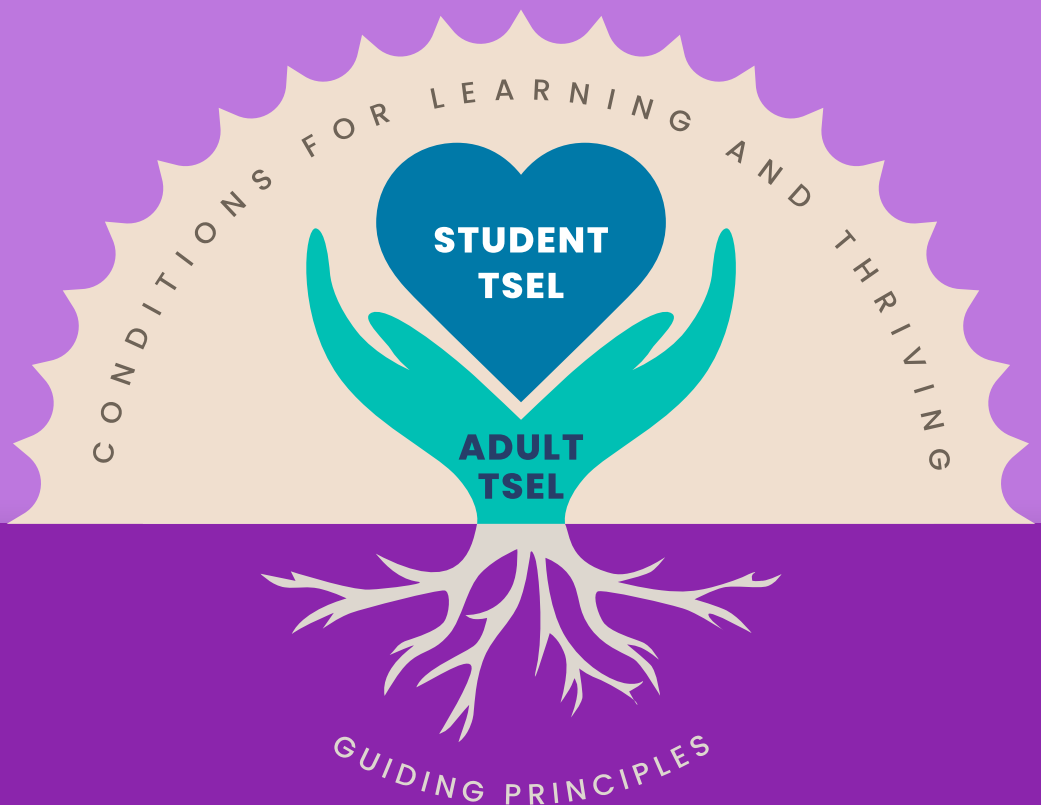
COLLABORATIVE LEARNING FACILITATOR GUIDE

Relationship Skills & Collaborative Problem-Solving



The following resource is designed to support a structured facilitation session based on content from the eight asynchronous Transformative Social and Emotional learning (SEL) professional learning modules. Each session seeks to develop collective understandings of Transformative SEL practices and competencies in a group setting. School and district facilitators are to adapt this guidance to lead groups of educators in lesson-planning, reflection, and more.

This Collaborative Learning Session (CLS) is scheduled to take 55 minutes, with optional extension activities that would lengthen the session to 70 minutes.

Oregon's Instructional Frameworks | Transformative Social and Emotional Learning

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Learning Module Overview

The Relationship Skills & Collaborative Problem-Solving Module invites educators to explore the essential skills and mindsets that foster healthy, supportive relationships and enable collaborative problem-solving within diverse school communities. Strong relationship skills are foundational for building trust, connection and resilience in both adult and student learning spaces. Grounded in Oregon's Transformative SEL Standard 4, this module supports educators to deepen their understanding of how relationship skills and collaborative problem-solving foster belonging, strengthen school culture and create conditions for collective thriving.

Adaptive Facilitation

The agenda, activities and resources included in this guide are intended to spark inspiration in facilitators. Facilitators may adapt these materials to better suit the context of educators they are supporting. This guide refers to the Transformative SEL Facilitator Spark Tool which facilitators can use to scaffold reflection, integration and activity planning.

Transformative SEL Guiding Principles

Guiding Principles (Figure 1) represent the roots of the Transformative SEL learning ecosystem (Figure 2), serving as the foundational values and beliefs that can lead to fruitful interactions, communication and decision-making.

Figure 1. Guiding Principles

A transformative approach to facilitating each Collaborative Learning Session (CLS) will attend to the Guiding Principles. Facilitators can embed **culturally responsive** education in sessions by affirming and honoring the knowledge, experiences and cultures that adults bring to the space. Opportunities for dialogue and relationship-building are built into each session so that participants can learn more about each other and facilitators can harness the collective wisdom present in each session. A **community responsive**

Figure 2. Transformative SEL Framework

approach ensures that facilitators give educators time to check in, challenge and engage with the content as needs, interests and tensions become apparent. Facilitators can uplift their own learning journeys with the content while supporting educators to engage in productive discourse pertaining to mindset shifts. Facilitation that is **strengths-based** affirms the perspectives and contributions of participants as assets for deepening Transformative SEL learning. These sessions represent unique opportunities for collaborative, reciprocal learning and problem-solving that humanizes the concepts through applied activities and scenarios. Facilitators can be **trauma-informed** by prioritizing trust-building activities that promote positive relationships, while also creating transparent, predictable and positive routines for new learning to regulate participants' brains, minds and bodies. Facilitation that is **grounded in neuroscience and the science of learning and development**builds on evidence about neuroplasticity and neurodiversity to appreciate and build on each adult's potential for learning while encouraging participants to show up as their authentic selves. When facilitated with these principles in mind, each CLS can spark curiosity in educators, encouraging continued exploration and iteration in the classroom.

Signature Practices

Figure 3. Signature Practices

Inclusive Welcome **Engaging Strategy** **Intentional Close**

A transformative approach to SEL is an ongoing process and practice of how adults and students show up for one another throughout the learning ecosystem. This guide describes how facilitators can use Signature Practices (Figure 3) as an entry point to putting the Guiding Principles into action throughout each CLS. In response to frequently asked questions such as "What does SEL look like?" and "How can we start?", the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) developed three Signature Practices: **Inclusive Welcome**, **Engaging Strategies** and **Intentional Close**. Facilitators will interweave each practice into learning experiences for adults, opening each session with an Inclusive Welcome that builds community and sets the stage for learning, embedding Engaging Strategies throughout the session to support adults in connecting content to their own learning experiences, and closing sessions with opportunities for reflection, shared sense-making or identifying next steps through an Intentional Close.

Preparing for the Relationship Skills & Collaborative Problem-Solving Session

Facilitators should approach this session with care, recognizing the emotional and relational depth of the content. Encourage participants to engage with vulnerability while also honoring each other's privacy. It's important to normalize any discomfort that may arise when discussing topics like trust, conflict and relationships, as these conversations can be both personal and complex. Throughout the session, remain flexible with timing to meet the needs and energy of the group, and consistently model key relational skills such as active listening, curiosity and empathy. Establish clear norms and agreements at the outset—especially around listening and confidentiality—to create a safe, respectful space for open dialogue and shared learning.

Agenda and Participant Tool

Materials

- Chart paper
- Markers and pens
- Sticky notes
- Print: Relational Case Studies
- Print and place around the room: Gallery Walk Quotes

Learning Goals

- Reflect on the importance of cultivating the skills to build and sustain healthy, supportive relationships and navigate diverse settings with care and respect.
- Develop a toolbox of practices that foster relational trust and support effective collaboration.

Agenda

TIME	SIGNATURE PRACTICE	LEARNING PROGRESSION AND FACILITATOR GUIDANCE	MATERIALS
10m	**Inclusive Welcome**	**Story Circles: The Power of Relationships** Welcome participants to the space and provide the group with the opportunity to introduce themselves. **Partner Share** Offer the following sentence stems for participants to discuss with a partner, guiding them to select one to respond to: • A relationship that taught me about trust was with . . . • I learned the value of collaboration when . . . **Facilitator tips:** • Model vulnerability by sharing an example of a relationship that impacted you. • Emphasize that participants control what they share. **Whole Group** Ask your group to consider the following question: In just one word, what feeling or value surfaced from the stories in your group? Invite quick popcorn-style sharing, limiting responses to one word per person. **Introduce Purpose and Goal of the CLS** Share the language of Standard 4: "Establish and maintain healthy, supportive relationships and effectively navigate diverse settings in order to collaboratively solve problems." Emphasize how the purpose of this session is to explore how trust, growth and connections can lead to fruitful relationships and collective problem-solving.	

10m	**Engaging Strategy**	**Visual Reflection Gallery Walk** Place a selection of Gallery Walk Quotes on chart paper around the learning space. Then, ask participants to take a few minutes to walk through this gallery. Invite participants to reflect with a partner or in small groups using these guiding prompts at each station: • How does this quote connect to relationships, trust and collaboration? • How does this show up in my relationships or work?	Chart paper or poster boards Gallery Walk Quotes
15m	**Engaging Strategy**	**Relational Case Studies: Practicing Relationship-centered Responses** Remind participants how relationships are tested in moments of conflict, misunderstanding or difference. Let your group know that the following activity will help them respond to relational challenges with empathy, care and intention. **Small-group Scenario Discussion** Ask participants to break out into small groups and provide each small group with Relational Scenarios highlighting school-based challenges. Ask groups to choose two or three scenarios to ground their discussion of the following prompts: • What relationship skills are needed in this situation? • What relational moves might help repair or strengthen connection? • How might identity, power or perspective play a role in this scenario? **Whole Group** Invite groups to share one or two key ideas or practices from their conversation. As participants share, chart responses under "Relationship Skills" and "Relational Moves."	Relational Scenarios Chart paper or whiteboard for group ideas Markers or pens

15m	**Engaging Strategy**	**Collaborative Problem-solving in Practice** Introduce the activity as collaborative problem-solving practice that participants can use with their school site, team or students to work through relational challenges. Walk through the steps: 1. Clarify the issue: What's the challenge? 2. Identify needs and interests: What does everyone care about or need? 3. Brainstorm solutions: What ideas could address this? 4. Co-create an action step: What is one next step to try? **Small Groups** Ask each group to use two or three scenarios from the Relational Scenarios handout for this activity. Guide them to move quickly through the four steps. Keep them moving, allowing 2–3 minutes per step. Encourage all voices to contribute. **Whole Group** Ask for volunteers from your group to share responses to the following questions: - What worked well in your group's collaboration? - What was challenging? - What can you apply to your role or team moving forward?	

5m	**Intentional Close**	**Collective Commitment Circle** Encourage participants to commit to one relationship-centered practice they will try moving forward. Express your gratitude for their presence and contribution today and then close out the session on time. **Individual Reflection** Ask participants to individually consider this guiding question: • What is one relationship-centered practice you can try moving forward? Offer this sentence stem: • I will commit to . . . Ask participants to write these responses on a sticky note that they will take with them to remind them of their commitments.	Sticky notes Markers or pens

Facilitator Spark Tool

Each Collaborative Learning Facilitator Guide provides specific, useful strategies to use with K-12 educators and staff. CLS agendas are written with a range of staff audiences and learning contexts in mind. Facilitators may need to adapt portions of the agendas for timing, learner familiarity with session context and group sizes or spaces. The Facilitator Spark Tool is intended to support facilitators as they integrate Transformative SEL into their professional learning practices. This tool offers reflective prompts, planning tools and adaptable strategies that align with CASEL's Three Signature Practices and Oregon's Transformative SEL Guiding Principles. By centering educators' identities, experiences and well-being, the tool helps foster professional spaces that model the competencies we aim to cultivate in students.

Extension Guidance and Activities

Invite participants to consider how they might support their students to engage in collaborative problem-solving by exploring the following relationship-centered resources:

- SEL for Students: Social Awareness and Relationship Skills
- Asking Powerful Questions
- Cultivating Caring Relationships at School: 15 Activities That Promote Staff and Student Connection

Resources and Support Materials

- Oregon Department of Education. (2023). *Oregon's Transformative Social and Emotional Learning Framework & Standards*. https://www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/standards/SEL/Documents/ODE_Oregon%27s%20Transformative%20SEL%20Framework%20%20Standards_FINAL%20(2).pdf

Relational Scenarios

Small groups will choose two or three of the following Relational Scenarios to discuss using these guiding prompts:

- What relationship skills are needed in this situation?
- What relational moves might help repair or strengthen connection?
- How might identity, power, or perspective play a role in this scenario?

1. Student-Student Conflict

Two middle school students argue during group work. One feels ignored and accuses the other of being bossy. The conflict escalates and impacts the group dynamic.

2. Teacher-Student Tension

A student feels publicly embarrassed after a teacher redirects their behavior in front of the class. The student becomes withdrawn and stops participating in future lessons.

3. Family-School Communication Breakdown

A caregiver receives a behavior report without prior communication. They feel blindsided and send a frustrated email, saying the school doesn't understand their child.

4. Peer Miscommunication Between Staff

Two staff members misinterpret each other's tone in an email exchange. The miscommunication leads to tension during meetings and avoidance in collaboration.

5. Cultural Misunderstanding

A student's cultural tradition conflicts with a classroom routine (e.g., not making eye contact with adults). The teacher misreads this as defiance and issues a behavior referral.

6. Teacher-Teacher Conflict

Two educators disagree on how to discipline a student who frequently disrupts class. One wants to send the student out, while the other prefers restorative conversation. The disagreement creates friction on the grade-level team.

7. Student Identity and Belonging

A nonbinary student feels uncomfortable during a school assembly where only binary gendered terms ("boys and girls") are used. They express feeling invisible and unsupported.

8. Navigating Disability & Accommodation

A student with an IEP is consistently pulled from an elective they enjoy to receive services. The student feels frustrated and the support teacher feels the service is critical. The tension is brought to an IEP meeting.

9. Administrator–Teacher Tension

A principal gives public feedback to a teacher during a staff meeting about a classroom practice. The teacher feels undermined and less willing to share ideas in future meetings.

10. Student Peer Group Exclusion

A group of students intentionally excludes a new student from recess games. When the excluded student reports it, a teacher overhears a peer saying, "No one likes her anyway."

Relationships & Collaborative Problem-Solving Gallery Walk Quotes

> We don't heal in isolation, but in community.
>
> – S. Kelley Harrell

> Relationships are built at the speed of trust, and social change happens at the speed of relationships.
>
> – Rev. Jennifer Bailey

> Trust is built when someone is vulnerable and not taken advantage of.
>
> – Charles Feltman

> Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.
>
> – Helen Keller

> People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.
>
> – Maya Angelous

> To bring about real change, we have to tap into people's capacity to care deeply and connect authentically.
>
> – Dr. Shawn Ginwright

> When we listen and celebrate what is both common and different, we become wiser, more inclusive, and better as an organization.
>
> – Pat Wadors

> Every interaction is an opportunity to build or break trust.
>
> – Unknown

> Empathy is seeing with the eyes of another, listening with the ears of another and feeling with the heart of another.
>
> – Alfred Adler