

Using the Teacher's Guides in Collaborative Learning Settings

This resource offers strategies for facilitators to bring the Transformative Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Teacher's Guides and Lesson Spark Tool to life for educators. Learning is inherently social, which means the content in these guides is well-suited for a collaborative setting. Just as strong peer-to-peer relationships favorably impact student outcomes, collaborative learning supports adult learning and engagement. Consistent social interactions also lead to higher-level thinking and meaning-making, enabling learners to assess and construct knowledge by engaging with each other.

Before You Begin

Review the Teacher's Guides

- The [K–12 Teacher's Guides](#) cover six content areas: art, English language arts, health, math, science and social sciences.
- The goal of each guide is to help teachers build vibrant, engaging classroom communities that celebrate identity, build agency, cultivate belonging, foster collaborative problem-solving and encourage curiosity by embedding Transformative SEL throughout content learning.
- Each guide provides content-specific lesson sparks—ideas and practices that are intended to spark inspiration in teachers and can be used dynamically to help shift classroom practices and policies toward transformation.

Review the Lesson Spark Tool

- Each guide refers frequently to the accompanying [Transformative SEL Lesson Spark Tool](#), which teachers can use as they engage in the processes of reflection, integration and lesson planning. This tool is designed for use across all subject areas and grade levels.
- The tool's prompts are designed to spark educators' thinking about their own learning journey in preparation for working with their students.

Planning for Group Learning

As you prepare to explore the Transformative SEL Teacher's Guides in groups, consider the following questions:

- How will this learning experience be grounded in and enact Oregon's Transformative SEL Guiding Principles?



- How will this learning experience leverage the three Signature Practices to Support adult learning and well-being?
- Who are the participants? What are their learning needs and preferences?
- What learning goals would meet participants' needs and context?
- To best meet these goals, do participants need to explore the same guides, or can they select which guide to explore? Will participants be grouped by subject area or grade bands?
- What time and space are needed to prepare for and facilitate a learning session?

LEGEND

The icons designate if it's a good fit for specific audiences.



An informal setting with a partner



A small group that meets regularly (e.g., professional learning communities)



A large group that meets periodically (e.g., all-staff meetings, department meetings)

The stars indicate how much facilitation is required.



One star indicates light facilitation, and three stars indicate more intensive facilitation.

Strategies




Integrate Signature Practices into Existing Professional Learning

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Adult Transformative SEL is a key component of Oregon’s Transformative SEL Framework. Consider using the three [Signature Practices](#) from CASEL as a guiding structure in meetings, during professional learning sessions and in building norms or policies. This learning by doing can help educators experience Transformative SEL in action and connect to their own practice.

- **Start with a welcoming ritual.** Begin each meeting with a brief, inclusive activity (a check-in question, breathing exercise or connection circle) that builds trust and emotional safety.
- **Embed engaging strategies and opportunities for voice.** Use collaborative protocols, reflection prompts or small-group dialogue to ensure all participants are actively engaged and contributing to meaning-making.
- **End with an intentional close.** Wrap up with a prompt or activity that helps participants reflect on their learning, share takeaways and set intentions for applying insights to their practice.
- **Root in the Guiding Principles.** Provide opportunities for self-reflection through the lens of the Guiding Principles (Culturally Responsive, Community Responsive, Strengths-Based, Trauma-Informed, Grounded in Neuroscience and the Science of Learning).
- **Connect to the classroom.** Facilitate a metacognitive conversation about how the Signature Practices can be integrated into classroom practice.



Engage in Solo Learning Together

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This strategy is simple: offer protected time for educators to review a Transformative SEL Teacher's Guide independently. Then, invite everyone to come together to share what they learned. Here are a few strategy variations:

- Ask everyone to read the same guide to deepen the collective learning. This works for educators who teach in the same discipline or elementary educators who teach multiple subjects.
- Have individuals choose a study buddy and move through the guide with a partner. Buddies can be by grade level or subject area.
- Create a space for educators to sit together and read. Then offer the opportunity for participants to go for a short walk at the end and talk to a partner about their takeaways. For example, one educator may be drawn to the standards crosswalk while another is excited by the lesson sparks.
- Invite individuals to share what they focused on in a specific section of the guide, such as learning about the Signature Practices, exploring the standards crosswalk, or adapting lesson sparks. This structure helps marshal resources and enthusiasm across a group of teachers.

Create a Book Club



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In a book club, readers engage with content independently and then come together to discuss and deepen their understanding through collaborative discussions and problem-solving. Below are structures to support this approach. In these variations, invite your colleagues to move through a section of the Teacher's Guide on their own before convening as a group.

- **Chunk the reading.** Just like for students, the reading strategy of chunking involves breaking down text into smaller, more manageable parts to enhance comprehension. Use the table of contents to identify chunks of the guide for teachers to read before meeting and be prepared to discuss in a small group. Invite teachers to choose the section that feels most interesting to them.

- **Engage in structured conversations.** Use a thinking routine, like [I Used to Think, Now I Think, Connect, Extend, Challenge](#) or [What? So what? Now what?](#) to anchor your conversation with colleagues. Visit Project Zero's [Thinking Routines Toolbox](#) to explore additional thinking routines.
- **Facilitate a thematic discussion circle.** Select a relevant Transformative SEL Standard like Standard 1: Self-Awareness & Identity. Invite colleagues to explore that standard by referencing the standards crosswalk in their content area. Then, gather colleagues to share insights and reflections on that theme through the lens of their discipline. *Note: This variation would work especially well if colleagues engage with different Teacher's Guides across multiple subject areas.*



Get Inspired

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Transformative SEL is a strengths-based model that builds on the assets of adults and young people. Creating a space for educators to come together to share and showcase their ideas around Transformative SEL creates a powerful space for mutual learning and inspiration. These gatherings can build on educator expertise, highlight diverse approaches and foster a sense of collective purpose.

- Host a try-it-out workshop. To encourage your colleagues to apply what they learned, ask them to choose one lesson spark. In the group, offer time and space for participants to move through the activity's steps, make a plan to implement it and share their thinking.
- Facilitate a Transformative SEL idea exchange. Invite educators to bring a strategy, tool or routine they've used to support SEL in their classroom. Create a structured format, such as a gallery walk or small group rotations, where participants can share, ask questions and gather ideas to try in their own settings.
- Use a protocol to guide educators in sharing a challenge related to Transformative SEL implementation. For example, the [tuning protocol](#) supports group discussion and invites thoughtful classroom, department and schoolwide feedback. Encourage participants to reflect, listen deeply and offer insights, helping to build trust and normalize learning through shared experience.
- Invite teachers to explore the “Additional Inspiration” and appendices of the Teacher's Guide and bring highlights to the group.



Plan Collaboratively Using the Lesson Spark Tool

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The Lesson Spark Tool is designed to support K–12 teachers in integrating Transformative SEL into their classrooms. As collaborative learning is essential to the fidelity and sustainability of Transformative SEL, the tool is designed to be used in community with fellow educators. Set aside time for educators to use the Lesson Spark Tool to plan their next unit or lesson.

- Steps 1–3 of the Lesson Spark Tool offer guiding questions around the key processes of reflection, integration and lesson-planning. Step 4 offers space for teachers to design their own Lesson Sparks.
- In a small or large group, work through the steps, pausing to share ideas, make connections and get feedback.
- Encourage cross-grade or cross-role collaboration. Invite educators from different grade levels or roles (counselors, specialists) to engage with the tool together. This can enrich the planning process with multiple perspectives and deepen the alignment of Transformative SEL practices across the school.
- Document and share examples. As teachers create and refine their Lesson Sparks, consider collecting a few to share in future sessions. This can create a cycle of learning and celebration, while offering inspiration to others.

Adapt the Teacher’s Guide Content for Extended Professional Learning

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The Teacher’s Guides are rich resources that build knowledge around the Transformative SEL guiding principles, a continuum of transformation, Signature Practices, standard crosswalks, and lesson sparks. Choose a topic from the Teacher’s Guide and select the activities and resources that best fit your learning goals and the needs of your audience. For instance, you might have participants read the Guiding Principles section and then use Step 1 of the Lesson Spark Tool. Or, have everyone read the Continuum of Transformation and work through Step 2 of the Lesson Spark Tool. You can choose which content to prioritize for the needs of your professional learning experience.