



# Education: K - 12

## Discussion Guide

### Let's review

*At the start of each discussion, review the conversation ground rules for returning and new members alike to set the stage for active participation by all. You may want to use a timer as you go around the room. And don't forget to decide who will take notes and post a discussion recap.*

- **Be open and curious:** Everyone has a unique perspective, so listen and be prepared to hear a different point of view. Remember, you do not need to share your political affiliation; this is a discussion and exchange of ideas, not politics.
- **Be respectful and engaged:** Be sure that everyone has a chance to speak before adding a second comment or perspective. Encourage each other's participation.
- **Be focused and concise:** Keep the conversation centered on the issue and the brief.

**The "Table-it" Rule:** If the group has gone off-topic but the area is of interest, the group can table the conversation and save it for another time to be addressed in a different manner.

### Let's begin

- **Take five minutes** to walk through the brief. Highlight the main point of each section and key statistics.
- Each member is invited to answer the following questions in a **two-three minute reaction** to the brief:
  - Introduce yourself, and share what "lens of care" did you wear when reviewing this brief (e.g. personal, professional, community, state, nation, global)?
  - What did you find most interesting or surprising from reading the brief? What matters?

### Spread the Word: Some Facts to Share with the Group During Your Discussion

- Per-pupil spending [increased by 27%](#) between 1992 and 2014, but U.S. student performance has changed very little over the last few decades, both [nationally](#) and [internationally](#).
- Over [\\$730 billion](#) was spent on public K-12 education across local, state, and federal levels for the 2016-2017 school year, which amounts to [\\$13,600 per student](#) as a nation-wide average. The federal contribution to elementary and secondary education is on average [less than 10% of all education spending](#).
- Returns of \$2 to \$4 were typical for every dollar invested in [early childhood programs](#), on top of social benefits such as school readiness that continue into adulthood.

# Let's discuss

*Pick 2 or 3 questions that resonate with the group and discuss, or choose your own.*

- **Community:** How should teachers, administrators and overall school performance be evaluated?
- **Local, State or Federal Government:** How do you think education should be funded and delivered? What do you think the role of federal, state and local governments should be?
- **Technology:** Does the presence of online learning opportunities present a challenge or benefit to students?

# Let's act

1. **Take it local. Talk to your neighbors** to identify the status of K-12 education in your community. Identify the opportunities to work with other community members in your area.
2. **Explore the impact of K-12 education laws in your community.** Look into education governance, such as school boards that set goals and visions for school districts. [Ballotpedia.org](http://Ballotpedia.org) is a good source to look for policies of K-12 education, agencies, and school board elections.
3. **Investigate community programs.** Identify the education programs in your state by searching for [yourstate].gov + "education." Look on your state government website for state agencies, or look for an "education" drop down menu.
4. **Research your elected representatives' positions** on K-12 education and their visions for how to tackle the challenges regarding K-12 education facing Americans at large and your community specifically. You can find contact information for federal, state, and local government officials [here](#). Your state or municipality's websites will also have information to contact leaders. Try looking at the drop-down menu for a *Government* tab.
5. **Establish a relationship with your legislators.** It's easy to establish a relationship with your legislators. Start by introducing yourself. You can also learn to write to your representatives or set up a meeting with a legislator on [The Policy Circle website](#).
6. **Consider writing a letter to the editor or an op-ed on your stance on K-12 education in your local paper.** Learn how on [The Policy Circle website](#).

# Next Steps for Your Circle

- **Post a Recap:** Summarize your discussion to share thoughts with members not present, and share planned actions from group members. Designate who will post a meeting recap on your circle page.
- **Decide your next meeting topic.** Want to discuss a related brief at your next meeting? Suggestions include:
  - [Higher Education Reform](#)
  - [Stitching the Fabric of Neighborhoods](#)
  - [Education Savings Accounts](#)
- **Dive Deeper into the issues.** If this is an area you would like to pursue further, consider taking possible steps to influence policy. The Policy Circle offers resources for [developing a message about your issue](#) and [organizing a petition](#) to amplify your voice and raise awareness. Don't miss our [latest events](#) that help you dive deeper on this issue and more.

