectations?**

☐ Exceeded expectations

☐ Met expectations

☐ Partially met expectations

☐ Did not meet expectations

**Please rate the following aspects of the training**
**(1 = Very Poor, 5 = Excellent)**

Relevance of the content to your work:
1  2  3  4  5

Clarity of information presented:
1  2  3  4  5

Effectiveness of the facilitator:
1  2  3  4  5

Usefulness of the discussion and activities:
1  2  3  4  5

Overall training experience:
1  2  3  4  5

**How confident do you feel about implementing Socratic Circles in your classroom after this training?**

☐ Very confident

☐ Somewhat confident

☐ Neutral

☐ Somewhat unconfident

☐ Not confident at all

## Open Ended Questions

**What did you find most valuable about the training?**

**What improvements, if any, would you suggest for future training sessions?**

**Would you recommend this training to other educators? Why or why not?**

**Any additional comments or suggestions?**

Thank you for taking the time to complete this feedback form.
Your input is greatly appreciated!

# Module 2: Creating a Safe Space for Difficult Conversations

## Objectives

- Understand Key Terms: Participants will be able to define and understand key terms such as antiracist education, intersectionality, power, privilege, microaggressions, social identities, and cultural competency.

- Engage in Self-Reflection: Participants will engage in self-reflection on their social identities, intersectional identities, and understanding of power and privilege, and how these aspects influence their teaching practices and interactions with students.

- Recognize Power and Privilege Dynamics: Participants will identify the dynamics of power and privilege, both in society and within their classrooms, and explore ways to counteract these dynamics to foster an inclusive, equitable learning environment.

- Build Trust and Foster Emotional Safety: Participants will explore strategies to build trust, foster emotional safety, and establish strong relationships with their students, with a focus on culturally responsive teaching. They will develop a better understanding of how to leverage the elements of cultural competency in building these relationships.

## Materials

- Projector for PowerPoint presentation
- Copies of relevant readings for participants
- Video/audio setup for podcast listening
- Pens and notebooks for participant note-taking

# Introduction

⏳ Time: 10 minutes

Welcome participants and introduce the topic. Briefly define key terms, explaining why it's crucial to establish a common language before diving into in-depth discussions about race and social justice in education.

## Sample Script:

*"Welcome, everyone, to today's session. Today, we'll be focusing on establishing a common language for discussing race and social justice issues in education. Understanding and using a shared language is key to effective discussions and helps ensure that we all approach these topics from the same foundational understanding.*

*We'll be discussing important terms like 'antiracist education', 'identity', 'intersectionality', 'microaggressions', 'oppression', 'positionality', 'privilege', and 'socialization'. By understanding these concepts and how they intersect, we can ensure a more inclusive, equitable, and respectful dialogue."*

# Define Terms

Using a whiteboard or slide presentation, define the following terms. You might engage participants by asking volunteers to read the definitions aloud for the group.

## Antiracist education

An approach to learning that seeks to identify, oppose, and overturn racism in schools and society. It begins with the understanding that racial structures and beliefs from the past continue to affect all people in the present, including in schools. It affirms that educators have a responsibility to recognize and counter racism and to use instruction and curriculum proactively to achieve social transformation and a better future for all students (Center for Antiracist Education[10]).

## Identity

The set of visible and invisible characteristics we use to categorize and define ourselves and those around us (e.g., gender, race, age, religion, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, language, marital/family status, ability, sexual orientation, etc.). Identity shapes our experience by influencing the ways we see ourselves and the ways others see us. (Learning for Justice[11])

## Intersectionality

The complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or group (Merriam-Webster[12])

[10] https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/inclusive-teaching/anti-racist-practices/anti-racist-definitions/
[11] The Southern Poverty Law Center. (2019). Let's Talk! Facilitating Critical Conversations with Students. Learning for Justice. Retrieved November 15, 2023, from https://www.learningforjustice.org/sites/default/files/2019-12/TT-Lets-Talk-December-2019.pdf
[12] Definition of intersectionality. (2023, November 6). Merriam-Webster Dictionary. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/intersectionality

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## Microaggressions

A comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group (such as a racial minority). (Mirriam-Webster[13])

## Oppression

A system that maintains advantages and disadvantages based on social group memberships and operates intentionally and unintentionally, on individual, institutional and cultural levels.

## Positionality

Positionality focuses not only on how our individual identities are constructed, but on how these identities shape the way we see the world in relation to those we interact with. Originally introduced in the field of sociology, positionality can help educators acknowledge how their own distinct identities and viewpoints inherently influence the results of their work. (Center for Social Solutions, University of Michigan[14])

## Privilege

A right, benefit, or advantage accorded to members of a dominant group that is withheld from members of a non-dominant or marginalized group. (Center for Antiracist Education)

## Socialization

The process through which we become accustomed to societal norms, i.e. rules about appropriate or acceptable social identities, beliefs, and behaviors. We are bombarded by these messages even before we are born. These messages are offered by a widening social network (interpersonal, institutional, structural). Through socialization, we learn about social identity categories, such as socioeconomic status, race, assigned sex, gender, religion, health status, sexual orientation, many other social identity categories, as well as the boundaries of human worth and value. (Harro, B. (2000)[15])

[13] Definition of microaggression. (2023, November 13). Merriam-Webster Dictionary.
https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/microaggression
[14] https://www.queensu.ca/ctl/resources/equity-diversity-inclusivity/positionality-statement
[15] Harro, B. (2000). *The Cycle of Socialization*. In M. Adams, W. Blumenfeld, R. Castaneda, H. Hackman, M. Peters. & X. Zuniga (Eds.), Readings for diversity and social justice, pp. 16-21. New York: Routledge

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# Engaging in Critical Self-Reflection

⏳ Time: 15 minutes

Introduce the concept of critical self-reflection, including the need to dig deep into personal identities and racial beliefs. Use the materials provided to facilitate a discussion about racial literacy and its importance in working against racial injustice.

## Sample Script:

*"Certain social identities hold more power and privilege than others in U.S. society. This chart shows examples of certain identities and where they fall on the spectrum of power and oppression."*

## » Show the table on slide 14 and use it to engage in discussion

### Discussion questions:

- In your experience, how have you seen certain social identities hold more power and privilege than others in U.S. society? Can you provide specific examples?

- How does understanding the spectrum of power and oppression help inform our roles as educators? How might this knowledge influence our approach to teaching and interaction with students?

- In what ways can we challenge and address the imbalance of power and privilege in our classrooms and schools? What strategies could we implement to create more equitable learning environments?

## Activity: Listening & Reflection

Play the podcast for participants. Encourage them to reflect on the following questions as they listen:

▶ Dr. Sealy-Ruiz explains the archaeology of self[16] (3:23)

As you listen, reflect

- How can you dig deep into your identities and racial beliefs?

- How can you revisit those tools as you develop new curriculum and activities for students to engage in?

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# Social Identities

⏳ Time: 20 minutes

Discuss the concept of social identities, power, privilege, oppression, and socialization. Use the provided chart and graphics to explain these concepts. Here, it would be beneficial to share personal examples, if comfortable, to encourage others to reflect on their own social identities and their implications.

## Sample Script:

*"Next we will explore the concept of 'Social Identities'. The aim of this section is to deepen our understanding of the diverse identities that compose our classrooms and how they influence our experiences and interactions. We define social identities as the visible and invisible characteristics we use to categorize ourselves and those around us. These can include race, gender, religion, ethnicity, language, marital status, ability, and more. These identities are not simply descriptors; they play a significant role in how we experience the world around us.*

*In U.S. society, certain social identities have historically held and continue to hold more power and privilege than others. This power dynamic can significantly influence the experiences of individuals, shaping the opportunities and barriers they encounter. To illustrate this, let's examine the chart that places different identities on a spectrum of power and oppression. [Refer to the chart on page 26 and slide 18] This chart helps us visualize the systemic inequalities that persist in our society, which extend to educational settings.*

*Understanding this spectrum is not only crucial for fostering empathy but also for identifying and addressing imbalances within our classrooms. As educators, we need to be cognizant of these power dynamics and the impact they may have on our students' learning experiences.*

*Now, let's reflect and discuss our observations from this chart..."*

## Discussion Questions:

- How do the social identities portrayed in the chart align or conflict with your personal experiences or observations in the classroom?
- Can you provide examples of how certain social identities might experience privilege or face oppression within an educational setting?
- How might the understanding of power dynamics influence your approach to classroom management, curriculum design, or student interaction?
- How can we as educators address the imbalances of power and privilege within our classrooms? What strategies could we use?
- Considering the concept of intersectionality, how might the intersection of multiple identities complicate the experiences of power and privilege? Can you give an example from your teaching experience?

# The Spectrum of Power and Oppression

| Type of Oppression | Target Group | Non-Target Group |
|---|---|---|
| Racial | People of color | White people |
| Class | Poor, working class | Middle, owning class |
| Gender | Women, transgender people | Men |
| Sexual orientation | Lesbian, gay, bisexual | Heterosexual people |
| Ability | People with disabilities | People without disabilities |
| Religion | Non-Christian | Christian |
| Age | People over 40 | Young people |
| Youth | Children and young adults | Older adults |
| Rank/status | People without college degree | People with college degree |
| Military service | Vietnam veterans | Veterans of other wars |
| Immigrant status | Immigrant | U.S.-born |
| Language | Non-English | English |

# Intersectionality

⏳ Time: 10 minutes

Introduce the concept of intersectionality, explaining how multiple forms of discrimination can overlap and impact individuals and groups. Show the provided [video](#)[17] and ask participants to reflect on their intersectional identities and those of their students.

## Sample Script:

*"Thank you all for your thoughtful contributions to the discussion on social identities. The complexities and nuances of our identities don't stop there, however. This brings us to our next concept: Intersectionality.*

*Intersectionality is a critical framework developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw that helps us understand how our multiple identities intersect and influence our experiences in the world. This complex, cumulative interaction of different forms of discrimination, such as racism, sexism, and classism, has a significant impact, especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups.*

*Think about your own identities: your race, gender, socioeconomic status, religion, and more. How do they intersect? How do these intersections shape your experiences, your privileges, or the discrimination you may face? It's important to remember that intersectionality helps us recognize that 'single-axis' thinking, that is, considering each form of discrimination separately, doesn't truly capture the lived experiences of individuals who belong to multiple marginalized groups.*

*We'll watch a video now to delve deeper into the concept of intersectionality. As we go through this, I want you to consider how intersectionality plays out in your classroom. Which intersectional identities are present among your students, and how might these identities shape their experiences within the education system?*

*After the video, we'll engage in a reflective activity where you will identify the intersectional identities that make up your lived experience and those of your students. You will be asked to reflect on prevalent social norms in your classroom, and to consider whether certain racial groups are privileged through these norms. This reflection will help us to identify and consider disrupting the systems of privilege, power, and oppression at work in your school or classroom."*

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# Optional Activity: Watch & Reflect

Play this video to help participants learn more about intersectionality.

▶ What is intersectionality? Kimberlé Crenshaw (1:54)

## Discussion Questions:

- How does understanding the concept of intersectionality deepen your understanding of your students' experiences?
- Can you provide an example of an instance where you observed intersectionality playing out in your classroom or school? What happened, and how did it impact the student(s) involved?
- How do your own intersectional identities influence your teaching style and approach to classroom management?
- How can an understanding of intersectionality help in creating a more inclusive and equitable learning environment?
- How might we address the intersectional needs of students within our curriculum and teaching strategies?
- In what ways do you see intersectionality affecting the relationship between teachers, students, and parents?

Remember, these questions should not only stimulate discussion but also promote a deep reflection on the impact of intersectionality on teaching and learning environments.

# Power and Privilege

⏳ Time: 10 minutes

Discuss power, privilege, and the role of social norms in perpetuating systems of power, privilege, and oppression. Show the video and encourage participants to reflect on their own classrooms and schools.

## Sample Script:

*"Moving forward in our discussion, let's now delve into the concept of power and privilege, and understand how these elements profoundly impact our classrooms. Power and privilege are often invisible forces that shape our society, our classrooms, and our interactions with each other. They operate within the framework of social norms—ideas and beliefs that we've been socialized into accepting.*

*Power is an advantage or authority granted to individuals or groups, often through societal structures and norms. It comes in various forms, and it's important to remember that everyone has some form of power. Privilege, on the other hand, is a special right or benefit that is given to some people and not others, often due to aspects of their identity such as race, gender, socio-economic status, etc. In the context of education, power and privilege can manifest in numerous ways, such as disparities in resources, representation in curriculum and literature, teacher expectations, and student interactions. Recognizing these disparities is the first step towards creating a more equitable and inclusive learning environment.*

*To enhance our understanding, let's watch this informative video on how social norms perpetuate systems of power, privilege, and oppression."*

## Optional Activity: Watch & Reflect

Play this video on how social norms (ideas we are socialized into believing) perpetuate systems of power, privilege, and oppression.

▶ [Power Privilege and Oppression](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LTDikx-maoM)[18] (6:35)

## Discussion Sample Script:

*"After watching the video, let's take a moment to reflect on the implications of power, privilege, and social norms in our own teaching practice and classrooms. Let's engage in a conversation about the changes we can implement to disrupt these systems and create a more inclusive, equitable learning environment."*

**Remember to be sensitive to the fact that discussing power and privilege can evoke strong feelings. Always ensure to create a safe and supportive space for open and honest conversation.**

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# Building Trust and Fostering Emotional Safety

⏳ Time: 10 minutes

Transition into a discussion on building trust and fostering emotional safety. Review the concepts of Cultural Literacy, Culturally responsive teaching, and Culturally competent teacher. Discuss the importance of building relationships with students and families and how these key concepts contribute to it.

## Sample Script:

*"As we transition into our next topic, let's focus on the importance of building trust and fostering emotional safety within our classrooms. A successful, inclusive learning environment is one where students feel valued, understood, and secure. In this section, we will delve into the concepts of cultural literacy, culturally responsive teaching, and culturally competent educators, and explore the ways these frameworks can enable us to create a trustworthy and emotionally safe space for our students.*

*Key Terms: Let's begin with understanding some key concepts.*

- *Critical Literacy: This is a pedagogical approach that encourages students to question and challenge dominant power structures and societal norms. It equips them with the tools to 'read' the world from different perspectives, promoting empathy, understanding, and social justice.*
- *Culturally Responsive Teaching: This teaching method celebrates and incorporates students' diverse cultural backgrounds into the curriculum and classroom activities. By doing so, it validates students' identities, enhances their academic achievements, and promotes an inclusive learning environment.*
- *Culturally Competent Teachers: These are educators who value diversity, strive to learn about their students' cultural backgrounds, and utilize this knowledge to inform their teaching practices. They understand that to effectively teach their students, they must respect and acknowledge their individual experiences and cultures.*

## Discussion Question:

Now, let's take a moment to reflect on our own practice. How do we embody these elements in our day-to-day interactions with our students? Let's share a few examples and learn from each other's experiences.

# Building Relationships with Students

⏳ Time: 10 minutes

Discuss the role of relationship building in education, and show the graphic of the five key elements for adults in building relationships with students. Ask participants to reflect on how they engage with these elements in their daily interactions with students.

## Sample Script:

*"Moving deeper into the process of fostering emotional safety in our classrooms, we come to an essential aspect of this work: building relationships. These connections, created and nurtured between teachers, students, and families, form the basis of a strong, collaborative, and inclusive learning community. It's important to remember that establishing such relationships is not an instantaneous process, but a continuous one that commences on the very first day of school and is sustained throughout the academic year.*

*A strong rapport with our students not only fosters an emotionally safe environment but also greatly contributes to their academic success and personal growth. As educators, it's crucial that we demonstrate respect for our students' unique experiences, value their perspectives, and affirm their identities in our classrooms. This allows our students to feel recognized and valued, thereby creating an environment where they feel confident and secure to participate, learn, and grow. Let's now turn our attention to the five key elements that contribute to building effective relationships with students: [Refer to chart on slide 31]*

*These elements can and should be consciously incorporated into our daily interactions with students, our instructional methods, and even our curriculum content. They provide us with a road map to creating authentic, meaningful, and impactful relationships with our students."*

## » Show the table on slide 31 and use it to engage in discussion

### Reflection Questions:

As we work towards creating such relationships, reflection plays a significant role. Invite participants to journal using the following questions as prompts:

- How are we embodying these elements in our classroom practices?
- In what ways have we used these elements to build connections with our students?
- Can you share a time when you found it challenging to build a relationship with a student?
  How did you approach this challenge, and what did you learn from this experience?
- How do you incorporate knowledge about your students' cultural backgrounds and personal experiences into your teaching strategies to foster stronger relationships?
- Reflect on a time when a relationship you built with a student positively impacted their academic performance or emotional well-being.
  Can you share this experience and the key factors that contributed to this positive outcome?

# Conclusion

⧗ Time: 5 minutes

Wrap up the session, summarizing the main points and emphasizing the importance of common language, self-reflection, and building relationships. Thank the participants for their engagement, and encourage them to reflect on what they've learned and how they might apply it in their classrooms.

## Sample Script:

*"Thank you, everyone, for your active participation, thoughtful reflections, and engaging discussions today. We have delved into some challenging yet important topics. We've explored key terminology related to antiracist education, intersectionality, power, privilege, and social identities. We have examined our own identities, privileges, and biases through the lens of intersectionality. And, importantly, we have discussed the significant role of building trust and fostering emotional safety in our classrooms, underlining the value of relationship-building with our students.*

*Remember, this process of self-reflection and self-awareness is ongoing. The journey towards becoming a more culturally responsive teacher and creating an inclusive and equitable classroom does not end here. I encourage you all to continue reflecting, questioning, learning, and applying these insights to your teaching practice.*

*Before we conclude, I would like to remind you to fill out the feedback form. Your input is invaluable and helps us continuously improve these sessions. Thank you once again for your time, your open-mindedness, and your commitment to improving as educators. I look forward to seeing you at our next session."*

# Post-Session

Following the training, facilitators should distribute feedback forms to evaluate the effectiveness of the training, allowing them to refine and improve future sessions. You'll note the feedback form is consistent throughout each training to compare the participant experience over the series of sessions.

# Feedback Form

Thank you for your participation in the Socratic Circles training session. Your feedback is invaluable in helping us improve our future sessions. Please take a few minutes to share your thoughts on the training.

**Your Name (Optional):** _____

**Did the training meet your expectations?**

☐ Exceeded expectations

☐ Met expectations

☐ Partially met expectations

☐ Did not meet expectations

**Please rate the following aspects of the training**
**(1 = Very Poor, 5 = Excellent)**

Relevance of the content to your work:
1  2  3  4  5

Clarity of information presented:
1  2  3  4  5

Effectiveness of the facilitator:
1  2  3  4  5

Usefulness of the discussion and activities:
1  2  3  4  5

Overall training experience:
1  2  3  4  5

**How confident do you feel about implementing Socratic Circles in your classroom after this training?**

☐ Very confident

☐ Somewhat confident

☐ Neutral

☐ Somewhat unconfident

☐ Not confident at all

## Open Ended Questions

**What did you find most valuable about the training?**

**What improvements, if any, would you suggest for future training sessions?**

**Would you recommend this training to other educators? Why or why not?**

**Any additional comments or suggestions?**

Thank you for taking the time to complete this feedback form. Your input is greatly appreciated!

# Notes