



STAFF MEETING RITUALS THAT BUILD TRUST AND COMMUNITY

"Trust is the lubrication that makes it possible for organizations to work."

—Warren Bennis

OVERVIEW

This practice offers opening and closing prompts for building trust and community among staff at meetings.

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- At the beginning and end of staff meetings
- To build a cohesive staff
- Before tackling a challenging topic with staff members

TIME REQUIRED

- 5-10 minutes

LEVEL

- Adult

MATERIALS

- None

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Participants will:

- Foster interpersonal and group trust through opening and closing meeting rituals

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Social Awareness
- Relationship Skills

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

Before starting the meeting, take a moment to take a few deep breaths and check in with yourself about how you're feeling. Then, call to mind something you're looking forward to. Does this brief moment of taking care of yourself give you a more positive outlook towards the upcoming meeting?

INSTRUCTIONS

- **At the beginning of the meeting:** Choose either a community building activity or a check-in statement from the list below as a welcoming ritual to open a meeting.
 - *Community building:*
 - Choose an open-ended question, such as "What is something you are good at and why?", "What would constitute a perfect day for you?", or "What kindness has a friend or colleague shown you recently?" Here are some of our favorite sources for questions:
 - Greater Good In Action "[36 Questions to Increase Closeness](#)"
 - [52 Essential Conversations Cards](#)
 - [Fetzer Conversation Cards](#)
 - [We Connect](#) conversation starters
 - Have participants share their response with a partner.
 - After sharing, ask for two to three comments from the whole group.
 - *Check-in:*
 - Begin with a sentence starter. Here are some suggestions:
 - "A success I recently had was _____"
 - "One thing that's new about _____"
 - "One norm I will hold today is _____"
- **At the end of the meeting:** Close with an optimistic closure.
 - Have participants reflect on a question and then name something that helps them leave on an optimistic note, such as celebrating a student's success or acknowledging the good work of a staff member or highlighting the progress being made on a challenging issue.
 - Examples of reflective questions:
 - "What are my next steps?"

- "What's the next conversation I'm going to have about this and with whom?"
- "Who do I want to connect with about this topic?"
- "A word or phrase that reflects how I feel about moving forward with this..."
- Offer an appreciation for someone in the room.
- "I'm eager to learn more about..."

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

Do you notice a shift in how connected staff members feel to each other during the school day and/or at subsequent meetings?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

A study of reform efforts in 12 Chicago schools found that enabling positive, [trusting relationships](#) among staff members, including the leadership, were at the heart of school improvement.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Trusting relationships among the adults in a school form the foundation of a safe and caring school climate. In order to build trust, research suggests several [key facets](#) must be present between people, such as a willingness to be vulnerable, holding benevolent intentions towards others, and being open with information. Surfacing shared values and finding ways in which diverse groups of people are alike can also help cultivate trust.

Meeting rituals can help cultivate these relationships by providing a supportive structure in which adults can share honest, personal thoughts, feelings, and ideas with each other.

SOURCE

Adapted from an activity created by [Oakland Unified School District's Department of Social-Emotional Learning and Leadership](#).