

Facilitation Guide: *Implementing Neutralizing Routines*

Introduction

This facilitation guide accompanies the **Implementing Neutralizing Routines** professional learning session. The purpose of this session is to support K-12 educators in using intentional alternative responses during vulnerable decision points (VDPs), which are in-the-moment quick decisions more likely to be affected by implicit bias. Neutralizing Routines help educators pause and interrupt knee-jerk reactions, creating space between a student's behavior and our response, and allowing them to remain instructional and consistent.

When educators use neutralizing routines, automatic interpretations driving punitive disciplines are interrupted and improvements in discipline outcomes for all students and students who experience more frequent removal from instruction are seen (Cook et al., 2018, Romano, 2024). This practice seems to support improved student engagement in learning, feelings of connection and belonging, student-teacher relationship a more positive school climate, and higher-quality instruction (Cook et al., 2018; Gregory et al., 2016; McIntosh et al., 2018; McIntosh, Girvan, Fairbanks Falcon, et al., 2021; McIntosh, Girvan, McDaniel, et al., 2021; Mossing et al., 2025; Payno-Simmons, 2021).

By intentionally partnering with families, integrating culturally sustaining approaches, and implementing safe and inclusive practices, educators can intentionally implement this and other practices to create classrooms where all students thrive (Payno-Simmons, 2021; Riddle, 2014; Santiago-Rosario et al., 2022).

This session invites educators to:

- Reflect on their current practices and assumptions.
- See practical examples and consider implementation strategies.
- Examine active ingredients of effective implementation.
- Develop an actionable plan using a plan–do–check–reflect approach.

The professional learning session is built around a **25 minute video presentation**. The facilitation guide is designed to **intentionally extend the learning**, *with structured pauses, reflection prompts, and discussion activities* that can **adapt to your available professional development time**, allowing for deeper engagement depending on your context. These activities help make the learning active, collaborative, and directly applicable to participants' classrooms.

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By the end of this professional learning, participants will have identified one or more actionable steps they can take immediately to strengthen their specific and culturally responsive praise, fostering strong positive relationships, as well as inclusive and academically engaging learning environments.

	Key Content	Activity	Facilitator Notes
<p>Intro (Before Video)</p>	<p>Intro & Purpose</p> <p>Remind staff of their progress in PD series, and intro today’s focus on implementing neutralizing routines, and VDPs as the context for neutralizing routines.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For participants who attended the previous session on Identifying Vulnerable and Equitable Decision Points, this activity serves as a reminder and reactivation of the VDP(s) they already identified. For participants who did not attend or have not yet viewed the Focus Practice 10 session, this reflection provides a quick entry point so they can still meaningfully engage in today’s learning. 	<p>Reflect (Quick Write)</p> <p>Think about your classroom. Write down 1 – 2 moments where your response feels quick or tense, and 1 moment where your response feels instructional and fair.</p> <p>Optional prompt for returning participants: Revisit a VDP you identified previously. Does it still feel challenging?</p>	<p>Facilitate</p> <p>Encourage participants to jot 1–3 examples. Emphasize that this is a working entry point, not full analysis. Validate participants whether or not they attended the prior session.</p>
<p>Pause after Slide 3</p> <p>(If this is the group’s first skill-building session of</p>	<p>Intentional Inputs</p> <p>Collaborative partnership, culturally</p>	<p>View, Reflect, & Discuss</p> <p>Watch/read the “Kickoff” <u>video/transcript</u> excerpt, note two “aha” moments</p>	<p>Facilitate</p> <p>Prompt participants to identify why each “aha” stood out, relate it each</p>

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the series, consider engaging in this item. Otherwise, feel free to skip it.)	sustaining approach, and inclusive and safe spaces	and why they stood out, share in triads, and discuss as a whole group why these intentional inputs matter.	intentional input and share concrete examples in triads before discussing as a whole group.
Pause after Slide 9	Interrupt the Chain Neutralizing routines interrupt adult reactions	Think-Draw-Share Participants sketch a simple “before” and “after” chain of events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Typical response chain - Interrupted chain using a neutralizing routine Prompt: “Where does the routine interrupt the chain?”	Facilitate Keep this fast and low stakes. Focus feedback on the <i>interruption point</i> , not on student behavior or consequences.
Pause after Slide 12	Adult Modeling as Instruction Neutralizing routines model regulation and strategy use	Think and Pair Prompt: “What thinking or regulation skill are students observing when an adult uses a neutralizing routine?” Optional share: Consider academic vs. social situations	Facilitate Reinforce that adult use is not just management, it is visible modeling of metacognition and self-regulation.
Pause after Slide 15	Why This Moment? Invite educators to consider how current classroom or school experiences make neutralizing routines a timely and relevant practice	Self-Assess Prompt: “What has happened in your classroom or school that make this work especially relevant right now?”	Facilitate Emphasize choice in sharing. This is about relevance, not disclosure. Normalize both personal and systemic answers.

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<p>Pause after Slide 19</p>	<p>Making the Input Visible</p> <p>Intentional inputs can inform how adults interpret situations and enact neutralizing routines</p>	<p>Reflect:</p> <p>Prompt: “Think about a recent challenging moment. What intentional practices had you already put in place or wished you had put in place to support collaboration, cultural sustainment, or inclusivity and safety before responding?”</p>	<p>Facilitate</p> <p>Emphasize this is about noticing, not selecting or planning yet. Participants may identify gaps or misalignments—frame this as information, not judgment. Keep the focus on adult interpretation and response.</p>
<p>Pause after Slide 28</p>	<p>Improve the Response</p> <p>Build skills in identifying the active features of neutralizing routines by revising non-examples into more effective, instructional responses</p>	<p>Pause & Apply</p> <p>After the non-example ask: “What change would make this an effective neutralizing routine?”</p>	<p>Facilitate</p> <p>This moves participants from recognition to refinement. Emphasize small changes (timing, tone, pause).</p>

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<p>Pause after Slide 30</p>	<p>Design a Neutralizing Routine</p> <p>Neutralizing routines are planned, brief alternative responses used during vulnerable decision points to interrupt the effects of biases and escalation.</p>	<p>Pause & Apply</p> <p>Ask participants to open the Neutralizing Routine Worksheet and complete Pages 3 and 4.</p> <p>Guide them to Page 3: Using the VDP previously identified, brainstorm possible neutralizing routines and check ideas for inclusion of all 5 critical features. Check that the routine adds space between behavior and response and keeps students in instruction.</p> <p>Pair Share (Optional)</p> <p>Partners review each other's routines and respond to two prompts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Would this work in a high-stress moment?</i> <i>2. Which part might need simplifying?</i> 	<p>Facilitate</p> <p>Emphasize that participants are designing a routine they can actually use in the moment, not the "perfect" response. Encourage simplicity and brevity. Circulate to support clarity (e.g., Are the steps short? Is the routine doable under stress?). Avoid suggesting specific routines, this is about personal fit and planned use.</p>

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Pause after Slide 33	<p>Grounding the Practice with Intentional Inputs</p> <p>Intentional inputs shape how neutralizing routines are experienced by students and sustained by adults</p>	<p>Pause & Reflect</p> <p>Ask participants to review the three intentional inputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaborative partnerships - Culturally sustaining practices - Inclusive and safe spaces <p>Prompt: “Which intentional input feels most important to strengthen <i>before</i> implementing your neutralizing routine and why?”</p>	<p>Facilitate</p> <p>Provide time for staff to identify specific action steps. This pause helps participants anchor implementation in conditions. Reinforce the choosing one input is sufficient and intentional</p>
Pause after Slide 32	<p>Plan to Implement</p> <p>Plan to make it a habit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice to fluency • Estimate current rate • Set goal for practice • Plan to increase • Plan to monitor • Plan to celebrate 	<p>Pause & Apply</p> <p>Provide time for staff to identify specific action steps to plan to implement and monitor</p>	<p>Facilitate</p> <p>Prompt previous content (see dot points on left) and support staff in estimating and setting reasonable goal</p>
After Video	<p>Close with Next Steps</p> <p>Recap key messages and describe next steps to support implementation in your context (e.g., share copy of action plan with coach, and share self-collected data with coach or peer at the end of each week)</p>	<p>Closing Commitment</p> <p>Provide additional time to complete the planning document, if needed, and share with peer or coach, if applicable</p>	<p>Facilitate</p> <p>Encourage sharing with a partner or coach (or submitting anonymously) to build accountability</p>

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References

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