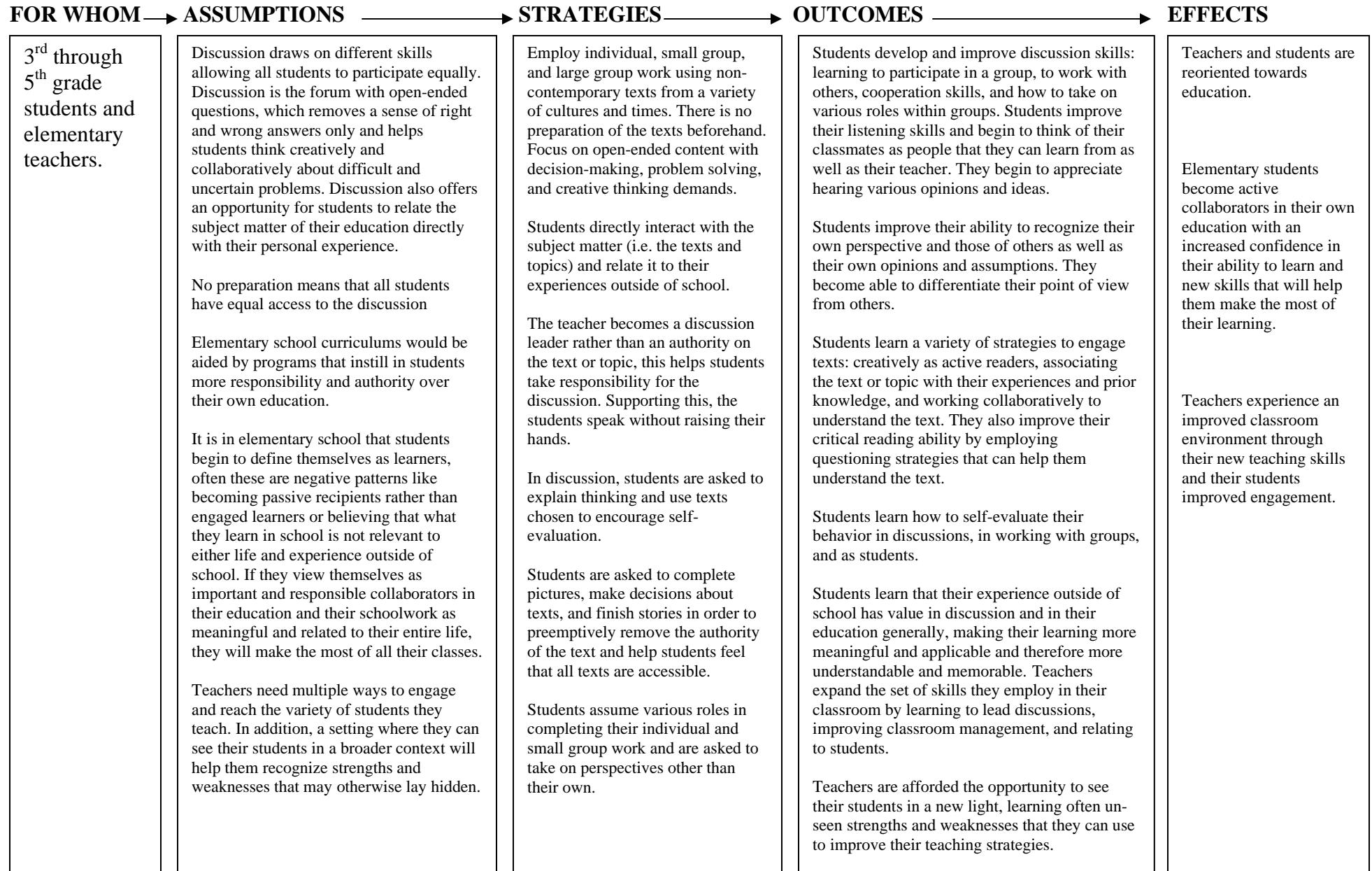


## **Touchstones Discussion Project's Touchpebbles Logic Model**

**MISSION:** To implement discussions which teach elementary students to understand themselves, their ideas, and how to work with others. To use discussion's unique ability to have students engage with texts and ideas to help maintain and nurture students' enthusiasm for learning which will make them active, engaged learners.



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**Who:** 3rd through 5<sup>th</sup> grade students and elementary teachers.

**Assumptions:**

- Discussion draws on different skills allowing all students to participate equally. Discussion is the forum with open-ended questions, which removes a sense of right and wrong answers only and helps students think creatively and collaboratively about difficult and uncertain problems. Discussion also offers an opportunity for students to relate the subject matter of their education directly with their personal experience.
- *No preparation means that all students have equal access to the discussion*
- Elementary school curriculums would be aided by programs that instill in students more responsibility and authority over their own education.
- It is in elementary school that students begin to define themselves as learners, often these are negative patterns like becoming passive recipients rather than engaged learners or believing that what they learn in school is not relevant to either life and experience outside of school. If they view themselves as important and responsible collaborators in their education and their schoolwork as meaningful and related to their entire life, they will make the most of all their classes.
- Teachers need multiple ways to engage and reach the variety of students they teach. In addition, a setting where they can see their students in a broader context will help them recognize strengths and weaknesses that may otherwise lay hidden.

**Strategies:**

- Employ individual, small group, and large group work using non-contemporary texts from a variety of cultures and times. There is no preparation of the texts beforehand. Focus on open-ended content with decision-making, problem solving, and creative thinking demands.
- Students directly interact with the subject matter (i.e. the texts and topics) and relate it to their experiences outside of school.
- The teacher becomes a discussion leader rather than an authority on the text or topic, this helps students take responsibility for the discussion. Supporting this, the students speak without raising their hands.
- In discussion, students are asked to explain thinking and use texts chosen to encourage self-evaluation.
- Students are asked to complete pictures, make decisions about texts, and finish stories in order to preemptively remove the authority of the text and help students feel that all texts are accessible.
- Students assume various roles in completing their individual and small group work and are asked to take on perspectives other than their own.

**Outcomes:**

- Students develop and improve discussion skills: learning to participate in a group, to work with others, cooperation skills, and how to take on various roles within groups. Students improve their listening skills and begin to think of their classmates as people that they can learn from as well as their teacher. They begin to appreciate hearing various opinions and ideas.
- Students improve their ability to recognize their own perspective and those of others as well as their own opinions and assumptions. They become able to differentiate their point of view from others.
- Students learn a variety of strategies to engage texts: creatively as active readers, associating the text or topic with their experiences and prior knowledge, and working collaboratively to understand the text. They also improve their critical reading ability by employing questioning strategies that can help them understand the text.
- Students learn how to self-evaluate their behavior in discussions, in working with groups, and as students.
- Students learn that their experience outside of school has value in discussion and in their education generally, making their learning more meaningful and applicable and therefore more understandable and memorable.

Teachers expand the set of skills they employ in their classroom by learning to lead discussions, improving classroom management, and relating to students. Teachers are afforded the opportunity to see their students in a new light, learning often un-seen strengths and weaknesses that they can use to improve their teaching tactics.

**Effects:**

- Teachers and students are reoriented towards education.
- Elementary students become active collaborators in their own education with an increased confidence in their ability to learn and new skills that will help them make the most of their learning.
- Teachers experience an improved classroom environment through their new teaching skills and their students improved engagement.