Welcoming Rituals

A welcoming ritual sends a clear message to students that the day has begun. The opening, or greeting, ritual also helps students make a peaceful transition from whatever they were doing at home, on the bus, or on the playground to what they will be doing in the classroom by creating a clear boundary between home and school or between lunchtime and lesson time (http://peacefirst.org/digitalactivitycenter/).

Examples include:
- Smile and greet each person by name
- Classroom (morning) meetings
- Whole-group greeting activities
- Interactive “do-nows” like peer to peer homework help

Classroom Meetings

The purpose of classroom meetings is to help meet the developmental needs of all K-12 students for relationships (sense of belonging/connectedness), competence (feelings of significance in the group), autonomy (independence), and fun (joy of learning). Classroom meetings are:

- An inclusive, proactive and community-building approach for promoting the well-being of all students and preventing and/or reducing negative outcomes for students.
- Operated on a set of student and teacher generated norms of behavior.
- Facilitated by teachers or another adult at the beginning of each school day or class period and can last 2 to 10 minutes. Once your class gets used to doing classroom meetings, students can play the leading role in facilitating them.

Classroom meetings may include planning and problem solving activities, social/emotional skills development, development of study habits, college & career planning, and individual support/guidance. Academics may also be integrated into classroom meetings. Reflection is a regular part of classroom meetings and helps improve outcomes for all. We want to learn from the past so we can help each other to do better in the future.

Classroom meetings are held in a circle format with four basic components:

**Greetings** - students greet and welcome each other

**Sharing** - students share information about themselves

**Activity** – student do an activity together

**News & announcements** - brief overview of the day’s activities

Activity Resources

http://peacefirst.org/digitalactivitycenter/

https://mnliteracy.org/sites/default/files/gamesactivitiesbook_0.pdf

Suggested Models for Classroom Meetings

Basic Model
• Breathing Exercise
• Greeting
• Sharing
• Group Activity
• News & Announcements
• Breathing Exercise

Specialized Model #1 – Problem Solving
• Breathing Exercise
• Greeting
• Problem-Solving Meeting
• News & Announcements
• Breathing Exercise

Specialized Model #2 - CCR
• Breathing Exercise
• Greeting
• College/Career Preparation Activity
• News & Announcements
• Breathing Exercise

Specialized Model #3 – Social Skills
• Breathing Exercise
• Greeting
• Social skills Development
• News & Announcements
• Breathing Exercise

Adapted from Cleveland Metropolitan School District

Schools that are currently implementing RP can utilize the model detailed above while conducting daily circles. The goal of the proactive circle is to build community and relationships which aligns with the purpose of the class meetings.
**Sample Welcoming Ritual Activities**

**NAME AND MOTION**
Time Needed: 10 minutes

Participants gather in a circle to learn each other’s names and share an activity they enjoy.

**When and why:**
Use this activity when a new group is coming together. It will help participants learn names and get to know one another - a great way to begin building relationships.

**SEL Focus:**
This activity focuses on both **Self-Awareness**, as participants need to create a gesture relating to an activity they enjoy, and **Relationship Skills**, through participation and positive interactions.

**Steps:**
1. Explain that the purpose of the activity is to learn names and get to know each other.
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, adding their own name and gesture.
4. Model with your name and motion of your own, e.g., "I'm Ms. Jones 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 his name and mimicking his motion.
6. If someone can't remember a name or motion, invite him/her to ask a peer for help and thank that person for their help.
7. Debrief by asking:
   - “Why is important to know each other’s names?
   - What was it like to participate?
   - Were there any surprises?
   - What is something several people in the group had in common?”

*Adapted from the Oakland Unified School District’s Three Signature SEL Practices Playbook*
SYNECTICS
Time Needed: 8 - 10 minutes

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 and establishes readiness for further exploration of the topic.

SEL Focus:
Synectics allows the group to focus its energy on a topic concept in a low-risk way in which all voices are included, particularly supporting the development of Self-Awareness, Self-Management, and Social Awareness skills.

Steps:
1. Project an image on a screen, or supply a picture card on each table.
2. Explain that the task is to complete the sentence stem: "This [topic] is like this [image] because..."
Participants generate and record as many comparisons between the image displayed and the topic presented as possible in 1-2 minutes. They can do this either individually, or in small groups.
3. If done individually, participants review their brainstorm 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.
4. If done as a group, after brainstorming, invite each group to work together to choose one comparison to share out loud to the whole group.
FOUR CORNERS

Time Needed: 5 - 15 minutes

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

When and why:
This activity is helpful in promoting the importance of divergent perspectives, and the value of having all voices heard and seen. Participants have the opportunity to connect in alliance 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 Responsible Decision Making, as they choose and discuss their “corner” choice. They will also be using Social Awareness skills as they listen and process each other’s choices.

Steps:
1. Before the activity, mark 4-5 "corners" 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 the 4-5 response choices with the group, using a poster or slide.
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, and to share what drew them to that choice.
5. Invite 2-3 participants to share their choice and rationale with the whole group. (If time, you might invite one person from each group to share.) 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.
6. 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.
MIX & MINGLE
Time Needed: 5 - 10 minutes

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 Social Awareness and Relationship Skills as participants share their ideas and actively listen to divergent perspectives.

Steps:
1. On a card or half-sheet of paper, ask participants to write down a response to a prompt you give that is related to the topic at hand.
2. When you announce, "Mix and mingle!" and turn on music, participants should stand up and move around the room.
3. When the music stops, participants should find a partner near them. Help with pairing if necessary.
4. Partners share their responses, listen actively to each other, and ask follow up questions.
5. Debrief by asking:
   - What were some of the things you appreciated about doing this activity?
   - What was challenging about it?
   - What SEL skills did you use?
   - What might be done differently next time?"

Adapted from the Oakland Unified School District’s Three Signature SEL Practices Playbook