



Open Space Conversations

Adapted from "Community Conversations" by Paul Born

Things to do Ahead of Time:

- ✓ For this event, there is no need to plan an issue or topic of discussion ahead of time. Participants will bring their own ideas for topics that are important to them.
- ✓ Choose a time and location.
- ✓ Advertise and send out invitations for your Open Space Conversation.

Recommended Time: Evening or weekend; allow at least two hours for the whole activity

Recommended Location: School classrooms or community centre (you will need a venue that provides you with five separate rooms for discussion)

Materials:

- ✓ Refreshments, coffee, water
- ✓ A stack of 8" X 11" sheets of paper
- ✓ Markers
- ✓ Large flipcharts
- ✓ Tape

Set-up:

- ✓ Show up early to set up tables, chairs, and flip charts in each of the rooms you are using.
- ✓ As participants enter, provide them with a name tag and have them sign-in with their name and contact information if they wish to be invited to more events in the future.
- ✓ Choose a room to start out in and have guests gather once you are ready to begin.
- ✓ Introduce the event by explaining to participants the four key principles and "The Law of Two Feet" (these can be found on the next page).
- ✓ Place markers and the stack of paper in the middle of the room. Invite anyone with a topic to discuss to write it down, announce it to the group, and tape it on the wall. Provide as much time as needed.
- ✓ Once people have had a chance to contribute topic ideas, those who suggested topics will go to one of the other rooms for discussion about that topic. Others may choose which room they would like to go to, based on the topics that they would like to discuss.
- ✓ In each room, the person who suggested the topic will facilitate the discussion and a note taker is elected.
- ✓ Allow about an hour for these conversations.
- ✓ Once all of the conversations have ended, have the whole group reconvene in the original room to have each group's note taker provide a summary of their discussion.

For more ideas and information for hosting an Open Space Conversation, check out:

www.openingspace.net

www.openspaceworld.org



Some other things to know about Open Space Conversations

Four Key Principles:

- 1) Whoever comes are the right people.
- 2) Whatever happens is the only right thing that could happen.
- 3) Whenever it starts, it is meant to start.
- 4) When it's over, it's over.

"The Law of Two Feet": If participants do not feel that they are learning or finding ways to contribute meaningfully to the discussion, they should go somewhere else; they do not need to wait until the current conversation has finished. After leaving a conversation, people may choose to go to another room to take part in a different conversation or take a break and have a coffee.

Because this ground rule is in place, participants should not be considered rude for getting up to leave in the middle of a discussion.