

 **RE.A.L. Discussion**

# Professional Learning



**2026-2027**

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“R.E.A.L.<sup>®</sup> met our Faculty where they were and took them where they didn’t even realize they needed to go.

**Everyone was engaged, digging deep, and having fun.**

It was the best full-faculty conversation I can remember.

The perfect PD to kick off the year.”



**Justin Brandon**

HEAD OF SCHOOL  
GEORGE SCHOOL (PA)



**At R.E.A.L.®, we think differently about Professional Learning. Why? Because we have sat through so much of it ourselves.**

**We know what works, what doesn't, and how precious the time *really* is. We believe that, done well, PL is a catalyst for strategic school leadership, so we partner with school leaders to plan that alignment up front.**

All of our PL is research-backed, reality-focused, and FUN! Workshops are content-rich and designed to foster meaningful human connection amidst busy school calendars. If your audience hasn't learned or laughed by the end of a R.E.A.L.® PL experience, we'll reimburse you in exchange for thoughtful feedback.

In 2026-27, we are offering the following **Professional Learning** engagements. These can standalone or be sequenced. Learn more about each in the coming pages.

- *Conversation Comeback* Summer Read Program (for Faculty/Staff/Families)
- Discussion Strategy Retreats (for Leadership Teams)
- All-School Workshops (for Faculty/Staff)
- Discussion Skills Intensives (for Humanities Departments)
- Board of Trustees Discussion Trainings (for Boards of Trustees)
- Author Keynotes or Book Talks (for Various Audiences)

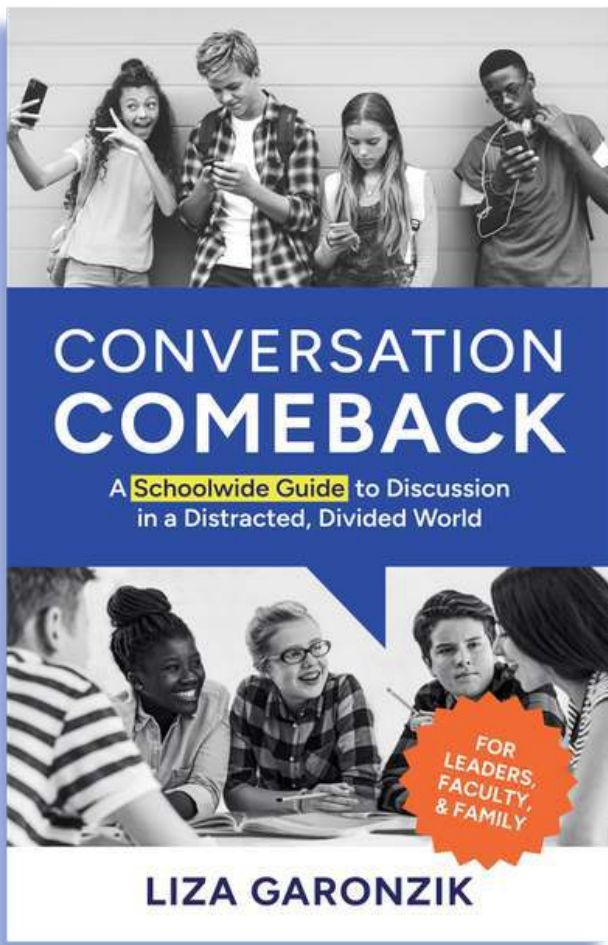
# The Conversation Comeback Summer Read Program

"*Conversation Comeback* offers teachers a practical framework—R.E.A.L.® Discussion—to **rebuild students' communication skills and revive the art of deep discussion in today's classrooms**. With clear strategies and frameworks, this book aims to help educators foster authentic conversation, deeper learning, and stronger communities in a tech-driven and AI-forward world."

**Debra Wilson**

President, National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS)

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"Imagine if every student emerged from school skilled—and practiced—in the habits of thoughtful dialogue. This **short, powerful handbook** holds the promise of accomplishing just that—for all students, at every level, and in ways that will prepare them for success and citizenship."

**Dr. John Austin**

Head of School, Deerfield Academy

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"**Practical, actionable, and impactful.** In today's world, *Conversation Comeback* provides the antidote we need. The R.E.A.L.® Discussion framework empowers students (and adults) with the skills to meet the demands of today and embrace the possibilities of tomorrow."

**Danielle Heard**

Head of School, Nashoba Brooks School

# The Conversation Comeback Summer Read Program

Summer reading for faculty and staff is a great idea: Done right, it can build a common language and introduce a theme for the year ahead. But too often, it doesn't really take off. Enter the *Conversation Comeback schoolwide edition!*

The ***Conversation Comeback Schoolwide Guide*** is written to be accessible and meaningful for an entire school community—and comes with strategic facilitation training that equips your school to kick off the year focused on human connection.

## The Summer Read Program includes:

- Bulk pricing of *Conversation Comeback: Schoolwide Guide*
- 30-minute live meeting with author Liza Garonzik to design what will work best within your school environment
- Ready-to-customize slides and resources to scaffold day-of discussion

→ To explore the Summer Read Program, [book a time](#) or [submit an inquiry](#).

## Community Read Program FAQs

**Q:** How is *Conversation Comeback Schoolwide Guide* different from *Conversation Comeback: The Teachers' Guide*?

**A:** The Teachers' Guide is an unapologetically tactical resource for Humanities teachers—and it requires more than ninety minutes to unpack. The Community Read Edition is written to inspire a conversation that everyone in your community—faculty, staff, even parents—can participate in. It's shorter, more digestible, and includes discussion questions.

**Q:** What is included in the facilitator training?

**A:** Our goal is to help you get intentional about making the most of your allotted "slot" during back-to-school meetings! Just like students, adults need more than a book-they-kind-of-read and generic prompts to engage in meaningful discussion. The Facilitator training will offer a menu of tried-and-true structures and help you think through how to customize them for your school's goals, culture, and logistics.

“Our Discussion Retreat was great—a rare moment for us to gather as an academic leadership team with a specific assignment: Consider why and how we teach discussion skills throughout our school. *How does what we do in lower school create the foundation for middle school? How does middle school build 'muscle memory' so that students arrive in high school with the discourse skills they need to engage deeply about complex topics?*”

**We left with an overarching vision for the role of discussion skills instruction and an action plan for each division, which has already informed PD and programmatic choices.** And the experience itself was highly engaging and wildly efficient — a great use of two hours on Zoom!”



**Erika Prah**

DIRECTOR OF DEIB  
FRANCIS W. PARKER SCHOOL (IL)



# Discussion Strategy Retreats

Most school leadership teams believe that discussion skills are mission-critical but lack a clear strategy for translating that belief into reality. Yet, for conversation to flourish on a campus, there must be shared language, cultural norms, and programmatic throughlines...all of which begin with leadership!

Our **Discussion Strategy Retreats** help leadership teams align around a discussion philosophy, engage with a program audit framework, and build a customized action plan for each grade level or division.

Discussion Strategy Retreats can be virtual or in-person and last anywhere from two to six hours. Pricing and facilitator varies according to format.

→ To explore Retreat Design for your team, [book a time](#) or [submit an inquiry](#).

## Discussion Strategy Retreat FAQs

### **Q: Who should participate in a Discussion Strategy Retreat?**

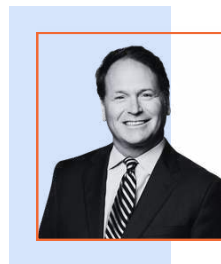
**A:** We highly recommend that division heads and top academic leaders are present and also appreciate perspectives from Student Life/Wellbeing, Admissions, and/or Advancement offices. Even though the focus is on teaching + learning, voices from the non-academic sides of school often provide great (and non-buzzwordy!) language.

### **Q: When is a good time of year to have a Discussion Strategy Retreat?**

**A:** Retreats can happen all year round, but Spring and early Summer tend to be popular because that timing allows you to plan for the upcoming year. We often have clients create time for this work by adding an hour to an existing leadership team meeting or embedding this experience as one section of a longer year-end retreat. It's amazing how much can get done with even just two hours of focused discussion about discussion!

“By lunch on the day of our all-school workshop, our faculty was already asking when R.E.A.L.® Discussion would be back. We’ve since sent faculty to other R.E.A.L.® PD, but **that all-school workshop was fantastic—full of research, stories, and joy!**”

It brought our faculty both a sense of possibility and very practical strategies for tackling a complex topic: *How could we build students’ capacity for confident dialogue in today’s world?* Liza worked with me ahead of time to align content to our School’s mission, language, and priorities, which was unusual and appreciated. I couldn’t imagine a better way to start the year!”



**Bart Griffith**

PRESIDENT  
SHADY SIDE ACADEMY (PA)



# All School Workshops

Built to plug into existing PD days/times, *Conversation Comeback* Workshops engage faculty and staff in discussion about our world's Conversation Crisis—and equip them with tools to launch a *Conversation Comeback* at your school.

**All-School Workshops** are facilitated by former school administrators who “get” how precious this PD time is, are skilled at managing typical faculty dynamics, and partner with you to engage and inspire your community. All workshops blend research, practice, and customized content.

## Sample topics may be:

- *From Conversation Crisis to Conversation Comeback: Designing Your School's Strategy*
- *Let's Talk About Talk: Introducing a Common Language for Discussion in Your Community*
- *Prioritizing The Other AI: Fostering Authentic Interaction in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*
- *From Scrolling to Speaking: How to Teach Real Discussion to Kids Growing Up on Screens*
- *Discussions Across Difference: Taking a Skills-Based Approach to Civil Discourse*
- *Classrooms as Conversation Labs: A Framework for Authentic, Screen-Free Class Discussions*

→ Choose from virtual or in-person. Available as a standalone half-day or sequenced as a series. To explore Workshops, [book a time](#) or [submit an inquiry](#).

## [All School Workshop FAQs](#)

### Q: When in the school year is the best time for all-school workshops?

**A:** The great thing about Conversation is that it's an evergreen topic that we can relate to whatever is happening in the world or at your school! However, if you're interested in PD in August, October, February, or April, please reach out soon. Those are popular PL times.

### Q: Do you offer coaching or follow-up sessions?

**A:** All PL engagements include a 30-minute preparation session where we get to know you, your school, and your strategic goals for the day; as well as a 30-minute debrief where we reflect on the workshop and design any next steps together, including options for additional workshops or coaching.

"We're a school deeply rooted in Harkness discussion, and we wanted a PD partner who understood that starting point but could also help us be more deliberate about our goals and practices around discussion in middle and high school. R.E.A.L.® was a great fit.

What became clear very quickly is that the R.E.A.L.® team knows discussion-based learning *and* understands the human work of teaching and change. **Their work resonated across faculty experience levels, and the conversations they sparked feel like ones we'll keep building on.** I'm grateful for the partnership and excited about where it's taking us."



**Cathy Kanaday**

DEAN OF FACULTY  
EPISCOPAL SCHOOL OF JACKSONVILLE (FL)



# Discussion Skills Intensives

Most Humanities classes already do class discussion—and that’s great! But often, discussions vary across teachers and are unintentionally inequitable. And in today’s tech-centric world, the stakes are high: Discussion is a precious, human experience—and a technical skillset students must learn to engage academically, socially, and societally.

**R.E.A.L.® Discussion Skills Intensives** equip Humanities departments with common language, shared instructional practices, and evidence-based assessment frameworks. This foundation will build teacher confidence, create space for student-led discussions, and ensure a student experience that is equitable, rigorous, and screen-free.

Intensives are facilitated by former Humanities Department Chairs who understand faculty dynamics and the discussion methods your teachers likely use (e.g., Exeter’s Harkness, Fishbowl, Paideia, SpiderWeb). Intensives are seminar-style, using *Conversation Comeback* and video case studies. We hope it feels like everyone’s favorite class from grad school!

→ Choose from virtual or in-person. 1, 1.5, or 2-day options. To explore Intensive design for your team, [book a time](#) or [submit an inquiry](#).

**Note:** Intensives are a one-and-done PL experience; they do not include outcomes measurement, R.E.A.L.® Discussion certification, or ongoing support. If your school is interested in a multi-year initiative to teach, measure, and celebrate discussion skills within Humanities classrooms, check out our [Customized Programs](#).

## Discussion Skills Intensive FAQs

**Q:** Our school already does Harkness in the High School and Socratic Seminars in Middle School (though it’s kind of inconsistent across classrooms). How can R.E.A.L.® training fit in?

**A:** Teachers tell us that the R.E.A.L.® layers easily into their existing discussion practices and that our tools are more concrete than *Harkness* and more comprehensive than Fishbowl. Our facilitators love working cross-divisionally; they get the stylistic and pedagogical differences between middle and upper school teachers. Let’s discuss what will work best for your faculty!

“Liza delivered exactly what our Trustee Day audience needed and did so with an appreciation of independent schools from many perspectives. **Her style is energetic, supported by research, takeaways, and lots of audience interactivity.**

Finding R.E.A.L. was like a great stock tip!”



**Alecia Dry**

DIRECTOR OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING  
AIMS



# Board of Trustees Training

Board conversations define the future of your school—and the voices in that room have been very intentionally assembled. Yet, too often, board discussions aren't structured to elicit deep, honest, or equitable engagement from *all* Trustees.

We partner with Heads and Board Chairs to examine the conversational dynamics in your board room and provide necessary training and meeting planning support to ensure all voices are heard—especially on complex, high-stakes topics.

**Importantly, our facilitators for Board Trainings have all served as Trustees or Heads themselves.** They know school operations *and* boardroom dynamics from the inside-out. This experience and perspective enable us to take a unique and authentic approach.

→ **Training and support can be virtual or in-person and range from 60 minutes to a full day. To explore a Board Training, [book a time](#) or [submit an inquiry](#).**

## **Board of Trustees Training FAQs**

**Q: We have so little meeting time. When is the best time of year to do this?**

**A:** Boards all have different meeting cadences, and discussion training can fit in where you need it to. The most important thing is to do this training when there is time in the agenda to do it well! It can serve as a great orientation, mid-year reflective moment, or end-of-year wrap-up.

**Q: We would prefer a year-long engagement with several touch points instead of a one-and-done training. Do you ever do that?**

**A:** Absolutely, but we ask that we take the time up front to align with the Head and the Board Chair on our shared goals so that we can monitor progress together over the year. There is nothing worse than feeling like meetings don't "add up" over time! Often, these engagements will include support at different levels, e.g., full Board, Executive Committee, and even individual coaching.

“Our educators value Liza’s contributions highly. Over several years, she has supported our professional learning through webinars, podcasts, and live events. **She brings deep subject-matter expertise together with an engaging and thoughtful presentation style, characterized by clarity and optimism.** Liza consistently responds to the needs of diverse audiences and demonstrates a strong ability to connect meaningfully with educators across contexts. She is regarded as one of our most respected presenters on a topic of enduring importance.”



**Megan Murphy**

GLOBAL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
INTERNATIONAL COALITION OF GIRLS' SCHOOLS



# Author Keynotes or Book Talks

R.E.A.L.® Discussion Founder Liza Garonzik speaks to your audience, drawing on insights from her book, *Conversation Comeback*, and her experience as an educator and social impact leader. She can keynote your event, give a book talk to a targeted audience, or participate in a fireside chat or panel discussion. Across formats, expect Liza to bring research, conversation, and optimism.

## Here's Liza's official bio:

Liza Garonzik is the Founder of R.E.A.L.® Discussion and the author of *Conversation Comeback*, inspired by her experience as a teacher and administrator. Since launching R.E.A.L.® in 2021, Liza has partnered with 100+ K-12 schools on discussion skill-building. Her work has been featured by the Wall Street Journal, National Association of Independent Schools, Association of Boarding Schools, International Schools Services, Transcend Education Models Exchange, Enrollment Management Association, and more.

Liza is a graduate of Harvard College (A.B.) and University of Pennsylvania (MS.Ed) with additional Fellowships at Klingenstein Center, Transcend Network, and New Sector Alliance. She has served on the boards of several education non-profits and lives outside Atlanta with her family—and many animals!

→ Choose from virtual or in-person. Pricing varies according to your event needs. To explore an Author Talk, [book a time](#) or [submit an inquiry](#).

Head to our [Media page](#) for past publications, podcasts, and presentations featuring Liza and R.E.A.L.® Discussion.



# Let's Talk!

Bring R.E.A.L.® Professional  
Learning To Your School



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