



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 review the [Executive Summary](#) for this 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 [nationally](#) and [internationally](#) has changed little over the last few decades.
- Total public K-12 spending across local, state, and federal levels for the 2017-2018 school year amounted to \$762 billion, or about [\\$14,900 per pupil](#). 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 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.