



# A TRUSTED SPACE<sup>®</sup>

*Common Ground*

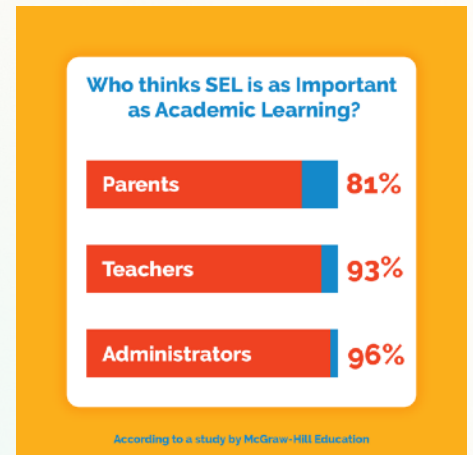
# The Power of COMMUNITY

**Discussion Guide & Recommended Delivery**



## Film Overview

Common Ground serves as a vital resource for educators, parents, and communities seeking to bridge the gaps intensified by recent controversies. Fostering unity within educational ecosystems has never been harder amidst a division over critical social issues. Through candid insights with educators, parents, and students, this episode explores the strained relationships between schools and their communities, particularly in the wake of the pandemic and the resulting gaps in academic and social competencies.



In the face of ongoing debates around curriculum inclusivity, particularly regarding LGBTQ+ inclusion and racial equity, “Common Ground” sheds light on the critical need for empathy, understanding, and collective problem-solving, even when we do not agree. The shared fatigue among parents, students, and educators is a critical issue for the education ecosystem—and the importance of modeling constructive dialogue and problem-solving for the younger generation has never been higher.

This docu-training film emphasizes the power of community, the significance of grace and understanding in rebuilding and strengthening the bonds between schools and families, and the urgent need to create a supportive environment that caters to the social and emotional needs of students. This film is a tool to help you advocate for a collaborative approach and encouraging all stakeholders to listen, understand, and work together towards a common goal of nurturing supportive, inclusive, and resilient educational communities.

## Maximize This Film With Your Team and Community

This film should be viewed primarily by adults, in and outside education, who are interested in empowering all parties in service to our young people to collectively come together for their social-emotional-mental-academic well-being. Bridging differences has become increasingly challenging, yet it is not impossible and arguably critical. Having honest conversations that allow for all voices to be heard is instrumental - but trusting ourselves to facilitate this can be unsettling, even when we know it is essential. Screen Common Ground to initiate the conversation and use the discussion and activities here to ease tensions and build collaborative approaches.

# How and Who Should Watch?

## At School:

First, watch the 15-minute film yourself so you know why it is important to you (and maybe for others) to watch it.

In a perfect world (few of us live in an ideal world), you can screen the film initially with your entire staff. By entire staff we mean ALL of your staff. Your office staff, para-pros, campus security, aides, food service, counselors, teachers, school psychologists, wellness counselors, administration, clerks, volunteers, +. Each of them is part of your community in service to youth. If your school has a close-knit parent group, add them to the mix. We are really in this together!

Does that sound daunting? You can easily start smaller and branch out from small successes.

Start with a team you feel safe sharing with, close colleagues, supportive parents, your lunchroom folks, etc. Watch it together and have a conversation about the value you found, they found, and the collective value you can see if a more inclusive group were to watch and work together to cultivate a more inclusive community that extends beyond the well-formed walls.

## Community Event:

Think of community stakeholders who are key people in the lives of young people attending your school or program. Whether there is a divisive challenge or not, together, you can create atmospheres where all students, staff, and families feel heard and supported more than they do now. This can be key for parent gatherings, ESL programs, GATE programs, and more.

Invite everyone because everyone influences the life of a child they are around, even for the briefest moments.

## **After the Screening!**

Seeing the film is a step forward; the bigger step, however, is how you process the film afterward. Without a meaningful post-viewing process, your audience will likely leave with a nice feeling, a thought that, 'yes, we need to do more,' and as they leave, all those thoughts will join their overfilled minds containing all the other thoughts one thinks about, dreams about, and worries about each day. 'We need to do more' becomes another thing on the never-ending list. (Continued)



Here are a few ways to process this film to move 'concept' to 'results.'

## 1. Turn and Talk (10 Minute Film Debrief)

- A. As the film credits finish, ask the audience to share the following by raising their hands (or other way of getting a visually collective response. For example, stand/sit - thumbs up/down/sideways):

*"Was there anything in the film that resonated with you?"*

- B. Invite a couple of audience shares. If it is a quiet audience, you should share your biggest takeaway and what it means to you. Invite sharing again from the audience. As the leader of the discussion, no matter whether first or last, be sure you share your insights and takeaways.

- C. Now, ask the audience to turn to a neighbor and discuss the following prompts:

*"What impacted you the most, and why?"*

*"In the film, 15-year-old Christian states that he's worried about chaos in the future. "...In the future, almost everybody in the world isn't gonna care."*

*What is your reaction to this statement, and what are your most significant **worries** and **hopes** for our children and youth?"*

- D. Bring the audience back to you and get a few more shares. What did they learn? What is present for them now after talking to each other?
- E. Gather ideas from the group of specific things that could be done within your school or group that would support bringing groups together. What will it take to actually move ideas to results?

## 2. Cultivating Agreements (Group Discussion & Brainstorm)

In the film, Pedro Noguera, Ph.D., discusses establishing agreements when groups come together. Either with the whole group or by breaking into smaller groups, have the audience discuss and be ready to share the following:

- A. What is an agreement, and why is it important?
- B. How do agreements support us when differences or big emotions surface?
- C. What agreements would be beneficial when working with passionate people who disagree with one another? Why? Brainstorm some ideas.
- D. Discuss ways we can cultivate and manage agreements that make it possible for all parties to feel heard, even if not agreed with.



### 3. Getting Our Way (Group Discussion)

Start a conversation around the following statement or a close version of it.

*“Having the space and opportunity to express our feelings, needs, and desires DOES NOT always (maybe not even often) equal ‘getting our way.’*

The concepts are mutually exclusive yet often mistaken as the same. As you consider this as a group, in dyads or small groups, what comes to mind? Ponder these prompts or others that may be better suited for your community.

- A. *“How do you perceive this statement? What does it mean to you, and why?”*
- B. *“Do you notice that the meaning of ‘having a say’ and ‘getting our way’ has often become the same? Is this just a young person thing, or do adults also blend the two as synonyms?”*
- C. *“What are the consequences we are seeing due to this ‘blending’ of meaning?”*
- D. *“Do you think we need to define them differently, and if so, how would you define them, and how would you make this a part of building agreements?”*
- E. *What skills must adults practice, and also teach young people, to navigate strong feelings when they do not get their way? What are the consequences of not learning to do this responsibly?*
- F. *What are some responsible ways to continue important dialogues to work toward desired change without demonstrating aggressive, shame-based, dismissive, and non-inclusive words and actions?*

### 4. All My People (15 Minute Activity)

Materials needed: All My People facilitation sheet (page 6), space to have the group be in a circle OR use the seated version.

- A. Using the All My People facilitation sheet as a guide, do everything as instructed except for the following.
- B. As you go through the All My People, process as written in the facilitation sheet, have the group count off by 3, 1, 2, 3, etc., tell them they need to remember their number, and when they are in the middle, they will adhere to this formula:  
  
ONES: will share something they worry about for our young people.  
  
TWOES: will share something that gives them hope about our young people.  
  
THREES: will share something that is randomly true for them (like in the basic instructions)  
  
ALTERNATE to 1, 2, 3: Hand each person slips of colored paper (three colors). Assign a specific topic to each color and follow the pattern.
- C. After about 10-15 crossing through the middle folks have gone, or based on the time you have, have everyone circle back up and facilitate a conversation based on these questions other others you have that will be meaningful to your group:
  1. “What did you notice?”
  2. “Why does this matter to you?”
  3. “What is possible after this experience?”



# All My People

## Opportunity for Connection, Speaking Powerfully, Sharing

**Goal:** To learn and experience commonalities.

**Materials:** Spots (optional)

**Process:** Set up the spots in a giant circle and have each participant stand with one foot on a spot. You need one spot for every participant, minus one. If there aren't enough spots, do it without them and have a quick conversation about integrity. There will also be a spot in the middle that you are standing on.

1. Standing as tall and proud as you can, say my name is...! Upon saying that all participants will pat their legs twice, clap twice, point at the person in the center with both hands and shout their name.
2. You will then say the statement, All my people who... or All my (Insert your school mascot), who... followed by, something true about yourself. Example: All my Falcons who have younger brothers and sisters!
3. Once that statement is said, all participants who share that in common with will leave the spot they're on, run and touch the spot in the middle, give a high five to someone, and return to a new spot that is at least 3 spots away from where they started.
4. Once participants start leaving their spots, you will also leave the center spot and go find a spot on the outside. One person will not have a spot on the outside and that person must go to the center where they repeat the sequence.
5. Encourage the new participant in the middle to stand tall, speak loud and proud so everyone can hear, and share something true about them.
6. The activity continues for as long as you feel the participants are still into it and you can give them a topic they have to share about, food, family, school, sports, etc.

**Mindfulness:** With many people all running to the center at the same time, encourage participants to notice how their actions are impacting other participants, (racing, bumping into each other, etc.). Encourage them to notice their body movements, speed, etc., to create a safe activity for all. With larger numbers you can add more spots to the inside for participants to touch as they pass through.

**Discuss:**

- Look around the circle and NOTICE who you have something in common with that you didn't know before.
- Did anyone share something unique that we would like to appreciate?
- Did you NOTICE anyone being respectful or supportive of others during the game?

**Facilitator Notes:**

As the game progresses, some participants will want to be in the middle so they linger around the center spot. You can impose the guideline that if you get caught in the middle twice you sit out for 3-5 rounds as something fun. Also, at times a participant is quieter and doesn't know what to share. You can offer a category such as favorite cartoon character, hobbies, school subjects, etc.

## 5. Notice Choose Act (20 Minute Group Planning)

Materials needed: markers, paper (large sheets of poster paper if possible)

Example: Page 8

- A. Ask the audience to get into groups of 4-6 depending on your space and audience size. Ask them to choose a scribe to take the notes.
- B. Divide the paper into three sections: **Notice | Choose | Act**<sup>®</sup> (sample attached)
  - I. **Notice column:** have them, as a group, choose one thing that worries them about the impact of division on the young people they care about
    1. Write the Worry at the top of the Notice section
    2. Have them write the feelings that they, the young people, families, educators, and others feel when considering this worry.
    3. Have them write the behaviors that collectively happen when humans feel the feelings they just wrote down.
  - II. **Choose column:** have the group now write at the top what they want instead of the worry they identified in the Notice column
    1. Write the Alternative desire at the top of the Choose section
    2. Have them now write the feelings they, the young people, families, educators, etc., they would have if this were the reality.
    3. Have them write the behaviors that collectively happen when humans feel the feelings they just wrote down.
  - III. **Act column:** in this column ask the groups to write down specific, tangible, measurable ACTions that they can individually do to move results from that they Noticed to what they Choose instead. These actions are individual - they are proactive and they do not point to someone else being responsible for them.
- C. Once the posters are complete, bring the audience back and invite group sharing based on your observations or the prompts below:
  - A. *"What is the problem we identified and some of the feelings and behaviors that go with it?"*
  - B. *"What do we want instead?"*
  - C. *"What are some of the actions we identified that would move us from understanding an issue to impacting the issue in a positive way?"*
- D. Take final shares about what learning took place, what inspired them, what they have questions about, etc.

# NOTICE.

## AWARENESS

Recognition of opportunities to improve situations or create new ones.

What needs improving? Is missing? Doesn't feel good?

**Our students don't know how to recover from challenges and set backs, do things for themselves**

How do you feel because of this?

**concerned, helpless, frustrated, worried for their mental health and how they will recover from future problems, tired nervous, anxious**

What behaviors go with these feelings?

**impatient, over doing for them, snappy, justify their behavior, no self care - always caring for them, complaining all the time, bad mood.**

# CHOOSE.

## INTENTION

Purposeful consideration of options.

What do you want instead?

**Resilient, capable kids**

How would you feel if you had what you want?

**hopeful, grateful, relieved, sense of 'in it together', proud, trusting, happy**

What behaviors go with these feelings?

**offer trust and independence, involved in constructive conversations, good rest, have fun, enjoyable to be around**

# ACT.<sup>®</sup>

## RESULTS

Matching actions that deliver desired outcomes.

What specific actions, words, & attitudes will you use to create what you want?

**Let them do what they are capable of, even if they fight it.**

**Partner with teachers and school without accusing to help child find independent success - ask the school for ideas**

**Ask other families what they do to get their child to work independently**

**Try new things and go the distance**

**Tell the school what I am trying**

**Talk to my child about what is going to change and why - I believe in them!**

**Talk to people who support me when it gets tough**

**minimize time on technology for me and kids -walk the talk**