

Suggestions for Classroom Discussion After Viewing
All or Part of the Tucson Memorial Service

The memorial service in Tucson honoring the lives of those who were injured and died in the shooting including Representative Gabrielle Giffords provides us one of those ultimate "teachable moments" that addresses several arenas. What was said by leaders in their speeches applies to issues as great as the vitriol in our national debate right on down to how we treat one another in the classrooms of our schools. None of us and none of our environments operates in a vacuum, so what we do in one has impact on all others. The goal in using this event as a "teachable moment" is only as powerful as our ability to help students relate the message of humility and civility to all environments in their lives - in our lives.

Following are a few questions that might be used to generate classroom discussion following the viewing of that service, in particular President Obama's speech.

In the end, these discussions are only a start. Helping students decide on "an action step" that will make a difference is the end goal.

A series of questions might include:

- What was said that helped comfort families?
- What was said that helped comfort the community of Tucson?
- What was said that is important for all of us as Americans?
- What examples can you think of that demonstrate the best in people? (If students tend to focus on major events such as how people mobilize in the face of national disasters, help them equate these behaviors to examples of things that have happened in your community or school. If they are focusing on local events, help them think more expansively.)
- Regarding freedom of speech: what is the difference between what we have the right to do vs. what builds a better world? What is the difference in right and obligation?
- What is humility and why is it mentioned?
- Why is it difficult for people to be humble?
- What does it take to develop humility?
- What are the things that happen in our school that are examples of people working together?
- What are examples of ways that people are hurtful to one another?
- What is one action step we can take to make things better?

Help students see that every one of us is a part of school climate. That one person does make a difference. That we do need to stand up for what we see that is "right" and we need to defend people who are being bullied. That what we say does make a difference, every time.

