



SEL Signature Practices Playbook for Adults and Students



Adapted from:





Acknowledgments and Permission Information

This SEL 3 Signature Practices Playbook is based on CASEL's Signature Practices Playbook which is based on the 2013 work of CASEL Consultant Ann McKay Bryson.

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We are grateful for the many sources of activities collected in this playbook. Where known, we have attributed it to our source. Many of these activities, in different variations, are common practice throughout the CASEL CDI, PSELI and partner districts, and within the general educational community. Any given activity may be found in multiple sources; we recognize and appreciate that people can have an original idea without it being unique.



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What is Social and Emotional Learning?

Social and emotional learning (SEL) leads to children, youth and adults achieving academic, post-secondary, career and life success. SEL involves acquiring and effectively applying knowledge, attitudes and skills to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and demonstrate behaviors that contribute to academic success (Palm Beach County’s SEL Definition Adapted from CASEL). The School District of Palm Beach County utilizes CASEL’s SEL Framework which consists of the following five social and emotional competencies.

SELF-AWARENESS

The ability to identify and understand one’s own emotions, thoughts, personal and social identities, goals and values, and how they influence behavior across contexts. The ability to accurately assess one’s strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and self-efficacy.

- Identifying emotions
- Understanding of personal and sociocultural identities
- Recognizing strengths and cultural assets
- Awareness of beliefs, mindsets and biases
- Self-confidence
- Self-efficacy

SELF-MANAGEMENT

The ability to regulate emotions and behaviors. This includes the ability to delay gratification, manage stress and control impulses through coping. It includes managing expressiveness, perseverance and agency in addressing personal and group-level challenges to achieve self- and collectively defined goals and objectives.

- Agency
- Stress management and coping skills
- Self-discipline and impulse control
- Self-motivation
- Goal setting
- Organizational skills

SOCIAL AWARENESS

The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The ability to understand broader historical and social contexts and norms for behavior in different settings, and to recognize family, school, and community supports for self and others.

- Perspective-taking
- Empathy
- Appreciating diversity
- Respect for others
- Understanding social norms
- Recognizing cultural demands and opportunities
- Recognizing issues of inequity

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships, and to effectively navigate settings with different social and cultural norms and demands. The ability to communicate clearly, listening actively, seek collective well-being, negotiate conflict constructively, seek help and offer leadership when needed and working collaboratively to problem solve across differences.

- Communication
- Social engagement
- Relationship building
- Teamwork
- Cultural competency
- Collaborative problem-solving

RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

The ability to make caring, constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across settings. Critically examining ethical standards, safety concerns, behavioral norms, and making realistic evaluations of benefits and consequences of various actions, and to consider collective health and well-being.

- Identifying problems and inequities
- Analyzing impact of individual and institutional decisions and actions
- Co-creating inclusive solutions
- Evaluating
- Reflecting
- Ethical responsibility



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BENEFITS OF SEL





Overview of the 3 SEL Signature Practices

The SEL 3 Signature Practices were developed in response to these commonly heard questions: “But what does SEL look like?” and “How can we start doing SEL right now?” The SEL 3 Signature Practices are one tool for fostering a supportive environment and promoting SEL. They intentionally and explicitly help build a habit of practices through which students and adults enhance their SEL skills. While not an SEL curriculum, these practices are one concrete example of a way to help people understand and practice the goals of an overall systemic SEL implementation plan.

Why? We set the tone for our learning and interactions as we launch the school day, run a staff meeting, deliver a lesson or facilitate professional development. Our goal is to purposefully and thoughtfully design each element to achieve a particular outcome. Adults and students walk into work or school each day as our whole selves. We bring our strengths, challenges, and outside circumstances which contribute to how we embrace or face the day. We transport our intentional goodwill and our implicit biases. We carry the memory of our last time in this environment, as well as our history of similar situations.

What? Intentionally chosen strategies, activities, and protocols foster interactions that model SEL in action and help create an equitable experience. They establish a safe container for equity of voice, for truly seeing one another, and celebrating one another as our fullest selves. By integrating moments of reflection, positive interactions, and appreciations, we craft the climate and culture we’re striving for— one in which everyone in the room feels they belong to a safe and caring community of learners, where they are valued and able to learn and work together productively.

Who? Everyone! Students and adults alike are a part of the lifelong learning process for developing and using strong SEL skills. Teachers, leaders, district staff, and out-of-school time agencies use these practices to great effect, to collaboratively build environments in which the fullness of each person’s identity is acknowledged and elevated.

How? This playbook offers examples and resources to draw from as you build your repertoire of SEL practices. It also offers insights about how to make planning and facilitating the Signature Practices a fluid, natural part of your work.

When? Build in these practices throughout the day, every day as a regular part of daily lesson planning, meeting agendas, and professional learning facilitation to create a climate and culture of safety, inclusion and belonging, and to support strong, effective learning environments.



3 SEL Signature Practices

1. Welcoming Ritual (Inclusion Activity): Welcoming Rituals are brief, interactive experiences that bring the voice of every participant into the room, making a connection to one another and/or to the work ahead, with each perspective-laden, culturally-rich voice being heard, respected and learned from. The more we fully share ourselves and are fully received and understood by others, the stronger and safer our learning environments become. Growing knowledge of and appreciation for our groups help ensure that we will provide opportunities to welcome people in the ways they need and want to be included. Open each class period, meeting, or professional learning experience with a Welcoming Ritual.

Welcoming Ritual (1-9 minutes) <i>Creating a climate of inclusion, belonging, and connection</i>		
Goals	Examples for Adults	Examples for Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Everyone's voice is heard by at least one other person. -There is an element of personal choice. -The activity matches the purpose and needs of participants. -Whenever possible, each person is welcomed by name. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Community Building:</i> Use an open-ended question to build community in a quick and lively way. Each participant shares their response with a partner. - <i>Check-in Sentence Starters:</i> One thing that is new... , A success I recently had..., One norm I will hold today... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Greeting Activities - Community Building Prompts/ Check-in Sentence Starters - Morning Meeting/ Circle Time - Interactive SEL themed do-nows -Writing prompts with partner discussion

2. Engaging Practices: Engaging practices are brain compatible strategies that foster relationships, cultural responsiveness, empowerment, and collaboration. They include strategies to engage all learners with processing content and integrating new information both individually and collectively. They can also include brain breaks, which provide vital opportunities for anchoring learning, regaining focus, and enhancing creativity. Engaging practices offer many opportunities that vary in complexity to practice SEL skills and build in a balance of interactive and reflective experiences to meet the needs of all participants. The goal is being in tune with and responsive to neurological, biological, and social and emotional needs!

Engaging Practices (1-15 minutes) <i>Building a relationship to one another and the content</i>		
Goals	Examples for Adults	Examples for Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Create the opportunity for sense-making for self or with others. -Support everyone's learning. -Help the group stay focused and in a state of optimal learning. -Include a variety of strategies and activities that honor the array of cultural norms and personal learning/working styles that exist in your group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Think Time: 30-90 seconds of silent time before sharing - Opportunities for Interaction: partnerships, triads, small groups and as a whole group. - Brain Breaks: Stand and Stretch, Mindfulness Exercise - Opportunities to Reflect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Wait Time & Interactive Pedagogy Structures: Turn & Talk, Think-Ink-Pair-Share, Socratic Seminars, etc. - Brain Breaks: Stand and Stretch, Movement Games, Mindful Minute, etc. - Directly teach SEL Skills and provide opportunities to reflect on application of skills

3. Optimistic Closure: An optimistic closure ends each experience in an intentional way. It highlights an individual and shared understanding of the importance of the work, and can provide a sense of accomplishment and support forward-thinking. The closing activity may be reflective of the learning, help identify next steps, or make connections to one’s own work. What’s important is that each engagement, class period, school day or meeting ends in a thoughtfully planned and meaningful way, helping everyone leave with appreciation and energy, looking forward to connecting again.

Optimistic Closure (3-5 minutes) <i>Leaving the group on an optimistic note, feeling connected, productive and inclined to return</i>		
Goals	Examples for Adults	Examples for Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Give participants time to reflect - Be forward/future focused - Respect the diversity and varied experiences of the group - Everyone’s voice is heard by at least one other person or in writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share a big takeaway or a next step based upon the PD/meeting - Share appreciations - Reflect on a brief inspirational video or quote 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share something you learned today, someone you were able to help, or what you are looking forward to doing tomorrow - Reflect on a brief inspirational video or quote



How to Use This Resource

The SEL 3 Signature Practices Playbook provides practical ways to introduce and broaden the use of SEL practices in classrooms, schools, and workplaces. We have learned that doing these practices superficially or just for compliance's sake will be of limited benefit. They are effective when thoughtfully selected to meet the needs of a particular context, facilitated skillfully, and understood to be part of a systemic plan to implement SEL. The Playbook introduces a variety of examples of the SEL 3 Signature Practices that, when used authentically and intentionally, can help users create safe, equity-centered, productive learning and working spaces for students and adults.

The Playbook aims to:

- Respect the judgment, experience, and context of the users.
- Offer a structure to support thoughtfully selecting and facilitating these practices.
- Provide samples of SEL Signature Practices for specific contexts and purposes.

(You are encouraged to add and/or modify activities to meet your community's needs.)

- Identify key SEL competencies and skills for each activity, while noting that these competencies are interconnected and that an activity may support more than one.
- Share the research base that is the foundation of these practices

Begin by reading *Creating and Sustaining Equitable Learning and Working Environments*. Without knowing why and how these practices work in academic and professional settings, it will be a challenge to implement them as a lever for sustained, meaningful change. These practices build on and are aligned with the principles of culturally responsive teaching, Restorative Justice, SEL-related neuroscience, and trauma-informed practices.

Next, read the *Getting Started* section of the playbook will help you begin to integrate the SEL 3 Signature Practices into your learning or work space. It provides a simple structure you can use to select the right practices for your purpose and context.

Last, scan through the examples of *Welcoming Rituals, Engaging Practices, and Optimistic Closures* and notice which ones look familiar. Find a few that are new to you and read through them. Mark ones that you might like to try in your classroom, group activity, or at an upcoming meeting.





Creating & Sustaining Equitable Learning & Work Environments

SEL in Service of Equitable Outcomes Equitable learning and working environments are shaped by policies, practices, and personal interactions that are explicitly designed to create the equitable experiences that are essential to doing our best work. This is too important to leave to chance. Intentionally attending to SEL in the design and facilitation of lessons, meetings, and gatherings will help create equity-centered environments in which to work, teach and learn. There are persistent and growing inequities in education, health, and economic opportunities and outcomes that reduce the quality of life for a substantial portion of the U.S. population. These inequities may be rooted in race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social class, home language, one's region of the country, etc. They undermine opportunities to learn in deep and meaningful ways and the chance for every person to achieve excellence in school, career, and other life pursuits. SEL instruction and opportunities are essential to an effective and sound education for all.

When the SEL 3 Signature Practices are effectively implemented as part of a comprehensive SEL plan, they promote these essential elements of an equitable learning and working environment:

- *Equity of voice*: All participants are encouraged to speak and are respectfully heard.
- *Inclusion*: All degrees of participation are welcomed and acknowledged.
- *Collectivism*: All engage in and contribute to a “for the good of the group” experience.

Equitable Practices The synergy of intentionally practicing SEL skills within academic and social situations provides opportunities to develop them as well-ingrained habits that are transferable to situations within and beyond the classroom walls. The SEL 3 Signature Practices support the ABCs of an effective learning environment (Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci):

A—Autonomy: The need to be in control of oneself and empowered to make decisions. Participants make personal choices about what they say and do in each of the activities.

B—Belonging: The need to be accepted and valued by others. The activities are designed so that every person can be heard and seen without judgment, and to help build relationships with others and with content.

C—Competence: The need to be effective or to accomplish things.

The SEL 3 Signature Practices give participants opportunities to be effective across a variety of contexts and to strengthen intra- and inter-personal skills during the school day, in out-of-school-time experiences, or at work.



Getting Started

When using the SEL 3 Signature Practices Playbook, keep in mind that:

- The Playbook is designed to respect the judgment, experience, and language of the facilitator. Be sure to adjust activities to suit your context and needs as you work with youth and adults.
- The Playbook provides only a sampling of activities within each category. The options are limitless and grow most authentically from the work you're doing and the group with whom you're working.
- Using the Playbook requires thoughtful selection and preparation.
- The Playbook identifies key SEL competencies and skills for each activity as a possible focus area. You can also use these activities for building skills in other competencies that you are intentionally addressing.

Below are 5 tips to help you get started with implementing SEL Signature Practices:

1. **Prioritize:** The urgency of the task or topic can trick us into thinking that we don't have time for SEL practices, but creating the conditions for the group to do its best work actually results in more effective learning and collaboration.

Ask yourself: How much time is available?

Examples:

- If you are in a short meeting or class period, design one- to five-minute SEL practices to quickly anchor the group, make a connection to the work ahead, support interactive engagement, and bring the time together smoothly to a close.
- If you are behind schedule, select an SEL activity that quickly consolidates the group, helps maintain focus, and/or allows for an optimistic end.

2. **Start with a Clear Purpose:** Having a clear idea of what's important is vital for selecting SEL practices that will support participants in achieving the goals of your engagement.

Ask yourself: What is important about this engagement?

Examples:

- If an important goal of the day is based in creative work or planning, consider choosing a Welcoming Ritual that includes brainstorming or a question.

- If an important goal of the meeting is making a difficult decision, you might select a Welcoming Ritual that asks participants to make choices.

- If an important goal of the engagement is learning how to work in a new small group, perhaps select a Welcoming Ritual that is organized in their new trios so learners can begin to make connections and feel safe interacting with each other.

3. **Keep Relationships in Mind:** How well your group knows each other, how comfortable they are with one another, and how many times you'll be meeting as a group are some of the factors that help you determine the vulnerability level of your activity.

Ask yourself: How vulnerable can I ask participants to be?

Examples:

- If the group is meeting together for the first time, participants may not be comfortable sharing deeply with people they don't know well. A low-vulnerability activity might be structured with participants choosing their own partner and answering a question such as "What's something that's new with you?"
- As a group forms deeper, more trusting relationships over time, you can facilitate activities that benefit from those increasingly more insightful exchanges. A higher-vulnerability activity might involve randomly selected partners and responding to a prompt such as "Describe a current work situation that you're finding very challenging."

4. **Empathize with Participants & Read the Room:** Having a hunch about the state of the group will help you select or create SEL practices that will match the emotional, physical, and intellectual needs of the participants.

Ask yourself: How can I meet the diverse needs of participants?

Examples:

- If participants appreciate feeling productive and task-oriented at all times, a Welcoming Ritual and Optimistic Closing that incorporates the topic of the engagement as the focus will support that.
- If the group is tired and low-energy, consider selecting a Welcoming Ritual and/or Engaging Practice that involves movement and an upbeat tone.
- If your time together has been spent on challenging material, choosing a closing activity that provides an opportunity to share appreciation can reframe the hard work as a chance to support one another.

Welcoming Rituals & Inclusion Activities



Welcoming Rituals are brief, interactive experiences that bring the voice of every participant into the room, making a connection to one another and/or to the work ahead, with each perspective-laden, culturally-rich voice being heard, respected and learned from. The more we fully share ourselves and are fully received and understood by others, the stronger and safer our learning environments become. Growing knowledge of and appreciation for our groups help ensure that we will provide opportunities to welcome people in the ways they need and want to be included. Open each class period, meeting, or professional learning experience with a Welcoming Ritual.



Welcoming Ritual/Inclusion Activity

Name & Motion

(Adapted from Engaging Schools)

Time Needed: 5-10 minutes (depending on size of the group)

Overview: Participants gather in a circle to learn each other's names and share an activity they enjoy.

When and Why: Use this activity when a new group is coming together. It will help participants learn names and get to know a little bit about one another - a great way to begin building relationships.

SEL Focus: This activity helps develop **Self-Awareness** as participants identify an activity they enjoy, and **Social Awareness** as they learn more about one another's interests and talents.

Steps:

1. Explain that the purpose of this activity is to learn names and get to know each other.
2. Invite the group to form a circle.
3. Offer instructions:
 - Participants will take turns saying their own name while making a motion that represents an activity they enjoy.
 - Each participant, in turn, will repeat the names and gestures of those who have gone before adding their own name and gesture.
4. Model with your name and motion of your own. For example, "I am Sue and I like basketball." (pretend to throw a ball towards a hoop)
5. Check for understanding. Then ask the person to your right to begin. Model by repeating his name and mimicking his motion.
6. If someone can't remember a name or motion, invite them to ask a colleague for help.
7. Debrief by asking one or two of these questions:
 - Why is it important to know each other's names?
 - What's something you had in common with someone?
 - What is something several people in the group had in common?"

Modifications and Variations: If making a gesture is challenging, a person can say the activity instead. If working with a large group, you may choose to break them up into several smaller groups.



Welcoming Ritual/Inclusion Activity

What's New?

Time Needed: 2 - 4 minutes

Overview: This is a quick welcoming activity in which everyone's voice is heard. It can be used repeatedly to continue building relationships because there's always something new!

When and Why: This activity offers a simple way to transition a group into a learning space while honoring a diversity of experiences and voices. It also promotes connectedness within the group and is a good example of a "low vulnerability" activity since each person decides for themselves what level of personal experience they wish to share.

SEL Focus: This activity builds **Responsible Decision-Making** skills by encouraging participants to choose the news that feels right to them to share at this moment and **Relationship Skills** as participants respectfully share and receive information.

Steps:

1. Ask participants to find a partner in a way that is appropriate for your group today.
2. Say, "Think of something that is new with you that you want to share with your partner." Then give participants a moment to think of their news.
3. Explain that each person will share their news while their partner fully listens silently, without comment or questions.
4. Tell participants that you will be keeping time and that you will let them know when it is time to switch roles.
5. Give pairs a moment to decide who will go first, ask the starting partners to raise their hands to make sure everyone is ready, then give the go-ahead to begin.
6. At the end of a minute or two, use your attention signal to bring the room to quiet and let participants know it is time to switch roles.
7. After partners have shared, ask them to reflect with each other or with the whole group: "How was it to share and listen to one another?"

Modifications and Variations: Give participants more time (3-5 minutes) to share and process their news and/or allow the other partner to comment and ask questions.



Welcoming Ritual/Inclusion Activity

Numbers About Us

(Contributed by Jennifer Hataway, PBCSD K-5 Math Dept.)

Time Needed: 10 minutes (depending on the size of group)

Overview: This activity helps participants share and feel connected by sharing something unique about themselves, while encouraging listening to a range of ideas.

When and Why: This activity can be used when a new group is coming together. It will help participants learn names, get to know a little bit about one another, and discover what they have in common with peers.

SEL Focus: This activity helps develop **Self-Awareness** as participants identify an activity they enjoy, and **Social Awareness** as they learn more about one another's interests and talents.

Steps:

1. Distribute index cards or sticky notes to participants.
2. Ask each person to write a number that is important to them.
3. Explain that each person will introduce themselves, then share the number that is special to them and why.
4. Go around the room and have each person introduce themselves and share their number.
5. Debrief by asking one or two of these questions:
 - Why is it important to know each other's names?
 - What was it like to participate?
 - Were there any surprises?
 - Were there any numbers that the group had in common?"

Modifications and Variations: If working with a large group, you may choose to break participants into several smaller groups.

Math Connection:

1. Sequence numbers from least to greatest by creating a human number line.
2. Place all cards in the center of a table. Make equations using these numbers.



Welcoming Ritual/Inclusion Activity

Stand Up, Sit Down

(Contributed by Bryan Sandala, PBCSD Division of Teaching & Learning)

Time Needed: 3-5 minutes

Overview: Participants respond to a series of questions by standing up or sitting down.

When and Why: This is an opportunity to promote nonverbal communication as participants are asked to independently reply to a series of related questions based on their personal relevance - without speaking. This activity also incorporates movement which injects energy into the room.

SEL Focus: This activity helps develop **Self-Awareness** as participants respond to content or personally relevant questions where there is no "wrong" answer and **Social Awareness** as they learn more about one another's interests and talents.

Steps:

1. Pose one question at a time that appeals to participants' personal interests, preferences, and/or relevance. For example: "Are you originally from Florida?" or "Do you have a pet?"
2. Explain that if the answer is yes or they agree with what is said, they should stand. If the answer is no or they disagree, they should remain seated.
3. Debrief by asking one or two of these questions:
 - What was it like to participate in this type of activity?
 - How did it feel when a lot of people had the same answer as you?
 - How did it feel when only a few people had the same answer as you?"

Modifications and Variations: The questions can change and be sequenced based on building adult or students' backgrounds/understanding; additionally, the stand-up/sit down responses to the questions can be later used to intentionally group students. If movement is an issue, participants can raise their hands rather than stand/sit.



Welcoming Ritual/Inclusion Activity

What's in a Name?

(Contributed by Aimee White, PBCSD Multicultural Dept.)

Time Needed: 5-10 minutes (depending on group size)

Overview: Participants introduce themselves by sharing the story behind their names.

When and Why: Participants are given the opportunity to introduce themselves by saying their name, telling the story behind their name, why they were given that name, and/or what their name means.

SEL Focus: This activity addresses **Relationship Skills** as participants speak and listen to each other and discover personal information about their colleagues.

Steps:

1. Ask participants to introduce themselves by saying their name.
2. Then, ask them to share the story behind their name, why they were given that name, and/or what their name means.
3. Repeat until everyone in the group has had an opportunity to share.
4. Debrief by asking one or more questions:
 - What is one thing that stood out to you?
 - What are you wondering?
 - How did you feel after completing this activity?"

Modifications and Variations: Depending on the size of the group you may want to have participants share in small groups, then have a few participants share out loud.



Welcoming Ritual/Inclusion Activity

Walk in My Shoes

(Adapted from “Groups of Work: Strategies and Structures for Professional Learning”, Laura Lipton, Bruce Wellman)

Time Needed: 10 minutes (depending on the group size)

Overview: This Welcoming Ritual is for Adults. Participants gather in a group to learn each other's names, roles, and unique insights about their positions that others may not fully understand.

When and Why: This activity can be used when a new group comes together or for a group that works together regularly as a team builder.

SEL Focus: This activity focuses on both **Relationship Skills** to establish and maintain healthy relationships through open communication, and **Social Awareness** by taking the perspective of and empathizing with others.

Steps:

1. Explain that the purpose of this ritual is to get to know each other's names and roles.
2. Invite the group to form a circle.
3. Deliver instructions:
 - Introduce yourself by name and role
 - Then, share ONE unique insight about your role/position that others may not realize, empathize with, or fully understand.
4. Clarify the Sharing Guidelines:
 - Speak from the heart
 - Listen from the heart
 - In the interest of time, say just enough
 - Honor confidentiality
5. Debrief by asking one or two of these questions:
 - What was the purpose of this activity?
 - How did it feel to share the unique insight about your job?
 - Why is it important to create an empathetic work environment?

Modifications and Variations: If working with a large group, smaller groups can be created. When breaking into smaller groups, encourage participants to work with people they do not work with on a regular basis.



Welcoming Ritual/Inclusion Activity

Synectics

(Adapted from “Groups of Work: Strategies and Structures for Professional Learning”, Laura Lipton, Bruce Wellman)

Time Needed: 8-10 minutes

Overview: Participants take part in brainstorming metaphorical thinking that allows for a high level of inclusion and encourages the acceptance of offbeat or novel ideas.

When and Why: This activity promotes creative and fluid thinking. It sparks conversation and establishes readiness for further exploration of the topic.

SEL Focus: Synectics allows the group to focus its energy on a topic or concept in a low-risk way in which all voices are included, particularly supporting the development of **Self-Management** and **Relationship Skills**.

Steps:

1. Project an image on a screen, or supply a picture card on each table
2. Explain that the task is to complete the sentence stem: “This [topic] is like this [image] because...”
3. Participants then generate and record as many comparisons between the image displayed and the topic presented as possible in 1-2 minutes. They can do this individually, or in small groups.
4. If done individually, participants review their brainstorm list and choose one to share and discuss with a partner. Then, invite two or three participants to share their completed sentence stems with the whole group.
5. If done as a group, after brainstorming, invite each group to work together to choose one comparison to share out to the whole group.

Modifications and Variations: In addition to making comparisons, individuals/groups can also generate contrasts: “This [topic] is NOT like this [image] because...”



Welcoming Ritual/Inclusion Activity

Four Corners

Time Needed: 5 -15 minutes

Overview: Participants reflect on a statement, image, or prompt and move to a “corner” that matches their choice. There they share their rationale with others in their corner before the group reconvenes.

When and Why: This activity is helpful in promoting the importance of divergent perspectives, and the value of having all voices heard and seen. Participants have the opportunity to connect in alliance with others, while hearing a variety of reasons for being drawn to the common category. The activity also incorporates movement and injects energy into the room.

SEL Focus: Participants will be practicing **Responsible Decision Making**, as they choose and discuss their “corner” choice. They will also be using **Social Awareness** skills as they listen and process each other’s choices.

Steps:

1. Before the activity, mark 4-5 “corners” in the room with an image, number, or word that corresponds to the choices you will be giving.
2. Ask participants to silently reflect on a statement or question prompt that is aligned to the content of the engagement.
3. Share the 4-5 response choices with the group, using a poster or slide.
4. Instruct participants to choose one of the responses, then ask them to move to that designated “corner” of the room, find a partner or trio, and to share what drew them to that choice.
5. Invite 2-3 participants to share their choice and rationale with the whole group. You may also ask what they notice about the size and composition of the groups and/or what SEL skills and competencies came into play during the activity.
6. NOTE: If you end up with a solo participant in a “corner”, join that person to hear their thoughts, using a timer to keep on track.

Modifications and Variations: Create an “Other” corner to encourage divergent and creative thinking.





Welcoming Ritual/Inclusion Activity

Cell Phone Photo Sharing

Time Needed: 7-10 minutes

Overview: Participants get to know each other better by sharing appropriate photos that best represent them.

When and Why: The purpose of this activity is for team building or for participants to become more familiar with people they do not normally interact with.

SEL Focus: This activity reinforces **Self-Management**, **Social Awareness** and **Responsible Decision Making** as participants choose appropriate photos to share while they interact with each other to share information about themselves.

Steps:

1. Divide the participants into groups of three.
2. Ask delegates to choose three appropriate photos on their mobile phones to share with others.
3. Give them one minute to choose the three photos. Ask them to choose pictures that say something about them so that others in the group can learn a bit about their world.
4. Ask participants to show their photos to their group and explain their significance.

Modifications and Variations:

Participants can share the most recent work-related photos or pictures that represent something they are particularly proud of professionally.



Welcoming Ritual/Inclusion Activity

1-2-3 Clap

Time Needed: 7-10 minutes

Overview: Partners stand and engage in a counting and clapping focusing activity. The facilitator asks short questions that guide the reflective process.

When and Why: The purpose of this activity is to quickly bond a group together in preparation for collaboration, especially when you want to encourage innovation during the engagement.

SEL Focus: This activity builds skills in **Self-Awareness, Self-Management, and Relationship Skills**, and demonstrates how making mistakes together can be a fast track to generous, creative collaboration.

Steps:

The same partners face each other during each of the three rounds.

Round 1:

1. Ask participants to find a partner (in any way that is appropriate).
2. Explain that pairs will count to three over and over again, with each player saying the next number in the sequence.
3. Model slowly with a partner.
4. Once everyone has had a minute or two to play, call the game to a close with your agreed upon attention signal. Ask, "How many of you made a mistake?" "What did you do when you made a mistake?" (Common answers: "Laughed" or "Said sorry" or "Pulled back.")
5. Explain that these are all ways that people give cues to the group that say, "I've got this. I'll laugh at myself or apologize as my way of handling making a mistake."
6. Tell the group that during the next round, whenever they make a mistake, they should raise their hands in the air and say, "Tah-dah!"

Round 2:

1. Explain that for this round, pairs should replace the number "1" with a clap and then continue the number sequence "2-3" counted out loud (Clap-2-3, Clap-2-3, etc.).
2. Model slowly with a partner. During the modeling purposefully make a mistake, such as saying "1" instead of clapping after "3." Raise your hands in the air and say, "Tah-dah!"
3. Once everyone has had a minute or two to play, use your attention signal to call the round to a close. Ask, "Was anyone glad that they weren't the one making a mistake?"





4. Tell the group that in the next round when one person makes a mistake, both partners will raise their hands in the air, give each other a double high-five, and both say, "Tah-dah!"

Round 3:

1. Explain that in this round, participants should clap for "1," replace the number "2" with a foot stomp, and say "3." (Clap, stomp, 3; Clap, stomp, 3; etc.).
2. Model this with a partner and purposefully make a mistake, such as saying "2" instead of stomping. You and your partner now give each other double high-fives and shout, "Tah-dah!" together, and start over again.
3. Once everyone has had a minute or two to play, call the round to a close with your attention signal.

Debrief by:

- Asking participants what they noticed (e.g., that they were taking care of each other, were learning to sync with each other, finding the right pace for everyone to succeed, etc.)
- Noting aloud the positive energy that was created with each mistake in the group, explaining that they will be working together for the next [time period], and encouraging them to keep that same energy when mistakes are made. Tah-dah!

Modifications and Variations: Add another round with a clap, stomp, and snap. Notice the joy in the room even when the task becomes more difficult.



Welcoming Ritual/Inclusion Activity

Greeting Frenzy

Time Needed: 3 minutes

Overview: This activity provides an opportunity for each person in the room to make a brief connection with everyone else in the room.

When and Why: “Greeting Frenzy” lifts up the energy in the room and reinforces positive connections, by name and face.

SEL Focus: This activity builds **Relationship Skills**.

Steps:

1. Explain: “You have XXX minutes, and within that time your job is to introduce yourself, greet everybody in the room, by name, and make some brief physical contact. It could be a handshake, high five, fist or elbow bump; there may even be some huggers in the room...” (Groups of 12 or less, one minute; larger groups, two minutes; huge groups, three minutes: “...greet as many people in the room as possible...”)
2. Set the timer and use an agreed-upon attention signal to bring the room to full quiet before the debriefing comments.
3. Debrief by asking:
 - How’s your energy? Notice a lift in the room? (Draw attention to the physiological and emotional aspects noted by participants.) Why do you think that’s the case?”

Modifications and Variations: Closing Frenzy: “We’ll take two minutes for our closing activity today, and within those two minutes please connect with as many people as possible in the room, greeting them by name and making a physical connection (handshake, high five, hug...whatever is mutually comfortable) and thanking them for engaging in our work today, either as a general appreciation, or if you can, with a specific thank-you for an inspiring comment, intriguing idea, or act of kindness that you noticed during our work time (meeting) today. (PAUSE.) Take a moment to look around and think about appreciations you may wish to share. (PAUSE.) Ready? Go!” Set the timer and use an agreed-upon attention signal to bring the room to full quiet. “Thank you for that optimistic closing! I can feel my energy lifted for what lies ahead!”

Engaging Practices



Engaging practices are brain compatible strategies that foster relationships, cultural responsiveness, empowerment, and collaboration. They include strategies to engage all learners with processing content and integrating new information both individually and collectively. They can also include brain breaks, which provide vital opportunities for anchoring learning, regaining focus, and enhancing creativity. Engaging practices offer many opportunities that vary in complexity to practice SEL skills and build in a balance of interactive and reflective experiences to meet the needs of all participants. The goal is being in tune with and responsive to neurological, biological, and social and emotional needs!



Engaging Practice

SEL Attention Signal

Time Needed: With practice, a few seconds. When using for the first time, allow 2-3 minutes for the debrief.

Overview: To bring the group's attention back to the facilitator after an engaging activity done in pairs or small groups.

When and Why: A well-practiced and consistently implemented attention signal is essential in group-learning situations. Whether adults or students, any gathering of engaged participants is going to be deeply immersed in meaningful, task-oriented conversations during which you will need to get their attention. This signal works well because it engages participants in a multi-sensory experience. There will be kinesthetic engagement (raising their own hands) and visual (seeing others raise their hands) and auditory (hearing the noise level drop) cues.

SEL Focus: This attention signal reinforces all five competencies:

- **Self-Awareness:** Participants become aware of their own behavior.
- **Self-Management:** Participants decide when to shift their attention.
- **Relationship Skills:** Participants respectfully close their conversations.
- **Social Awareness:** Participants respect the group's gradual silence.
- **Responsible Decision-Making:** Participants make a series of small decisions for the good of the group and their own learning.

Steps: While there are many versions of attention signals (chime, flashing the lights, clapping, raising or lowering your voice), one that has been most consistently effective is to:

1. Raise your hand in the air.
2. Wait for everyone else in the room to raise their own hand and be silent before you proceed with directions or information.

Guiding Language: There will be many times when you are working together and talking to one another, and I'll need to be able to get your attention. If we help each other by following these two steps, we'll soon be able to get in and out of lively conversations seamlessly and quickly. When you see me raise my hand, you'll have two jobs. One is to raise your hand too. That gives others around you a visual cue that they should quietly look my way. The other is to bring your conversation to a close. That will help the room quickly become silent so you can hear the next direction or announcement.





As we get used to using this attention signal, you'll notice that you're building on all the SEL skills. Self-Awareness, as you start to notice your own behavior. Self-Management, as you take ownership of those two jobs of raising your hand and finishing your conversation. Relationship Skills, as you respectfully engage in conversations with others. You are drawing on your social awareness as you cue in on what others around you are doing. This series of responsible decisions contributes to the good of the group and to our own learning.

Facilitator Tips:

- Cultivate patience, realizing that it's a positive signal of deep engagement for participants to be so caught up in their academic dialogue that they are reluctant to stop or don't immediately notice your silently raised hand.
- Hold an inner and outer attitude of goodwill as the group settles into complete silence before you begin talking. If you consistently wait for complete silence, the group learns your expectation and will become quiet more quickly over time. If you begin to talk while some participants are still talking, they will believe that it's okay for some people to continue conversing and are much less likely to meet your stated expectation for the attention signal. (It's not necessary that every hand goes up, but it is necessary that all are quiet.)
- Refrain from restating your expectations or from singling out participants with requests that they become quiet. Let your silent raised hand be the only

Modifications and Variations: When you initially introduce this strategy, you might choose to hold one fist up in the air and as you name each SEL competency and the associated action used in the attentional signal. You will finish with a raised hand.

Engaging Practice

Maître d'

Time Needed: 5 -10 minutes

Overview: Acting as a maître d', the facilitator calls participants to form "tables" where they "dine" (exchange ideas) with a variety of tablemates

When and Why: This activity helps participants develop a sense of connectedness when sharing ideas, encourages listening to a wide range of ideas, and incorporates movement and fluid groupings.

SEL Focus: Participants will practice **Relationship Skills** as they engage in meaningful social interactions, with a particular emphasis on communication skills.

Steps:

1. Prepare engaging prompts (questions, quotes, or images) that are aligned to the content or SEL goal.
2. Explain that when you, the maître d', call a "table" (e.g., "Table for Three!"), participants must move quickly to arrange themselves into groups of that number and then begin discussing the prompt.
3. Let them know that in order to keep things moving and mingling, they will only have a few minutes to talk with each of their "tables."
4. Share the first prompt and call out, "Table for ___!"
5. Use your attention signal when time is up.
6. Repeat several times, each time offering a different prompt.
7. Debrief by asking one or more questions:
 - What is something you heard about _____ that stood out to you?
 - What is something about _____ that you are now wondering?
 - In what ways did your understanding of _____ deepen or change?
 - What was a benefit or challenge of doing this activity?"

Modifications and Variations: Play music as the groups are being formed. Keep same prompt each time, and ask the tables to carry on the conversation from their previous table group.



Engaging Practices

Mix & Mingle

(Adapted from Engaging Schools)

Time needed: 3-5 minutes

Overview: This activity involves moving around the room and sharing ideas with a partner or small group.

When and Why: Mix and Mingle builds community by encouraging participants to interact with each other, and sets the expectation that everyone's thinking and voice are valued.

SEL Focus: This activity builds **Social Awareness** and **Relationship Skills** as participants share their ideas and actively listen to divergent perspectives.

Steps:

1. On a card or half-sheet of paper, ask participants to write down a response to a prompt you give that is related to the topic at hand.
2. When you announce, "Mix and Mingle!" and turn on music, participants should stand up and move around the room.
3. When the music stops, participants should find a partner near them. Help with pairing if necessary.
4. Partners share their responses, listen actively to each other, and ask follow-up questions.
5. Start the music again and repeat the sequence with another partner or two, as your time permits
6. Debrief by asking one or two of these questions:
 - What were some of the things you appreciated about doing this activity?
 - What was challenging about it?
 - What SEL skills did you use?
 - What might be done differently next time?"

Modifications and Variations: Groupings can be in pairs, trios, or even groups of four. You can post several prompts, and run the activity several times so that participants can discuss their various responses with different partners.



Engaging Practices

Card Sorts

(Adapted from Engaging Schools)

Time Needed: 10-30 minutes

Overview: Participants collaborate to sort, match, or sequence cards with content/information.

When and Why: Card sorts help keep small groups focused as they narrow large brainstorming down into key concept categories.

SEL Focus: This activity emphasizes **Responsible Decision Making** and **Social Awareness** as participants work together to solve the task.

Steps:

1. Provide a topic or question for participants to respond to (e.g. “How do you build relationships?”). Participants legibly write one idea per index card or sticky note.
2. Allow enough time for each participant to write three to seven cards.
3. Ask participants to form small groups and lay their cards out together on a table so that all group members can see them. Let them know they’ll be working as a team to group the ideas by listening respectfully to each person’s contributions.
4. Groups read all the cards and then decide together how they want to sort them into categories that emerge from their conversation.
5. Remind the groups to work toward equity of voice and take turns moving the cards into a variety of categories. The goal is to hear and understand a variety of ideas; there are no “wrong answers.”
6. Debrief by asking 1 or 2 questions:
 - How does discussing with others impact your learning?
 - What patterns and meaningful categories did you find?
 - What was beneficial to your learning or enjoyable about working with your small group and why?
 - What was challenging about the process and what strategies did you use to accomplish the task anyway?

Modifications and Variations: Vary the group sizes and/or the number of cards each individual may contribute. If the groups are struggling to determine the categories, the facilitator can provide the categories and let the groups decide which cards should go into which category.





Engaging Practice

Save the Last Word for Me

(Adapted from National School Reform Faculty)

Time Needed: 15 minutes

Overview: Working in small groups, participants follow a pattern of sharing and discussing their responses to a text or video clip.

When and Why: By creating a clear structure for discussion, this strategy encourages everyone to be both an active speaker and an active listener, and supports equity of voice by ensuring that frequent speakers give space for others to share.

SEL Focus: This activity enhances skills in **Self-Management** and **Social Awareness** as participants take turns being both speaker and listener as they share insights from various points of view

Steps:

1. Identify a reading or video excerpt that will serve as the catalyst for this activity.
2. Have participants read/view the selected text/video and highlight three sentences or make note of three ideas that particularly stand out for them.
3. Ask participants to write each sentence/idea on the front of an index card. On the back of the card, ask them to write a few sentences explaining why they chose that quote (what it meant to them, reminded them of, how it connects to their own experience, etc.).
4. Divide the participants into groups of three, identifying one person as A, one person as B, and one person as C.
5. Invite the A participants to read one of their chosen quotations or ideas to their group. Then persons B and C discuss the offering while person A listens. (For example, What do they think it means? Why do they think these words/idea might be important? To whom?)
6. After several minutes, ask Participant A to read the back of their card (or to explain why they picked the quotation or idea), thus having “the last word.”
7. This process repeats with B sharing and others reflecting before B gets “the last word,” then is repeated again with C sharing.
8. Debrief by asking 1 or 2 questions:
 - What was a benefit of listening to others respond to your passage before you spoke?



- To what degree was it challenging to hold back your own thoughts while others spoke?

Engaging Practice

Engaging with Data

(Adapted from ATLAS Data Protocol)

Time Needed: 45 minutes

Overview: This protocol offers a structured way to engage with data, with a focus on reflecting on implications and developing next steps.

When and Why: The purpose of this activity is to help participants make meaning out of data. It is useful when you want to use a data set to drive change.

SEL Focus: This activity emphasizes **Responsible Decision Making** as participants exercise their problem-solving skills together.

Steps:

1. *Predictions:* Explain which data you have in hand and ask participants to predict what they think the data will say. Chart the responses.
2. *Descriptions:* Distribute the data and ask participants to work in pairs to describe what they see while avoiding judgments or jumping to interpretations. What trends do they notice? Chart the trends.
3. *Interpretations:* Ask pairs to discuss what the data suggests. Encourage participants to come up with as many interpretations as possible, ask each other questions, and base their responses on evidence from the data set. Chart the interpretations.
4. *Implications:* In pairs, invite participants to recommend next steps, develop strategies that may be effective in addressing the evidence found in the data, and suggest additional data that might be helpful to look at. Chart the discussion.
5. *Reflections:* Ask participants to write or discuss with a partner any or all of the following questions:
 - What did you learn from listening to your colleagues that was interesting or surprising?
 - What new perspectives did your colleagues provide?
 - How well did the process work?
 - What could be improved?

Modifications and Variations: This can be done in small groups instead of in pairs, and groups can be responsible for charting and sharing out their responses between steps.



Engaging Practice

Gallery Walk

Time Needed: 20 minutes or longer if schedule permits

Overview: Like viewers at a gallery, small groups of participants rotate from poster to poster, stopping to view, discuss, and add ideas at each station.

When and Why: This brainstorming activity allows small groups to discuss a variety of topics and learn from one another in a short amount of time.

SEL Focus: During this activity, participants will be drawing on **Responsible Decision Making** skills as they problem-solve with their group and **Relationship Skills** as they talk and listen to each other.

Steps:

1. Share an overarching question with the group, such as, "How can we make our school environment safer?"
2. Hang posters with headings that relate to the overarching question around the room. For example, for the question "How can we make our school environment safer for students?", the headings might be "Between Classes," "At Dismissal," "During Lunch," etc.
3. Divide participants into small groups, give each group a marker, and direct each group to one of the posters. Explain the overarching question, and what each of the poster topics is.
4. Allow groups to stand at each poster for three to five minutes to share, discuss, and write down their responses to the category.
5. When time is up, ask the groups to rotate clockwise so each group is in front of a new poster to continue the activity. Each group now reads the offerings of the previous authors, using sticky notes to add clarifying questions or comments/compliments. Rotate every three to five minutes, until every group has visited every poster.
6. Next, allow time for individuals to silently walk around the room and read the completed posters, noting ideas that they agree with or that seem like something they'd like to try.
7. Original group revisits their feedback and can add to their poster.
8. Debrief the activity by asking participants to share their favorite idea, insight, or proposed next step.





Modifications and Variations: If space is limited, posters can be sheets of paper that are passed from table to table. You could also create a Google Slide Deck where each group has their own slide.

Engaging Practice

Jigsaw

Time Needed: 20-30 minutes

Overview: Small groups each discuss a different excerpt of an article or topic. Groups then reorganize so that each new group contains one member from each of the original groups. The members of the new group now "teach" their excerpt to the members of their new group.

When and Why: Teaching others is a highly effective strategy that enables individuals to deeply learn and synthesize information.

SEL Focus: This activity supports **Responsible Decision Making** and **Self-Awareness**, as participants are challenged to teach what they have learned to their peers.

Steps:

1. Select an appropriate text and divide it into numbered sections so that each group gets a piece that's readable during the amount of time you'll be providing. Preplan for students who will need a particularly accessible section, or who will benefit from receiving their reading ahead of time.
2. Divide participants into same-sized small groups, and assign one section of the article to the members of each group.
3. Allow groups to discuss their section or topic for 5 to 10 minutes, with everyone in the group supporting one another to fully understand their piece.
4. Number off within each group, counting up to the number of new small groups you are forming. Then ask all the "1s," "2s," "3s," etc., to find each other and form new groups.
5. The new group members then take turns teaching their piece to their new group in the sequenced order of the article. Designate a "timer" within each group who ensures that each person has equal time to do their teaching, answer questions from the group, etc.
6. Debrief by asking participants to return to their original groups and:
 - Share one new thing they learned.
 - Offer an appreciation for "a teaching strategy that really helped me understand, because..."
 - Write a silent reflection to self-assess on areas they thought they were particularly effective in when they taught their piece, and what they might try to do differently next time.





Engaging Practice

Scripted Cooperative Dyads

(Dansereau and Associates)

Time Needed: 15-20 minutes

Overview: This highly structured cooperative technique requires pair partners to exchange multiple oral summaries of 1 to 2 pages of text material.

When and Why: This activity can be used when presenting new information that participants can learn and process together, which promotes cooperative learning.

SEL Focus: This activity supports **Relationship Skills**, **Social Awareness**, and **Self-Awareness**, as participants teach and learn from each other by switching between the roles of recaller and listener.

Steps:

1. Explain that the group will be broken down into partnerships and one person will be the designated “recaller” and the other will be the “listener”.
2. Each partner will be given an excerpt from a short text to read. As they read, they will take notes about the main idea and key details of the content.
3. Once the reading/annotating is completed, the recaller will summarize the content without using their notes, while the listener adds missing information and corrects any errors in the recaller’s summary.
4. Partners will then switch roles for the next chunk of information and repeat Step 3.
5. Debrief by asking one or more of the following questions:
 - How did this activity help you process this new information?
 - How did it feel to be the “recaller”?
 - How did it feel to be the “listener”?

Modifications and Variations: Small groups can create analogies, comparisons, and visual representations of the new content after completing the Scripted Cooperative Dyad cycle.





Engaging Practice

Advance Organizer

(Marzano Compendium of Instructional Strategies)

Time Needed: 15-20 minutes

Overview: Each participant will create a simple advance organizer to help process new information, then share with other participant(s) to share ideas and perspectives.

When and Why: Advance Organizers can be used to identify the critical content of newly acquired information.

SEL Focus: This activity emphasizes **Responsible Decision Making** as participants decide what critical content needs to be included in their organizer, as well as **Social Awareness** as they share and listen to each other's perspectives.

Steps:

1. Distribute blank paper to each participant.
2. Ask them to fold it in half horizontally.
3. On the inside top half of the organizer (section A), instruct them to draw a picture that represents the critical content.
4. On the inside bottom half of the organizer (section B), have them write a short description of the critical content. Be sure to use key terms and concepts from the content.
5. On the front of the organizer (section C), write a short word or phrase to label the critical content.
6. On the back of the organizer (section D), list a few key terms or phrases that are important to remember from the critical content.
7. Have participants share the information with their partners/table groups.



Engaging Practice

Snowball

(Contributed by Robin O'Brien, PBCSD 6-12 Math Dept.)

Time Needed: 5-7 minutes

Overview: Participants write a thought or idea on a piece of paper and then share it with others by throwing the piece of the paper across the room for another participant to pick up.

When and Why: This activity can serve as a fun brain break which can also help participants stop and process the content they have learned so far and learn what others have learned so far.

SEL Focus: This activity focuses on **Self-Awareness** as participants reflect on their learning and **Social Awareness** as they absorb the variety of input from those who share aloud.

Steps:

1. Distribute blank paper or sticky note to each participant.
2. Instruct each student to write one important take-away they have learned to this point on the blank paper.
3. Then, ask them to crumple the paper into a ball and have a “snowball fight” (throw your paper).
4. Everyone grabs the closest snowball and takes turns reading them aloud.



Engaging Practice

Fishbowl

Time Needed: 30 minutes

Overview: In this activity, participants are divided into two groups that are seated in concentric circles, all facing the center. The outside circle listens while the inside group has a discussion about a topic. Then the groups switch places so the listeners become the speakers, and vice versa.

When and Why: This activity strengthens listening skills and encourages everyone to participate in turn in a discussion. It can be used during a session to discuss content, or at the end of an engagement to give airtime to everyone about what they learned or found useful.

SEL Focus: While the main emphasis of this activity is on the **Social Awareness** skills needed to participate in constructive dialogue, the activity also strengthens **Self-Awareness** and **Self-Management** as participants work to communicate effectively.

Steps:

1. Set up two concentric circles of chairs, all facing the center of the circle, and have everyone take a seat.
2. Provide the question prompt or discussion topic and set a timer for 10 minutes. Only the inside group members may speak during this time. Instruct the outside group to quietly listen and notice their own ideas that surface during the discussion. Note-taking on a graphic organizer may be helpful.
3. When the time is up, ask the groups to trade places so that the outside group is sitting on the inner circle chairs and vice versa. Set the timer again and let the new inside group discuss the topic.
4. Debrief with one of these activities:
 - Ask participants to write down a response to one comment they heard and explain why they agree/disagree.
 - Turn to a partner and discuss how it felt, both being a "listener" and a "discusser."
 - Share one word or a short phrase with the whole group that was important about the discussion to them

Modifications and Variations:





- You can assign the groups opposing views in an argument. This works especially well when you have read an article or watched a video prior to the discussion that shows opposing views.
- With adults, or students who are skillful and experienced with the Fishbowl strategy, place an empty chair in the inner circle, and invite a participant to join in to ask a question or have a speaker clarify a thought.
- If groundwork has been laid for the “inner/outer circle, support partner” mentioned in Step 2 above, provide debrief time after each discussion circle during which the observing partner provides feedback on specific areas the group has already agreed on (e.g., impactful idea or statement, eye contact, voice volume, connection to another speaker’s point).

Engaging Practice

Clock Partners

(Adapted from Reading Quest)

Time Needed: 3-5 minutes

Overview: In this pairing activity, each person has their own “Clock Buddies” handout and gets the name of a fellow participant on each of the corresponding slots. These will become partners for various activities throughout the week/engagement.

When and Why: “Clock Buddies” is a quick and easy way to create pairs for future partnered activities that offers a break from continually turning to an elbow partner.

SEL Focus: Interacting with Clock Buddies strengthens **Relationship Skills** as participants partner with various peers for mutual learning.

Steps:

1. Make copies of a [Clock Buddy handout](#).
2. Distribute a handout to each participant and ask them to write their own name at the top of their paper.
3. Instruct participants to stand up with their papers and a pencil and move quietly around the room until you use your attention signal, at which point they should stop and find a partner.
4. When everyone has a partner, ask them to sign each other’s paper on the 3 o’clock line. It is very important that they all start on the same line.
5. Give the signals to mix, stop, and find a new partner. Check to be sure everyone has a new partner before you ask participants to sign each other’s papers on the 6 o’clock line.
6. To complete the activity, have partners mingle and pair up two more times. They’ll sign next on the 9 o’clock line and finally on the 12 o’clock line.
7. After all lines are signed, invite participants to return to their seats.
8. Each time you need participants to form pairs during the engagement, have them take out their appointment clocks and announce one of the times to designate their partner for this activity. For example, “Now meet up with the person who is your 9 o’clock appointment to reflect and discuss...”

Modifications and Variations: After students/ participants become confident with this process, you can expand beyond the 12, 3, 6 and 9 o’clock slots during the sign-up period.



Engaging Practice

Give One, Get One, Move On (Go, Go, Mo)

Time Needed: 5-10 minutes

Overview: Through this activity, participants share and pass along new ideas.

When and Why: This activity enables participants to spread good ideas and share what they know or have learned with each other in a way that maximizes equitable “airtime.”

SEL Focus: “Go, Go, Mo” promotes **Self-Management** as participants practice active listening to learn from their peers, and **Relationship Skills**, providing an opportunity for participants to practice clear and effective communication as they teach each other.

Steps:

1. Ask participants to write down three to five key learnings or important ideas about the topic at hand. Each idea or key learning should be written down on a separate index card or sticky note.
2. Explain the activity, reinforce your attention signal, and then invite the group to get up and mingle until you let them know it’s time to pair up and exchange their ideas.
3. After 30 seconds, bring the room to silence and call out, “GIVE ONE to a partner!”
4. Participants form pairs and each “gives” (hands) one of their key learnings or important ideas about the topic to their partner while explaining what they wrote, so that each person “gives one” and “gets one.”
5. Give your signal and when the room is quiet, tell them to “Move on!” and mingle again.
6. Repeat the sharing process. This time, participants can share their own idea or the new idea they received from a previous partner.
7. Debrief by inviting a few participants to share a valuable new learning that was shared with them.

Modifications and Variations: Instead of random mingling, have people gather in clusters, such as by birth month, by designated categories of shared interests, by role, etc.





Engaging Practice

Pass It On

Time Needed: 5-10 minutes

Overview: In this activity, participants silently share their ideas with each other.

When and Why: This activity enables participants to share ideas with each other in a quiet, focused way. It is particularly useful after a round of active engagement, and is especially appreciated by more introverted people.

SEL Focus: This activity helps to develop **Self-Awareness** and **Responsible Decision Making**.

Steps:

1. Provide a sheet of paper to each participant and instruct them to fold it so that the creases form six boxes and put their name in the upper-left box.
2. Ask participants to think of an important idea they have learned or that has recently been reinforced during the engagement.
3. Give participants one to three minutes to write it down in Box 1 (the box they wrote their name in).
4. Instruct participants to pass their sheet to another participant (e.g., the person next to them at the table), who will silently read what was written in the first box.
5. That person will add an idea in Box 2 (upper-right box). Explain that participants should not repeat ideas that are already listed, but rather should generate new ideas.
6. Ask participants to continue passing the papers and adding ideas until all of the boxes are filled with ideas.
7. When the papers are filled in, instruct participants to return the sheets to their original owners.
8. Debrief by asking, “What did you learn from reading your paper when it was filled in? Did anyone have similar ideas? Or ideas that pushed your own thinking?”

Modifications and Variations: Fold the papers into quarters if time is short. Invite participants to share out one new idea on their completed paper that they particularly like or agree with. This can be also done as a partner activity, trading papers with one other person. You may wish to give conversation time after the writing sections to discuss areas of disagreement and to clarify for accuracy and meaning.





Engaging Practice

Talk a Mile a Minute

(Based on Building Academic Vocabulary by R. Marzano)

Time Needed: 15 minutes

Overview: Similar to the “Password” game, a “giver” gives clues to a set of words pertaining to the learned content, while the “receiver” tries to guess the terms.

When and why: This activity is an interactive way for participants to review vocabulary learned during the presentation.

SEL Focus: This activity supports **Relationship Skills, Social Awareness, and Self-Awareness**, as participants interact and learn from each other by switching between the roles of giver and receiver.

Steps:

1. Have participants choose partners (or assign as needed).
2. Each team will designate a talker and receiver for the first round.
3. The talker will be given a set of words/terms that are relevant to the content (they can be displayed on a screen or printed out and distributed) and the giver will give clues for the first word while the receiver tries to guess it (they should have their backs to the screen if words are projected). The giver then moves quickly to the next word until all words have been guessed or time is called.
4. Partners will then switch places and the new giver will be given a different set of words for the receiver to guess.



Engaging Practice

Mindful Minute (Brain Break)

Time Needed: 1-3 minutes

Overview: Oftentimes our bodies can be present, but our minds are elsewhere - planning, making a grocery list, etc. Asking participants to focus on a single, simple action helps everyone become fully present.

When and Why: This activity works well to both start a meeting as a way to help participants focus, and as a “brain break” to allow participants to decompress and refocus during an engagement.

SEL Focus: This activity promotes both **Self-Awareness** and **Self-Management** as participants practice awareness and self regulation.

Steps:

1. Explain that our breath is always with us and can be used to calm our bodies and steady our minds.
2. Ask participants to silently bring awareness to their breathing when you sound a tone. It may be helpful for participants to place their hands on their bellies and notice the gentle rising and falling of their breath.
3. Gently sound a triangle or bell.
4. Debrief the experience by asking participants to share how the activity felt to them, when they might use this in their lives, or to share similar ideas like this that helps them stay present and focused.

Modifications and Variations: For an energizing mindfulness activity, choose something that involves concentration, for example, ask participants to pat their heads while they rub their bellies.



Engaging Practice

Silent Birthday Line-up (Brain Break)

Time Needed: 5 minutes

Overview: Participants are asked to use problem-solving and nonverbal communication skills as they are asked to line up in order of their birth dates - without speaking.

When and Why: This activity works well as a “brain break” to allow participants to get up and move to re-energize so they can refocus on learning.

SEL Focus: This activity reinforces **Self-Management, Social Awareness** and **Responsible Decision Making** as participants interact with each other silently, while deciding the correct order in which they should be lined up.

Steps:

1. Explain that the goal of this activity is to line up according to their birthdays (month and day). The line should begin with January 1st and end with December 31st (or the closest dates to that)
2. Next explain that they must complete the activity in COMPLETE SILENCE. Give them no further instructions as to how to work together - let them problem solve to decide how to communicate non-verbally (they will most likely use fingers to display the months and days).
3. Once the line is complete, start with the beginning and ask the participants to say the month/day which they were born out loud and, if they were successful, everyone will be in calendar order.
4. Debrief by asking:
 - How did the group communicate nonverbally to complete the task?
 - What are some ways we communicate nonverbally in our day-to-day lives?
 - Why is it important to pay attention to nonverbal communication when working with others?

Modifications and Variations: Other topics that can be used with adults: years of teaching experience, shoe size, number of students they service, etc. More challenging variations can include setting a time limit to complete the task, or adding their birth year to the line-up requirements.



Engagement Activity

Rock, Paper, Scissors Tournament (Brain Break)

Time Needed: 5-10 minutes (depending on group size)

Overview: Partners will engage in a rock, paper, scissors tournament until there is one final winner, while the participants cheer on the final competitors.

When and Why: Brain breaks can be used as an energizer to break up sustained time spent on content/academics, while building community by having participants interact in a fun, energetic activity.

SEL Focus: This activity builds **Social Awareness** and **Relationship Skills** as participants interact in a competitive activity and join cheering sections as they are eliminated from the tournament in order to support their peers.

Steps:

1. Explain that participants will be participating in a Rock, Paper, Scissors Tournament.
2. Have the group pair off (assist as necessary).
3. Review the rules of Rock, Paper, Scissors and model with a partner.
4. Explain that the winner of that round will go on to play the winner of another round, and the person who did not win will become a member of the winner's cheering section by standing behind them as they move around the room and continue to play.
5. Winners will continue to play (with the losing participants continuing to become a part of their cheering section) until there are two finalists competing for the "championship" with their respective cheering sections cheering them on.
6. The whole group will then celebrate and cheer for the final winner.

Optimistic Closure



An optimistic closure ends each experience in an intentional way. It is not necessarily a “cheery ending,” but rather highlights an individual and shared understanding of the importance of the work, and can provide a sense of accomplishment and support forward-thinking. The closing activity may be reflective of the learning, help identify next steps, or make connections to one’s own work. What’s important is that each engagement, class period, school day or meeting ends



in a thoughtfully planned and meaningful way, helping everyone leave with appreciation and energy, looking forward to connecting again.

Optimistic Closure

One Takeaway I'm Going to Try

Time Needed: 3-5 minutes

Overview: Participants are asked to consider and name a take away—an idea, strategy, tool, action step— that they want to try out.

When and Why: Students or participants are often presented with a variety of ideas, strategies, and tools, with the implicit understanding that they will use one or more of the "takeaways." This activity invites participants to explicitly connect their learning to their practice and encourages ownership and responsibility by taking action.

SEL Focus: This activity focuses on developing skills in **Self-Management** as participants are asked to set a personal goal and **Relationship Skills** when the accountability partnerships are used.

Steps:

1. Direct participants to reflect on what they have heard and learned, then ask, "Thinking about what you heard and learned today, what is one takeaway you want to try, and why? A takeaway can be an idea, a strategy, or an action step."
2. Give participants a minute of silent think time.
3. Pair participants and allow 1-2 minutes for each person to share their takeaway and thinking with their partner.
4. If time permits, invite 2-3 participants to share their takeaway and thinking with the whole group.

Modifications and Variations: With all participants standing up, person #1 shares aloud her takeaway and then sits down. Other participants with the same similar takeaway sit down as well. Move to the next person and repeat until everyone is seated.

Optimistic Closure

One Word Whip Around

Time Needed: 1-2 minutes

Overview: This activity is a quick and easy way of starting out or closing a session. The facilitator asks a question and participants go around and provide a one-word answer.

When and Why: This activity brings all voices into the room and enables the facilitator to quickly get a sense of the group in a short amount of time.

SEL Focus: This activity focuses on **Self-Awareness** and **Self-Management** in holding oneself to a one-word or short-phrase contribution as participants choose how to communicate their thoughts and feelings.

Steps:

1. Prepare a statement or question prompt that is aligned to the content of the engagement. For example, “Think of one word about how you are feeling now that you have participated in this engagement” or “Decide on one word that sums up your learning for today.”
2. Invite participants to form a circle.
3. State the prompt, explain that everyone should prepare a one-word response, and allow a minute of private think time.
4. Ask for a volunteer to start off stating their prompt. The volunteer then chooses a direction to go (left or right), and participants continue to respond in turn around the circle. As always, it’s okay to pass by saying, “Pass.” Note: Rather than “correcting” anyone who responds more lengthily, allow the modeling of the remaining group members to get the design back on track.
5. If time allows, debrief the activity by asking participants if they noticed any themes or similar responses and ask what that might tell us about the engagement or participants. If it’s respectful and possible to record the words each person says, create a Word Cloud and share it with the group at a future date.

Modifications and Variations: If there is not enough time or space to form a circle, participants can do a whip around from their seats.

Optimistic Closure

Human Bar Graph

(Adapted from EL Education)

Time Needed: 5 minutes

Overview: Participants form a human bar graph by standing in the line that best represents their current level of understanding.

When and Why: This activity gauges participant understanding at the end of a session and helps plan for the next session. Be mindful of the level of vulnerability you're asking of participants, as they publicly reveal their level of mastery or comfort with the topic, and create the conditions for that ahead of time.

SEL Focus: This activity addresses the competency of Self-Awareness as participants are asked to identify what they understand and have learned and what they still need more support with. **Social Awareness** skills also come into play as the group supports each person in noting that wherever they are in their learning process is okay.

Steps:

1. Identify a range of levels of understanding or mastery (e.g., beginning–developing–accomplished OR confused—I'm okay—I am rocking!) as labels for three or four adjacent parallel lines. Using removable blue painter's tape makes it easy to lay down and take up the lines.
2. Invite participants to form a human bar graph by standing on the line that best represents their current level of understanding.
3. Debrief the process by asking for volunteers to share:
 - Why they chose the line they stood in.
 - What would have enabled them to stand in a different line.
 - What this means for a future session.
 - What they most need or want next to make progress.

Modifications and Variations: Prepare a piece of chart paper with the labels at the bottom and invite participants to add a sticky note to their bar in the graph. Add names if you are using this as a targeted formative assessment; no names are needed if you are getting a general pulse of the group.



Optimistic Closure

I Am Curious

Time Needed: 1-5 minutes

Overview: At the end of an engagement, participants are asked to reflect on something that they are curious about as a result of their day/meeting/lesson. They will then share their reflection with a partner or with their table group.

When and Why: This activity respects participants' learning processes and is a quick way to find out what questions they might have. It is useful when you want to solicit input on planning for future engagements.

SEL Focus: This activity builds **Self-Awareness** as participants identify their learning gaps, and are encouraged to be curious about learning more. **Social Awareness** skills are practiced as they form and share opinions and receive one another's input respectfully.

Steps:

1. At the end of an engagement, ask participants to complete this sentence, "I am curious to learn more about..." or, "I am curious about..."
2. Give participants a minute to think and write a note to self.
3. At the end of the minute ask participants to share their "curiosity" with a partner or their table group.
4. After 1-3 minutes of partner talk, ask for 2-3 people to share what they are curious about with the whole group.
5. Collect the "notes to self" if you are using this as a formative assessment for future planning. Tell participants ahead of time if this will be the case. Write on sticky notes and have a poster near the door for people to add their thoughts as they leave.

Modifications and Variations: If your group is small enough, allow more time for reflection and discussion and/or hear from everyone. It will give you and the group a sense of shared learning and help prepare for the next engagement. You can debrief this option by asking whether anyone notices any themes or recurring curiosities raised by the group.





Optimistic Closure

My Next Step

Time Needed: 3 - 10 minutes

Overview: Close the engagement or class by asking participants to make a commitment to take immediate action.

When and Why: This activity encourages participants to make a commitment to action in the near future.

SEL Focus: This activity focuses on both **Self-Awareness**, as participants reflect on their own learning, as well as on **Self-Management**, as they are encouraged to follow up on a commitment.

Steps:

1. Ask participants to think of their first next step based on what they learned during the engagement or class. It might be a conversation, gathering additional resources, or thinking more about the topic.
2. After giving participants a minute to think about what that step would be, ask them to share their next step with a partner or at their table.
3. Ask participants to write their “next step” on a sticky-note and post the note somewhere where they will be reminded of their task, such as on their desk, inside the cover of their related text, or in their assignment notebook, or take a photo with their phone, etc.

Modifications and Variations: Help participants set up an “accountability partner” from the group to check in with on their action step during the following week.

Optimistic Closure

Suit Yourself

(Adapted from “Playing with a Full Deck: 52 team Initiatives Using a Deck of Cards” by Michelle Cummings. 2006. Training Wheels Inc.)

Time Needed: 4-6 minutes

Overview: Participants reflect on, and then share, valued takeaways from the experience using playing card suits as a focus area.

When and Why: Use this activity when you would like the group to hear a broad range of what was seen as valuable from the engagement.

SEL Focus: This activity builds **Self-Awareness** skills as participants are asked to identify how the engagement impacted them. It opens the group to **Social Awareness** skill development as they notice how varied individual takeaways are from the same experience.

Steps:

1. Randomly pass out a playing card to each participant. Each suit describes a category of responses:
 - *Hearts:* Something from the heart. How did you feel? What did it mean to you?
 - *Clubs:* Things that grew—new ideas, new thoughts, a new point of view.
 - *Diamonds:* Gems that last forever. What are some of the gems of wisdom gathered from people or content?
 - *Spades:* Used to dig in the garden. Generate conversation about planting new ideas or things participants dug up during class.
2. Provide 1-2 minutes of quiet time for each participant to jot down (or think about) their answer, then use one of the following three options:
 - Ask for one volunteer from each ‘suit’ to stand and share their response. Do not comment between sharing;
 - Ask participants to turn to a neighbor and share their response;
 - Invite each participant to answer aloud to you as they walk out door, or hand in their written response as an exit ticket.

Optimistic Closure

Future Me

Time Needed: 5-7 minutes

Overview: This activity involves asking participants to write a letter to their “future self” about what they learned from the day’s session and what they’d like to take away. It may be appropriate to encourage them to offer themselves “sage advice and heartfelt appreciations” to remind themselves of the goals and aspirations of today.

When and Why: This is a great exercise for the start or end of the school year. You can mail the letters at the end of the year or right before school begins, or have participants use the website www.futureme.org and email themselves their letter, choosing when they would like their message sent to them through the website.

SEL Focus: This activity builds skills in **Self-Awareness** as participants identify how a learning experience went for them, what they learned, and how they will use that knowledge

Steps:

1. Hand out paper, pens, and stamped envelopes and ask participants to self-address the envelope. Be sure they also add their address as the return address to ensure delivery. Be mindful of alternatives for students who may not have a permanent address, like using the school as their address.
2. Read/post prompts that connect to the session; for example, “What have you learned that you plan to apply in the year ahead? (Or to your practice?) What do you want to remember from today’s session?” “What message of encouragement do you want to send yourself?” “What reminders about how you’re feeling right now do you want to capture in writing and send to your future self?”
3. Collect letters in their sealed envelopes and inform participants that you will mail the letters to them at a later date.

Modifications and Variations: Provide a postcard to each participant instead of paper and an envelope, reminding participants that this “letter to self” will be public, since their writing will be visible during the delivery process.



Optimistic Closure

UFO/Energy Ball/Energy Stick

(The UFO Circuit Energy ball is available from many sources, including local science or toy stores, and can easily be found with an internet search.)

Time Needed: 3-7 minutes (depending on group size)

Overview: Participants form a standing circle, join hands, and are surprised when the connection of their hands allows the UFO/Energy Ball/Energy Stick to light up.

When and Why: The element of surprise and delight makes this a great closing activity after a full day or multi-day professional development. It also works well with students at the beginning of the year to build a sense of community. The activity promotes the ideas that it takes all of us working together and that we may not be able to see the fruits of our individual work or collective work, but that those fruits do exist.

SEL Focus: This activity focuses on **Social Awareness**, as participants recognize their productive contribution to the group.

Steps:

1. Gather participants in a circle. Express appreciation for everyone's contributions during the engagement. Remind them that even though our work may sometimes feel invisible, or that we are working all alone, it is actually adding to the progress of the field and is important, even when we don't always see the fruits of our labor right away.
2. Ask everyone to join hands. (Assure them no singing is involved, if that humor fits the group and the moment!)
3. With your right index finger, touch the UFO ball on the metal strip closest to you while you hold hands with the person on your left.
4. Ask the person on your right to touch the metal connector on their side of the Energy/UFO ball instead of joining hands with you.
5. The ball will light up and make a noise.
6. Let people take turns letting go and re-joining hands (one at a time) to make the light and sounds stop and start again.
7. Debrief: Offer closing language that appreciates the energy everyone has put into the shared experience and in the work they do with and for others. Or invite participants to





share a closing thought or appreciation, such as "Something that's giving me new energy in my work is..."

Optimistic Closure

One Minute Accolade

Time Needed: 2 minutes

Overview: The facilitator invites a moment of reflection on the current experience, then sets a timer for one minute to allow the group to contribute toward seeing how many voices can be added to the room during that time.

When and Why: Quick, meaningful and informative, this activity is especially useful when it feels like there just isn't time for an Optimistic Closing!

SEL Focus: This activity focuses on **Self-Awareness** as participants reflect on their learning, **Self-Management** as they choose how to contribute in a way that leaves time for others, and **Social Awareness** as they absorb the input from those who share aloud.

Steps:

1. Inform participants that you are going to set the timer for one minute (or longer if you have more time). During that time, the group will see how many people it can hear from.
2. Invite participants to think silently for a minute about ONE reflection question that you provide, such as: Something you appreciated about today, something you learned, something you want to thank someone for, or something that went very well, something you are grateful for, etc. Tell them to raise their hand when they have an idea of what they'd like to share.
3. Once several hands are raised, select one person who will start off. Explain that when you start the timer, the first person will go. Then anyone can share, whenever they're ready.
4. Encourage participants to listen attentively to each speaker. When one person finishes, someone else begins. It's okay if there is quiet between people sharing; that is natural.
5. Repeat the reflection question and start the timer.
6. When the timer goes off, listen as the person who is already speaking finishes. Then thank the group and move on. It's okay if not everyone who wanted to share had a turn this time. With repeated opportunities, the group grows more fluent and also more





comfortable with silence between sharing. This closing activity can be used over and over without losing its impact!

Modifications and Variations: With larger groups or as a smaller group becomes more comfortable with this strategy, set the time for two minutes instead of one. For very large groups, expand to three minutes.

Optimistic Closure

SEL Standards Connections

Time Needed: 5-7 minutes (depending on group size)

Overview: Participants review the skills connected to the SEL skills/themes that they used, or saw others use, during the engagement, and select one to share with the group. As volunteers share out, everyone who selected that same skill sits down at the same time as the speaker.

When and Why: In this low-risk activity, reviewing and connecting learning to SEL skills/themes helps participants keep sight of the SEL nature of the work we do in meetings, professional learning, and classrooms.

SEL Focus: This activity focuses on **Responsible Decision-Making** in selecting the skill that most resonated with participants, **Relationship Skills** and **Social Awareness** as connections are made and diversity of experiences highlighted during the whole-group sharing.

Steps:

1. Distribute a copy of the SEL skills/themes (or the CASEL wheel with skills) that have been taught up to this point.
2. Ask participants to put a checkmark next to each of the SEL skills/themes they used or saw others using, during your time together.
3. After a minute or two, ask participants to go back through the skills/themes they checked and circle one that is especially important to them.
4. After another minute, when you notice almost everyone is done writing, invite all to stand.
5. Explain that as you go around the room, one at a time participants will read their one circled specific SEL skill/theme and then be seated.
6. Encourage participants to look boldly around the room as they read their choice, because everyone who happened to choose the same skill or standard will sit down at this same time. If participants want to wave or make a signal of connection, invite them to!
7. Ask for a volunteer or invite someone to begin. Listen without comment to the sharing.





Modifications and Variations: If using with students, share only one or two competencies to narrow the focus until they become fluent in identifying the SEL skills they are using.

Optimistic Closure

Personal Reflection and Group Summary

(Contributed by Michelle Enos, PBCSD Professional Development Dept.)

Time Needed: 3-5 minutes (depending on group size)

Overview: Participants reflect individually on what they have learned. Then, they work as a table group to combine and summarize the collective learning of the group.

When and Why: This activity requires participants to individually reflect and collaborate to summarize the learning.

SEL Focus: This activity promotes **Relationship Skills** and **Social Awareness** as participants work to communicate clearly through collaboration.

Steps:

1. At the conclusion of a chunk of information, give participants a few minutes to individually reflect and record their two biggest takeaways, or what they feel is important for them to remember.
2. Provide each table group with a whiteboard and dry erase marker.
3. Have the participants work as a table group for about 10 minutes, to combine their takeaways into one summary of learning for the group on their whiteboard.
4. Have table partners switch boards to read the other summary.
5. Debrief as a whole group quickly by asking what they found as the most common key points to remember.

Modifications and Variations: The summaries can be done on chart paper. The table groups can view them as a gallery walk before debriefing as a whole group.



Optimistic Closure

Self-Awareness Closing Circle

Time Needed: 5 – 6 minutes, depending on group size

Overview: Participants identify how they are feeling about the professional learning acquired during the training session.

When and Why: In this low-risk activity, reviewing and connecting learning to SEL skills helps participants know where they are at with their acquired learning at the end of a Professional Development session.

SEL Focus: This activity focuses on Self-Awareness in helping participants understand and express how they are feeling and/or next steps as it relates to the professional learning.

Steps:

1. Display the following sentence stems: I believe _____, I am _____, I am learning _____, I can _____.
2. Ask participants to stand in a circle.
3. Participants read the sentence stem silently and complete it based on how they are feeling about the professional learning. (Give participants about a minute to think about their sentence)
4. A volunteer begins by sharing his/her sentence.
5. Go around the circle as all participants say their sentence.
6. Encourage participants to speak boldly and no pauses between sharing.





Optimistic Closure

Fill My Plate

Time Needed: 15-20 minutes (depending on group size)

Overview: Each participant is invited to reflect upon and share a quality they appreciate in their fellow group members. They will note their messages of appreciation on a paper plate for each person to keep as a friendly reminder of their peers after the training.

When and Why: This activity can be done after a multi-day training where participants have had the opportunity to work together for an extended period of time, or after a faculty/team meeting.

SEL Focus: This activity promotes **Relationship Skills** and **Social Awareness** as participants communicate their respect and appreciation for each other.

Steps:

1. Distribute paper plates and markers or colored pencils to each participant.
2. Instruct each person to write their name in the center of the plate.
3. Then, ask the group to pass their plate to the person sitting next to them in a clockwise direction.
4. Once they receive their neighbor's plate, tell them to write a short message expressing a trait they appreciate about that participant named on the plate.
5. Continue passing the plates until they have been completely circulated around the room and are passed back to the original owner.
6. Encourage the group to keep and display their meaningful memento.
7. Debrief by asking:
 - How do you feel when you look at your plate?
 - How do you think others feel when they see your kind words?



Appendix



District SEL Themes & CASEL Competencies

	CASEL's Core Competencies				
	Self-Awareness The ability to identify and understand one's own emotions, thoughts, personal and social identities, goals and values, and how they influence behavior across contexts. The ability to accurately assess one's strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and self-efficacy.	Self-Management The ability to regulate emotions and behaviors. This includes the ability to delay gratification, manage stress, and control impulses through coping. It includes managing expressiveness, perseverance and agency in addressing personal and group level challenges to achieve self-and collectively defined goals and objectives.	Social Awareness The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The ability to understand broader historical and social contexts and norms for behavior in different settings, and to recognize family, school, and community supports for self and others.	Relationship Skills The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships, and to effectively navigate settings with different social and cultural norms and demands. The ability to communicate clearly, listening actively, seek collective well-being, negotiate conflict constructively, seek help and offer leadership when needed and working collaboratively to problem solve across differences.	Responsible Decision Making The ability to make caring, constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across settings. Critically examining ethical standards, safety concerns, behavioral norms, and making realistic evaluations of benefits and consequences of various actions, and to consider collective health and well-being.
District SEL Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personal Identity (gender identity, race, culture, etc.) - Identifying Different Feelings/Emotions - Understanding that Feelings Change - Growth Mindset - Feeling Confident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Managing Feelings/Emotions - Goal Setting - Positive Self Talk - Handling Put-downs - Stress Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discovering Commonalities - Being Respectful - Appreciating Diversity - Respecting Differences - Predicting Others' Feelings - Empathy - Showing Compassion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Being Inclusive - Attentive Listening - Making Conversation - Being Assertive - Conflict Resolution - Being Considerate - Dealing with Negative Peer Pressure - Apologizing and Forgiving - Offering and Seeking Help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Avoiding Jumping to Conclusions - Making a Plan to Solve a Problem - Taking Responsibility



Micro Signature SEL Practices for School-wide SEL

Micro Signature SEL Practices are small but powerful moments in our day that only take a few seconds or minutes to complete. Practices such as greeting a person by name, sincerely asking how they are doing and wishing them a good day are ways of demonstrating care and inclusion in a very short amount of time. When done authentically and systematically throughout the school they can help create and grow a culture of positive and productive relationships that are the foundation for learning, teaching, and leading.



<p>WELCOMING ACTIVITIES Greetings Designed for Inclusion</p> <p><i>We all want to be acknowledged and welcomed.</i></p> <p>A culture of personal greetings establishes safety and predictability, supports contribution by all voices, set norms for respectful listening, and allows people to connect with one another, creating a sense of belonging. To be effective they must be authentic, warm and accompanied by appropriate eye contact and attentive body language.</p>	<p>USE INCLUSIVE GREETINGS in passing</p> <p>Eye Contact: When culturally appropriate, establish eye contact while listening and speaking. This means not looking at your cell phone or computer screen while engaging with another person.</p> <p>Smile: 😊 ! And if not a smile, assume a neutral and welcoming facial expression.</p> <p>Quick Greetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Hi, [say person's name]." • "Good morning (afternoon)." • "How can I help you?" • "Nice to see you."
<p>ENGAGING PRACTICES Attentive Listening</p> <p><i>Adults and students want to know that they have been heard and seen every day.</i></p> <p>Engaging practices such as attentive listening are brain compatible strategies that can foster relationships, cultural humility and responsiveness, empowerment, and collaboration. Attentive listening improves the quality of the thinking/speaking of the person who is talking and allows the listener time to understand the full message of what is being said or implied.</p>	<p>DEMONSTRATE ENGAGEMENT even when time is tight</p> <p>Non-verbal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering a "High Five" a wave, a nod or other non-verbal acknowledgment. • Nonverbal cues – not using technology during an encounter. • Pausing your activity to acknowledge the other person. <p>Verbal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "How are you doing?" • "What's new?" • Asking a follow up question to their comment.
<p>OPTIMISTIC CLOSURE Reflections and Looking Forward</p> <p>This provides positive closure, reinforces the topic, and creates momentum towards taking action. It is a way to show that you want to stay connected with the person.</p>	<p>END ON AN OPTIMISTIC, APPRECIATIVE NOTE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Is there anything else I can help you with?" • "Bye. See you later." • "Thank you." • "Let me think about that."