



Making the Most of Touchstones

IMPLEMENTATION
GUIDE FOR OUR
SCHOOL PARTNERS

TOUCHSTONES[®]
DISCUSSION PROJECT

Touchstones will transform your school.



By choosing Touchstones for your students, you've joined our community of hundreds of school partners throughout the US and internationally who want to develop students' Essential Discussion Skills while fostering an inclusive school culture. With thoughtful implementation, your school can realize enormous growth in just one year. This guide gives you insights from our nearly 40 years of work in the field and an overview of the tools, resources, and support available for Touchstones schools. We can't wait to partner with you!

Touchstones Essential Skills



ACTIVE LISTENING



LEADERSHIP



CONFIDENCE



**ANALYTICAL
REASONING**



SPEAKING



**COOPERATIVE
LEARNING**



**REFLECTIVE
THINKING**

How can your school maximize the impact of Touchstones?

01. Articulate a clear set of goals

Being clear about why you chose Touchstones for your teachers and students from the outset will help you measure progress toward your goals. How do Touchstones curriculum and discussion programs align with and support your school's mission? How are you hoping it will enhance your school's culture and climate? Take the time to make these goals specific and explicit and share them with all your faculty.

02. Offer training for all staff

Make sure your staff is familiar with the Essential Skills Touchstones develops—and how student growth is fostered through guided and structured discussions—so every member of your team recognizes when students are demonstrating their new skills. We encourage you to invite staff across disciplines to participate in Touchstones in-service professional development. This includes administrators and supervisors, instructional coaches, school counselors and social workers, and support staff. Explore all training options on [our website](#).

03. Help students see a why

Touchstones has the power, not only to build your students' discussion skills, but also to reignite wonder, curiosity, and joy in learning. From the start of the year, all school staff should engage students in thinking about how Touchstones is different from other school contexts - a chance for everyone to connect authentically, to learn by teaching, and to discover and appreciate their own and others' talents. Throughout the year, regular discussion evaluations will help students reflect on what they're learning about themselves and each other.





04. Be consistent

When practiced consistently, Touchstones builds powerful skills that students apply in their discussion classes and across all school settings. In order to maximize outcomes, Touchstones should be scheduled for a designated time and class each and every week. Although Touchstones is most often used in ELA classes, our staff can work with you to identify the best fit for Touchstones with your school's schedule, goals, and other complementary programs and initiatives.

05. Observe and coach

Touchstones offers personalized coaching services that support teachers as discussion leaders. This includes one-on-one observation and debriefs with strategies tailored to each teacher and for each classroom context. We also offer guidance for administrators so routine teacher observations can meaningfully include Touchstones classes. Reach out to us or explore the [educator resources](#) on our website to learn more.

06. Gather data

Touchstones creates a powerful shift in classroom and school culture—leading to a more inclusive and collaborative learning environment, one discussion at a time. We offer engaging and easy-to-use survey tools to capture progress and support evaluation of individual student and whole class growth at the beginning of the year, mid-year, and end of year. Surveys conform with FERPA guidelines, connect seamlessly with your students' devices, and provide specific and actionable information about what's going well and where to focus to improve student and class skill development and outcomes. Reach out to us to get access to our digital survey tools for your students.

07. Bring in the community

Leverage your work with Touchstones in the classroom to build relationships and foster trust with families and caregivers. Our family engagement pilot can be customized to meet your needs while drawing on families' experiences to help them connect to each other, their student, and school staff. The program pulls texts from our volumes tied to the theme of community and is designed to be facilitated by you, with guidance from Touchstones staff. Learn more on [our website](#).

08. Stay connected

The Touchstones educator community spans the globe! Connect with other Touchstones teachers, share tips and strategies, and learn about upcoming events and initiatives by following us on social media, becoming a part of our [Touchstones Teacher Community](#) on Facebook, and joining The Touchstones Circle, our monthly newsletter. In addition to our [Touchstones Fellows](#) program and [Open Enrollment Workshops](#), in 2022-2023 we'll also be hosting a quarterly community discussion series just for educators called Exploring the Four Stages of Discussion. Learn more and sign up on our website.

09. Reach out for support

As with every new endeavor, there is a learning curve. Touchstones staff is here to support teachers who are new to Touchstones. Building discussion leadership skills for genuinely inclusive discussions, making group dynamics visible, and cultivating truly student-centered learning takes time and consistent effort—from everyone in the classroom. We are here as your partners to provide ongoing support, assist in securing training and materials when schools have no funding, and help you accomplish your goals for students and faculty.



“

Touchstones is a perfect match with my philosophy of education. When we trust our students, empower them to take charge of their education, and offer them the necessary guidance, they astound us.

Garreth Heidt, High School Teacher,
Collegeville, Pennsylvania

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