Table Talk: Family Conversations about Current Events

About Table Talk
Families often want to discuss news stories and other timely societal events. It's a great opportunity to engage children in rich conversation, share important values and encourage lifelong interest in the news. These talks can happen on the way to school, during a walk or over a meal. Research shows that dinnertime conversation benefits the health, emotional and academic outcomes for children of all ages. Each Table Talk guide below includes a topic summary, questions to start the conversation and dig deeper, ideas to take action and additional resources.

Here are some tips for discussion:
Let's Talk about Voting!

- Find out what young people know and use the summary information to expand upon their prior knowledge. Ask what else they want to know and research together to learn more.

- When discussing the topic, ask young open ended questions that deepen the conversation. Be mindful not to judge their responses and listen thoughtfully.

- Think together about a child-level action they can take; this can be something they do on their own or something you do together or as a family.

In its simplest terms, voting is an act of expressing your opinion. Whether you participate in a poll, take an online survey or vote in the Presidential election, you are expressing an opinion or point of view with your vote. *Merriam Webster*
defines voting as “to express one's views in response to a poll” or “to express an opinion.”

In political elections, people vote for a variety of offices and laws. This includes local elections (e.g., Mayor, City Council person, Judge), state elections (e.g., State Senator, Governor) and national elections (U.S. House of Representatives, Senator, President). Voting for citizen-initiated ballot measures like referendums, ballot initiatives and recall elections is also an important part of voting. Learning about those measures in advance is essential.

Engage your family in a discussion about the purpose and process of voting as well barriers to and discrimination in voting.

**What is the Electoral College and Why Is it Controversial?**

The Electoral College is an election topic that inspires confusion, controversy and conflict. Many people know that the Electoral College is part of the Presidential
In the early days of our country's formation, deciding on the process for electing a U.S. President was a controversial topic. Some suggested that Congress should choose the President. Others argued that it should be a democratic vote by the people. The compromise was the Electoral College, which has been in effect ever since.

Previous Table Talks

**Tools and Strategies**

**The Purpose and Power of Protest**

Talk with your family about the purpose, history and impact of protests.

**George Floyd, Racism and Law Enforcement (in English and en Español)**

Engage your family in a discussion about the killing of George Floyd, how bias and hate escalate and the larger context of systemic racism.
Talk with your family about the disproportionate impact of coronavirus on communities of color and how systemic racism is a contributing factor.

**TOOLS AND STRATEGIES**

**How Systemic Racism Impacts Coronavirus Racial Disparities**

Talk with your family about the disproportionate impact of coronavirus on communities of color and how systemic racism is a contributing factor.

**Draw Me Safe: Coloring and Conversation about a Pandemic**
Use Ricardo Morales' "What to Do in a Pandemic... Our Cousins Know" coloring series to be creative, pass the time, relieve stress and engage in family conversations with children about how to stay safe and well during the coronavirus pandemic.

TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

COVID-19 and Societal Inequities

Discuss how societal inequities are highlighted and perpetuated by the impact of the Coronavirus.
Discuss the 2020 presidential election and the extent to which sexism plays a role in this unprecedented campaign.

What Is Heterosexism and What Can I Do About It?

Engage in a family discussion about the different ways that heterosexism manifests in society and schools and explore ways to address it.
Talk with your family members about how polls inform, influence and impact elections.

**TOOLS AND STRATEGIES**

**Election Polls**

Talk with your family members about how polls inform, influence and impact elections.

**TOOLS AND STRATEGIES**

**Diversity in Media and Why Visibility Matters**

Talk with your family about the importance of diverse representations and visibility in the media.
Engage in a family discussion about the use of "they" and "them" as a gender-neutral pronoun.

**TOOLS AND STRATEGIES**

**Gender-Neutral Pronouns Make Headlines**

Engage in a family discussion about the use of "they" and "them" as a gender-neutral pronoun.

Merriam-Webster/Twitter

**TOOLS AND STRATEGIES**

**Antisemitism Today**
This family discussion guide shares current information about the state of antisemitism in the U.S. today.

TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

The Little Mermaid, Diversity and Bias

Family discussion guide about the recent controversy about the casting of an African-American woman in The Little Mermaid.
Tips and strategies for parent and family roundtable discussion with youth about mass shootings, violence, guns and gun laws.

**TOOLS AND STRATEGIES**

**Gun Violence and Mass Shootings**

Tips and strategies for parent and family roundtable discussion with youth about mass shootings, violence, guns and gun laws.

**TOOLS AND STRATEGIES**

**Stonewall and LGBTQ Equity**

Talk with your family about the Stonewall uprising, which took place on June 28, 1969 and is viewed by many as sparking the movement for LGBTQ rights in the U.S.
Slurs and other biased language have become commonplace. What are they and how can we address them in order to prevent the next generation from perpetuating this offensive language?

TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

**Slurs and Biased Language (en Español)**

Slurs and other biased language have become commonplace. What are they and how can we address them in order to prevent the next generation from perpetuating this offensive language?

TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

**Kyle Korver, Privilege and Racism**
Kyle Korver, a basketball player with the Utah Jazz, writes an essay about racism and white privilege. Discuss the essay with your youth using our Table Talk parent/family discussion guide.

Women in sports face a wide range of inequalities. Talk with your family about the lawsuit the U.S. women’s soccer team filed against the federation that governs soccer in the U.S., which cites “institutionalized gender discrimination.”
There has been a heightened awareness of and discussion around sexual harassment and sexual assault. Use this discussion on Gillette's ad about gender roles and masculinity to talk about these issues with your family.

**TOOLS AND STRATEGIES**

**Gillette’s New Ad: ‘The Best Men Can Be’**

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**TOOLS AND STRATEGIES**

**Shooting at a Pittsburgh Synagogue**
Tips and strategies for parent and family roundtable discussion with youth about the deadly shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, PA, antisemitism and hate.

Colin Kaepernick, former N.F.L. quarterback with the San Francisco 49ers, took a stand about racial injustice. This Table Talk provides a discussion guide about the Nike ad featuring Kaepernick and the campaign's slogan "Believe in something."

**TOOLS AND STRATEGIES**

**Nike's Ad and Believing in Something**

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A survey showed that in U.S. families, boys are paid twice as much allowance as girls for doing weekly chores. Have a discussion with your youth about the "gender allowance gap" and their thoughts about chores and allowance in your home.

**Kids, Allowance and Gender**

What is DACA and Who Are the DREAMers?

Have a family discussion about the Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, what it means to be 'American' and the consequences if DACA is eliminated.
There have been horrific stories of children being ripped from their parents at the border. Discuss with your youth what they have heard, how they feel about the situation, what it means to seek asylum and how they can help.

**Family Separations and Detentions at the Border**

There have been horrific stories of children being ripped from their parents at the border. Discuss with your youth what they have heard, how they feel about the situation, what it means to seek asylum and how they can help.
We are seeing more and more news and social media stories about people experiencing bias as they go about their daily lives. Here are some tips and strategies for parent and family roundtable discussion with youth about incidents of everyday bias.

TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

**Scientist Drawings and Gender Stereotypes**

Research studies, past and present, revealed that most children’s scientist drawings depict men. Use this discussion guide to talk with youth about the "Draw-a-Scientist" tests and what they reveal about gender stereotypes.
Since August 2017, about 655,000 Rohingya people have fled into neighboring Bangladesh to escape violent and deadly persecution in Myanmar. Here are some tips and strategies to help guide a discussion with youth about the Rohingya refugee crisis.

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**What is the 'Muslim Ban'?**
Use this discussion guide to have a parent and family roundtable discussion with youth about President Trump's ban on foreign nationals into the U.S.

On December 14, 2017, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) voted to dismantle net neutrality regulations that were passed in 2015. Discuss with youth what net neutrality means and how this veto will impact people's ability to express their thoughts and ideas online.

**TOOLS AND STRATEGIES**

**What is Net Neutrality?**

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**Why We Need Diverse Books**

Talk with youth about literature, diversity and what other aspects of their life or forms of media lack diversity.

**Sexual Harassment in the News**

In October 2017, Harvey Weinstein, a powerful producer in the movie industry for decades, was accused of sexual harassment by more than thirty women. Use these tips and strategies to discuss with youth their thoughts, experiences and how they can support others.
Here are some tips and strategies for parent and family roundtable discussion with youth about the lessons of Charlottesville, racism, anti-Semitism, white supremacy, the alt right and the First Amendment.

**Charlottesville and Beyond**

Here are some tips and strategies for parent and family roundtable discussion with youth about the lessons of Charlottesville, racism, anti-Semitism, white supremacy, the alt right and the First Amendment.

**Confederate Monuments**

Steve Isaacs | Twitter

Anthony Crider/CC BY 2.0
More than 150 years after the Civil War, there is a new drive to remove Confederate monuments. Discuss with youth why they think this issue is controversial and why monuments hold so much power and meaning.

TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

**What Bullying Is and Is Not**

Use this parent and family roundtable discussion guide to talk with youth about bullying/cyberbullying and how to be an ally.
Race, Perception and Implicit Bias

"We Think Black Men are Bigger than White Men (Even When they're Not)," a perception revealed in a study by APA. Talk with youth about stereotypes and how misperceptions of others impact our interactions.

Hate Symbols

We see symbols every day in all aspects of our lives. Lately, a proliferation of hate symbols is increasing concern. Use this discussion guide to engage youth in conversations about swastikas and other hate symbols.
TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

**What is Fake News?**

Here are some tips and strategies for parent and family roundtable discussion with youth about "fake news," what it means and how to identify it.

Pexels

**Nice, France and Our Response to Terrorist Attacks**

Have a parent and family roundtable discussion with youth about the 2016 attacks in Nice, France and understanding the complexities around incidents of terrorism.
Online hate speech, or "cyberhate," is often in the news. Use these tips and strategies to discuss with youth two different responses to cyberhate highlighted in the news and ways they can respond.

**Responding to Cyberhate**

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**Bias in the Presidential Election**
Tips and strategies for parent and family roundtable discussion with youth about bias and bullying in the presidential election.

Propaganda, Extremism and Online Recruitment Tactics

Tips and strategies for parent and family roundtable discussion with youth about propaganda, extremism and recruitment tactics of terrorist groups.
Movies and the Diversity Gap
Tips and strategies for parent and family roundtable discussion with youth about implicit bias and the role it plays in the movie industry, and award platforms.

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TOOLS AND STRATEGIES
Dolls and Diversity
Tips and strategies for parent and family roundtable discussion with youth about dolls and diversity.

Facebook / Toys Like Me
In the wake of terrorist attacks and ISIS, here are tips and strategies for parent and family roundtable discussion with youth about Muslims, islamophobia and being an ally.

**Islamophobia and Being an Ally**

In the wake of terrorist attacks and ISIS, here are tips and strategies for parent and family roundtable discussion with youth about Muslims, islamophobia and being an ally.

**School Discipline and the School-to-Prison Pipeline**

Behavior that once led to a trip to the principal’s office and a detention, now often leads to suspension, expulsion and/or arrest. Use these tips for parent/family roundtable discussion with youth about incidents of harsh school discipline.
Refugees from Syria have been leaving their homes in search of safety and assistance. Use these tips and strategies to have family conversations with youth about the refugee crisis.

**To Tools and Strategies**

**Refugees, Reactions and World Response**

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**To Tools and Strategies**

**Kids Can Make a Difference**
Two fourth grade students expressed their opinions about their school’s lunch policy that required boys and girls to sit at separate tables. Have family conversations with youth about school policies and making a difference.

The Washington D.C’s football team’s name continues to spark controversy. Here are tips and strategies for family conversations with young people about mascots, sports team names, slurs and epithets.

TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

Sports, Mascots and Bias

The Washington D.C’s football team’s name continues to spark controversy. Here are tips and strategies for family conversations with young people about mascots, sports team names, slurs and epithets.
Teenagers are online constantly. Use these conversation tips to help guide family conversations with youth about their technology use and habits.

Teenagers and Technology

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Caitlyn Jenner and Being Transgender

Caitlyn Jenner has been in the news recently because she recently came out as transgender.
Over the years, schools have implemented student dress codes to address a wide range of issues, some of which have been quite controversial.

**TOOLS AND STRATEGIES**

**What's Fair and Unfair About Student Dress Codes?**

Over the years, schools have implemented student dress codes to address a wide range of issues, some of which have been quite controversial.