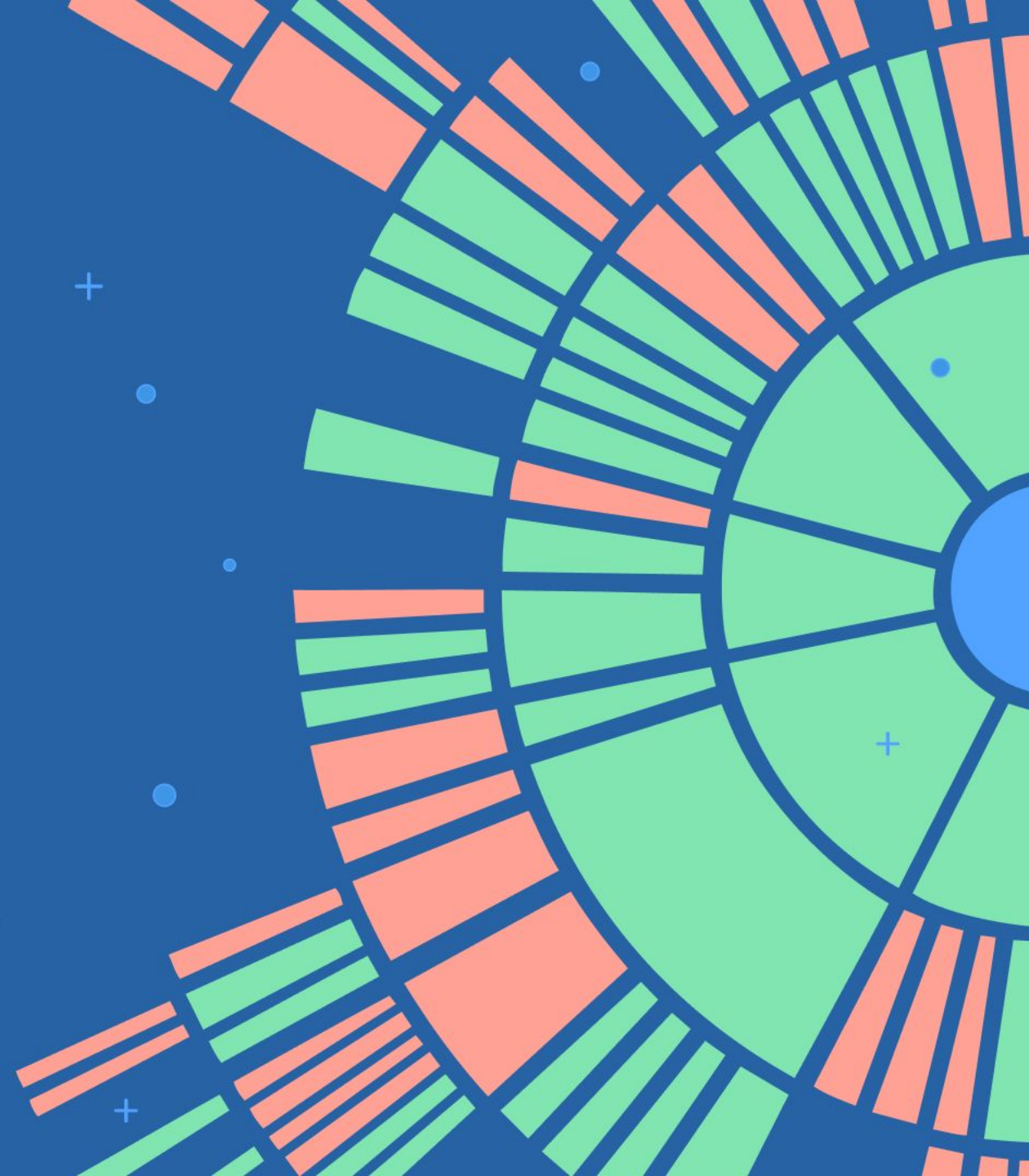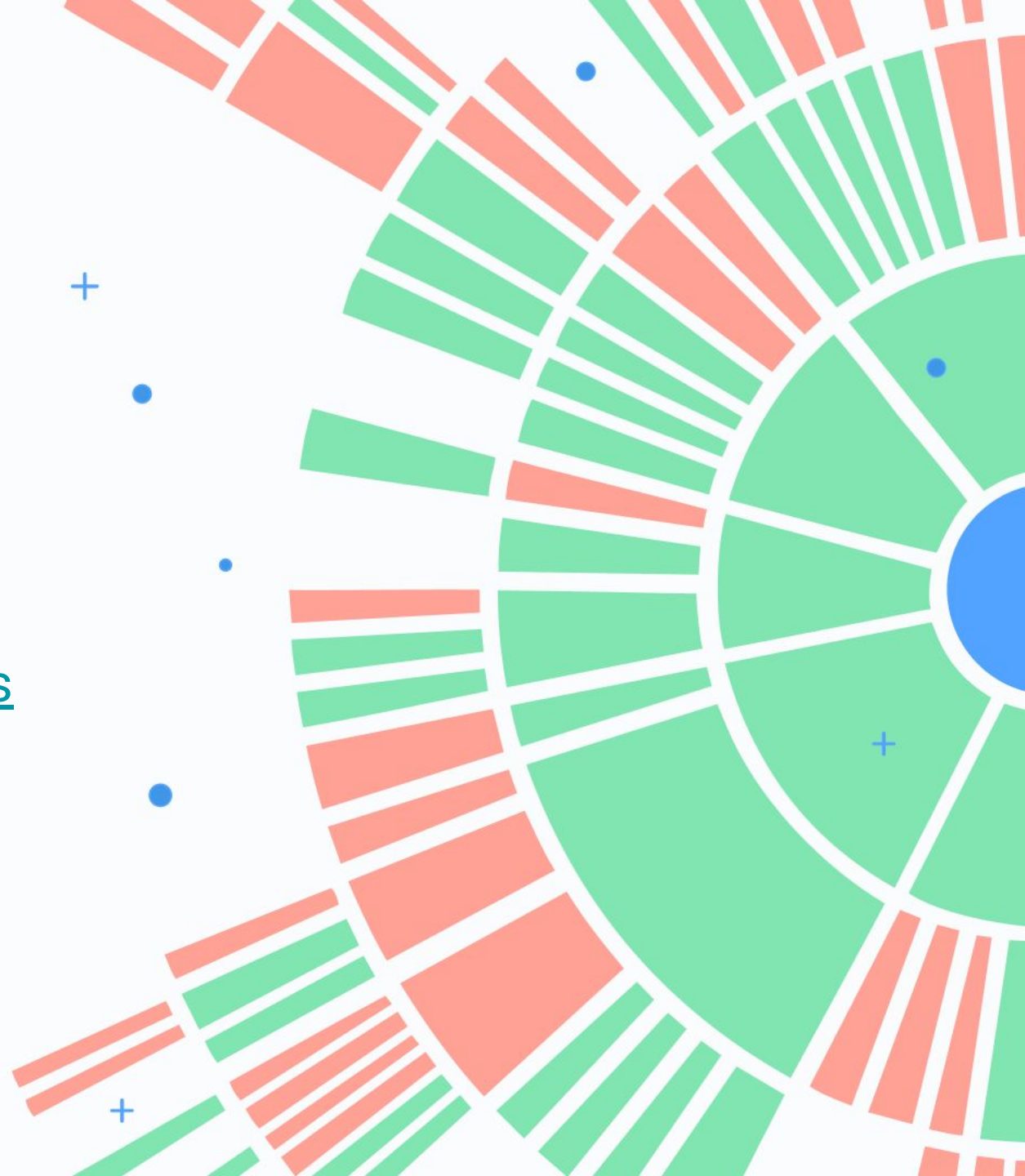# kialo edu

Kialo - built for thoughtful class discussions

Improving critical thinking, one collaborative discussion at a time

Outline

Kialo Edu in a nutshell

Kialo Edu is a free, purpose-built web app for educators to train students' critical thinking skills via thoughtful, focused, and collaborative argumentation.

Educators primarily use it for highly engaging and structured classroom discussions, small group exercises, debate and argumentation training, and structuring argumentative essays.

A few words about Kialo

Founded in 2011. Privately funded. R&D based in Berlin. Team of 60+.

Kialo.com launched in 2017, and is the world's largest argument mapping site for public debates.

Kialo-edu.com, built specifically for educators, launched in November 2019. Since then 800k users from 40k schools have signed up.

What is Kialo? A collaborative argument map...

Kialo discussions start with a thesis at the top, which students support or weaken by adding pros and cons beneath. Basically a pro/con list.

Under each pro/con, students can add more pros and cons to support or weaken the arguments above.

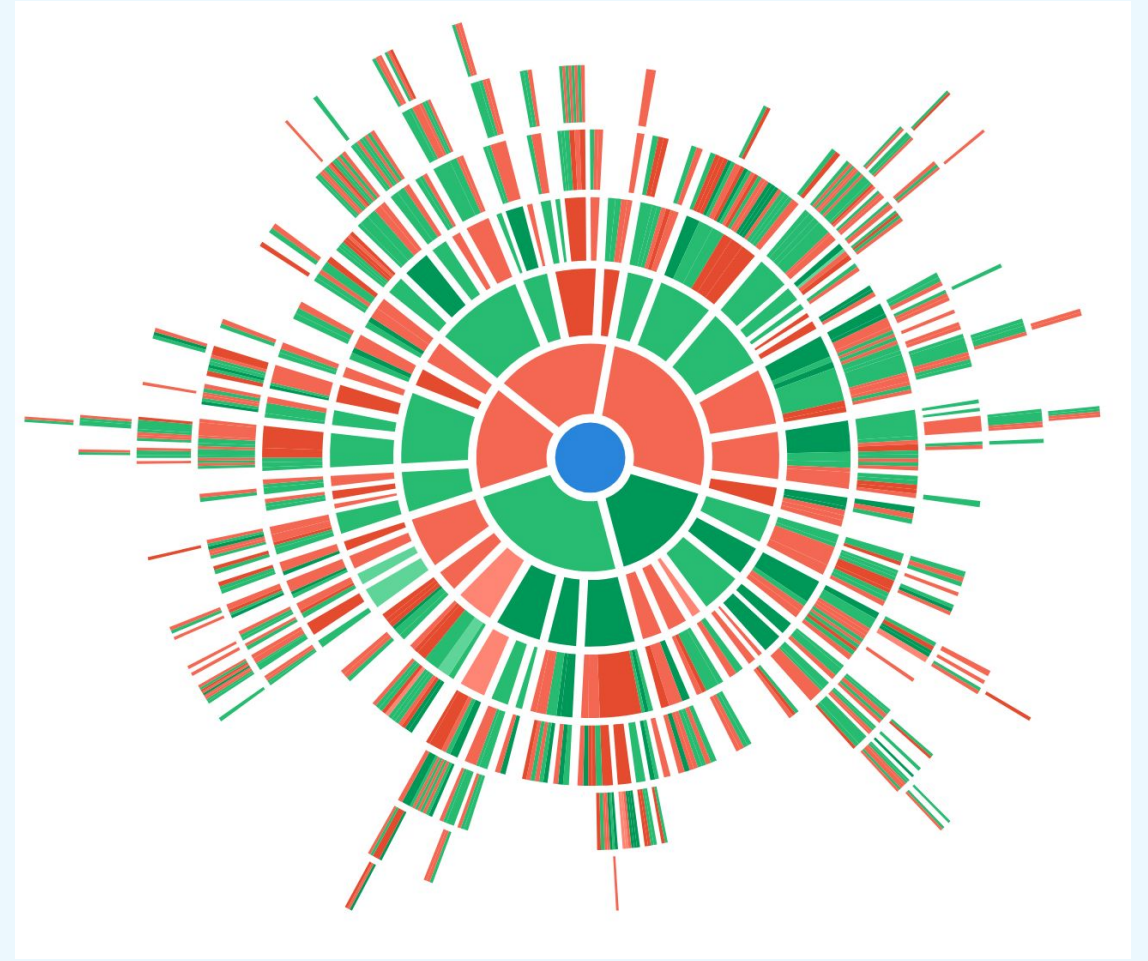And underneath these arguments they can add even more pros and cons, and so on.

...where arguments turn into sunbursts.

And this is how a simple list of pros and cons evolves into a tree of arguments, which can then be visualized as a beautiful sunburst.

Give it a spin…

No sign up required. Feel free to play around and add arguments.

Go to bit.ly/eedu-kialo or scan the QR code:

A bit more about Kialo Edu

- Free and ad-free use without limitations. No data abuse, reselling, etc.

- Very intuitive interface that has passed several UX audits.

- No training or installation required. Very easy to set up, and Kialo works on all platforms including phones, via modern web browsers.

- Eight signup methods. Two ways to use Kialo without requiring students to sign up. Sharing personal identifiable information is optional.

- Moodle plugin for seamless integration and LTI for all other LMSs.

- Hosted in Germany and compliant with all privacy regulations.

- Accessibility: WCAG 2.1 AA audited and as compatible as possible.

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Popular use cases and Kialo's benefits

- #1 Classroom discussions
  - The pros and cons of Kialo
- #2 Small group assignments
- #3 For structuring argumentative essays
- #4 For training critical thinking
- As an essay replacement, an exam or #5 for debate training
- To build ChatGPT-resistant exercises

#1 Kialo as a tool for classroom discussions

Used in remote and in-person classes, and in a synchronous as well as asynchronous fashion.

Students practice writing clear and concise statements, integrating sources, and understanding and analyzing others' arguments.

Additionally, students learn to rationally and civilly engage with arguments they disagree with—all in a safe, low-stakes environment.

Let's have a look at the pros and cons of Kialo in the context of a classroom discussion.

Pro: Greatly increased participation

Synchronous participation leads to more participation, as students don't have to wait for their turn to speak.

Normal discussion flow makes it very hard to refer to something that was said ten minutes ago. This is not the case in an argument map, where you can contribute to any point at any time.

Students find peer-to-peer discussing each others' points more engaging than only reacting to teacher prompts.

Depending on familiarity with the topic, you can expect 20 students to be writing 40 claims in 5 minutes of Kialo discussion.

Pro: Better contributions

The short 500-character text fields encourage students to write clear, concise arguments that focus on a single point at a time.

The very nature of an argument map is that you engage with arguments rather than commentary.

Students stay on task, and conversations are less likely to be derailed with endless, facetious comment threads, like "Ah that's a typical Erik comment…"

Pro: More inclusive

Students don't have to muster the courage to speak in front of the whole class, as they are participating in an argument map full of contributions made by others.

Students can participate at their own pace, taking their time to write, find sources and also edit arguments.

This is particularly helpful for shy and slower-working students, as well as for those who have speech/hearing impediments or who aren't yet firm in the language being used.

Pro: A safer discussion environment

Kialo's emphasis is not on who made a particular point, especially compared to speaking in front of the whole class.

Students feel safer making points they disagree with, as they are just helping to compile all relevant arguments into a comprehensive argument map. It's not necessarily their point—just a point that they know exists.

Thus, it's rare for students to criticize other students for points they wrote, especially compared to traditional forms of discussion or debate.

Additionally, teachers can enable the Anonymous Discussion feature to mask students' identities from each other. Teachers can still see who is who.

Pro: Fewer classroom management issues

Given students rarely attack other students for what they wrote, and given there is no prominent place for derailing commentary in Kialo, classroom management becomes much less of an issue. This is especially useful when covering thorny issues.

In the unlikely event of a student losing their temper, teachers will find the delete command under their seats—or in the menu.

Pro: Clear asks of students & teacher feedback

Teachers can set clear and trackable tasks for each student to complete.

Tasks also push more passive students to participate in a discussion, without teachers having to cold-call them.

Additionally, teachers can participate in the discussion and give private or public feedback to individual students on their arguments.
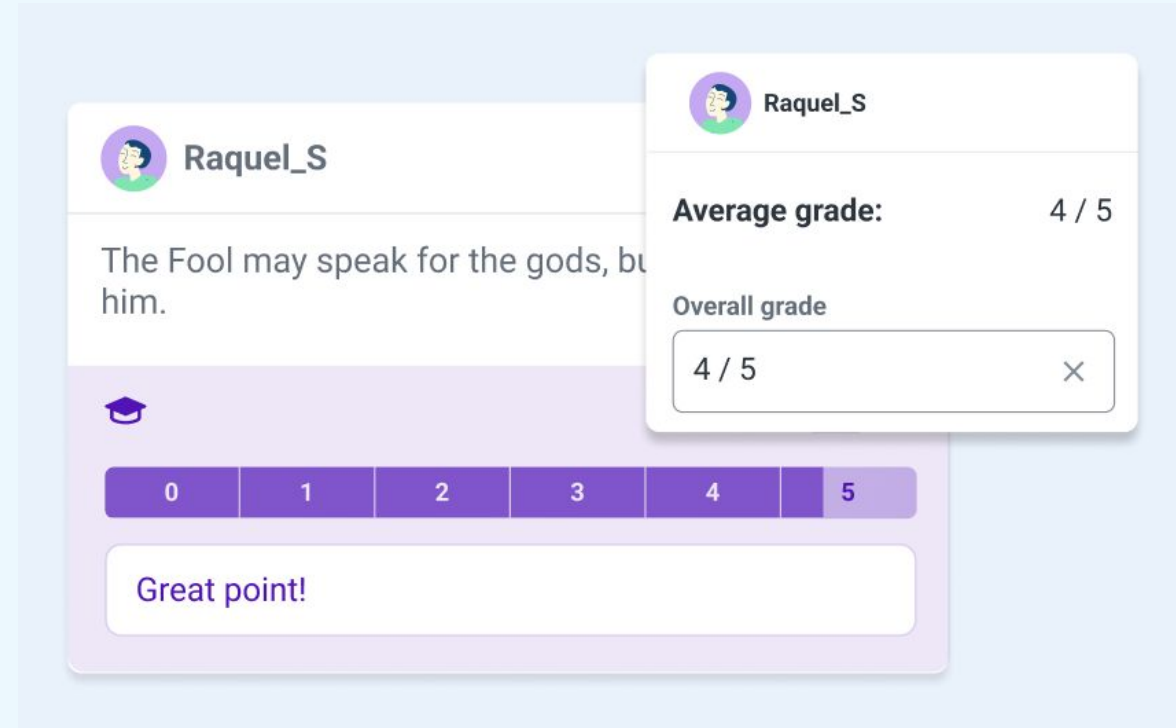
Pro: The outcome is reusable content...

Unlike ephemeral verbal discussions, where what is said lives only in the here and now, Kialo discussions result in a written argument map that can be referred back to. Students can discuss their map further in class, use it as the basis of an essay or consult it to review content.

These completed argument maps are also much better at allowing students to visually process the depth and breadth of the issues being discussed, especially when compared to endless nested commenting threads.

Pro: ...which is easier and fairer to grade

Given the whole discussion is in writing, a teacher can easily grade students based on all their contributions, either during or after the discussion.

All students have the same time and opportunity to participate, contrary to traditional classroom discussions, where the best and most assertive students often dominate.

Now for the cons:

When a lot of students simultaneously start writing in a discussion, they will inevitably create duplicate arguments. The release of Small Group Mode in May will minimize this. Teachers don't seem to mind too much and consider it the result of strong student engagement.

Argument maps are not suitable for non-argumentative "discussions".

While Kialo trains students' argumentation and critical thinking skills, it does not directly train their oratory presentation abilities.

Teachers need to familiarize themselves with yet another tool.

Students need devices and access to the Internet.

Kialo discussions take a minute to set up.

#2 Kialo for small group assignments

Kialo is often used for synchronous activities, but also in asynchronous discussion assignments that students complete over days or weeks.

To create small group assignments, simply clone a discussion and use the Teams functionality to assign small groups to the individual clones.

Additionally, we are in the process of creating a special Small Group mode which will allow teachers to divide their class into groups of X students and have each join their own small group discussion. A one-click solution where they won't have to go through cloning and inviting anymore. ETA May.

#3 Kialo for argumentative essay preparation

Kialo's first use in education (that we know of) was a Princeton professor who wasn't happy with the arguments his PhD students used in their essays.

To improve this, the professor told their students to each write a Kialo map in preparation for the essay, which the professor first reviewed and commented on. This led to significantly better reasoning in the essays.

We have seen many teachers successfully using Kialo for this purpose.

#4 For training critical thinking

The ability to understand, analyze and formulate arguments is an essential aspect of critical thinking.

Kialo Edu has been purpose-built for training argumentation skills and is therefore delivering excellent learning outcomes per time spent.

When writing essays, you are primarily practicing long form writing. But when you focus on analyzing and creating one argument after the other, you learn pure argumentation skills. By the same token, we don't teach math via physics.

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#5 For debate training

Debating consists of great oracy and argumentation skills.

To prepare for actual debates, debate coaches use Kialo maps for brainstorming, training students' argumentation skills and as a resource for studying arguments that they are likely to encounter.

Last but not least: Security & Privacy

Kialo is not in it for the money but for impact, therefore our goals are aligned with educators'.

Your data is yours alone, and you can export or delete it at any time.

Your data is only used for improving and running the Kialo application.

We are happy to sign very stringent data protection agreements.

We successfully completed an ISO 27001 certification.

We have a lot of in-house IT security knowledge, including the founder who, while not being very knowledgeable about writing enticing presentations, previously founded a communication encryption and privacy startup.
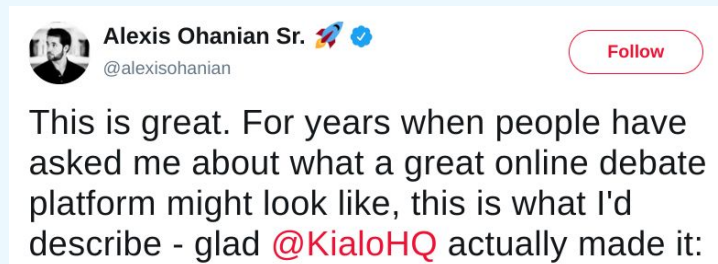
The gory details how we handle data, security and privacy can be found here.

What we are working on in 2024

- Making our [500 discussion topic library](#) available in more languages.
- Finally launching our new webpage with many resources for teachers.
- Small Group Mode
- Add more capabilities to the LMS integrations, e.g. grade syncing with Moodle
- Simplified teacher and student onboarding
- AI bla bla bla 😊

Some research, shoutouts and press

Reddit co-founder [tweet](#):

Alexis Ohanian Sr. 🚀 ✔
@alexisohanian

Follow

This is great. For years when people have asked me about what a great online debate platform might look like, this is what I'd describe - glad @KialoHQ actually made it:

[Harvard Deputy Vice Provost for Advances in Learning](#)

[John Hopkins UX and Educational Design Review](#)

[Education Alliance Finland Evaluation and Certification Report](#)

[The use of Kialo in the online ESL writing university classroom](#)

[Drawing the Line : Integrating Kialo to Deepen Critical Thinking in Debate](#)

[A Blended Approach to Flipped Learning for Teaching Debate](#)

Reviews: [Common Sense](#)   [Merlot](#)

Interviews: [Financial Times](#) ([PDF](#))   [Chronicle of Higher Education](#)

Thank you! 💙

Happy to answer questions now or later.

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