SEL 3 SIGNATURE PRACTICES PLAYBOOK

A Tool That Supports Systemic SEL

PRACTICAL WAYS TO INTRODUCE AND BROADEN THE USE OF SEL PRACTICES IN CLASSROOMS, SCHOOLS, AND WORKPLACES

Table of Contents

Snapshot of the SEL 3 Signature Practices 3

About the SEL 3 Signature Practices 4

Using the Playbook 6

- Creating and Sustaining Equitable Learning and Working Environments 7
- Getting Started

SEL 3 Signature Practices Examples 10

- Welcoming/Inclusion Activities 10
- Engaging Strategies, Brain Breaks, and Transitions 19
- Optimistic Closures 36

Adapting the Playbook for Your Work 47

- Developing Your Own Activities 47
- Template: Design your own Signature Practices 48
- Customizing the Playbook 51

Appendix 52

CASEL SEL Definition 53

SEL Competencies and Skills 54

SEL 3 Signature Practices for Adults 55

SEL 3 Signature Practices for the Classroom 57

SEL 3 Signature Micro-Practices 59

Getting it down PATT 61

Index of Activities (Alphabetized by Name) 62

Related Research Links 63

Acknowledgments and Permissions 64

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

SNAPSHOT: The SEL 3 Signature Practices

WELCOMING INCLUSION ACTIVITIES
ENGAGING STRATEGIES
OPTIMISTIC CLOSURE

1. Open each class period, meeting, or professional learning experience with a **WELCOMING INCLUSION ACTIVITY, ROUTINE, OR RITUAL** that builds community and connects to the work ahead**.**

Examples of Welcoming Activities, Routines, and Rituals:

- Smile warmly and greet each person by their preferred name
- Whole-group greeting activities
- Morning circles
- Interactive "do-nows," such as peer-to-peer homework help

2. Embed **ENGAGING STRATEGIES,** including brain breaks to anchor thinking and learning, throughout the experience. Engaging strategies offers many opportunities that vary in complexity to practice SEL skills. Engagement and learning individually (e.g., "turn-to-your-partner") and collectively (e.g., "Socratic Seminar" and "Jigsaw") are supported by intentionally chosen strategies and activities with sequenced steps that suit your group's current needs. Build in a balance of interactive and reflective experiences to meet the needs of all participants.

Examples of Engaging Strategies:

- Think, Ink, Pair, Share (silent time to reflect; time to write; partner discussions; close with a group share out)
- Clock Partners (prearrange partners for quickly pairing up for reflection and discussion)
- Private think-time (facilitator wait-time)
- Mindful Minute Brain Break (a calming activity, promoting focus and readiness to learn)

3. Close each experience in an intentional way. An **OPTIMISTIC CLOSURE** 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.

Examples of Optimistic Closure:

- One-Minute Accolade
- Something I learned today…
- I am curious about…
- I am looking forward to tomorrow because..
- Suit Yourself
- Something I'll do as a result of this meeting is...
- Something I still question...
- Something that still concerns me...

Establish a shared agreement that it is always okay to pass.
Encourage participants to verbally say "Pass" or
"Please come back to me" if that is their choice today!

About the SEL 3 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?"* Educators and OST providers understood and believed in the power of SEL, but sought clarity about how to demonstrate and observe SEL in action during the school day and beyond.

The **SEL 3 Signature Practices** are one tool for fostering a supportive environment and promote 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. You and your colleagues are each other's richest data sources, so we encourage you to dialogue regularly about how you consistently build these Signature Practices into your daily work, and to learn from one another!

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.

What's Been Shared from Schools and Districts Using the SEL 3 Signature Practices

- When a team, a school, or an entire district commits to using the SEL 3 Signature Practices in an authentic way, they are better able to meet their own learning goals and those of their students while building everyone's SEL skills to create a positive learning and work environment. One person can begin to use these practices and influence others, but it is only when they are used by the entire team or organization that they will achieve their full impact.

- When people are intentional about the purpose, frequency, and facilitation of the SEL 3 Signature Practices, they can build routines that become a solid foundation for strengthening a learning community. If used without planning and intentionality, or only for compliance's sake, they will not have the desired results.

- When used consistently and thoughtfully, the Signature Practices help to create productive habits that shape an organizational culture. If used randomly or without authenticity, they are unlikely to make a positive, systemic impact.

"Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can." – Arthur Ashe

Using the Playbook

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.

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. There is also a section on adapting the playbook for your work and a design template to support your planning process.

Next, scan through the examples of **Welcoming Activities**, **Engaging Strategies,** and **Optimistic Closings** 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 and Sustaining Equitable Learning and Working 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. CASEL believes 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.

The Neuroscience of SEL
Dr. Richie Davidson, University of Wisconsin, speaks about "every behavioral intervention being a biological intervention"—and that a young person's repeated experiences in school have the opportunity to be a powerful influence for the re-wiring of neural pathways that is necessary for habits to be built and sustained. Creating and sustaining consistent practices helps create the climate and culture that's vital for optimal learning and working conditions.

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. (See "Getting It Down PATT!"— *Purpose, Alignment, Transparency, Target.*)
- 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.

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 together for a whole day, you might plan SEL practices that take a little more time so you can also establish and deepen the relationships in the group.
- 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.

You will also notice that most of the sample activities include a **debrief**. The debrief is where some of the most powerful learning takes place, so plan enough time for this step. Reflecting on connections to specific skills within an SEL competency is a powerful strategy for individual, small-group, and whole-group self-assessment.

Align to 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/Inclusion Activity that includes brainstorming or a question.
- If an important goal of the meeting is *making a difficult decision,* a Welcoming/Inclusion Activity that asks participants to make choices could be a good fit.
- If an important goal of the engagement is learning how to *work in small groups,* perhaps select a Welcoming/Inclusion Activity that is organized in trios, and then debriefed with the whole group.

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."

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 activity that incorporates the topic of the engagement as the focus will support that.
- If the group is tired and low-energy, consider selecting an activity that involves movement and an upbeat tone.
- If the group has become unfocused, consider an Engaging Strategy that brings their attention to one central whole-group activity by helping the group down-regulate (e.g., using mindful focusing) or up-regulate in an active and fun way.
- If your time together has been spent on challenging material, choosing a closing activity that provides an opportunity to share appreciations can reframe the hard work as a chance to support one another.

Welcoming/Inclusion Activities

Welcoming Inclusion Activities 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.

Psychologist Barbara Fiese explains that *routines* are a way of communicating "this is what needs to be done," while *rituals* symbolically communicate the idea that "this is who we are" as a group, providing continuity in meaning across time.

Welcoming Routines include a well-taught system of actions or series of tasks that contribute to an expected rhythm that starts an event. This might be a list of pictures and/or written directions near the door of an elementary classroom, or a "Do Now" on the board for secondary students that spells out expectations upon arrival. Students and adults who enter can see at a glance exactly how to get engaged. Practicing these steps, as you do with other classroom routines, is an investment in creating a calm, orderly space in which learners move with confidence and agency.

Welcoming Rituals are a special subset—a routine imbued with special meaning. An example is how the U.S. Supreme Court justices begin their work days by each shaking every other justice's hand. This carries symbolism, making a public statement that despite strongly held differences of opinion that will be expressed during this work session, they are all civil members of the group, able to maintain personal connections across lines of difference. Examples of welcoming rituals in a classroom include a warm, consistent greeting of every student at the door.

Welcoming/Inclusion Activity

Four Corners

Time: 5-7 minutes

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

When and Why:
"Corners" is helpful in promoting the importance of divergent perspectives and the value of having all voices heard. Participants have the opportunity to connect 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 the **Responsible Decision-Making** skills of ***Situation Analysis*** and ***Evaluating*** as they choose and discuss their "corner" choice, and are developing the **Social Awareness** skills of ***Perspective-Taking*** and ***Empathy*** as they listen to understand each other's choices and reasoning.

Steps:
1. Before the activity, mark four to five areas in the room with a large 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 response choices with the group on a poster/slide (quotes, pictures, etc.).
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 within the group that forms in that area, and share what drew them to that choice.
5. 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.

Debrief by inviting two or three participants to share their choice and rationale with the whole group (or one person from each "corner" area, if time permits). 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.

Welcoming/Inclusion Activity
Greeting Frenzy

Time: 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 (*Social Engagement, Building Relationships)***

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.

Debrief by asking one or more of these questions:
"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!"*

Welcoming/Inclusion Activity
Name and Motion

Adapted from Engaging Schools

Time: 5-7 minutes (depending on the number of people)

Overview:
Participants stand in a circle and interact to learn each other's names and activities they enjoy.

When and Why:
Use "Name and Motion" 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 the **Self-Awareness** skill ***Recognizing Strengths*** as participants identify an activity they enjoy, and the **Social Awareness** skill ***Appreciating Diversity*** as they learn more about one another's interests and talents**.**

Steps:
1. Explain that our purpose is to learn names and get to know more about one another.
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 something they enjoy doing.
   - Each participant in turn will repeat the names and gestures of those who have gone before, and then will add their own name and gesture.
4. Model with your name and motion, e.g., *"I'm Sara and I like to play 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 their name and demonstrating their motion.
6. If someone can't remember a name or motion, invite them to ask someone in the circle for help and to thank that person for their assistance.

Debrief by asking one or more of these questions:
- *"Why it is important to know each other's names?"*
- *"What was it like to for you to participate in this?"*
- *"Were there any surprises?"*
- *"What's something you had in common with someone?"*
- *"What is something several people in the group had in common?"*

Modifications and Variations:
Instead of using a gesture, say the name of the activity. This may be a modification for individuals for whom gestures are challenging or as a variation for a fresh approach when the activity is repeated another day.

Welcoming/Inclusion Activity
One, Two, Three, CLAP!

Time: 7-10 minutes

Overview:
Partners stand and engage in a counting and clapping focusing activity. The facilitator guides the reflective process with questions.

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

SEL Focus: This activity builds skills in **Self-Awareness** (***Accurate Self-Perception***), **Self-Management** (***Impulse Control***), and **Building Relationship Skills** (***Working Cooperatively***), 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!

Welcoming/Inclusion Activity
Mix and Mingle

Adapted from Engaging Schools

Time: 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 **Relationship Skills** (***Accurate Self-Perception*** and ***Social Engagement***), as participants share their ideas and actively listen to divergent perspectives. It also provides a foundation for an impactful debrief around **Self-Awareness** skills (***Identifying Emotions***) and **Self-Management** skills (***Self-Discipline***) as participants reflect on their contributions, verbal and non-verbal, to the engagement.

Steps:
1. On a card or half-sheet of paper, ask participants to write down a response to a prompt you give related to the topic at hand. (Begin with a low-vulnerability prompt such as, "What did you do for fun yesterday?" or "What have you read or watched recently that you enjoyed?" or something connected to upcoming work like "What's one thing you know already about [*insert your content]*?")
2. When you announce, *"Mix and mingle!"* and turn on music, participants move around.
3. When the music stops, participants find a partner near them. Help with pairing if needed.
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.

Debrief by asking one or more of these questions:
- What were some of the things you appreciate about doing this activity?
- What was challenging about it?
- What SEL skills did you use?

Modifications and Variations:
- This same activity serves well as **Engaging Strategies**, with prompts that relate directly to reviewing or understanding academic content.
- "Mix and Mingle" also works as an **Optimistic Closure** activity. Provide a prompt that draws from the content, experience, or process of your engagement.

Welcoming/Inclusion Activity
Synectics

Adapted from Groups at Work: Strategies and Structures for Professional Learning*, by Laura Lipton and Bruce Wellman, and based on the work of George M. Prince*

Time: 4-7 minutes

Overview:
Participants take part in brainstorming and 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, establishes readiness for further exploration of a topic, and can be explicitly connected to a literacy objective.

SEL Focus: This helps the group to focus its energy on a topic or concept in a low-risk way in which all voices are included, providing opportunities to strengthen the **Social Awareness** skills of ***Perspective-Taking*** and ***Respect for Others***, along with the **Self-Management** skill of ***Impulse Control*** as everyone works to support equity of voice.

Steps:
1. Project an image on a screen or supply picture card(s) on each table.
2. Explain that the task is to complete the sentence stem: "[*Given topic*] is like this [*image*] because..." Participants generate and record as many comparisons between the image displayed and the topic presented as possible in one to two minutes.

Debrief:
- If brainstorming is done individually, participants review their 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.

Modifications and Variations:
- Participants can do their brainstorming in small groups. After brainstorming, invite each group to come to consensus on one comparison to share out loud to the whole group.
- Another time, shift the directions to generate contrasts, instead of likeness. "[*Topic*] is Not like [*image*] because…"

Welcoming/Inclusion Activity
What's New?

Time: 2-5 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 that's 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: "What's New?" builds **Responsible Decision-Making** skills by encouraging participants to choose the news that feels right to them to share in this moment (***Situation Analysis*** and ***Evaluating)***, and the **Relationship Skills** of ***Communication*** and ***Social Engagement*** 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.

Debrief:
- After both 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?" (That is, NOT sharing their personal story; just reflecting and commenting on the process.)

Engaging Strategies

Including Brain Breaks and Transition Techniques

Engaging strategies are inherently infused with SEL, vary in complexity, include reflection and processing time, and consist of sequential steps that are facilitated to support learning individually (like the use of "turn-to-your-partner") and collectively (for example, "Socratic Seminar" and "Jigsaw"). The goal is being in tune with and responsive to neurological, biological, and social and emotional needs!

Since SEL skills are integral to engaging strategies, it's critical that as educators we make SEL explicit. Being aware of the skills we're developing and how they impact learning will support learners in being ready and able to intentionally engage in SEL-integrated instruction. It is important to provide a balance of interactive and reflective experiences to meet the needs of all learners, and to meet the leader's needs in helping to bring the group's energy up or down, as the moment dictates.

Brain breaks provide vital opportunities for anchoring learning, regaining focus, and enhancing creativity. Bill McBride writes about the need for embedding brief and relevant experiences that engage participants emotionally throughout content delivery, to better ensure that concepts transfer into long-term memory. Offering opportunities to be up and moving helps keep brains refreshed and open to learning. Timing and design of brain breaks tie directly to the on-going experiences. If a particular class period or meeting is mainly lecture / directed input, schedule specific brain breaks to digest material and provide sense-making opportunities. When the room is more autonomously centered, breaks may be available in an authentically personalized way, in keeping with the individual flow of learning and doing.

Transition techniques, including routines *("Five-minute heads up before we…"*) and rituals (singing *"It's time to put the toys away so we can play another day…")*, foreshadow shifts within a class period or school day. These are helpful techniques for all people and are absolutely essential for some, including those with processing challenges or for whom traumatic events have impacted their social and learning experiences.

Engaging Strategies
Attention Signal

Time: 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 elements of the CASEL framework:

- **Self-Awareness:** Participants becomes aware of their own behavior.
- **Self-Management:** Participants decide when to shift their attention.
- **Relationships:** 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 (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.*
- *Relationships 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 continuing 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 signal they have to attend to, and soon it will become the only signal they need!

Debrief:

- After the first time you use this attention signal with a group, ask them what they noticed about the process. Any surprises? Any insights?

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 Strategies
Card Sorts

Adapted from Engaging Schools

Time: 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 brainstorms down into key concept categories.

SEL Focus: This activity emphasizes **Responsible Decision-Making** skills (***Problem-Identification, Problem-Solving*** *)* and **Social Awareness** (***Perspective-Taking****)* as participants work together to solve the task.

Steps:

1. Provide a topic or question for participants to respond to, (e.g., "*What are some ways students in our class can support each other's learning?*" "*How do you build relationships with your students?*"). 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."

Debrief by asking one or two of these 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 size and/or the number of cards each individual may contribute.
- If the groups are struggling to determine categories, the facilitator can provide some categories and let the groups decide which cards should go into which category.

Engaging Strategies
Clock Partners
Adapted from Reading Quest

Time: 3-5 minutes

Overview:
In this pairing activity, each person has their own copy of a "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** (***Recognizing and Using Supports***) 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.
- Vary the images used when you have people partner up, to keep it fresh!

Engaging Strategies
Engaging with Data

Adapted from ATLAS Data Protocol

Time: 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 developing skills of **Responsible Decision-Making** ***(Problem-Solving)*****, Relationship Skills (*****Resolving Conflicts)*** and **Social Awareness** (***Respect for Others***).

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.

Debrief: Ask participants to write or discuss with a partner any or all of the following questions. Invite share-outs.

- *"What did you learn from listening to others that was interesting or surprising?"*
- *"What new perspectives did others 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 Strategies

Fishbowl

Time: 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 (***Perspective-Taking, Empathy, Appreciating Diversity*** and ***Respect for Others***) needed to participate in constructive dialogue, the activity also strengthens **Self-Awareness** (***Accurate Self-Perception***) *and* **Self-Management** (***Self-Discipline***) 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.

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 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 Strategies
Gallery Walk

Time: 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** (***Working Cooperatively, Recognizing and Using Supports, Social Engagement***).

Steps:

1. Share an overarching question with the group, such as, "How can we make our school environment safer for students?"
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.

Debrief:
Ask participants from each group to respond to one of the questions or comments they received and share out their favorite idea, an insight, or a proposed next step.

Modifications and Variations:
If space is limited, the "posters" can be sheets of paper that are passed from table to table.

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

Time: 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** (***Self-discipline***) 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. The debrief could be structured to highlight examples of **Self-Awareness** (***Recognizing Strengths***) *and* **Social Awareness** (***Respect for Others***).

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 card or the new idea they received from a previous partner.

Debrief:
- Invite 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 Strategies

Jigsaw

Time: 20-40 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 skill development in **Responsible Decision-Making** (***Ethical Responsibility***), **Social Awareness** (***Respect for Others***), and **Self-Awareness** (***Self-Efficacy***) as participants are challenged to teach what they have learned to 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.

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 Strategies
Maître d'

Time: 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 the **Relationship Skills** of ***Communication*** *and* ***Social Engagement*** as they participate in multiple social interactions.

Steps:
1. Prepare engaging prompts (questions, quotes, or images) that are aligned to the gathering's 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 to keep things moving and encourage mingling, they will only have a few minutes to talk with each at their "tables."
4. Share the first prompt and call out, "Table for ___!"
5. Use your attention signal to bring the room to silence when time is up.
6. Repeat several times, each time offering a different prompt for discussion.

Debrief by asking one or more of these questions:
- *"What is something you heard about _____ that stood out to you?"*
- *"What is something about _____ that you are now wondering about?"*
- *"In what ways did your understanding of _____ deepen or change?"*
- *"What was a benefit or challenge of doing this activity?"*

Reminder: Speakers should always share from their own perspective, not share someone else's contribution.

Modifications and Variations:
Play music as groups are formed. Keep the same prompt each time and ask the tables to carry on the conversation from their previous table group. This activity is also very useful as a strategy for building and sharing knowledge in a content area.

Engaging Strategies
Pass It On

Time: 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 the **Self-Awareness** skill of ***Self-Efficacy,*** **Relationship Skills** (***Building Working Relationships, Social Engagement***), and **Responsible Decision-Making** (***Reflection***).

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.

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 Strategies
Save the Last Word

Adapted from National School Reform Faculty

Time: 15 minutes

Overview:
Working in small groups, participants follow an established protocol to share and discuss 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 *(Impulse Control, Self-Discipline)*** and **Social Awareness** (***Appreciating Diversity***) 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.

Debrief by asking one or two of these 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 Strategies
Brain Break: Meet in the Middle

Source: CATCH Grades 6-8 Activity Box: Card #32

Time: 5-7 minutes

Overview:
Students are paired with a partner. Partners stand on opposite sides of the classroom (or hallway) facing each other, one on one, and follow directions to "meet in the middle" and do a specified activity.

When and Why:
This works well when your group needs a quick pick-me-up to bring up the energy. Get the blood flowing, move around, have a laugh—ready to learn again!

SEL Focus: This activity emphasizes **Responsible Decision-Making** skills (***Problem Identification, Problem-Solving***) and **Social Awareness** (***Perspective-Taking***) as participants work together to solve the task.

Steps:
1. Call out an activity to do. Students walk to the center and meet their partner. After completing the activity, students turn and walk back to their original places.
2. Add one activity each time. For example:
    i. 1st time—meet partner in the middle and do a right-handed high-five.
    ii. 2nd time—right-handed high-five, add left-handed high-five.
    iii. 3rd time—right-handed high-five, left-handed high-five, call out a favorite physical activity they like to do.
3. Depending on time, add more activities: left-handed low-five, over the top (back to back), tap right shoe sole, tap left shoe sole, etc.

Debrief by asking one or two of these questions:
- Which partners can recall the sequence of activities they did?
- How's your energy right now?

Modifications and Variations:
• Let students create a list of physical actions to do the next time you use this brain break.
• Let students take turns leading the brain break, calling out the actions for the group.

Engaging Strategies
Brain Break: Mindful Minute

Time: 1-3 minutes

Overview:
Oftentimes our bodies can be present but our minds are elsewhere. Asking participants to focus on a simple action helps everyone become fully present.

When and Why:
This activity works well both to start a meeting—to help participants focus—and as a classroom "brain break"—to allow participants to decompress and refocus so they're ready to re-engage with learning.

SEL Focus: This activity promotes both **Self-Awareness** (***Identifying Emotions*)**, and the **Self-Management** skills of ***Stress Management*** and ***Self-Discipline*** as participants practice ownership of regulating themselves.

Steps:
1. Explain that our breath can be used to calm our bodies and steady our minds.
2. Ask participants to 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. Invite them to either close their eyes or to rest them by looking at a spot they choose across the room. Remind them there is no need to try to breathe in any special way, but to just notice how their own breathing is happening right then.
4. Gently sound a triangle or bell or verbally signify the end.

Debrief the experience by asking participants to share how the activity felt to them and when they might use this in their lives, and/or to share similar ideas like this that help 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 alternately tap opposite shoulders.

Engaging Strategies
Brain Break: Team Quiz Hustle

Source: CATCH Grades 6-8 Activity Box: Card #78

Time: 10 minutes

Overview:

This activity is a prime example of a brain break that both provides physical activity and reinforces content. Students combine reviewing academic material with movement and teamwork. As always, modify as needed for individuals in your group.

When and Why:

This activity provides a chance for movement, cooperation, and reinforcement of academic content. There may also be cheering for one's team and laughter—always a plus!

SEL Focus: This activity promotes **Self-Awareness** (***Sense of Self Confidence)***, the **Self-Management** skills of ***Stress Management*** and ***Self-Discipline*** as participants practice ownership of regulating themselves, and **Relationship Skills (*Communication, Social Engagement, Building Relationships, Working Cooperatively)***.

Steps:

1. Designate at least four stations in the classroom (just a sign—no equipment is needed).
2. Create quiz/physical activity cards (one per station). Write a quiz question on one side of the card and a physical activity on the other side of the card (e.g., 20 jumping jacks, jog in place for 30 seconds, imaginary jump rope for 25 seconds).
3. Place a quiz question/physical activity card at each numbered station. The card should be placed with the quiz question face down and the physical activity face up. Write the answers to the questions on separate pieces of paper that are numbered according to the station and taped to the chalkboard face down.
4. Divide the class into even teams of three or four; each team starts at a different exercise station.
5. On signal, the team performs the physical activity and then turns the card over to read the question. As a team, they decide on the answer, and one person walks to the chalkboard to determine if the group has the correct answer. If correct, they proceed to the next station.
6. If their answer is incorrect, they go back to the station and repeat the activity. They then move to the next station and repeat the sequence.
7. Play until one team has successfully completed all of the stations, or until time runs out.

Debrief the experience by asking participants to share how the activity felt to them, when they might use this in their lives, and/or to share similar ideas like this that help them stay present and focused.

Modifications and Variations:

- Create math, science, health, language arts, or social studies questions for other rounds.
- Invite students to create questions related to a particular area of current content, and to put their own idea for a physical action on the other side.
- Invite students to lead the brain break once the routine and rules are well established.

Optimistic Closure

Close each experience in an intentional way. An **OPTIMISTIC CLOSURE** 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.

Optimistic Closures may be reflective about the learning, help identify next steps, or make connections to one's own work. Since our learning and our work are always a part of an on-going journey, these experiences bring a moment of pause, of collection, of reflection, to help anchor learning and build anticipation for the efforts to come.

What's important is that each engagement, class period, or school day ends in a thoughtfully planned and meaningful way, helping everyone leave with appreciation and energy, looking forward to connecting again.

Optimistic Closure
Future Me

Time: 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** (***Identifying Emotions, Recognizing Strengths,*** and ***Self-efficacy***) 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 encourage 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
Human Bar Graph

Adapted from EL Education

Time: 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: The Human Bar Graph addresses the competency **Self-Awareness** (***Accurate Self-Perception***) as participants are asked to identify what they understand and have learned and what they still need more support with. **Social Awareness** skills (***Empathy, Appreciating Diversity, Respect for Others***) 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.

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: 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: "I Am Curious" builds skills in **Responsible Decision-Making** (***Reflection)*** and **Self-Awareness** (***Accurate Self-Perception***) as participants identify their learning gaps and are encouraged to be curious about learning more. **Social Awareness** skills (***Empathy, Appreciating Diversity, Respect for Others****)* are practiced as they form and share opinions and receive one another's input respectfully.

Steps:
1. At the end of a class or 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 or so to think and write a "note to self" that they will share aloud.

Debrief by inviting participants to share their "curiosity" with a partner or table group. Collect the reflection notes 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: 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 make a commitment to action in the near future.

SEL Focus: "My Next Step" focuses on both **Self-Awareness** (***Self-Efficacy***), as participants consider their next steps, and on **Self-Management** (***Self-Discipline, Goal-Setting***), as they are encouraged to follow up on their commitment.

Steps:
1. Ask participants to think of their first next step based on what they learned during the engagement. It might be a conversation, more reading, or thinking more about a 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 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.

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

Optimistic Closure
One-Minute Accolade

Time: 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** (***Accurate Self-Perception***) as participants reflect on their learning; **Self-Management** (***Impulse Control***) as they choose how to contribute in a way that leaves airtime for others; and **Social Awareness** (***Respect for Others***) as they absorb the variety of 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
One Takeaway I'm Going to Try

Time: 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 participant 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** (***Organizational Skills, Goal-Setting***) as participants are asked to set a personal goal and **Relationship Skills** (***Recognizing and Using Supports***) when the accountability partnerships are used.

Steps:
1. Ask 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, a tool, or an action step."
2. Give participants a minute of silent think time.

Debrief by pairing participants and setting a timer for one or two minutes for each person to share their takeaway and thinking with their partner. If time permits, invite several participants to share their own takeaway and thinking (not their partner's) with the whole group.

Optimistic Closure
One-Word Whip Around

Time: 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:
"One-Word Whip Around" 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 (*Identifying Emotions)*** and **Self-Management (*Impulse Control)*** 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."
5. *Note: Rather than "correcting" anyone who responds more lengthily, allow the modeling of the remaining group members to get the design back on track.*

Debrief If time allows, debrief the activity by asking participants if they noticed any themes or similar responses and ask what that might that 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
SEL Standards Connection

Time: 4+ minutes, depending on group size

Overview:
Participants review the skills connected to their local SEL standards (or the SEL competency wheel with skills) 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 when the sharing person does.

When and Why:
In this low-risk activity, reviewing and connecting learning to SEL skills and standards 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 (*Reflection, Situation Analysis)*** in selecting the skill that most resonated with participants, **Relationship Skills (*Effective Communication)*** and **Social Awareness (*Appreciating Diversity)*** as connections are made and diversity of experiences highlighted during the whole-group sharing.

Steps:
1. Distribute a copy of your local SEL standards (or the CASEL wheel with skills) and ask participants to put a checkmark next to each of the SEL skills they used or saw others using, during your time together.
2. After a minute or two, ask participants to go back through the skills they checked and circle one that is especially important to them.
3. After another minute, when you notice almost everyone is done writing, invite all to stand.
4. Explain that as you go around the room, one at a time participants will read their one circled specific SEL skill (or local standard) and then be seated.
5. 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!
6. Ask for a volunteer or invite someone to begin. Listen without comment to the sharing.

Debrief: Once everyone is seated, you may wish to make a general closing remark or connection to student skill development.

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

Optimistic Closure
Suit Yourself

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

Time: 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 perceived as valuable from the engagement.

SEL Focus: "Suit Yourself" builds **Responsible Decision-Making** skills (***Reflection, Evaluating***) 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 (***Perspective-Taking, Empathy, Appreciating Diversity.***)

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. Give one minute of quiet time for each participant to jot down (or think about) their answer.

Debrief using one of the following:
- Ask for one volunteer from each 'suit' to stand and share their response. Do not comment during the 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
UFO/Energy Ball

Source: 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: 3-5 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 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 experience. 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: "Energy Ball" focuses on **Self-Awareness** skills (***Accurate Self-Perception, Recognizing Strengths***) and **Relationship Skills** (***Recognizing and Using Supports***) as participants acknowledge 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.

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..."

Adapting the Playbook for Your Work

You are welcomed and encouraged to customize this playbook for use in your district or non-profit youth-serving agency, including incorporating your branding, logo, SEL standards, and activities. We respectfully request that you include the existing content and the credits and permissions Information in your local edition. Please consider sharing your customized playbook with the CASEL community.

Developing Your Own Activities

Possibilities abound for other activities that you can use, whether you find activities from other sources or create new ones. Keep in mind these goals for each activity:

Welcoming/Inclusion Activities, Routines and Rituals: Creating a climate of inclusion, belonging, and connection.

- 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.

Engaging Strategies: Building relationship to one another and the content.

- 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.

Optimistic Close: Leaving the group on an optimistic note, feeling connected, productive and inclined to return!

- 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.

Establish a culture of agreement that it is always okay to pass.
Encourage participants to verbally say "Pass" or "Please come back to me" if that is their choice today.

We sincerely hope that you find this resource useful and welcome your ideas and feedback!

Welcoming/Inclusion Activity

TITLE

Source

Time: 5-10 minutes

Overview:

When and Why:

SEL Focus:

Steps:

Debrief:

Modifications and Variations:

Engaging Strategies/Brain Break

TITLE

Source

Time:

Overview:

When and Why:

SEL Focus:

Steps:

Debrief:

Modifications and Variations:

Optimistic Closing

TITLE

Source

Time:

Overview:

When and Why:

SEL Focus:

Steps:

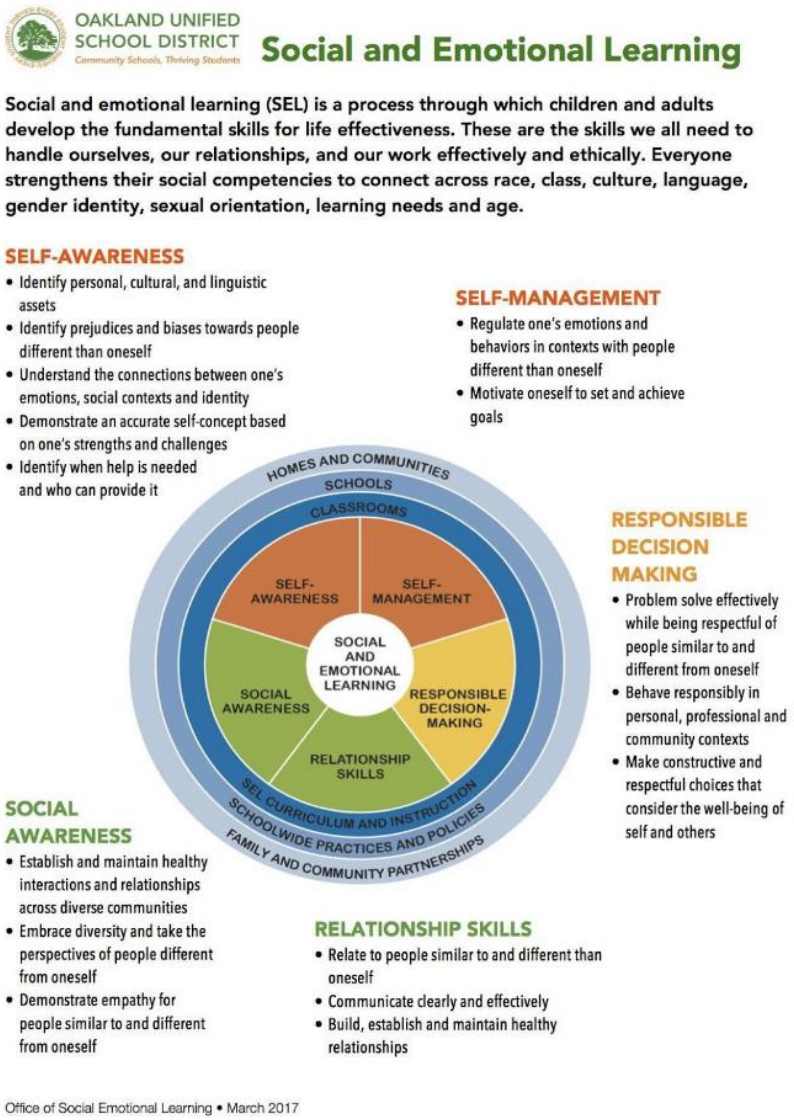
Debrief:

Modifications and Variations:

Customizing the Playbook

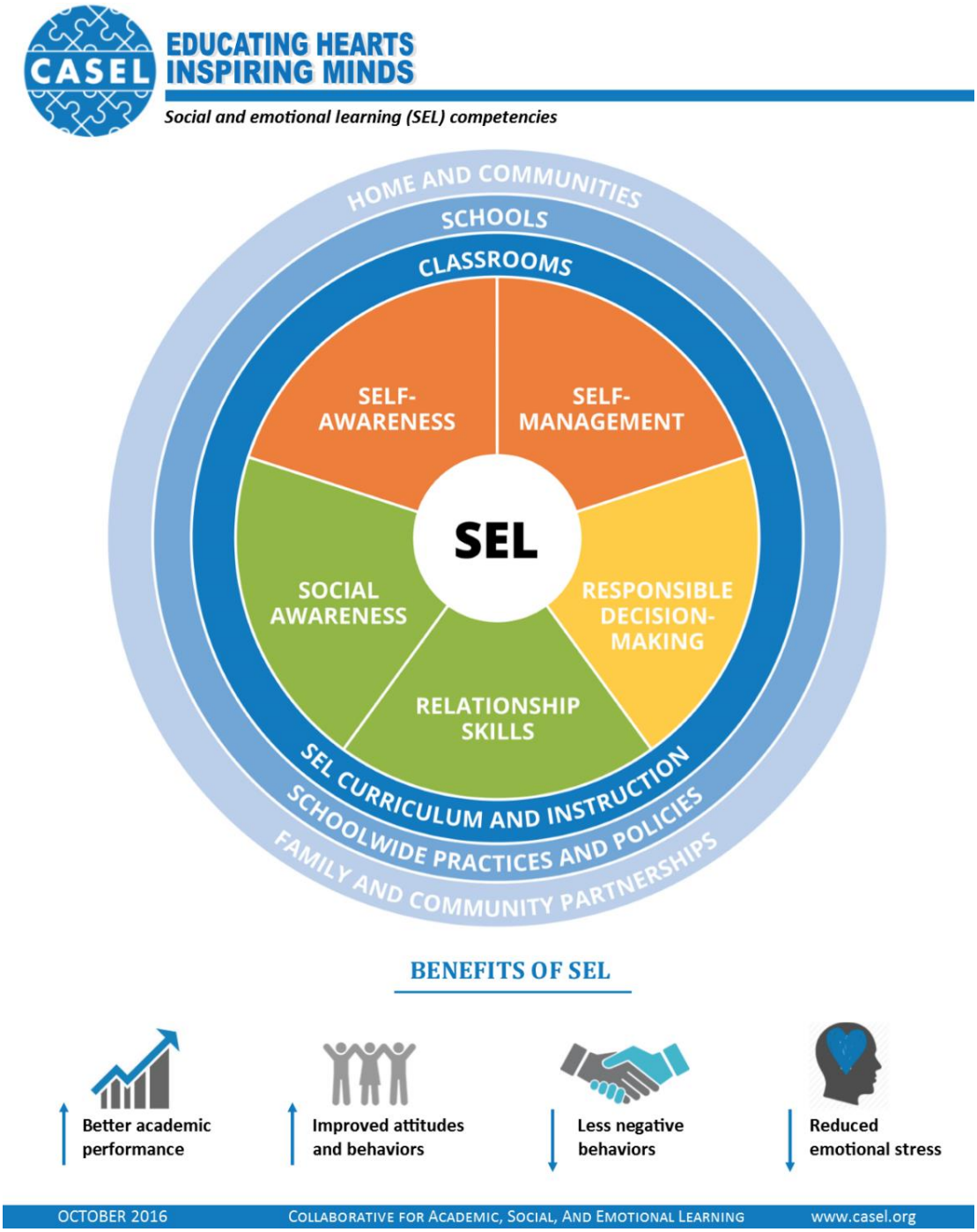
You are encouraged to add your materials to the Playbook, to modify activities, to create your own variations, and to add new ideas.

Example:



Appendix

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.



SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

3 SIGNATURE PRACTICES PLAYBOOK

A TOOL THAT SUPPORTS SYSTEMIC SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

SELF-MANAGEMENT

The ability to successfully regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations — effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself. The ability to set and work toward personal and academic goals.

- Impulse control
- Stress management
- Self-discipline
- Self-motivation
- Goal setting
- Organizational skills

SELF-AWARENESS

The ability to accurately recognize one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior. The ability to accurately assess one's strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a "growth mindset."

- Identifying emotions
- Accurate self-perception
- Recognizing strengths
- Self-confidence
- Self-efficacy

RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. The realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and a consideration of the well-being of oneself and others.

- Identifying problems
- Analyzing situations
- Solving problems
- Evaluating
- Reflecting
- Ethical responsibility

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. The ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed.

- Communication
- Social engagement
- Relationship building
- Teamwork

SOCIAL AWARENESS

The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The ability to understand social and ethical norms for behavior and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.

- Perspective-taking
- Empathy
- Appreciating diversity
- Respect for others

OCTOBER 2016 Collaborative for Academic, Social, And Emotional Learning www.casel.org

SEL THREE SIGNATURE PRACTICES for ADULTS

Creating the Conditions for Adult Learning

Social and Emotional Learning for Facilitating Meetings and Professional Learning Engagements

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

WELCOMING INCLUSION ACTIVITIES • Setting the Tone

ENGAGING STRATEGIES • Sense Making, Transitions, Brain Breaks

OPTIMISTIC CLOSURE • Reflections and Looking Forward

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

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

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

THREE SIGNATURE SEL PRACTICES FOR ADULTS*

Creating the Conditions for Adult Learning

WELCOMING INCLUSION ACTIVITIES (1-9 minutes)

Adults bring their experience; allow them to use it.

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

EXAMPLES

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

ENGAGING STRATEGIES (1-15 minutes)

Sense Making, Transitions, Brain Breaks

Adults want to make their own meaning, connect to work and colleagues, and have fun.

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

EXAMPLES

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

OPTIMISTIC CLOSURE (3-5 minutes)

Reflections and Looking Forward

Adult learning is connected to behavior changes.

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

EXAMPLES OF REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

- *"What are my next steps?"*
- *"When is my next influencing conversation about this and with whom?"*
- *"Who do I want to connect with about this topic?"*
- *"A word or phrase that reflects how I feel about moving forward with this…"*
- *"Offer an appreciation for someone in the room..."*
- *"I'm eager to learn more about ___ ."*

SEL THREE SIGNATURE PRACTICES for the CLASSROOM

Creating the Conditions for Student Learning

"With compassion, we can help remove students' triggers by providing smoother transitions and safe, predictable classrooms."

- The Heart of Teaching and Learning: Compassion, Resilience and Academic Success

Dr. Richard Davidson, a neuroscientist at the University of Wisconsin, speaks about "every behavioral intervention being a biological intervention." A student's repeated experiences in school can be a powerful influence for the rewiring of the neural pathways necessary for habits to be built and sustained. Having routines and rituals in our classrooms and school communities is beneficial for every child, and absolutely essential for some.

Three main categories of carefully chosen, effectively facilitated and thoughtfully debriefed teaching practices work together to build a solid foundation of safety, consistency and joy in classrooms across the school day:

WELCOMING INCLUSION ACTIVITIES • **Setting the Tone**

ENGAGING PEDAGOGY • **Sense Making, Transitions, Brain Breaks**

OPTIMISTIC CLOSURE • **Reflections and Looking Forward**

When used consistently, these signature SEL practices create conditions for growth and learning across all five SEL competencies while using culturally responsive teaching strategies to help create collaborative classrooms.

By providing repetitive and engaging opportunities, they help students improve the skills and habits of:

- *Self-awareness and social awareness through noticing and naming feelings, and seeing how they are connected to what is happening within and around us.*
- *Self-management and relationships by interacting with people and with content in ways that intentionally strengthen our skillset of being aware of and in control of our thoughts, emotions, actions and interactions.*
- *Focusing and persevering by balancing novelty with routines and rituals; we are internally soothed by sameness, while paradoxically, our brains need freshness too!*

SEL THREE SIGNATURE PRACTICES for the CLASSROOM

Creating the Conditions for Student Learning

WELCOMING INCLUSION ACTIVITIES

(1-10 minutes)

Routines and ritual openings establish safety and predictability, support contribution by all voices, set norms for respectful listening, allow students to connect with one another and create a sense of belonging. To be successful these activities must be: carefully chosen, connected to the learning of the day and engagingly facilitated.

EXAMPLES FROM THE CLASSROOM:

- "Do Now" Homework Helpers
- Class circles
- Name games / Greet warmly by name
- Morning Meeting
- Writing Prompts / Partner Discussions

SCHOOL-WIDE:

- Adults express joy in seeing students.
- Stack of breakfast items on office counter = glad to see late arrivals.
- Morning announcements include student voice.

ENGAGING STRATEGIES

(1-15 minutes)

Sense-Making & "Brain Breaks"

Engaging practices are brain-compatible strategies that can foster: relationships, cultural humility and responsiveness, empowerment, and collaboration. They intentionally build student SEL skills. These practices can also be opportunities for brain breaks that provide a space for integrating new information into long-term memory, otherwise it is soon forgotten. Making intentional choices about how **Transitions** are foreshadowed and experienced can make all the difference for a young person's success.

EXAMPLES FROM THE CLASSROOM

- **Directly teach** SEL skills through evidence-based programs.
- **Turn To Your Partner:** Sharing and listening to make sense of new input.
- **Co-create** working agreements with your students.
- **Brain Break - Stand and Stretch** or **Movement Games.** Refresh and reset the brain; include a variety of activity levels, chances to make connections to others and content, to anchor learning.
- **Opportunities for Interaction:** Cultivate practices that involve interactions in partnerships, triads, small groups and as a whole group.

OPTIMISTIC CLOSURE (3-5 minutes)

Reflections and Looking Forward

End the day by having students reflect on, and then name something that helps them leave on an optimistic note. This provides positive closure, reinforces learning, can connect school to home and create a moment of looking forward to returning tomorrow.

EXAMPLES FROM THE CLASSROOM:

Think of…

- Something I learned today.
- Someone I was able to help.
- Something I want to share with my grown-up.
- Something I'm looking forward to doing tomorrow.
- Something I enjoyed about the day.
- Someone who was kind/helpful to me.

MICRO SEL THREE SIGNATURE PRACTICES FOR EVERYONE…EVERY DAY

Creating Inclusive and Positive Environments

Highly engaging, effective and purposeful interactions are created using three key social and emotional learning (SEL) practices in the small moments of our day:

WELCOMING ACTIVITIES • Greeting for Inclusion

ENGAGING PRACTICES • Attentive Listening

OPTIMISTIC CLOSURES • Reflections and Looking Forward

Even if you are using these three SEL practices for the first time, they can be effective in creating positive and productive relationships throughout the day with everyone you encounter. These signature practices engage all five SEL competencies and can help us to create a culturally inclusive community. They also build upon and are aligned with the principles of adult learning, Restorative Justice (RJ), Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and trauma-informed practices.

Using these three practices is beneficial for everyone and is absolutely essential for some people:

- *People who walk into our offices and schools after a morning, a day, a week or a lifetime of difficult situations need to experience a sense of calm and inclusion in order to participate fully.*
- *Humans are internally soothed by sameness–while paradoxically our brains need freshness, too. It's balancing novelty within routines and activities that allows us to move with confidence through our work day while navigating multiple competing demands on time, energy and attention. These micro-routines provide a solid foundation for our most overextended colleagues, students and families to be engaged as learners and contributors.*
- *Productivity and creative thinking result only when our basic human needs have been met and our neocortex is engaged and available.*

MICRO SIGNATURE SEL PRACTICES*

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 a work environment they can help create and grow a culture of positive and productive relationships that are the foundation of learning, teaching and leading.

WELCOMING ACTIVITIES **Greetings Designed for Inclusion** ***We all want to be acknowledged and welcomed.*** 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.	**USE INCLUSIVE GREETINGS in passing** **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. **Smile:** 😀 ! And if not a smile, assume a neutral and welcoming facial expression. **Quick Greetings:** • *"Hi, [say person's name]."* • *"Good morning (afternoon)."* • *"How can I help you?"* • *"Nice to see you."*
ENGAGING PRACTICES **Attentive Listening** ***Adults and students want to know that they have been heard and seen every day.*** 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.	**DEMONSTRATE ENGAGEMENT even when time is tight** **Non-verbal:** • *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.* **Verbal:** • *"How are you doing?"* • *"What's new?"* • *Asking a follow up question to their comment.*
OPTIMISTIC CLOSURE **Reflections and Looking Forward** 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.	**END ON AN OPTIMISTIC, APPRECIATIVE NOTE** • *"Is there anything else I can help you with?"* • *"Bye. See you later."* • *"Thank you."* • *"Let me think about that."*

Getting it down PATT!

SEL 3 Signature Practices:
Getting it Down PATT!

Purpose **A**lignment **T**ransparency **T**arget

CIRCLE ONE

Welcoming Inclusion Activity/Routine | Engaging Pedagogy | Optimistic Closure

MY ACTIVITY / STRATEGY

WHO AND WHEN Example: 7th grade quantitative reasoning; 3rd grade beginning of day; staff meeting...

PURPOSE

Example: Bring up group's energy; to calm and focus; build relationships; reflect...

ALIGNMENT

Example: SEL standard and/or indicator; SEL Competency / Specific Skill

TRANSPARENCY

What do I want them to know about my purpose or the alignment? How will they know?—talking points. What individual or group self-assessment will I use?

TARGET

Focus of interactions: Teacher <—> Student; Student <—> Student; Adult <—> Adult

INDEX OF ACTIVITIES

Welcoming/Inclusion Activities

Four Corners	11
Greeting Frenzy	12
Name and Motion	13
One, Two, Three, Clap!	14
Mix and Mingle	16
Synectics	17
What's New?	18

Engaging Strategies & Brain Breaks

Attention Signal	20
Card Sorts	22
Clock Partners	23
Engaging with Data	24
Fishbowl	25
Gallery Walk	27
Give One, Get One, Move On	28
Jigsaw	29
Maître d'	30
Meet in the Middle (Brain Break)	33
Mindful Minute (Brain Break)	34
Pass It On	31
Save the Last Word	32
Team Quiz Hustle (Brain Break)	35

Optimistic Closures

Future Me	37
Human Bar Graph	38
I Am Curious	39
My Next Step	40
One-Minute Accolade	41
One Takeaway I'm Going to Try	42
One-Word Whip Around	43
SEL Standards Connections	44
Suit Yourself	45
UFO/Energy Ball	46

RESEARCH RELATED LINKS

Acknowledgments and Permission Information

This SEL 3 Signature Practices Playbook is based on the 2013 work of

CASEL Consultant Ann McKay Bryson.

The original playbook was developed by the

2016-2017 Oakland Unified School District SEL Team:

Mary Hurley, SEL Coordinator,

Sonny Kim and Meena Srinivasan, SEL Program Managers,

Christine Hiroshima and Ann McKay Bryson, CASEL Consultants,

Eva Jo Meyers, Educational Consultant,

Chen Kong-Wick, Expanded Learning Program Manager, and

Tyrone Martinez-Black, Policy and Practice Specialist for Collaborating States Initiative

and Equity Work Group at CASEL.

"Getting It Down PATT" was contributed by Micaela Gerardin-Frey,

Washoe County School District SEL District Specialist.

We are grateful for the many sources of activities collected in this playbook. Where known, we have attributed 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.