



Center for Leadership & Educational Equity

## Chalk Talk

Developed by Hilton Smith, Foxfire Fund; adapted by Marylyn Wentworth.

### **Purpose**

Chalk Talk is a way to get everyone in a group participating — to reflect on complex issues or questions, generate ideas, check on learning, develop projects or solve problems.

The slower calmer dynamic of Chalk Talk can change the atmosphere in a room as it allows for thoughtfulness with no competition for air time. It is a chance for slower processors to contribute. Chalk talk can be used productively with any group — as long as they can write or even draw.

Chalk Talk is a fun and novel activity to engage, motivate and spark interest.

### **Set Up for Success**

Post paper

Lay markers near the paper/board to be picked up for each comment or everyone can take one to use throughout the activity. Colors do not need to be identified with any particular student. The visual is more dynamic with different colors. Use colors that are easily seen from a few feet away.

1. Introduce ChalkTalk

Example: We are going to 'talk' to each other visually with our markers without any talking out loud for about \_\_\_ minutes. There will be a one minute alert as we get toward the end of our time. You can write. You can draw, use emojiis, punctuation marks (eg exclamation, question...). We will not talk out loud at all. You may add to the chalk talk as you please.

### **Time**

5 minutes to an hour.  
Average time: 20 minutes.  
When contributions have slowed or time is running out, offer a one or two minute warning, then wait another minute to see if more arises.

### **Materials**

- Markers: markers for one for each person
- Surface: butcher paper, chart paper, chalkboard, white board
- Wall Space: for students to gather to see and contribute to the 'talk.' If your space doesn't allow for one big chalk talk, you can post charts around the room for students to circulate among.

### **Roles**

Facilitator to open and close activity and to prompt or focus thinking when needed.

- If someone writes something that evokes a question for you, a comment, or if you just want to express agreement draw an arrow to that comment. **It is helpful to model making a comment and connecting to a comment.**

Suggested ground rules for a Chalk Talk:

- Communicate only visually on the chart.
- Suspend judgement on spelling and handwriting.
- If you need to say something orally, you can go out of the room briefly. If someone starts to talk to you, remind them with a hand signal to direct communication to the chart. If there is something urgent, you can step outside of the room.

2. Point to the Guiding question you've written.

Sample Questions:

- What did you learn about \_\_\_\_\_ today?
- So What? or Now What?
- How can we involve the community in the school, and the school in community?
- How can we keep the noise level down in this room?
- What do you want to tell the scheduling committee?
- What do you think it was like to live in these trade cities?
- How are decimals used in the world?
- Post a concept for response: Power does not corrupt. Fear corrupts. Perhaps the fear of a loss of power.

### **Variation**

Ongoing graffiti wall: You might want to leave the chalk talk paper on walls or in hallways for a while as reminders of student thinking or for additional thoughts. Let students know beforehand if you will make it public as that might affect what they 'say.'



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# Chalk Talk Participant Handout

Developed by Hilton Smith, Foxfire Fund; adapted by Marylyn Wentworth.

## **Purpose**

Chalk Talk is a way for a group to reflect on complex issues or questions, generate new ideas, check on our learning, develop projects or solve problems with everyone's thoughts being included within a short period of time.

## **Ground Rules**

- Communicate visually on the chart.
- Suspend judgement on spelling and handwriting.
- If something is urgent to say, step outside the room.

Focus on the written guiding question.

## **Steps**

We are going to 'talk' to each other visually with our markers. You can write. You can draw, use emojiis, punctuation marks (eg exclamation, question...). If someone writes something that evokes a question for you, a comment, or if you just want to express agreement draw an arrow to that comment and add your comment, question or agreement.

1. Facilitator opens the activity: "Chalk talk is now open." Write as you feel moved. There may be periods of no writing. Everyone should still be focused on the visual 'talk.'
2. The facilitator might push or expand thinking with comments or questions such as asking for examples, or to be more specific, asking another question.
3. As the Chalk Talk comes to a close, the facilitator will give a one or two minute alert, indicating that the Chalk Talk will be closing soon.

## **Debrief**

What do you notice about what we wrote?

What do you wonder about now?

How was the silence and visual talk for you?

## **Time**

5 minutes to an hour.

Average time: 20 minutes.

## **Materials**

- Markers: markers for one for each person
- Surface: butcher paper, chart paper, chalkboard, white board
- Wall Space: for students to gather to see and contribute to the 'talk.' If your space doesn't allow for one big chalk talk, you can post charts around the room for students to circulate among.

## **Roles**

Facilitator to open and close activity and to prompt or focus thinking when needed.