

Convene Your Community - *Most Likely To Succeed* “The Essentials” Guide

If a full-length screening of *Most Likely to Succeed* will not work well, we’ve created a second set of resources to use when you convene your community. Our “The Essentials” collection includes a brief “thesis” of the film, with additional videos to spark and shape your community’s discussions. This Guide provides suggestions for planning your event, including links to the pages where the resource videos and discussion questions are located. Customize your presentation

Getting Started

Before you plan your event, it’s helpful to think about why you are convening and what your objectives are. We encourage you to have this strategy dialogue with your partners or planning committee to help shape your decisions throughout the planning process and after the event. We want your event to reflect your community’s unique goals - there are no right or wrong answers here! We hope these prompts will help you plan a successful event that ignites momentum and action in your community.

- What do we hope will happen in our community as a result of this discussion?
- Based on our objectives, who, specifically, are we hoping to reach or engage with us?
- What kind of conversation do we hope to have? For example, are there specific topics we want to discuss or are we just interested in a general dialogue?
- What do we hope to learn by bringing this audience together?
- What do we hope the audience will learn?
- What is happening in our school or community today that we want to celebrate or discuss relative to the videos? How can we make those connections evident?
- How do we want people to feel about our event? What do we want them to do or say afterwards?
- How can we use the event to drive action towards the outcomes we’ve identified?

Viewing Options. Which videos are best to use? We’ve selected several that work well (see below), but you’ll find discussion questions for all of our videos, if you would like to substitute others that better suit your needs. All of our videos include discussion questions, and we are happy to assist if you’d like.

How should your audience watch the videos?

Will your group convene virtually, in person, or in a hybrid format? Online options are especially important now. If you choose to convene virtually, we suggest the following actions:

1. The moderator(s) choose which video(s) the group will discuss. You can choose either a video (see below for suggestions) or a full playlist surrounding a topic.
2. Have your group watch the video(s) individually on their own schedule.
3. Participants write down whatever sparked their curiosity or anything they have questions on.
4. Schedule a zoom (or other video conferencing) meeting and discuss the video(s) virtually.

Watching it in this way allows each person to fully absorb the video(s) on their own and then come together for a lively discussion about the material.

Consider the timing of the event, as well. After school hours generally increase attendance for in-person events, but if you have chosen a smaller group (students and teachers, for example), it might be easier to meet during school hours. Asynchronous online viewing with a group Zoom discussion later provides maximum flexibility for attendees, and school systems have used this approach successfully during the pandemic.

Discussion formats: Three general discussion models work well:

- A traditional Q&A
- A formal panel discussion featuring local education leaders
- An interactive working discussion, where there is a guiding topic and some generative dialogue resulting in a next step or action (Discussion formats should be considered in relationship to your strategy and target audience, but this option is our favorite!)
 - Note: If possible, you may want to break up into smaller groups (or Zoom breakout rooms) to facilitate discussion and idea generation
 - You can blend or improvise around these formats, but anything that engages the voices of your participants is likely to be more successful on all fronts.

Publicity: How you publicize your event will depend on your audience. Events open to the entire community should utilize school mailing lists, advertisements in local papers, school website and social media announcements, press releases, etc. The time you spend publicizing your event will impact the size and composition of your audience and the usefulness of the resulting discussion.

Tips for Facilitating and Managing Dialogue. As a facilitator, you should aim to establish common objectives, create a climate of collaboration, and provide the structure, guidance and content to make your discussion effective.

Key Facilitator Responsibilities:

- Designing, introducing, and enforcing discussion structure and norms
- Calling on people to share input or questions
- Challenging assumptions
- Summarizing content
- Insisting on closure and action/follow up

Facilitation Tips:

- Create buzz and generate excitement! Conversation can begin the minute people arrive. Signal to your audience that their voice matters by greeting them with an invitation to participate in the conversation following the videos. Invite students to volunteer as greeters to personally welcome audience members. Distribute written materials to give your guests some context and a platform to actively engage with the videos' ideas.
- Appoint a note-taker/timekeeper to record key insights and keep everyone on track.
- Employ active and reflective listening. Continuously paraphrase and reframe the conversation in order to clarify thought processes and make sure you understand what is said. For example, use phrases such as: "What I'm hearing you say is..." or "Do I understand you correctly that..."
- Ask open-ended questions, which result in answers that are analytical and exploratory, and where ambiguity, diversity and multiple factors can be included. A closed ended question results in a simple answer of "Yes/No" or just a factual response (Do you like the idea of project-based learning?). An open-ended question is broader in its quest: "In what ways could project-based learning play a bigger role in your classroom or school?" is an example.
- For any big, vital question, ask everyone to take a minute or two initially to write down their thoughts. Then open up to discussion and solicit everyone's input.
- Anticipate the "tough to talk about" issues and make sure you create pathways to get those items on the table. Humor is a great tool!
- Get everyone involved with a body poll: How many of you are (parents, teachers, students?) Who in the room has...? How many of you are...?
- Don't be afraid to quickly and politely cut off a line of discussion that is off topic. One tip is to honor the speaker by assigning it to "the parking lot" - documenting it for later discussion.

Introducing the Videos: A session like this is a special event and a warm welcome is appropriate. This is a moment for the hosts to introduce themselves and briefly express

why they organized the event. It's also your chance to urge people to join in dialogue. A few tips to consider:

- Keep it short! This is critical - people are eager to begin and you want to stay on track. We suggest keeping your welcome to no more than 5 minutes.
- Let people know what comes next:
 - Why do you need and want them to participate in discussion?
 - Will there be a panel or special guests?
 - How will you conduct Q&A?
- Be clear about time expectations, for example: We'll have YYY minutes of dialogue after each video clip, followed by a final Q&A lasting ZZZ minutes.
- Encourage your audience to reflect and take notes while watching the videos.

Sample Script:

Good evening everyone. Thank you all for taking time to join us for this community discussion. My name is XXX and together with YYY we hope tonight will be an opportunity to talk about what matters most for our students and how we support learning in our community. We'll be showing several short videos, and each will be followed by a brief discussion. We'll conclude with /an interactive session to discuss key ideas in the videos/a Q&A with ZZZ/a panel conversation with ZZZ). As you watch the videos, please reflect and take notes for the discussion.

Our gathering will conclude at xxPM

"The Essentials" Videos with Video-Specific Discussion Questions:

1. [MLTS Thesis Video](#)
2. [Sir Ken Robinson's "Do Schools Kill Creativity?"](#)
3. [The Future of Work](#)
4. [Essential Skills and Mindsets](#)

And Some General Discussion Questions:

Questions for Educators:

- a. Relevance, personalization and meaning are words used more and more frequently to describe high quality student learning experiences.

- How do these words resonate with or relate to the work you do as a teacher?
- b. What is the purpose of school?
 - To what extent is preparing a student for college similar or different to preparing them for life? What are the implications of this?
 - In your opinion, what are the most important things school should prepare a student for after graduation? Why?
 - What happens in school now that supports this vision?
 - How do you, as a teacher, want to do this work?
- c. As technology continues to change how we live and work, what do we need to learn?
 - What skills and content knowledge do you think are most useful for your students to acquire?
 - What are the implications for teaching?
 - How do we align teaching and assessment to these outcomes today?
- d. What in your experience as an educator has had the greatest impact on students?
 - Discuss what you do – lessons, discussions, projects, etc. – that, in your eyes, most benefits students' learning experiences.
 - What would you stop doing?
 - What would you like to learn to do?
- e. How can a community support and encourage teachers to take on innovative initiatives?
 - What could our school do to be even more supportive?
 - How do you think your school community would react to something innovative that didn't go well the first time?
 - If you felt you had the support of your community, are there small innovations you'd like to introduce to your classroom? Would you commit to a few this school year?

Questions for Students:

- a. What do your parents expect from you and your educational experience?
 - How does your school support you in meeting these expectations?
 - What would you like them to know and what would you like to change?
- b. How do teachers and your school learn about your experience as a student?
 - What would you like them to learn or understand?

- What would you like to learn that is not available to you now?
Discuss.
- c. When do you believe you are learning at your best in school?
 - What are those experiences like?
- d. What makes learning successful at school for you now?
 - What could be different?
 - What would you like to see stop or start happening?
- e. Lillian Hsu, a graduate student at the High Tech High Graduate School of Education, designed “The Incarceration Project”, a project for her senior English students involving several different subject areas and types of study. Her students analyzed a play about the 1992 LA riots, interviewed a broad cross-section of community members on their views regarding incarceration, and wrote a play reflecting their learning called “We Don’t See, We Hear: A Play about Incarceration.” The English students collaborated with the senior art class, who designed the set, and the senior government class, who created a playbill featuring historical facts about incarceration.

This project enabled students to engage with their community and tie in their own experiences in order to analyze important events from local history.

- What do you think about projects that combine subjects like this project combined English, Art, and Government?
- What benefits or challenges do you think they would involve?
- What subjects would you choose to combine?
- f. Do you feel like your interests, heritage, and aspirations are reflected in the things you learn at school?
 - If so, in what ways?
 - If not, how might you imagine this being done?
- g. If you were to design a project like this one, what locally relevant issue would yours address?

Questions for Parents:

- a. If your child comes home from school describing an innovative new initiative, would you support your school, or be concerned?
- b. Do you think there’s a trade-off for your child between building the strongest possible college application, and building the strongest possible character?
- c. Did your education adequately prepare you for the work you do now?

- What skills do you feel were missing from your education, that you want your child to be learning today?
- d. From a parent's perspective, what learning experiences have been the most engaging and rewarding for your child?
 - What about these learning experiences makes them significant?
- e. As a parent, how do you see yourself participating in or contributing to your child's education?
 - Are there any additional actions you'd like parents in your community to start taking?

At the End of the Session:

The close of your discussion is an excellent time to harness your audience's energy and announce any next steps you want them to take. We've included some suggested action steps below, but it's best to tailor these ideas to your community's schools and objectives.

We also encourage you to use this time to get feedback from your audience, which can be useful data when referencing demand for change in your community. By a show of hands (or an online polling tool), take the poll below and share your audience's results with us!

See how many of your audience members are:

- Ready For Change, Let's GO!
- Interested; Want to Learn More
- We've Got Other Things to Do

What's Next: Suggested Calls to Action:

- Have a team of people identify all the amazing innovations already happening in your school or district and exhibit them in some format, like a newsletter or presentation. Each month, you can feature a different initiative and discuss the critical skills it's helping students develop. This will cultivate awareness about the great work being done in your community and serve as a foundation and inspiration for building more scalable efforts.
- Set a date and time for a follow-up discussion and invite your audience to attend. This can even be the first of an on-going series of discussions you launch in your community! Creating a space for folks to continuously share feedback and inspiration with each other can be key in fostering progress.
- Do your best to gather and solidify main points from the discussion, and present them at the closing of the event. Invite audience members to share some of

these insights or action items with local political and education leaders via social media.

- Invite community members to shadow students at your school and look for evidence of the important skills and mindsets your audience identified. Plan your next steps based on what they find.
- Remind your audience to visit whatschoolcouldbe.org to join the mailing list and check out the Innovation Playlist for resources aimed at educators, parents, and students.