

Subject: Alignment of *Depolarizing Discourse* with Global Competency, Civic, and Educational Standards

## Executive Summary

The *Depolarizing Discourse* curriculum is a research-informed program designed to foster the essential human skills of perspective-taking, intellectual humility, and constructive dialogue. While many modern curricula focus on digital tool proficiency, our program prioritizes the behavioral and cognitive competencies required for effective citizenship and global collaboration. By integrating specific psychological frameworks, the curriculum ensures that students are not just using digital tools to talk, but are using them to collaborate cognitively. This scientific approach provides the *why* behind the *how*, transforming standard discourse into a rigorous academic exercise in psychological resilience and critical thinking.

### 1. Academic Standards: Global Competence & Common Core

The program is designed to meet rigorous pedagogical benchmarks for 21st-century learners, focusing on the human elements of the global collaborator standards:

- **Common Core State Standards (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1):** The curriculum directly supports Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening. Students learn to participate in diverse collaborations, build on the ideas of others, and express their own perspectives clearly and persuasively.
- **Global Competency Frameworks:** Aligned with the World Savvy and AFS models, the curriculum emphasizes recognizing perspectives. Students learn to frame conflicts and identify how personal assumptions influence opinions. A core component of our "depolarization" methodology includes the ability to articulate another person's viewpoint thoughtfully and respectfully. We emphasize active listening and the mechanics of civil discourse, moving beyond simple debate toward mutual understanding.

### 2. Support for Federal & State Mandates

Depolarizing Discourse fulfills the behavioral requirements of district compliance by focusing on student interaction and safety in the following areas

- **Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) & Cyberbullying Prevention:** By addressing the psychological roots of "othering" and dehumanization, the curriculum functions as a primary prevention tool. It equips students with the emotional regulation skills needed to avoid escalating behaviors that lead to online harassment and digital conflict.

- **Responsible Digital Citizenship:** The program aligns with the "Digital Citizen" philosophy by teaching students how to manage their digital reputation through civil interaction and intellectual humility.

### 3. Alignment with Social-Emotional Learning (CASEL)

By focusing on the human side of disagreement, the curriculum fulfills key Social Awareness and Relationship Skills competencies:

- **Perspective-Taking:** Lessons help students identify and understand the "why" behind opposing viewpoints.
- **Conflict Resolution:** We provide a framework for students to navigate polarized environments without resorting to dehumanization, fostering a more inclusive school culture.

### 4. Evidence-Based Methodology & Research

The *Depolarizing Discourse* curriculum is a research-driven program built upon foundational principles of social psychology and cognitive science. Our methodology moves beyond simple civility by targeting the psychological mechanisms that drive ideological rigidity and intergroup conflict.

- **Intellectual Humility (IH) Development:** Grounded in the [Comprehensive Intellectual Humility Scale](#), the program focuses on fostering an "Independence of Intellect and Ego." By helping students decouple their personal identity from their viewpoints, we reduce defensive reactions to opposing ideas and increase their openness to evidence-based reasoning.
- **Active Open-Minded Thinking (AOT):** Drawing from [research on cognitive biases](#), the curriculum employs strategies to counter "my-side bias"—the tendency to evaluate evidence in a way that favors one's prior beliefs. We train students to deliberately seek out and weight information that challenges their existing conclusions, a critical skill for navigating polarized information environments.
- **The Neurobiology of Empathy:** Our approach integrates findings on the [neural mechanisms of empathy](#), specifically the distinction between emotional contagion and cognitive perspective-taking. By focusing on "Mentalizing"—the capacity to understand the mental state of others—the curriculum strengthens the prefrontal cortex functions that allow students to maintain social bonds even during intense ideological disagreement.
- **Stakeholder Recognition & Value-Mapping:** The program utilizes a structured framework to identify the diverse needs of multiple stakeholders in complex social conflicts. This ensures that student-generated solutions are not mere compromises, but high-quality outcomes that respect varied perspectives and values.

## 5. Quality and Implementation

- **Low-Tech/High-Impact:** Designed for seamless delivery in any classroom environment (offline or online), ensuring equitable access regardless of a school's digital infrastructure.
- **Measurable Growth:** Includes reflection tools and confidence scales to help educators track the development of student empathy and critical thinking.

### Conclusion

*Depolarizing Discourse* provides the durable skills infrastructure that makes a school's safety and technology policies actually work. By teaching students the *how* of civil engagement, the district fosters a safer, more inclusive school climate and prepares students for the complexities of modern citizenship.

For further information regarding pilot results or curriculum samples, please contact:  
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