

imagine if

# How do we start each day at Imagine If?

## Community Connection Circle (3C)

Besides the 3R's of reading, writing and 'rithmetic, Imagine If has always included the 3C's to get each learning day off to a great start!

### What are the 3C's? Read on...

Educators everywhere are now discovering the benefits of weaving social-emotional learning activities into the school day by starting with Community Connection Circle each morning. This has been a long-standing tradition at Imagine If. By investing a small amount of time to establish a trusting and respectful learning community, learners feel safe and supported working alongside peers and classmates.



### How do you structure Community Connection Circle?

Community Connection Circle may look a little different from one learning space to the next, and can include a range of activities from 'getting to know you' conversations to themed prompts focused on a specific content area. Typically, however, they often follow a similar pattern that involves a key rhythm for starting the day.

We include these **four components** in Community Connection Circle which, when put together, total about **15 minutes** of active and positive engagement:

## Component 1

### Greeting

You may be familiar with the positive impact of welcoming learners at the door as they arrive which is, again, a long-standing Imagine If tradition. Equally important is allowing learners to spend time greeting each other as they reconnect and prepare for the day. There are many fun ways to invite learners to say 'hello' to each other including handshakes, fist bumps, songs, and chants. The key to greetings is ensuring that every learner feels recognised and seen when the day begins in the learning space.

## Component 2

### Sharing

Sharing is the part of the meeting that allows learners to have their voices heard. This may include a round-robin style Community Connection question of the day, a partner turn and talk, or an opportunity for volunteers to speak what's on their minds. Often, a guiding question is used to prompt reflection or conversation, and this can be related to content in a way that sparks deeper personal or social connection to the curriculum. For example, "Which part of the butterfly life cycle do you think is the most exciting?"

## Component 3

### Activity

The activity is the most open-ended element of the Community Connection Circle, and can be anything from playing a game to singing a song, or dancing together. Whatever the focus, the idea is to allow learners to engage in an active manner before settling in for the day. Activities can be directly related to content or purely for fun, and can also be an opportunity to explore general or emerging social-emotional challenges in the learning space.

## Component 4

### Housekeeping

Many children thrive on predictability, and wrapping up with a review of the day's upcoming schedule is a helpful practice. This is especially true when flow varies based on the bespoke nature of each child's curricula and class rotations, or when special events and assemblies occur, or announcements need to be made.

In addition to reading the schedule out loud, providing some choices for the children each day, sometimes we arrange a visual schedule for some learners to track throughout the day. This can include subject words, subject area icons, or pictures of the educators they will see throughout the day. In addition to these basic components, sometimes we close the Community Connection Circle with a ritual, such as a class chant or cheer to underscore the sense of community and develop class pride. We have a simple Imagine If chant that is a positive affirmation for the day!

## What are the Educator's responsibilities during Community Connection Circle?

Depending on the learners' academic and social-emotional age, many activities can be led by learners, allowing for a greater sense of agency and investment in learning space function and community.

As is often a best practice, the educator's role in a Community Connection Circle is largely that of the facilitator, and they are always available to answer questions and play the games as an active participant.

Sometimes we choose to rotate a learner of the day to select the specifics of which greeting will be used, or to read off the schedule to peers and classmates.



## Setting the stage for Community Connection Circles

Making the time and space for class gatherings pays off in the long run when learners feel safe and connected as a community of learners. Community Connection Circles are always set up by the Educators to set the stage with patience and intention. It takes time for learners to settle into the routine, and to get used to the rhythm and flow of learning at Imagine If. We set out clear expectations for learning and teamwork.

Most importantly, this is a time for all Imagine If learners to feel seen, heard, and present together. This practice sets the day off to a great start and never fails to inspire more cooperation and collaboration throughout the day!