TOOL: 12 Strategies for Adult SEL Facilitation

1. Intentionally plan for both content and connections.
Keep in mind, along with the content one intends to convey, the social and emotional goals that are most important to focus on for this engagement. Build in time for personal reflection, for anchoring new ideas and feelings through partner, small group, and whole group discussions. Plan for multiple opportunities for an emotional engagement with the material and with other participants.

2. Be prepared to be present.
What isn't done when the first participant arrives can perhaps be done without. Preparing materials and the environment ahead is every facilitator's goal. Along with that, plan for a window of time, even a minute or two, in which to ground yourself in your own hopes for the engagement. Take a few moments with yourself and/or your co-facilitator(s) to feel and express gratitude, cultivate a sense of calm and purpose, and anchor your confidence.

Mindful facilitation includes an awareness of our inner self-regulation and calming techniques. Choose a mindful cue that brings you to full presence, and intentionally return to it as needed throughout the engagement. (The cue is an external reminder, such as when you look at the clock or when there are periods of group silence, which is always a reminder to re-focus, breathe, and become again fully present.)

3. Use a 'third thing'.
Thought leaders in our field, such as Parker Palmer, encourage the use of artifacts for opening dialogue. Poetry, a professional article, a song…materials with the potential to be the catalyst for deep thinking and conversation, provide a starting place for engaging interactions outside of the individual and build connections within the group through the shared experience.

4. Include reflection time throughout and at the end.
Both formative and summative periods of reflection are valuable. Whatever feedback or evaluation tool you use at the end of the engagement may be fed by providing times throughout the participant's experience to pause and gather their thoughts. Providing even a minute or two of quiet space to anchor and reflect on new learning, on current questions or concerns, on feelings that are arising, on internal connections that are being made to other work, situations, or ideas can help participants capture or release those thoughts and feelings. It can be fruitful to build in reflection opportunities for private think time, writing, and verbalizing thoughts to other(s), since each mode will feel effective to different people, and to an individual at any given time.

5. Sharpen and maintain your Equity Lens.
As Paul Gorski writes, "We must recognize, respond to and redress inequity…and become better advocates for our most disenfranchised students." As we build PD engagements, what questions do we need to reflect on for ourselves, and for/with our participants, to assure that our actions match our intentions? It is our responsibility to continuously be ensuring that no one is viewed through the lens of "A Single Story."

6. Vary groupings to keep things fresh and fluid.
Interactive processing strategies are vital for many people to fully grasp and own the content that facilitators provide through direct instruction (lecture, 'talking head'). In designing an engagement of any length of time, consider where participants can be encouraged to think and connect within

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themselves (through private reflection and writing), and with others through partner talk, small group and/or whole group sharing.

The value of opportunities for physical movement cannot be overstated. Building in brief opportunities to move their bodies provides participants the chance to refresh, reenergize and refocus their attention. Our brains love movement!

- Turn to Your Partner: *"We're going to take one minute each to share with another person about xxx. Please stand, find someone near you to partner with, and xxx. As soon as you see/hear (-established attention signal-), please thank your partner for sharing and return to your seat.*
- Agree/Disagree/Neutral
- Activity: Four Corners
- Walk-and-Talk content discussions with annotated text and guiding questions

7. Ground content and process with storytelling.
Authentic insertions of our own stories takes advantage of the human hardwiring that desires connection. Telling a brief and well-aligned story that illuminates the content at hand supports participants in connecting more fully with the material, and with you as the facilitator. Participants may 'see' themselves, a student, a colleague, and/or a previous interpersonal or work experience in your story. That recognition may anchor your intended outcomes in a way that helps them access it again, outside of this particular engagement.

8. Differentiate as much as possible.
Varying content and process based on the participants' background, knowledge, interest and own intended audience for the material to be learned is an enormous challenge for facilitators. Infusing opportunities for choice (*which article excerpt to read; choosing own partner for a given activity, methods of responding…)* may help participates feel seen and valued for where they are currently located in the work.

Initially and throughout, verbalizing respect and appreciation for the expertise in the room, and overtly asking participants to actively work toward their own personal growth. *"Some of you have seen this (video, article, dataset) before. We encourage you to look with fresh eyes, to notice and make new connections, to be open to the nuances that multiple encounters provide…"*

9. Leverage pacing and varieties of engaging strategies for full attention.
The same basic rule applies with adults as youth – our brains crave both the freshness of variety and the safety of routine. Chunk facilitator delivery of content with interactive activities, brain breaks and multi-sensory strategies. As you design your adult learning engagement, consider 15 minutes as a maximum amount of time before shifting participation modality: listening, reading, having voice, reflecting, moving…

Develop your own set of engagement rituals that increase the likelihood that information and ideas will be added to long-term learning and practice. Cultivate a collection of brief activities that soothe and that stimulate, and weave them in as you plan to provide the breaks we need to anchor experiences and understandings into long-term memory. (*conscious breathing, nature break, communal 'mental step away, short energizers)*

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TOOL: 12 Strategies for Adult SEL Facilitation – Professional Development Reflection

10. If you run short on time, consider removing rather than truncating.
During the facilitation, if you are running short on time, do less of what you had planned. Facilitate what you decide to keep in as deeply as you had originally planned to do it. When culling down, consider what learners will apply and recall after the session, along with their emotional resonance.

The group does not necessarily need to know that you are eliminating activities. Avoid engaging participants in the realization that you planned more than there was time for by not verbalizing the changes in your plan, and by eliminating 'hurry' language such as *"Let's spend just a minute on this…' or 'We're going to just skim through this…"* This language can be a distraction for participants, and can affect their ability and willingness to stay focused.

You might choose to celebrate at the closing that you have saved great activities for next session, or you may prefer to celebrate that privately with your co-facilitators later!

11. The debrief holds the deepest learning.
A basic tenet of adult learning is that we learn as much or more from reflecting on our experiences as we do from the experience itself. Thoughtful debriefing, whether minimal or extensive, provides participants the processing time needed to integrate new learning and increases the chances that they will own it, care about it, and carry it into future practice.

12. The Power of Before and After
Before the facilitation, engage your participants by clarifying the purpose of the upcoming workshop; building a positive mindset about the content to be shared; and/or thoughtfully establishing an inclusive culture of learning and collaboration. It may make sense to have prospective participants take a survey, read an article, gather student work samples, or bring an artifact that will be incorporated into an activity.

It's always helpful for participants to know the logistics and to be reminded of them in a welcoming email just prior to the engagement. Location, start & end times, what to wear, lunch.

Always extend the session by sending a follow-up email within 48 hours, expressing appreciation and promoting action by the participants. You might include additional resources related to the content (article, web link, bibliography…), along with any work products generated during the session, reminders of intentions/action steps, due dates, and a connection to the next session / meeting. Even if simply expressed as "Looking forward to seeing you again on ___", solidifying the connections made during the event, and reminding them that you appreciate their participation – and that the work will continue.

Compiling and sharing participant feedback and your related thoughts with them within 48 hours reminds participants that you are serious about your joint work and that you value their input.

Bottom Line and Continual Touchstone:
What moves their hearts?
What moves their thinking?
What moves them to action?

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Content Goals

Reflect on the mission and role of Professional Learning facilitators
Explore concrete skills for facilitating effective SEL-embedded professional learning

SEL Goals

All participants are engaged as learners and constructors of knowledge
Participants enjoy the collaboration and want to learn more

Time	CONTENT	SEL Strategies	Materials and Handouts
15 min	Introduce the "12 Strategies for Adult SEL Facilitation" article. Please silently read, highlight and annotate with the symbols below to be ready for partner discussions. **Symbols** **Δ** 2-3 Learnings or Things to Develop **?** 1-3 Questions or Want More Information About **!** 1-3 that really resonated as valuable for my facilitation; I identify with & LIKE this! **Think about:** What are possible roadblocks to achieving each of these for me? Strategies for removing roadblocks?	Reflection Think & Ink Forming Opinions about Content	12 Strategies for Adult SEL Facilitation Article handout Highlighters
10 min	Depending on your group, use a partnering strategy (e.g. playing cards or matching puzzle pieces) or invite them to "find a partner" for a one-on-one discussion. Consider having Partner A have three full minutes to talk while Partner B listens without comment. Then switch roles after bringing the room to silence. Finally, give three minutes for open conversation between the two partners.	Partner Conversation	
12 min	2 sets of Partners pair to discuss highlights and formulate input for Whole Group sharing: One Learning and One Question (from each Quad)	Small group sharing	
8 min	Whole Group facilitated sharing. Record on Wall Post-its (for future use). Spokesperson from each quad shares aloud the Learning and the Question they are bringing to the group.	Public Charting	Wall Post-its Labeled "Our Learnings" and "Our Questions"

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