



SEL IN PRACTICE

3 SEL Daily Practices for Elementary Student Learning

Creating the Conditions for Learning

Model SEL in learning settings by intentionally integrating the 3 SEL Daily Practices of **Welcoming Routines, Strategies for Engaged Learning, and Intentional Closures** to create a positive learning environment.

Before starting your school day or class, take a mindful moment to check in with yourself.

1. Start the school day, class period, or learning experience with a [WELCOMING ROUTINE](#) that builds community and connects to the work ahead.

- **Why Use a Welcoming Routine?**

Welcoming routines establish safety and predictability and brings the voice of every student into the room, making a connection to one another and to the work ahead.

Examples: Greeting students warmly by name
 Morning meetings or class circles
 Writing prompts/partner discussion

2. Embed [STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGED LEARNING](#) throughout the school day or lesson.

- **Why Use Strategies for Engaged Learning?**

Strategies for engaged learning are brain compatible strategies that vary in complexity, anchor learning and may include reflection and processing time. A balance of interactive and reflective experiences, including brain breaks and transition techniques, support learning individually and collectively.

- **Brain breaks** provide vital opportunities for anchoring learning, regaining focus, and enhancing creativity.
- **Transition techniques** including routines (“five-minute heads up before we...”) indicate shifts within a class period or school day that are helpful for all students and essential for some students.

Examples: Think, pair, share
 Brain Breaks, stand and stretch or movement games
 Interaction in partnerships, small groups, or as a whole group

3. Close each experience using an [INTENTIONAL CLOSURE](#) that highlights an understanding of the importance of the work, supports forward-thinking, and provides a sense of accomplishment.

- **Why Use Intentional Closures?**

Thoughtfully planned and meaningful intentional closures help students leave the learning experience with appreciation and energy and builds anticipation for future learning.

Examples: Think of...
 Something I learned today
 Someone I was able to help
 Something I want to share with my family
 Something I’m looking forward to doing tomorrow

Welcoming Routines – Setting the Tone

Community Building Activities

Morning Meetings

- Start the day in a morning meeting to help everyone settle in and focus on the day's learning. This daily meeting usually occurs in a circle, includes greeting everyone by name, reviewing the day's schedule, sharing a quick discussion, or answering a question, and participation in a quick activity.

- **Greeting Frenzy**

Time: 3 Minutes

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

Explain: "You have 3 minutes, and within that time your job is to introduce yourself, greet everybody in the room, by name, and elbow bump.

(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? Why do you think that's the case?"

- **What's New?**

Time: 2-5 minutes

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!

1. Ask students 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 students 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.)

- **Name and Motion** Adapted from Engaging Schools

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

Participants stand in a circle and interact to learn each other's names and activities they enjoy. This activity is used to begin building relationships.

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:

- Students 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.

Check- In's

- Use an emotion emoji chart or temperature check for students to understand how they are currently feeling and how to be at their best for learning.

Positive Thinking

- Have students write or draw something positive that has happened during classes or studies in the last week.

Gratitude

- Have students write or draw something they are thankful for today.

Curiosity

- Begin the lesson or discussion by asking students to complete this sentence: "I am curious to learn more..."

Strategies to Engage Learners – Sense Making, Transitions, Brain Breaks

Brain Break: Breathing

- **Mindful Minute Breathing**

Time: 1-3 minutes

This activity works well both to start a lesson and as a classroom "brain break"—to allow students to decompress and refocus so they're ready to re-engage with learning.

1. Explain that our breath can be used to calm our bodies and steady our minds.
2. Ask students to bring awareness to their breathing.
3. Invite them to either close their eyes or to rest them by looking at a spot they choose across the room. Remind them to practice nasal breathing, in through the nose and out through the nose.
4. After one minute, gently sound a triangle or bell or verbally signify the end.

Resources: Pure Edge Inc., provides mindful breathing, movement, and rest resources. [K-2](#) [3-6](#)

Brain Break: Movement

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

Time: 5-10 minutes

Through this activity, students share and pass along new ideas.

1. Ask students 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. Students 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, students 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.

Communication Skills: Speaking and Listening

- **Think, Pair, Share**

Time: 10-15 minutes

1. Before introducing the Think-Pair-Share strategy to the students, decide on your target for this lesson. You may choose to use a new text that the class will be reading, or you might want to develop a set of questions or prompts that target key content concepts that you have been studying.
2. Describe the strategy and its purpose with your students and provide guidelines for discussions that will take place. Explain to students that they will (1) think individually about a topic or answer to a question;(2) pair with a partner and discuss the topic or question; and (3) share ideas with the rest of the class.
3. Using a student or student(s) from your classroom, model the procedure to ensure that students understand how to use the strategy. Allow time for students to ask questions that clarify their use of the technique.
4. Once students have a firm understanding of the expectations surrounding the strategy, monitor and support students as they work through the steps below. Teachers may also ask students to write or diagram their responses while doing the Think-Pair-Share activity.
 - **Think:** Teachers begin by asking a specific higher-level question about the text or topic students will be discussing. Students "think" about what they know or have learned about the topic for a given amount of time (usually 1-3 minutes).
 - **Pair:** Each student should be paired with another student. Teachers may choose whether to assign pairs or let students pick their own partner. Remember to be sensitive to learners' needs (reading skills, attention skills, language skills) when creating pairs. Students share their thinking with their partner, discuss ideas, and ask questions of their partner about their thoughts on the topic (2-5 minutes).
 - **Share:** Once partners have had ample time to share their thoughts and have a discussion, teachers expand the "share" into a whole-class discussion. Allow each group to choose who will present their thoughts, ideas, and questions they had to the rest of the class. After the class "share," you may choose to have pairs reconvene to talk about how their thinking perhaps changed as a result of the "share" element.

Collaboration

- **Gallery Walk**

Time 10 minutes

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

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.

Variation:

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

Intentional Closures – Reflections and Looking Forward

Forward-Thinking

- **My Next Step**

Close the lesson or class by asking students to make a commitment to act.

1. Ask students to think of their first next step based on what they learned during the lesson. It might be a conversation, more reading, or thinking more about a topic.
2. After giving students 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 students 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.
4. Help students set up an "accountability partner" from the group to check in on their action step during the following week.

Gratitude

- **One-Minute Accolade**

Time: 1-3 minutes

1. Inform students that you are going to set a timer for one minute (or longer if you have more time). During that time, the group will see how many people from whom it can hear.
2. Invite students 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!

Reflection

- **I Am Curious**

Time: 1-5 minutes

Students are asked to reflect on something that they are curious about as a result of their day/lesson. They will then share their reflection with a partner or with their table group.

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.

- **One-Word Whip Around**

"One-Word Whip Around" brings all voices into the room and enables the teacher to quickly get a sense of the group in a short amount of time.

Prepare a statement or question prompt that is aligned to the content of the engagement. For example, "Decide on one word that sums up your learning for today."

2. Invite students 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 students continue to respond in turn around the circle. As always, it's okay to pass by saying, "Pass."

Debrief If time allows, debrief the activity by asking students if they noticed any themes or similar responses and ask what that might tell us about the learning of the lesson.

Variation: If there is not enough time or space to form a circle, students can do a whip around from their seats.

Positivity

- **Closing Frenzy**

Time: 3 minutes

As you wrap up the end of class or a lesson tell student they have two minutes to connect with as many people as possible in the room, greeting them by name and asking, "what are you looking forward to tomorrow," or sharing an inspiring comment, intriguing idea, or an act of kindness noticed during the class or lesson 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!"

Celebration

- **"Yay" For the Day**

Time: 1-3 minutes

Ask students to share a "yay" for the day with a partner or in a small group, or as a class exit activity.