March/April Events:
Here’s what we have on deck:
Mar. 2 and 9: Argument Writing Without the Fight, 6-12
Register @ http://lacoe.k12oms.org/1540-97628
Mar. 8 and 16: Strategies for CC Writing, K-5
Register@http://lacoe.K12om.org/97632
Mar. 30: LA County Spelling Bee
Watch it live on the web!! More info to come....
Apr. 13 and 27: The Art of Effective Facilitation, 4-12
Register @: http://lacoe.k12oms.org/1540-97634

Why Civil Discourse is Worth Instructional Time

With the current political climate, it has come to light that the notion of civil discourse has been, to put it lightly, “tossed out the window.”

According to Wikipedia, “Kenneth J. Gergen describes civil discourse as ‘the language of dispassionate objectivity’, and suggests that it requires respect of the other participants, such as the reader. It neither diminishes the other’s moral worth, nor questions their good judgment; it avoids hostility, direct antagonism, or excessive persuasion; it requires modesty and an appreciation for the other participant’s experiences.”

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_discourse)

If you have witnessed any political debates of late, you may have noticed that they fail to resemble any part of this definition of civil discourse. The debates have seemed to foster much late-night TV joke fodder and social media hate-storm.

So why, then, should teachers be concerned with the concept of social discourse in their classrooms? Common Core State Standards (CCSS) clearly articulate expectations regarding collaboration with multiple and diverse partners, using multiple sources in a variety of formats. They also ask students to evaluate a speaker’s point of view, identify faulty reasoning and use of rhetoric, and determine if evidence presented is accurate and unbiased. This in and of itself could lead to hotly debated issues in the classroom and rather than avoid these scenarios, teachers can embrace the controversy and use it as an opportunity to practice authentic civil discourse.

Structured Protocols

Structured discussion protocols can help to teach the rules and manners of civil discourse. Here are a few resources for some great protocols and discussion tips:
https://online.tarleton.edu/fdi/Documents/Burdick_Handout4.pdf

Here is a link to some amazing lessons on civil discourse from the Teaching Tolerance website:
http://www.tolerance.org/publication/civil-discourse-classroom

As educators, we have the power to affect how young people evaluate the world around them and choose to operate within it. Teaching civil discourse seems like a great way to not only practice CCSS, but to engage in civic life in a productive and respectful manner.

Check out our workshop on The Art of Effective Collaboration in April, as well as few more resources here:
http://goodmenproject.com/families/3-ways-to-teach-my-kids-the-art-of-civil-discourse-eeeb/

-Have a great month!!!