

## What is Sustained Dialogue<sup>®</sup>?

Sustained Dialogue is a dialogue-to-action process that (1) **transforms relationships** and (2) **creates informed community change**. SD is rooted in the conflict resolution methodology of senior Middle East diplomat **Hal Saunders**, a key drafter of the Camp David Peace Accords. During Hal's international negotiations, he observed that participants' relationships evolved through a recognizable pattern. He distilled those observations into two key concepts that serve as the foundations of SD:

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*Dialogue is a process of genuine interaction through which human beings listen to each other deeply enough to be changed by what they learn. Each makes a serious effort to take other's concerns into their own picture, even when disagreements persist. No participant gives up their identity, but each recognizes enough of the other's valid human claims so that they will act differently toward the other."*

*– Dr. Hal Saunders, Board Chair and Founder of SDI*

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1. **A concept of relationship that helps analyze relationships and guide efforts for improving them**
2. **A five-stage process to lead participants from trust-building dialogue to community-changing action**

## Campus Applications

SD organizers gather participants from diverse backgrounds into small groups that meet regularly to build relationships and develop informed strategies to improve their campuses and communities, especially around the following dimensions of identity which many often don't have the skills to engage productively:

<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Socioeconomic Status/Class</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Sexual Orientation</i>
<i>Sex &amp; Gender</i>	<i>Race &amp; Color</i>	<i>Religion</i>	<i>Ability Status</i>

The process involves:

- Dialogue groups of 8 to 15 participants that meet for a pre-determined length of time (semester or year). Multiple dialogue groups run at any given time. Students frequently lead the charge, but administrators and faculty often organize joint or faculty-only dialogues.
- Some campuses have an SD course or incorporate SD aspects into a current course.
- Two trained peer moderators lead each dialogue group
- SD leaders support groups logistically and hold events throughout the school year that promote and help create a more inclusive larger community.
- SD is sustained in multiple ways:
  1. **Participants:** Each SD group maintains the same participants and moderators.
  2. **Agenda:** Each meeting is designed to continue where the last ended.
  3. **Time:** Dialogues meet consistently at an appointed weekly time for at least an hour.

Campuses learn the five-stage process of Sustained Dialogue from trainers from the Sustained Dialogue Institute. Once the group **comes together** (stage 1) and **discusses personal experiences** that relate to community concerns (stage 2), they pick an issue to focus on and **work to analyze the root causes**, both relational and structural/systematic (stage 3). In stages 4 and 5 of the process, the participants **plan and execute action/advocacy** around their chosen issue.

## What impact should campuses using SD expect?

Through these experiences, participants develop a diverse set of leadership skills, including strong personal identity awareness, knowledge of social justice concepts and systemic inequities, empathy, facilitation and conflict resolution skills, and more.

SDCN conducts pre- and post- dialogue surveys for student participants based on key measures from questions similar to The National Survey on Student Engagement, NSSE.

While in the USA, student empathy is decreasing, SD participants indicated high empathy traits in their post-surveys.



Better understand another's perspective

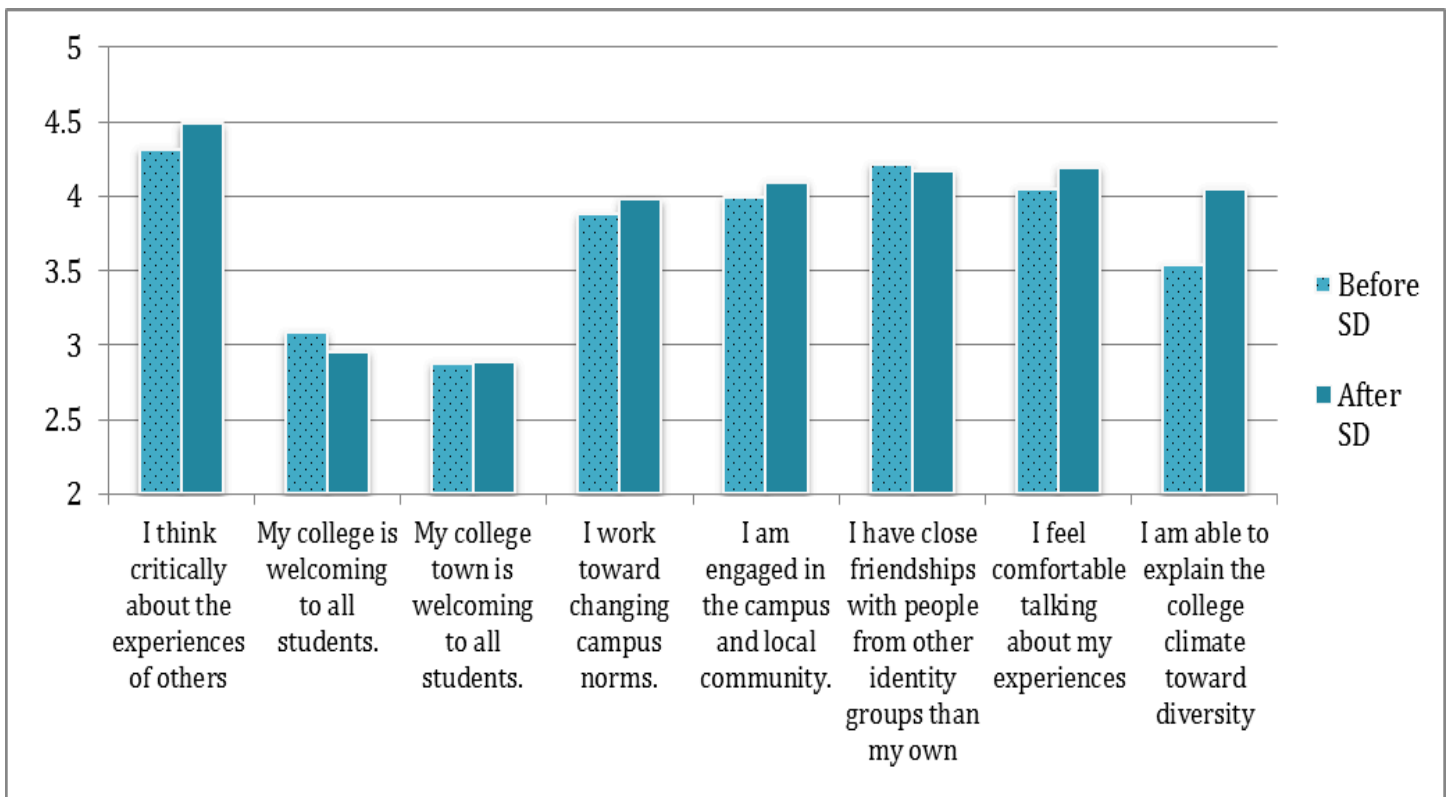


Think from another's perspective

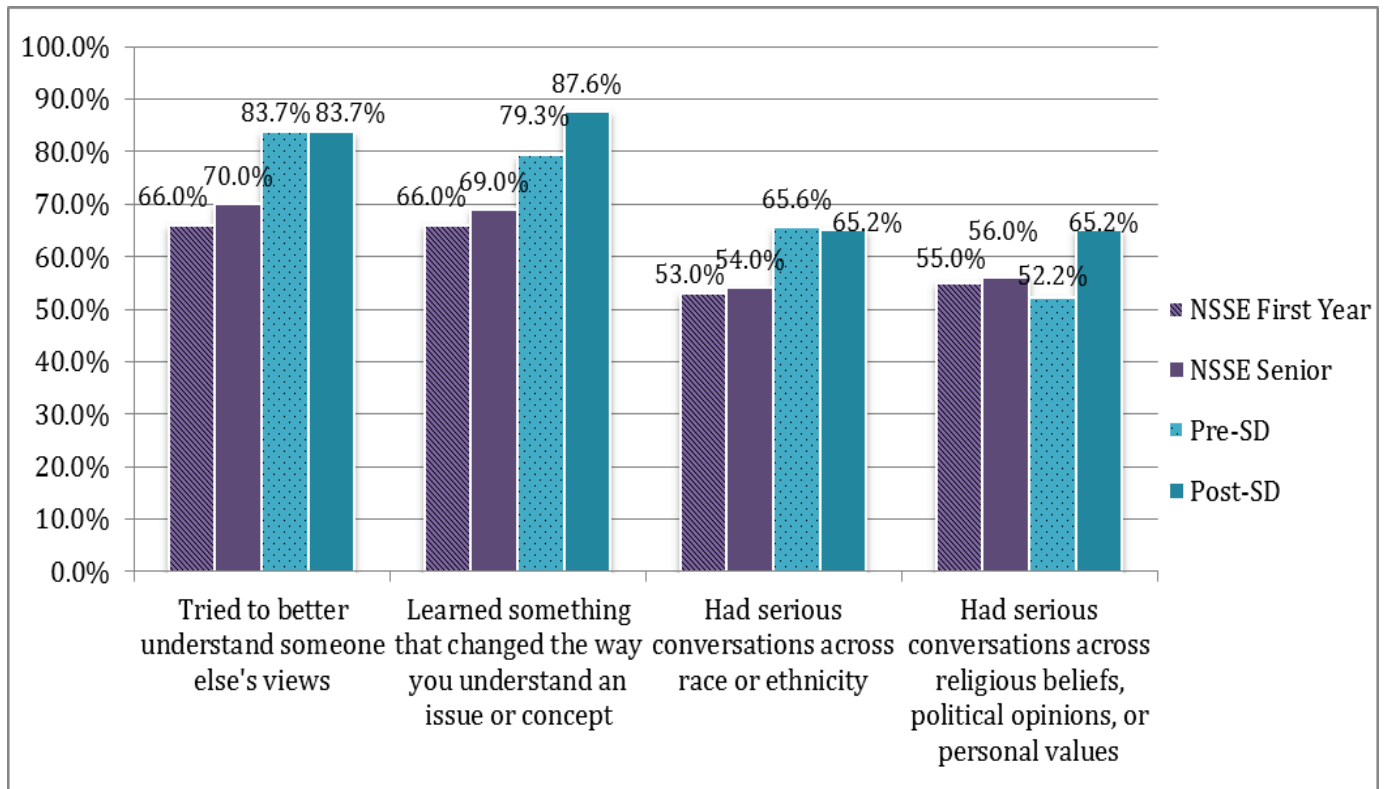


Think critically on how to improve the situations of others

## Before and After SD: How much do you agree with the statement:



**Compared with NSSE statistics, total percentages of participants who responded “Very often” or “Often” to the following questions were as such:**



### **Impact internationally:**

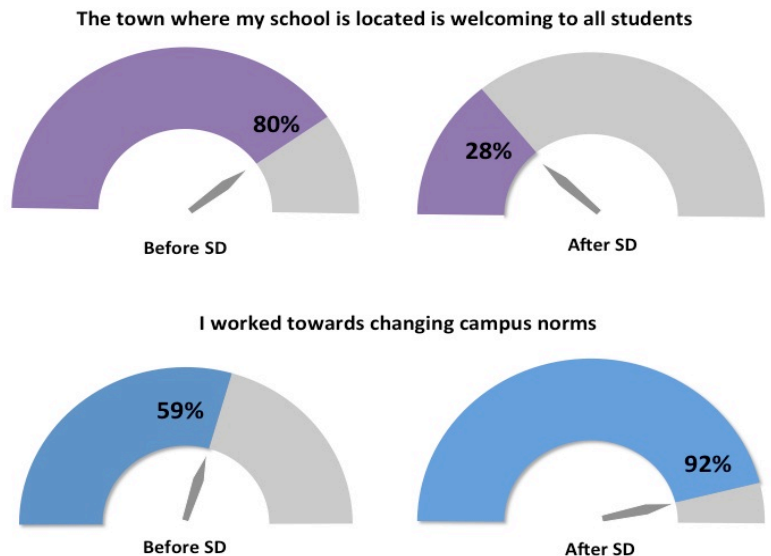
Sustained Dialogue is used at over 20 campuses across Sudan, Mexico, and Ethiopia. In a randomized field trial\* conducted comparing two-term SD participants at Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia with students who did not participate, the study found statistically significant attitudinal change:

- A decrease in mistrust
- An increase in trust between people of different ethnic origin
- An increased sense of ethnic identity
- An increased perception of being ethnically discriminated
- An increase in accommodative feelings towards students of other ethnicities leading to resulting positive relationships

\*Svensson, Isak and Karen Brounéus. “Dialogue and interethnic trust: A randomized field trial of ‘sustained dialogue’ in Ethiopia.” *Journal of Peace Research* (August 20, 2013): 1-13. Available at: <http://jpr.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/08/19/0022343313492989>

## Participants saw strong increases in some of their personal skills and actions because of their time in dialogue including:

- Developing, understanding, and expressing personal beliefs (82% → 87%)
- Explaining the college climate toward diversity, issues that arise, and why issues persist (70% → 81%)
- Thinking critically about the experiences of others and how they might be improved (86% → 90%)
- Talking about their experiences in front of a group of their peers (81% → 84%)
- Taking steps if a friend, roommate, classmate, or professor makes a biased or hurtful comment (76% → 79%; 58% → 67%)
- Talking about diversity-related issues with friends (84% → 88%)
- Using inclusive language (80% → 87%)



## Where can I turn for more information about Sustained Dialogue?

For more information on the campus application, please contact [info@sustaineddialogue.org](mailto:info@sustaineddialogue.org). The tenets of SD work have also been described in Hal Saunders' books, including [A Public Peace Process](#) (2001), [Politics is about Relationship](#) (2005), and [Sustained Dialogue in Conflict](#) (2012).