How to run a world café

World café is a powerful method to actively engage your students in conversations about volunteering. The format is flexible and draws on 7 design principles to create a simple, effective and flexible way to host large group discussions.

**The 7 design principles**

1. Set the context: focus on the reason you’re bringing everyone together – student volunteer program.
2. Create a hospitable space: create an atmosphere that feels safe and inviting.
3. Explore questions that matter: for example, what’s our role in the community? What is volunteering?
4. Encourage everyone’s contribution: encourage everyone to contribute ideas, either actively sharing or just by listening.
5. Connect diverse perspectives: ask students to move between tables and contribute their ideas.
6. Listen together for patterns and insights: encourage everyone to listen for what is and is not being said.
7. Share collective discoveries: this step involves identifying patterns so they are visible to everyone. Make sure you have a way to capture thoughts and ideas (harvest), for example Post-it Wall Pad.

**Resources required**

* 1.5 hours.
* Small tables (preferably round) of about 1m diameter.
* Chairs for participants and presenters.
* Colourful tablecloths with Post-it Wall Pad in the middle.
* Coloured markers on each table.
* Posters outlining Café Etiquette.
* Fruit and refreshments (to keep those energy levels up).
* Flip-chart to capture the final plenary discussion.
* Chime or bell for bringing conversations to a conclusion.

**World café etiquette**

* Focus on what really matters.
* Contribute your ideas and thinking.
* Speak your mind and heart with humility.
* Listen to understand.
* Connect your ideas with others.
* Write, doodle and draw – use your Post It Wall Pad to full effect.
* Have fun!

**Process**

1. **Setup small café-style tables**: 4 to 8 students at each.
2. **Have conversation rounds**: have 3 rounds of conversation on the topic of volunteering (20 minutes each). Encourage students to write, doodle and draw key ideas.
3. **Invite table hosts**: ask one student to stay at the table to welcome their new guests and briefly explain the main ideas, themes and questions from the last group.
4. **Ask others to be ‘idea ambassadors’**: ask remaining students to move between tables (move twice – visit 3 tables). Encourage them to link ideas from their previous tables. At the end of the rounds, all of the tables and conversations will be cross-pollinated with insights from previous conversations.
5. **Harvest**: after the rounds of questions, allow some time for the whole group to harvest their collective conversations.