Courageous Conversations about Diversity Protocol

Origin of Protocol

Courageous Conversations Protocol was originally developed by Singleton (2015) to support adults in having conversations necessary to make progress on difficult subjects such as race, racism, ethnicity, and privilege. The main components include:

- Four agreements
- Six conditions
- Mindset Compass
- Operational definitions

Using these components, the facilitator supports participants in pushing to sustain difficult dialogue while upholding the agreements—leveraging the compass during check-in moments with participants, and adhering to the six conditions. The end result is an empowering experience through driven dialogue that deepens the group’s collective understanding while broadening individual perspectives.

Protocol Process:

1. Protocol and key terms introduced by facilitator
2. Co-create group norms.
3. Participants engage in the activity
4. Partners and group apply the compass to check-in with one another
5. Dialogue is started and sustained
6. Group debriefs and reflects

The Four Agreements:

1. **Stay engaged**: Staying engaged means “remaining morally, emotionally, intellectually, and socially involved in the dialogue” (p.71)

2. **Experience discomfort**: This norm acknowledges that discomfort is inevitable, especially, in dialogue about race, and that participants make a commitment to bring issues into the open. It is not talking about these issues that create divisiveness. The divisiveness already exists in the society and in our schools. It is through dialogue, even when uncomfortable, the healing and change begin (pp. 74-75).

3. **Speak your truth**: This means being open about thoughts and feelings and not just saying what you think others want to hear (pp. 72-74)

4. **Expect and accept non-closure**: This agreement asks participants to “hang out in uncertainty” and not rush to quick solutions, especially in relation to racial understanding, which requires ongoing dialogue (pp. 75-76).
The Six Conditions:

According to Singleton (2015) the conditions are sequential and progressive; they intentionally build on one another. The conditions are offered within three tiers—each tier encapsulating two conditions (see underlined) and is framed by a guiding statement (p.85).

Tier 1: The Engaging Conditions:

Engage through personal experiences, beliefs, and perspectives while demonstrating respectful understanding of specific historical as well as contemporary, local and current contexts about diversity.

Tier 2: The Sustaining Conditions:

Sustain yourself and others in the conversation through mindful inquiry into those multiple perspectives, beliefs, and experiences that are different from your own.

Tier 3: The Deepening Conditions:

Deepen your understanding of diversity, and examine your beliefs about your own association with and relationship to diversity privilege and power.

The Compass

The compass was created to help us understand how we each process and engage with information about diversity. It is a way to understand one another's opinions and beliefs. According to the compass, there are 4 ways that people deal with diversity: Emotional, Intellectual, Moral and Social.
Definitions we can all work from:

**Diversity:** Difference

**Educational Equity:** Raising the achievement of all students, while narrowing gaps and disproportionality between highest and lowest performing learners. 

*Equity is an operational belief that enables educators to provide whatever level of support is needed to whichever students require it* (Singleton, 2015, p. 56).

**Learner Variability:** Neuroscience supports that learners vary in the way they perceive, process, and express information (see the UDL Guidelines). With this knowledge we may predict the ways that all learners will be different. We can proactively plan for variability by applying the UDL principles of multiple means of engagement, representation, and action and expression (Meyer, Rose, and Gordon, 2014).

**Race:** A socially constructed characterization of individuals based on skin color, culture, etc.

**Racism:** Any act that even unwittingly tolerates, accepts or reinforces racially unequal opportunities or outcomes for children to learn and thrive.

**Privilege:** A right or advantage that is given to some people and not others.

**“Whiteness”:** The component of each and every one of ourselves that expects assimilation to the dominant culture.

References:

