

# The Power of the Room



*best-practices in online teaching and learning*

Deeper  
Learning

Habla  
Teacher Institute

## BEST PRACTICE

## EXPLANATION

Raise hand/metacognition around practices

Raise your hand if you need more time/if finished. “Peel back the curtain” on the processes in use (ex. This slide deck, corresponding slides to breakout rooms, sharing link to slides in chat, prepping blank slides ahead of time).

Renaming function  
Word cloud function in Mentimeter

As part of a building community activity, practice using the renaming function (i.e. what is a food that describes how you feel today?). Then you can use that function to more easily move into breakout groups. (i.e. put your school at the start of your name). Collect words and phrases on a topic/theme/big idea in a Mentimeter word cloud and show it on the shared screen as it develops. Use a thinking routine (i.e. I/Q) to reflect on what you see.

Pulling one person from breakout back to main room to share new info (cognitive engagement)

When there is a lot of front-loading or new information to share (i.e. a rubric to introduce) but you want to move to work time, send a note to breakout rooms: “please send 1 courageous volunteer back to the main room!” and share the new info in a quick mini-lesson. The person will return to their group to impart their new wisdom on their group. A good way to do informal self-assessment or feedback, if you don’t have time for a formal protocol.

Assign roles  
(someone to highlight thinking)

Make someone’s job to keep quoting gems in the chat. That “highlighter” can be a presenter or student in the class.

Text/Image

“Text and Image” group activity. Groups of 3 people are given a text, their job is to illustrate it using materials provided. There are various shared screens that can be used that each person can annotate, depending on zoom comfort (eg. notability, just the zoom screen, google slides, etc.). Each person must be involved, artistic ability is absolutely not required or expected. At the end, come together as a group and discuss the images produced/what of the text was picked and why.

Gallery Walk Activity using Google Slides

Each breakout room is assigned a specific slide in a deck (using google slides, pear deck, jam board, etc.). Each slide represents each team’s flip chart paper or poster. Depending on the activity, the slide may be pre-formatted, similar to a graphic organizer. After each group captures their work on their slide, everyone does a “gallery walk” by reviewing the entire slide deck, and putting questions/connections/comments in the speaker notes section of the document. In the end, everyone has access to everyone’s “poster” as well as all of the comments.

## BEST PRACTICE

## EXPLANATION

Miro

Using a collaborative tool where people can engage, interact, and create while in breakout rooms. We try to make it very visual - and also with drag-n-drop and whatever we can think of - often starting off with a little game to learn how to navigate Miro. We always put everything from the agenda to the list of participants and supporting resources like videos, etc.

Creating Learning Materials

Creating short videos to chunk out complicated concepts into short concise steps to help participants to learn complicated processes. I usually record videos in Quicktime and upload the videos to Vimeo. Finally, I drop the video links into a Google Doc accompanied by written directions.

Brain Dump

In response to a single prompt or a series of prompts participants use the Mural app and it's post-it to write any thoughts that come into their mind in response to each prompt and place the post-it in the appropriate place under the prompt. When completed participants explain their thinking.

What we have in Common  
Connection & Getting to know you

Random break out rooms of 3-4 participants finding what they have in common around specific themes ie. Family, Music, Food, etc... They decide what "in common" means, they all like it, the all don't like. Only have 5 minutes to complete this. One person from each group shares out to whole group.

The Personal Artifact

Folks bring a physical object (can be on their phone too) into the virtual space to share. Having us ground into something personal and tangible, and sharing that across virtual space can foster a deeper sense of connection.

Total Physical Responses

Using our bodies and moving (younger grades are more game to do this typically) to bring in movement as we respond and engage- and creatively show our thoughts.

## BEST PRACTICE

## EXPLANATION

Polls (in zoom)

Using the integrated feature in zoom to poll the room on various topics, formal or informal. This allows everyone ease of access & the results can be shared in real time. Multiple polls can be created prior to the meeting & initiated at any time throughout the meeting, as you move through content.

Padlet for adding 'Bright Spots' of learning

At the end of each professional learning session, all participants add their 'Bright Spots' from the session. Intention is to end on a positive note, bring something to the front of mind that can be transferred to practice. Padlet also has the option for comments so others can +1 etc and participants have access to between PL sessions to add additional comments, resources etc .

Share out to connect

When joining a meeting have a question formed about (or even unrelated) to the session to get everyone to connect and listen to one another and engage from the beginning. I like to use - 'Say your name and what you are Grateful for.'

Have a co-facilitator monitor the chat

Especially in larger groups, participants are often very engaged in the chat. To keep that engagement going while still facilitating, it's great to have a co-facilitator monitor the chat and respond to questions/comments as they come in.

Intentional Camera Off

Give participants intentional time to turn camera off and focus on a self driven task that they will bring back to the larger group.

Landing Page

Create a Google doc that can be shared with participants as you would an agenda. Each item can be hyperlinked to a resource, video, music or website that will support the session's thinking and learning. Format: meeting link, musical intro, engagement activity (use padlet, jamboard, etc.), essential topic/theme/question, keynote or speaker address, breakout for discussion with a discussion prompt, a whole group report out prompt, exit ticket (use of menti, Google form, etc.).

BEST PRACTICE	EXPLANATION
Opening spaces for different languages (Translanguar) and cultural expressions	I feel that in Zoom we need to make more visible the richness of different languages. Translanguaging has help us open spaces for people to use the language they feel most comfortable with in expressing their stories.
Choose Me!	When: you are introducing a new tool or method and want to engage participants in the modeling. How: at the beginning of your class/session, directly invite a few participants to be the demo learner. Give them their “clue” or assignment and approximately the time of their active role. Now: as you start that portion of the class/session, remind them and let the full cohort know you’ve identified a few demo learners. Then, activate that portion of your learning experience with their involvement. Value: reduces “downtime” or the need to pick from multiple volunteers in quick succession when you can’t easily see everyone “in the room.” You can also provide time for learners to prepare themselves and reduce “front of group” anxiety.
Reflect and Share	Create a space for small breakout room reflection given a specific prompt or question. Jamboard and Mural are two examples of easily accessible spaces to create post it notes etc. Invite a volunteer to report back 2 takeaways to the larger group. Follow up a workshop by sharing these collective mural/jamboard artifacts.
Equal access and Gratchat	For larger scale workshops provide zoom translator to allow for equity of access to the content. (parent education for example) End workshops asking all to share a gratitude for a colleague or someone in their life.
Tech Tools in Advance	When a particular software or tech tool is essential to the workshop, provide a preview/practice assignment to allow Ps to try it out and work out any login challenges in advance. Then, use that activity to kick off the workshop itself. Supports smoother tech use and a common experience for all on the way in.
Community Building/Sharing Activity	Ground ourselves in trust and our common humanity so we can work together towards a productive and meaningful end. Color-Symbol-Image was a great example of this, but overall it is important to provide opportunities for folks to bond and connect with each other in what can otherwise be a very impersonal virtual world. These can be as formal or informal as the situation/group demands.

## BEST PRACTICE

## EXPLANATION

Clear Learning Targets

Having clear learning targets for each sections of the session communicates to the learner/participant what the expectations are during independent, whole group and small group time. Clear learning targets allow for better feedback.

Alternating time for individual and group reflection

Alternating and blending time for individual reflection and (small) group reflection serves learners with a variety of processing modes. Individual reflection before small group discussion can also make group discussion more intentional.

Whiteboarding through Padlet/  
Jamboard/Google Doc/etc.

Finding a way to collaboratively work and co-construct knowledge. This is beneficial for learners who err toward visual representations, but also provides an opportunity to memorialize our work together, promotes equity of voice, and allows folks to fluidly build on each others' thinking.

Create Community Agreements

Have participants take time in the beginning of the session to establish norms that they will use throughout their time together.

Have a Stage Manager for Zoom

If you have the luxury, assign one person to “stage manage” the Zoom learning environment; they can handle assigning folks to break-out rooms, helping folks who show up late or get kicked out of the Zoom room, can play music, etc.

Create Google Doc Task Cards

A Task card that can be easily shared and copied by participants with 1. Clear directions,  
2 A place to engage in the task, and/or 3. Place for participants to take notes.

## BEST PRACTICE

## EXPLANATION

Team teach when possible

To have a young person or practitioner who might have on-the-ground expertise, and can model not having all the answers and to challenge received wisdom.

Music

Music as cue for emotions, transitions, and/or routine building.

Grounding in Emotions

At the beginning of a session or workshop have each person identify 2 emotions they are feeling along with where they feel it in their body. Then do a group breathing exercise of 4 deep inhales, hold for 4, 4 deep exhales. Next twist your body to the left and look over your shoulder, center, twist to the right and look over your shoulder, center, look up at the ceiling, center, look at the floor center.

Group roles

All members in a breakout room have a specific role they are responsible for upholding. Roles are pre-assigned and kept the same for a period of time (several weeks) so that we get familiar with them.

“Give & Go” Breakout rooms

First breakout room session for access & connection (5 min ish), then return to main session for prompts, then go back to same breakout room for “work.” Gives the breakout room members a chance to connect & ensure access first, then reset for deep content, rigorous work, etc. Two short sessions instead of one long one.

Capture Practice/Application  
Using Slides

Use Google Slides to create a “workbook” or “digital portfolio” that participants use to capture their reflections and work. This can be used to support participants in sharing their learning.

## BEST PRACTICE

## EXPLANATION

Facilitation guide

Facilitation guide with clear instructions for whoever is running breakout rooms.

Use of Chat to connect between facilitators

For me is important to connect with others while facilitating in zoom, and also to get a feel of how the experience is going. Real time sharing with everybody involved in putting the experience together, makes a big difference. Also for shout outs!

Clear on Purpose

Continue to define purpose throughout session for participants. What is the purpose of coming together? What can be done through the synchronous session that can not be done alone or in an asynchronous format?

Rate my feeling check-in  
Journaling time

At the beginning of class, students get to rate how they are feeling that day from a scale of 1-5 and share why they are feeling that way. Allowing students to journal what they know about a particular content topic before sharing with group

Check-In Questions

At the beginning of the session, or during extra time, place a get-to-know-you/check-in question on the slide and in the chat. Questions could be: "What is your favorite place to escape to? What's your favorite ice cream flavor?" Great place for others to informally connect with each other while waiting for the session to begin or while waiting on transitions.

Varying structures of synchronous/  
asynchronous/video on/off and being  
transparent about it.

"We are not taking a three minute movement break as we are about to head into breakouts to get our ideas flowing". We are asking that you disconnect from this call for the next thirty minutes to go outside and ... so that we can come back and share with this group". "Please turn off cameras to journal for this activity and turn on your cameras again so we will know you are finished."

## BEST PRACTICE

## EXPLANATION

Music for thinking/writing time

Calming - best when it doesn't have lyrics (hard to write when you want to sing along).

Community agreements  
Balance activities

Create community agreements as a group: Start and end class as one group, use of camera when speaking, participating in class, leading breakout rooms, need for breaks. Mix of synchronous and asynchronous work.

Conversation, Connection +  
Collaboration

Intro Bingo: Use a Google Doc and break it into parts (like 3 x 3 boxes) with questions/statements in each box. Give participants editing rights and have them populate the boxes in 5 min or less. Here's the catch, no one can enter their own name. At least three people (depending on the group size) have to enter names. At the end you can see what participants have in common and what surprises they see. This leads to lots of conversation, connection, and collaboration. Then use breakout rooms to debrief.

Partner Accountability

Pair students up with a partner at the start of the session or course. For all future breakouts, pairs will move together (breakout room could have 2 pairs for 4 students, 3 pairs for 6, etc.) Always knowing they will have a buddy helps build long-term relationships instead of starting over each breakout. Mixing with other pairs helps bring fresh perspective/ideas. In whole class, partners can be attendance and accountability checks!

Emojis to check for understanding

To do a "quick check" for understanding of instructions or concepts, allow/encourage participants to put emojis in the chat.

Display Countdown Clocks/Timers

When possible, provide a visual of how much time participants will have for the activity. Provide time warnings in the chat.

## BEST PRACTICE

## EXPLANATION

Imagine they're fully engaged

It can be disheartening to see so many blank screens. You've got to tell yourself that they are getting everything out .

With Zoom- Same Breakout groups

If you're in zoom, Keep the same breakout groups.

Drinking water

We are constantly losing water when we speak in water vapor. Remind people to have water at their desk, or give folks water hydration breaks. This allows for people to stay more focus if they are well-hydrated.

Google Meet Breakout Room Extension  
by Robert Hudek.

Allows you to tile the breakout rooms & see all of them at once. I make sure to assign one student to share their screen in each breakout room. Attach student work in tabs next to each room. I show my students what I am seeing when they are in a breakout room so they know I'm aware. When students enter their breakout room I ask them to leave the main room. They can either raise their hand, put it in the chat box, or, if I haven't acknowledged them in one minute they come back to the main room to get my attention.

Going over the purpose of a lesson

Students may wonder what's the purpose of any lesson? So I like to start off each lesson, or unit, with why it's meaningful, how it's applicable to everyday life, and how it helps me personally.

Mentimeter

Collecting anonymous response to a question, phrase, and image. There are many other functions available to visualize people's response. There are other many other apps that do similar function.

## BEST PRACTICE

## EXPLANATION

Roles for students  
(could be for people in general)

Give roles to help in navigating you're presentation or classroom to your students or audience. 1. Attendance keeper 2. Timer (give them something fun to shout when notifying you of time) time for break, time for exit tickets, timer for discussions, etc. 3. Class translators 4. Chat narrator letting me know when there are questions in chat if I'm not able to have chats open on my screen or reposting links in the chat. 5. Google Classroom model show class how to navigate google classroom 6. Class Motivator and moderator reports on our class norms and how well we did and what we can improve on.

Many People, One Voice (Meaghan)

Have people read the same meaningful quote or commitment out-loud. I did this on a 400 person Zoom. There's a lag, but it sounds really cool! Make sure it's a truth worth speaking aloud as one voice.

Keep It Moving

The energy in the room changes when students have a break from staring at the screen. If your session or project itself doesn't lend itself to breaks, work them in another way; for example, with minute-to-win-it challenges, movement exercises, or simple scavenger hunts.

Translanguaging

Opening spaces for different languages and cultural expressions, it builds community, opens opportunity to make connections, and makes everyone visible.

Visualization

To harness technology in order for students to explore beyond their known experience in order to develop creativity and critical thinking. Less instruction and more or a painted picture.

Tons of HELP!/co-facilitation

While I'm presenting, my co-facilitator watches the chat and answers the questions there, we have a grad assistant drop in links to the chat/do breakout groups, and another grad assistant screen-shares. Takes the pressure off!

## BEST PRACTICE

## EXPLANATION

Macro.io (app-free)

Adds a few features to Zoom. It tracks talk time amongst the participants (what percentage of time you've been talking relative to everyone else). Helps you know when to step-up vs. step back.

Shout Outs

After an activity have students share in chat or hold up to camera. The instructor can highlight and ask for extra input from students if they would like to expand.

Remind

Repeat goal and intention, over and over. The more it is heard the more it is remembered. Especially with late comers, home distractions and forgetfulness.

Interactive Group Work

Sounds simple, but don't be afraid to do what you would normally do in class (maybe some modifications). Do group discussions, jigsaws, interactive whiteboards. Embrace collaboration and jump in/facilitate like in a normal classroom.

Changing voices, intentional pacing

Plan to share air time, keep things moving at a good clip with some sections short, others longer - like writing punchy paragraphs with mixed sentences!

Use polls throughout the session

Start with fun questions to break the ice and then a set of questions that set the tone. Also a great way to check for understanding.

## BEST PRACTICE

## EXPLANATION

Creating Breakout Rooms Quick

1- Label a topic with a number. Ask participants to rename themselves with that number in front of their name.  
2- Label a topic with a number. Select the option for participants to choose their breakout room with the corresponding number.

Camera on-camera off activity

Participants start with cameras off. Facilitator posts a statement and participants will turn on their camera if it applies to them. Then the facilitator can open up the floor for participants to expand on the idea. Statements can be agree/disagree kind of statements or simply facts about oneself. This activity is a great tool to ensure participants know how to use the functions of the video conferencing platform (camera, muting) and engage all participants.

Set the expectation of non-closure

Zoom sessions are short and don't often leave time for reflection and checks for understanding. And when the session ends, folks are often times left alone or with family. Make sure to let people know that this is OK and expected!

Space for Wonder

Create an "outside of Zoom" collaborative space for sharing questions and provocations, and visit the space intentionally and regularly to explore and reflect on the questions being raised. It's sort of like a "parking lot" or "bike rack" concept for in-person sessions.

Consistent Breakout Rooms.  
If only one mtg, then "give & go"  
(quick & longer)

Consistency in breakout rooms helps participants feel comfortable collaborating. Providing a short breakout room first, then a longer one helps focus attention on access first, then accomplishing, learning, etc. - [Article](#)

Laughter

Find a way to laugh together with students doing whatever project, lesson or task you are doing. Be sure it is not at someone else's expense, but it sure helps ease the stress.

## BEST PRACTICE

## EXPLANATION

Instruction method

Delivery of instruction depends on the age of audience - for example, when teaching a younger audience (students) use straightforward basic language, clear numbered steps, include voice/audio recorded instructions and a visual example. Essentially, ensure it is accessible/understood for students of all capabilities.

Time constraints

Audience needs to know how much time they have to complete tasks so they can budget for life, like going to the bathroom.

Redundancy and leanness.

Have multiples of the same link both on your online platform as well as in shared documents. Keep your programs lean and consistent as far as types of assignments. Have them focus on content and skill building vs. tech surprises.

Laugh a bit about things that are uncontrollable.

Technology is going to crash, we are all new to this.

Model what “collaboration” looks and sounds like.

While teaching high school students, educators may sometimes assume students know how to collaborate. In my experiences, student group work can be more productive when we model and structure what the student expectations are.

Start and end with a share out.

I usually start all of my classes with a quick check in where everyone can share something either with their mic or in the chat. It’s an easy way to help set the tone of the class and get people comfortable with sharing their ideas. I try to close classes with sharing a take-away, learning, or next step as well.

## BEST PRACTICE

## EXPLANATION

Only speaker screens on during whole group share out

If you have a large group in the “general session”, but you want to have folks present as a group, ask everyone to turn off their camera except for those who are presenting. This ensures their cameras show “at the top” of the zoom gallery view.

Mentimeter

Mentimeter is an interactive presentation that mimics the act of writing on the board. The teacher is also single out a comment and ask students to explain. These presentations can also be shared and saved for students. This is especially useful for assessments as students can go back and review what was shared on a given day.

Music

Music serves as a great transition. It gives space for reflection and can serve to convey a message. It is a great way to get students to engage.

Loving Kindness Meditation

Find a comfortable place to relax and sit up straight. Close your eyes and think about a time when you felt completely and wholly loved. Remember what that felt like. (Give people some time to think about this.) Now think about someone who you feel warmly towards and take that feeling of unconditional love and send it to them, enveloping them in that same loving kindness. Repeat with someone you feel neutral towards, and then with someone you have conflict with (take time to spell these out and give people time again.) Finally, take that feeling of love and kindness and send it out to the whole world, emanating from everywhere we are to the rest of the planet.

Cameras on

If there are no technical issues preventing you from doing so, please turn your camera on when speaking.

Close-up cam

If sharing something detailed, set up a second camera to highlight that activity. For example, for gardening activity, showcasing seeds or other small objects in the close-up camera.

## BEST PRACTICE

## EXPLANATION

Rituals

Breathing; 4,7,8; Sketching spirals; Sharing favorite dessert, famous person you have met, favorite summer time thing to do, word at a time proverbs; music for beginning /ending classlike Happy, Thanks-a-Lot (Raffi).

Greet everyone (small group)

In small groups the facilitator/teacher greets/acknowledges every attendee.

Establish co-facilitator roles

Roles such as slide sharer, DJ, chat monitor, Zoom admitter, breakout person, and tech support should be divided among facilitators to allow you to share the load and focus on facilitation.

Listen>Lecture

When you speak you are a match that lights the fuse to get others talking so that you can listen. Your expertise shines more in your ability to build upon what is being said in the moment that relying exclusively on what you've prepared.

Student Tech Crew

Teach a few students in the class the tech tool you want students to use for a given activity or authentic assessment and have them teach it to their peers and then act as your tech crew to support the rest of the students in that activity or project.

Chat directions

Pre-type directions on your facilitation guide which can be dropped into the chat so participants have access after them during breakouts. Use lines to show this is different from just normal chats.

## BEST PRACTICE

## EXPLANATION

Name Recognition

Using people's names when you are sharing their contributions in the chat.

Warm Call

Warm call participants by first asking in private chat if they are willing to share.

Use interactive slides such as PearDeck,  
Slido, etc.

Allow participants to respond to questions in real time, and elevate all voices using a word cloud,  
or other means to show folks' responses.

Slide share

Share your slides with another facilitator in case you get kicked off of Zoom

Turning zoom video off when writing/  
processing - then back on to share

Allows for individuals to process without the feeling of being watched while they write or process.

Choice in ways to engage

Allow participants to chat responses or unmute to share. Also allow participants to choose to read the same article, jigsaw, etc.

## BEST PRACTICE

## EXPLANATION

Co-Facilitation

Having a colleague co-facilitate allows for easy management of tech. One individual is accountable for slides and facilitation and the other for links, breakout rooms, and other tech features.

Closure

End Zoom sessions with Aha's-Appreciations-Apologies to provide of bit of closure.

Being able to see other people's work and ideas while working

Spaces like google slides allow to for people and groups to be working in different slides on the same document, and to be able to see what other people are doing. In a way similar to what happens when sharing a room.

Workbooks

Create slide "workbooks" for longer convening that include protocols and prompts with note-taking space so participants can create a copy and have a place to add their notes/reflections etc... Holds all the info in one space and allows for a level of personal interaction with the content.

Miro

Miro is good for replacing sessions that require group collaboration and sticky notes.

Padlet

You can have breakout groups share their takeaways in Padlet and others comment, like, respond.

## BEST PRACTICE

## EXPLANATION

Modeling

Show everyone what you're doing and walk them through it. Sometimes the digital atmosphere makes it difficult to understand directions, so never hesitate to model what you're doing even if it feels unnecessary.

Conversational Cyphers

Providing the space for participating in the presentation by either speaking and or typing in the chat. As the facilitator you can read the chat comments and that at times makes the person more open to speak. Include a symbol on your slide deck so that participants know that it is time to talk.

Don't be the students that you complain about

Too often adults are apprehensive about participating but will complain when their students don't participate in their classroom. Don't be the one that we will complain about when the session is over :)

Practice what you preach and show mercy

You penalize students who don't have their cameras on and you come to your trainings and don't turn your cameras on.

Stretch breaks

At the start of class, or after class/zoom has gone for a while take 2-5 minute stretch breaks to music.

Asynchronous videos

I share short ( 2 minute) pre- professional learning videos for a welcome and logistics etc. and follow up videos ( 2 - 3 minutes ) to explain the why of the pedagogical moves and how can be transferred to classroom practice. Also create short 'workshop' videos to share a skill that participants can access at any time.

## BEST PRACTICE

## EXPLANATION

Translation Feature

There is a feature that you can turn on that can enable different 'channels' for different languages in zoom.

Ensure access to some set of 'hands-on' materials (scissors, paper, craft sticks).

Ensure that all learners have access to a some set of hands-on materials (for example, distributed through kits or recycling bin scavenger hunts), so that learners can maker or create in order to represent/express themselves and their thinking. This can also allow you to actively build 'design cycles' or other maker-centered approaches into your online lessons/activities/units/curricula.

Zoom as the behind the scenes platform

During a collaboration activity, bring zoom to the background and the collaboration tool to the front. Have participants focus shift from looking at themselves or others to the work in front as it would be if you were standing side by side at a whiteboard.

Use a separate chat for facilitators

I feel that when facilitating is complex to feel the room and its flow.  
Having a separate chat allows for real time shout outs, sharing and feedback.

Consider audio issues when sharing videos/music

Zoom allows you to share 'original sound.' Best to turn that on when sharing videos or music so that the sound is not going through your microphone.

Virtual Background

Use your virtual background to brand your message, use your logo, share an image that states your mood, an image that matches your intended message, an image that sets the pace, tempo and impact of your message.

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