

FACING HISTORY AND OURSELVES

Back-to-School

TOOLKIT CHECKLIST

Use these *reflection questions, ideas, and teaching strategies* to help guide your planning so you are ready to foster a *welcoming community of learners* that *invites participation and collaboration*.

1 How will you create a brave and reflective classroom where students learn to exchange ideas and listen respectfully to each other?

In order to create a classroom environment that effectively supports difficult conversations, teachers must start with themselves.

- Read "Start with Yourself" in [Fostering Civil Discourse](#) to reflect on your identity and the lens through which you view your teaching.
- Explore the [Back-to-School Toolkit](#), which includes online professional learning and lesson plans for the first week of school that will get you started in creating a brave and reflective classroom community.

2 How will you foster the habit of reflection and critical thinking in your classroom?

To stop, think, and reflect is an important habit for students' academic achievement and social emotional learning. It is also the foundation for thoughtful, informed citizenship.

- Read [Journaling in a Facing History Classroom](#) to learn how journals can be used as to support reflection, critical thinking, and classroom community.
- Plan how you will how you will explain the rationale for reflective writing to your students and incorporate regular journaling opportunities into your lessons.

3 How will you facilitate meaningful collaboration and discussion between students?

We learn best in dialogue with others. Students need to hear each other's ideas, thoughts, and opinions, and weigh them against their own and the evidence from history, literature, and the other humanities.

- Learn to [create a class contract](#) that establishes norms and standards for respectful dialogue and interaction.
- Choose some of Facing History's [teaching strategies](#) for discussion and collaboration to try with your students this year.

4 How will you set up the physical space in your classroom to encourage student-centered learning?

The arrangement of physical space in the classroom sends a powerful message about student-teacher and student-student relationships.

- Draw a floor plan that includes spaces for different kinds of activities: quiet reflection, pair shares, small group discussions, and whole class activities.

5 How will you reflect on your own teaching practice and capture your observations for thoughts and improvement throughout the year?

Reflection and dialogue are key components of an educator's continued professional growth too. The lessons in this [Back-to-School Toolkit](#) include reflection questions for you to consider after you have completed teaching each lesson.

- Decide how you'll build daily reflection into your teaching practice: respond to the teacher reflection questions; maintain a teaching journal; or unplug for a short time each day to reflect on your students and classes.
- Find professional learning opportunities that will connect you with a community of teachers with whom you can discuss your experiences, learn from, and grow professionally. Facing History offers a wide range of [webinars](#), [online learning](#), [workshops and seminars](#) to support your personal and professional journey.

6 How will you continue to foster and nurture a safe and courageous classroom community beyond the first week of school?

A brave and inclusive classroom won't be fully developed during the first week of school, and its importance doesn't diminish as the year goes on. As you prepare for the start of the school year, consider how you will continue to build on the foundation you're establishing.

- Identify key times when students can revisit, revise, and recommit to their [classroom contract](#), such as the beginning or end of a unit, marking period, or semester.
- Visualize and plan how you will respond if someone in the class breaks a classroom norm. Identify mentors in your building whom you can reach out to for support and guidance.
- Watch the [Fostering Civil Discourse Part 1](#) on-demand webinar to learn strategies you can use this year to help your students engage in challenging conversations.