

**CDH**  
**CIVIL DISCOURSE**  
**Principles**



# **CIVIL DISCOURSE DEFINED**

**“Respectful engagement in conversation  
intended to enhance reciprocal  
understanding.”**

**“Authentic dialogue with another that  
presumes the individuals’ good faith and  
rationality.”**

**“Honest discussion defined by true empathy  
and serving the mutual enlightenment of  
society.”**

# Listen First

## Think Second

## Speak Third

**“Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak,  
slow to anger.” (James 1:19)**

**“Be Curious, not judgmental.” (Walt Whitman)**

As a Cretin-Derham Hall community, we value both diversity and community. At times, we must come together to engage in meaningful dialogue about difficult topics. Our values require that we show tolerance for others’ opinions and ideas, always showing respect for the human dignity of all. In order to gain insight and empathy, we must have discussions and not arguments. We must recognize that we all enter into difficult discussions because of a shared concern for people and a desire to affect positive change. We strengthen our community when we listen to one another and try to understand viewpoints that are different from our own. We must engage with respect as conscientious listeners, considerate thinkers, and thoughtful responders. When we engage in this type of civil discourse, we contribute to building Cretin-Derham Hall into a school that welcomes and values all of its members.

### 1) When **Listening...**

- ✓ Be Aware of Your Nonverbal Behavior
- ✓ Be Patient & Wait; Always Choose to Listen First ✓ Show Active Listening by your body language &  
Do Not Interrupt
- ✓ Maintain Confidentiality & Practice Forgiveness ✓ Presume the Other’s Honesty & Goodwill

✓ Do Not Easily Take Offense; Be Sensitive but Strong

2) When **Thinking...**

- ✓ Suspend Bias, Judgment, or Presuppositions
- ✓ Embrace Humility & Defer to Expertise
- ✓ Empathize with Others; See Through Their Eyes
- ✓ Find Common Ground & Begin There

3) When **Speaking...**

- ✓ Acknowledge the Other's Perspective
- ✓ Ask Questions to Clarify; Do Not Assume
- ✓ Recognize Agreements & Common Ground
- ✓ Be Specific & Speak Only for Yourself
- ✓ Disagree Gently; Debate the Issues, not One Another
- ✓ Differentiate Between Fact & Opinion
- ✓ Do Not Demean, Name-Call, Use Sarcasm, or Threaten
- ✓ Stay Calm & Follow the Conversational Direction
- ✓ Do Not Make it Personal; Stick to the Issues at Hand

\*Thank you to the Cretin-Derham Hall Student Council Executive Board in partnership with Holy Family School, in consultation with sources from the American Bar Association & the United States Federal Courts\*