

Rules (or not?) to cultivate thriving learning spaces

Newton Public Schools
Thrive25, November 4, 2025

ICE BREAKER

2



Tie

3



Thread

4

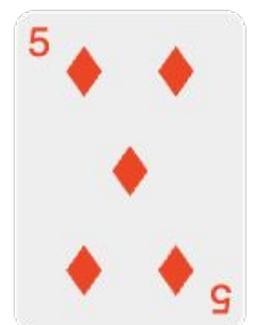
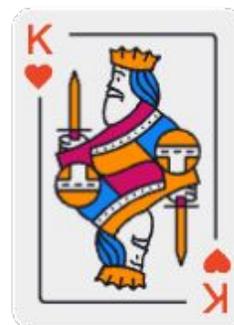
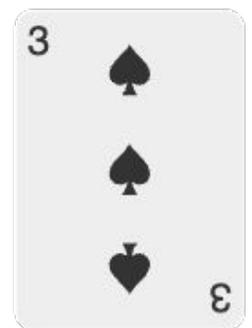
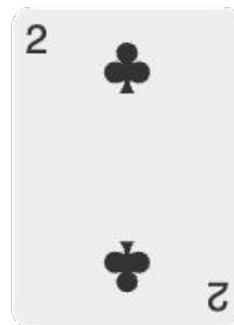


Fit

5



Find



SESSION OUTCOMES

- ❑ engage in a simulation reflecting student challenges.
- ❑ connect experience to student learning practices and NPS portrait of a learner [social emotional] competencies.
- ❑ share strategies to foster learning environments for student discourse, agency, perseverance.

NORMS

This is a place where we can share ideas, successes and struggles with people who understand and can help us improve our practice.

We are all experts and learners

We will listen to understand

We will assume best intentions and own impact

We will be as present as possible with each other

“We cannot direct the wind, but we can adjust the sails! —Dolly Parton”

— Amy C. Edmondson, Right Kind of Wrong: The Science of Failing Well

Rules (or not?) to cultivate thriving learning spaces

Cooperative
Learn 'n Play

Competitive
Play

Collaboration

- Agency
- Discourse
- Perseverance

What it means
for our
classrooms

But first...

There are **four suits** ♠️ ♦️ ♣️ ♥️ (spades, **diamonds**, clubs, **hearts**). These are aces 

Trump = a card or set of cards chosen to win over other cards.

Trick = group or set of cards played and won in a game (all cards played).

Tournament Play Expectations

NO



Words

YES



Pictures Gestures

Overview

Table groups of 4

Read rules
Practice playing
Rules placed back in the folder.

No further talking during tournament.

Timed tournament rounds (~4-5 min); keep score

Regroup according to outcomes

Original groups

Debrief
what it means for our classrooms



Practice Round 0

Read and discuss/clarify the rules.

Create partnerships.

Practice for ~3 - 5 minutes

End of the practice round

Rule sheet will be put away for the tournament

NO FURTHER TALKING UNTIL TOURNAMENT (3 rounds) ENDS



Tournament Round 1

PLAY for five minutes. Play as many hands as possible.

Keep score.

MOVE Partnership with **most tricks** moves **UP** one table #.

Other partnership stays.

NO

Words



YES

Pictures & Gestures



Tournament Round 2

PLAY for five minutes. Play as many hands as possible.

Keep score.

MOVE Partnership with most tricks moves UP one table #.

Other partnership stays.

Switch partnerships for Round 3

NO



Words

YES



Pictures & Gestures



Tournament Round 3

PLAY for five minutes. Play as many hands as possible.

Keep score.

END of Tournament identify winning partnerships.

Return to starting table groups.

NO



Words

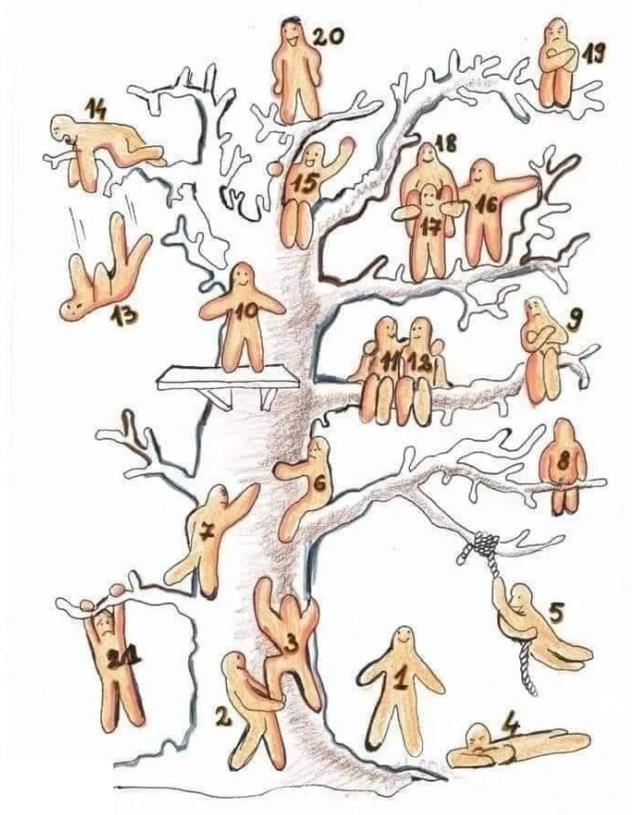
YES



Pictures & Gestures

DEBRIEF

Where are you on the “blob tree” and why?



<https://www.blobtree.com/>

Debrief

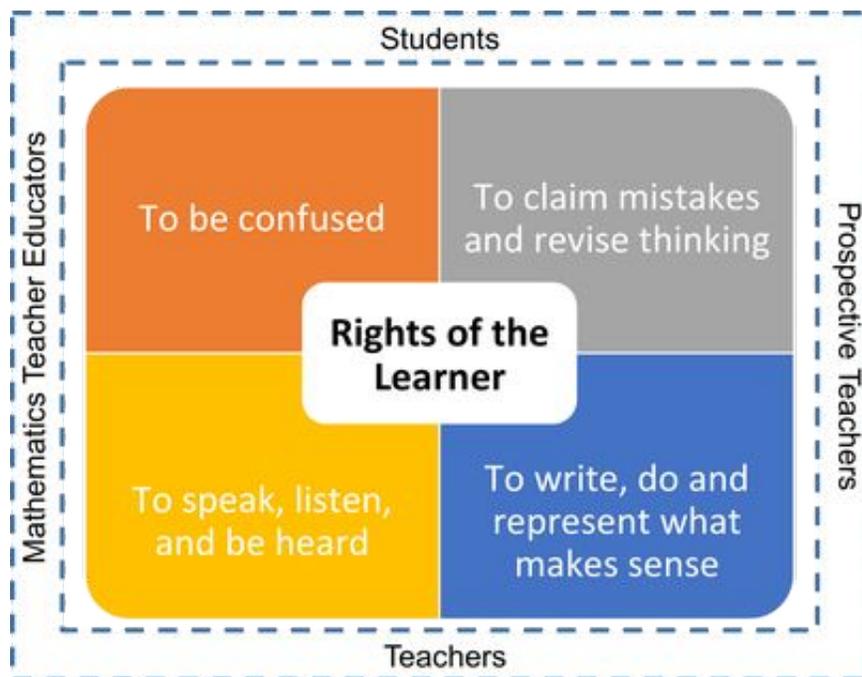
- Back in your starting group
- Reflect individually ~2 minutes
- Group discussion ~2 - 3 minutes
- Whole group share out



- How did you/do you feel?
- What happened and what did you learn?
- How might today's experience relate to student agency, discourse and perseverance?

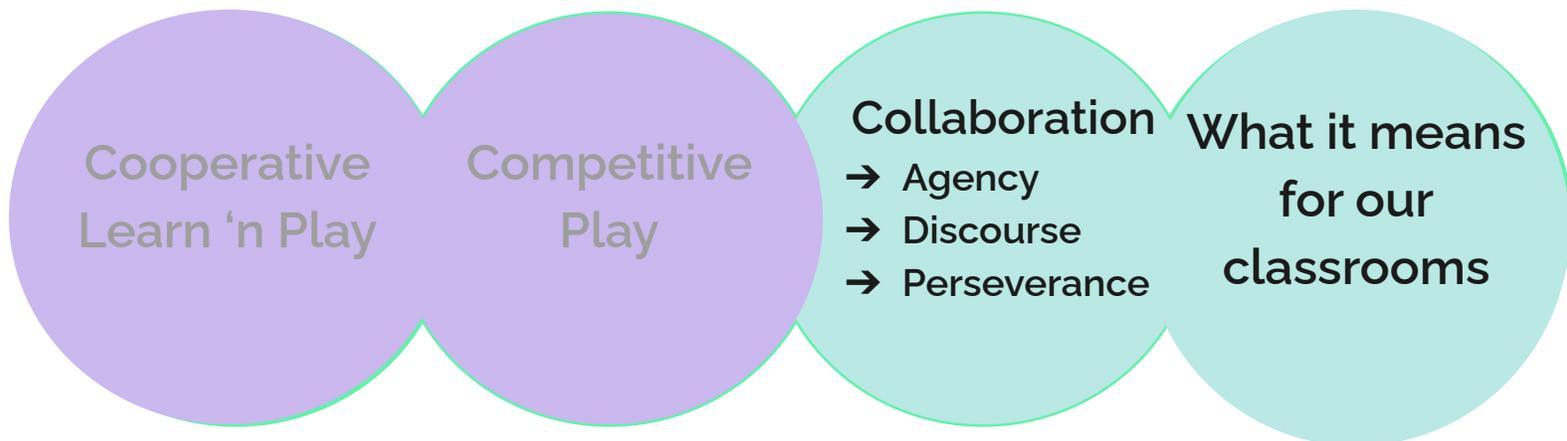


Rights of the Learner



<https://embracinglifewithmajorrevisions.org/2017/07/12/rights-of-the-learner-an-introduction/> and <https://pubs.nctm.org/view/journals/mtlt/113/6/article-p468.xml>

Rules (or not?) to cultivate thriving learning spaces



“Empathy is connecting to the emotions that underpin an experience.”

— Brené Brown Dare to Lead


**NPS Portrait of
a Learner
Competencies**



What are the implications for the learning experiences we provide in our school systems?

NPS Portrait of a Learner: Competencies



Adaptability



Communication



Critical Thinking

Empathy



Learner's Mindset



Student Academic Practices



Critical Thinking



Learner's Mindset

MATH	ELA	STE	HHS	WL

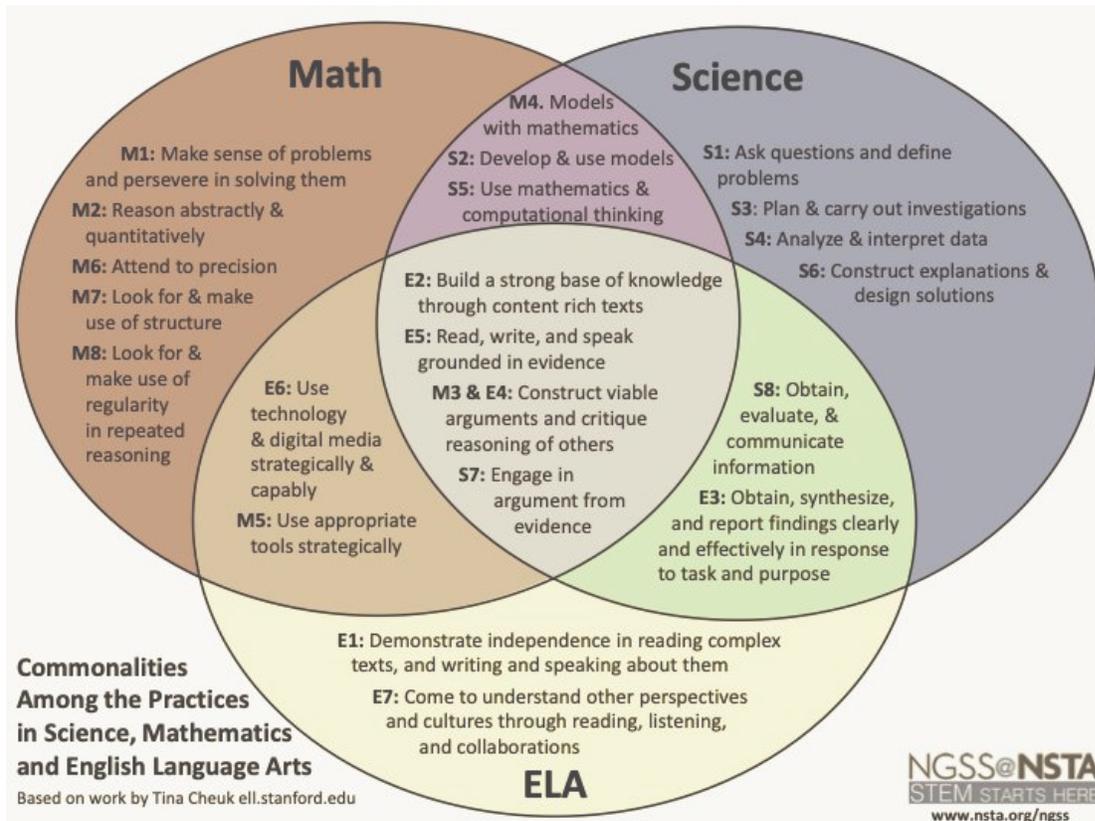
Practices in Math, STE, ELA*

<u>Mathematics</u> p16-18	<u>Science Technology Engineering</u> p98	<u>English Language Arts and Literacy</u> p17-18
<p>M1. Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.</p> <p>M2. Reason abstractly and quantitatively.</p> <p>M3. Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.</p> <p>M4. Model with mathematics.</p> <p>M5. Use appropriate tools strategically.</p> <p>M6. Attend to precision.</p> <p>M7. Look for and make use of structure.</p> <p>M8. Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.</p>	<p>S1. Ask questions and define problems.</p> <p>S2. Develop and use models.</p> <p>S3. Plan and carry out investigations.</p> <p>S4. Analyze and interpret data.</p> <p>S5. Use mathematics, information, computer technology, and computational thinking.</p> <p>S6. Construct explanations and design solutions.</p> <p>S7. Engage in argument from evidence.</p> <p>S8. Obtain, evaluate, and communicate information.</p>	<p>E1. Demonstrate independence.</p> <p>E2. Build strong content knowledge.</p> <p>E3. Respond to the varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline.</p> <p>E4. Comprehend as well as critique.</p> <p>E5. Value evidence.</p> <p>E6. Use technology and digital media strategically and capably.</p> <p>E7. Come to understanding other perspectives and cultures.</p>

The Common Core English Language Arts uses the term "student capacities" rather than the term "practices" used in Common Core Mathematics and the Next Generation Science Standards.

Practices in HSS, WL

<u>History and Social Studies</u> (p22-25)	<u>World Languages</u> (p15-19)
<p>HSS1 Demonstrate civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions.</p> <p>HSS2 Develop focused questions or problem statements and conduct inquiries.</p> <p>HSS3 Organize information and data from multiple primary and secondary sources.</p> <p>HSS4 Analyze the purpose and point of view of each source; distinguish opinion from fact.</p> <p>HSS5 Evaluate the credibility, accuracy, and relevance of each source.</p> <p>HSS6 Argue or explain conclusions, using valid reasoning and evidence.</p> <p>HSS7 Determine next steps and take informed action, as appropriate.</p> <p><small>*The History and Social Science Practice Standards and Content Standards were intentionally designed to be integrated with these Literacy Standards. Effective history and social science instruction unites significant content with strong literacy practices.</small></p>	<p>WL1 Interpretive Communication; Understand, interpret, and analyze.</p> <p>WL2 Interpersonal Communication; Interact and negotiate meaning.</p> <p>WL3 Presentational Communication; Present, inform, explain, persuade and narrate.</p> <p>WL4 Intercultural Communication.</p> <p>WL5 Cultures; cultural competence and understanding..</p> <p>WL6 Comparisons; insight into the nature of language and culture; interact with cultural competence.</p> <p>WL7 Connections; use the language to function in academic and career-related situations.</p> <p>WL8 Communities; Interact and communicate engage and responsibly collaborate with a variety of multilingual communities at home and around the world.</p> <p>WL9 Social and Emotional Well-being skills that are inextricably linked to language and culture acquisition.</p> <p>WL10 Social Justice; Empower students to think and act with critical consciousness.</p>



mAthitations



Adaptability



Communication



Empathy



mAthitations

Discourse  <i>[and Agency]</i>		
M3. Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.	S7. Engage in argument from evidence.	E4. Comprehend as well as critique.
HSS6. Argue or explain conclusions, using valid reasoning and evidence.	WL3. Presentational Communication; Present, inform, explain, persuade and narrate.	
Perseverance  <i>[and Agency]</i>		
M1. Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.	S1. Ask questions and define problems.	E1. Demonstrate independence.
HSS4. Analyze the purpose and point of view of each source; distinguish opinion from fact.	WL1. Interpretive Communication; Understand, interpret, and analyze. WL2. Interpersonal Communication; Interact and negotiate meaning.	

~3 min OYO



MA

STE

ELA

HSS

WL

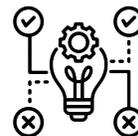
Reflection: sticky note color

In the context of your Barnga experience today,

what structures or strategies in our classrooms support the intersection of student academic practices and NPS PoL competencies?

what adjustments or new opportunities could strengthen student agency in discourse and perseverance?

~5 min OYO



Gallery Walk **no** Talk Post & Ponder

What patterns do **you** see across content areas?

What key tensions or challenges emerge?

What ideas might inspire potential shifts in **your** practice?



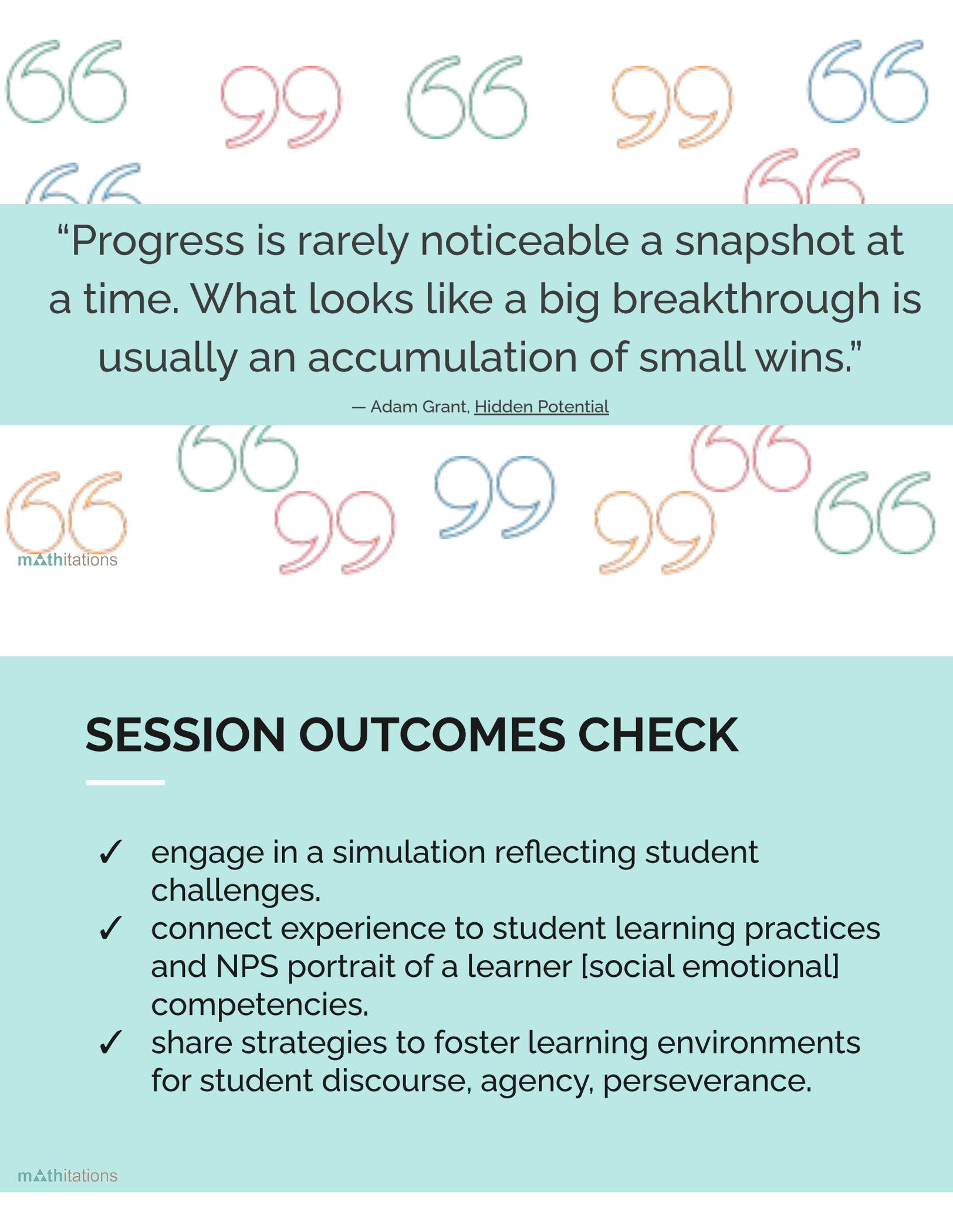
Gallery **Talk**



What patterns do **we** hear/see across content areas?

What key tensions or challenges emerge?

What ideas might inspire potential shifts in **our** practice?



“Progress is rarely noticeable a snapshot at a time. What looks like a big breakthrough is usually an accumulation of small wins.”

— Adam Grant, [Hidden Potential](#)

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Suit Yourself (feedback)



bit.ly/rulesornot



Photo credit <https://unsplash.com/@pkumar26>

m Δ thitations

Think about today's experience and choose what suits you!



Hearts

How did today's session connect for you?



Clubs

What new idea(s) or thought(s) do you have?



Diamonds

What gem(s) of wisdom will you take away?

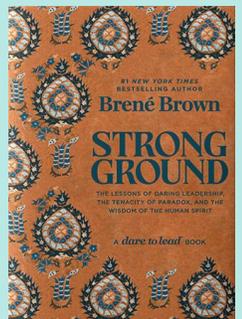


Spades

What do you want to dig deeper into?

“True belonging never asks us to change who we are. True belonging requires us to be who we are.”

— Brené Brown *Strong Ground: The Lessons of Daring Leadership, the Tenacity of Paradox, and the Wisdom of the Human Spirit*



m Δ thitations



Resources

[Bargna book](#) & [pdf's of the rule pages](#)



[U Michigan. Bargna - Inclusive Teaching](#) rules variation

[UDL and SEL](#)

[3 SEL Practices Middle/High School Teachers Can Use Every Day](#)

[Building Students' Metacognitive Toolboxes \(NCTM\).pdf](#)

[Social and Emotional Learning in Massachusetts - Office of Student and Family Support \(SFS\)](#)

DESE MA [SEL math](#)

Math/SEL from [insidemathematics.org](#)

[SEAD](#) Kentucky



Interactive [CASEL wheel](#)



[Breathing exercises SEL • Activity Builder by Desmos](#)

[Sample Teaching Activities to Support Core Competencies of Social and Emotional Learning](#)



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