

## Group Meeting Models

The goals of a group meeting should be similar to that of a 1:1 conversation: gather information and build relationships. It is easy for group meetings to devolve and turn into unproductive airing of woes. These four models help to focus the attention of the participants and provide frameworks to get to the group's priorities:

### EdCamp

An EdCamp is a participant driven session sometimes called a “un-session”. It is a good way to allow members to self-select the topics they would like to discuss and a good way for the group to brainstorm solutions. The session starts as a blank slate and builds from there.

Prior to beginning, it is important to have people in the room who are well versed in the different related topics like the contract, the local negotiations history, etc., but it is vital that they are not leading the conversation. An EdCamp is not at all a presentation format. Any of your knowledgeable individuals should also not respond with “tried that, won’t work, they’d never go for that, etc” or other shutdowns to brainstorming and sharing. It is essential to be open to all ideas in order to have high quality discussions, sharing and brainstorming.

Individuals bring their ideas, issues, values, or concerns and create themes. An example EdCamp theme could be “Changes in the contract that would have a positive impact on your work life, personal life, school community and the education of students”.

Once the themes are created, depending on the size of your overall group, members would self-select the conversation they want join. They would then break into groups and discuss what solutions, changes or issues could affect the topic. If you had a large number of themes, you could have rounds to give members multiple opportunities to discuss different themes.

Important ground rules to be shared with participants:

- If a discussion runs its course then end it and start/join a new or different one
- The “rule of two feet” is in effect – if someone doesn’t want to be a part of the discussion anymore they should feel free and be encouraged to walk to a new group
- There should be free flowing discussions. Sit in a way that encourages “group”
- Record what is discussed for the teams and for future action

### Open Forum w/ Guided Questions

Open Forum w/ Guided Questions is best when in small groups. Every group should be provided with the same questions, and there should be a note-taker to gather the thoughts shared at the table. The organizing team, negotiations team and other leadership should come up with the guiding questions before hand with facilitators and note takers in each group.

### Virtual Meetings

Video conferencing gives great flexibility to who and when groups can meet. Ensure that you have someone who can monitor entry and membership. Use a moderator to take questions in the chat, facilitator speakers and guide the conversations. Breakout rooms are a great option for discussions when groups are large.

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## World Café

World Café can be modified to meet a wide variety of needs. Specifics of context, numbers, purpose, location, and other circumstances are factored into each event's unique invitation, design, and question choice, but the following five components comprise the basic model:

- A. **Setting:** Create a "special" environment, most often modeled after a café, i.e. small round tables covered with a checkered or white linen tablecloth, butcher-block paper, colored pens, a vase of flowers, and optional "talking stick" item. There should be four chairs at each table (optimally) – and no more than five.
- B. **Welcome and Introduction:** The host begins with a warm welcome and an introduction to the World Café process, setting the context, sharing the Cafe Etiquette, and putting participants at ease.
- C. **Small Group Rounds:** The process begins with the first of three or more twenty-minute rounds of conversation for the small group seated around a table. At the end of the twenty minutes, each member of the group moves to a different new table. They may or may not choose to leave one person as the "table host" for the next round, who welcomes the next group and briefly fills them in on what happened in the previous round.
- D. **Questions:** each round is prefaced with a question specially crafted for the specific context and desired purpose of the World Café. The same questions can be used for more than one round, or they can be built upon each other to focus the conversation or guide its direction.
- E. **Harvest:** After the small groups (and/or in between rounds, as needed), individuals are invited to share insights or other results from their conversations with the rest of the large group. These results are reflected visually in a variety of ways, most often using graphic recording in the front of the room.

## Affinity Wall/Affinity Mapping

The affinity wall uses post-it notes to gather information and identify, visually, the highest priorities of the group.

**Basic Structure:** Give members a broad question or problem that is likely to result in lots of different ideas, such as "What impacts your ability to meet the needs of students?" or "What impacts your work life, positively or negatively, and is an important factor in your success/struggles?" Have members generate responses by writing ideas on post-it notes (one idea per note) and placing them in no particular arrangement on a wall, whiteboard, or chart paper. Once many ideas have been generated, have members begin grouping them into similar categories, then label the categories and discuss why the ideas fit within them, how the categories relate to one another, and so on.

**Variations:** Some leaders have members do much of this exercise—recording their ideas and arranging them into categories—without talking at first. In other variations, participants are split into groups and a second or more groups are asked to re-combine the ideas again after the first round of organization occurs. Often, this activity serves as a good pre-discussion exercise, after which members will discuss and capture what they have created.

## Important note for all models:

Regardless of the method used, it is critical that whatever members share is recorded and shared with the negotiations and organizing teams for planning.

