



THREE SIGNATURE SEL PRACTICES*

Creating the Conditions for **Adult Learning**

Social and Emotional Learning for Facilitating Meetings and Professional Learning Engagements

Highly engaging, effective and purposeful meetings and professional learning experiences are created using three key social and emotional learning (SEL) practices:

WELCOMING RITUALS • Activities for Inclusion

ENGAGING PRACTICES • Sense Making & “Brain Breaks”

OPTIMISTIC CLOSURES • Reflections and Looking Forward

Even if you are using these three SEL practices for the first time, they can be effective. When they are carefully chosen, effectively facilitated, and thoughtfully debriefed they create a solid foundation of safety, consistency and joy in adult learning environments. These signature practices create conditions for growth and learning across all five SEL competencies while using culturally responsive teaching strategies. They also build upon and are aligned with the principles of adult learning, Restorative Justice (RJ), Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and trauma informed practices.

Establishing these three practices is beneficial for every adult participant, and is absolutely essential for some:

- *Adults who walk into our meetings after a day, a week or a lifetime of difficult situations need calming, centering and focusing routines in order to participate fully.*
- *Humans are internally soothed by sameness – while paradoxically our brains need freshness too. It's balancing novelty within routines and rituals that allows us to move with confidence through our work days while navigating multiple competing demands on time, energy and attention. These routines provide a solid foundation for our most overextended participants to be engaged as learners and contributors.*
- *In order for the learning to be purposeful and applicable, adults need direct, concrete experiences to use what they have learned, and they need structures that promote self-direction.*
- *Productivity and creative thinking result only when our basic human needs have been met and our neocortex is engaged and available.*

*Adapted from the work of Ann McKay Bryson, CASEL District Consultant for OUSD



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Creating the Conditions for **Adult Learning**

Students First • Equity • Excellence • Integrity • Culturally Responsive • Joy

WELCOMING RITUAL (1-9 minutes)

Activities for Inclusion

Adults bring their experience; allow them to use it.

Ritual openings establish safety and predictability, support contribution by all voices, set norms for respectful listening, and allow people to connect with one another creating a sense of belonging. To be successful they must be: carefully chosen, **connected to the work of the day**, engagingly facilitated, and thoughtfully debriefed.

EXAMPLES

- **Community Building:** Using an open-ended question (e.g., from the *Circle a Day* cards), build community in a quick and lively way. Each participant shares their response with a partner. After sharing, ask for 2-3 comments from the whole group.
- **Check-In:** Begin with a sentence starter:
 - “A success I recently had ____.”
 - “One thing that’s new about ____.”
 - “One norm I will hold today is ____.”

ENGAGING PRACTICES (1-15 minutes)

Sense Making & “Brain Breaks”

Adults want to make their own meaning and have fun.

Engaging practices are brain compatible strategies that can foster: relationships, cultural humility and responsiveness, empowerment, and collaboration. They intentionally build adult SEL skills. These practices can also be opportunities for brain breaks that provide a space for integrating new information into long-term memory. (Otherwise it is soon forgotten.)

EXAMPLES

- **Think Time:** 30-90 seconds of silent think time before speaking, sharing.
- **Turn To Your Partner:** Sharing and listening to make sense of new input,
- **Think-Ink-Pair-Share:** Generating ideas and deepening understanding,
- **Brain Break - Stand and Stretch:** Refresh and reset the brain.
- **Opportunities for Interaction:** Cultivate practices that involve interactions in partnerships, triads, small groups and as a whole group.

OPTIMISTIC CLOSURE (3-5 minutes)

Reflections and Looking Forward

Adult learning occurs when behavior changes.

End each meeting or professional learning by having participants reflect on, then name something that helps them leave on an optimistic note. This provides positive closure, reinforces the topic, and creates momentum towards taking action.

EXAMPLES OF REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS:

- “What are my next steps?”
- “What’s the next conversation I’m going to have about this and with whom?”
- “Who do I want to connect with about this topic?”
- “A word or phrase that reflects how I feel about moving forward with this...”
- “Offer an appreciation for someone in the room...”
- “I’m eager to learn more about ____.”