

## THE FIVE STEPS

**Establish Ground Rules:** Establishing ground rules is a pro active approach to having successful conversations with students around what can sometimes be sensitive issues. Think about ground rules as a way to plan for success. What rules will help to create a safe and respectful environment? What rules can ensure that everyone participates in the discussion? What rules can help to move the conversation forward and promote greater inclusion?

**Know Your Students:** Before having conversations with students take the time to consider who the students are. Remember that everyone's thoughts are based on their prior experiences. Before having a conversation with students about a sensitive issue take the time to think about what experiences each of your students has had. This will help to prepare you for what they may bring to the conversation.

**Expect the Unexpected:** Despite creating ground rules and knowing the students be prepared that students may share unexpected thoughts. This is natural. Whenever we engage with students around sensitive issues we can expect that they will make connections and reflect. In doing so, be prepared to expect the unexpected.

**Acknowledge Student Voice:** Discussing differences is the first step in creating more empathetic and inclusive communities. Far too often students are silenced when it comes to discussing sensitive issues. Therefore, it is important, that we validate what students are saying. Be prepared with some teacher scripts or sentence starters to make sure you are always able to validate that you have heard a student whether what they share is expected or not.

**Redirect Respectfully:** A key piece of these discussions with students is to help them identify their emotions and express their thoughts in respectful ways. Therefore, when students share information or use language that is unexpected it is important to model new language by redirecting respectfully. By knowing your students a teacher will be better prepared to redirect respectfully. Think about how you can rephrase their thoughts in a more respectful way.