

# Primary Uplift 5 SEL Practices for Turbulent Times

## Introduction

If scholars are exposed to the national news at home, they will undoubtedly see images of the insurrection on January 6 at the capitol building. Reliable news reports state that there are plans for both peaceful protests and violent riots on Inauguration Day, Tuesday January 20, 2020.

We hope that the police and FBI will be able to prevent any violent acts from occurring, however we may want to prepare ourselves as the caretakers of children to address the events next week.

This is a guide on how to use the Uplift 5 SEL Practices during the school day to prepare for and respond to news of dangerous and violent adult behavior.

**Before** you meet with students you need to use the Uplift 5 SEL Practices to get yourself in the best place to address their concerns.

**Start with greeting another teacher or staff person before you meet with scholars.** Finding a connection to another person and acknowledging that we are in a delicate situation will remind you that you are not alone

**Conduct an emotion check in before class.** Settle into a chair, take a deep breath and assess how you are feeling. If you find you are in a place that is not conducive to being calm and genuine with scholars, then start a mindful moment.

**Take a mindful moment to get into the present.** You need to help settle your nervous system by becoming still and breathing deeply. This will remind your body that you are currently safe and in control. Use the [Smiling Minds](#) app or the Breathe APP [Breathe-1-minute-meditation APP for Iphone](#) with 4-7-8 breathing, or your choice of quick meditation. Remember that mindfulness is about being present, positive and non-judgmental. You can do this! You are the right person for these scholars right now!

**Time with Scholars** should include all Uplift 5 SEL practices.

**Your Warm Greeting should be calm and genuine.** Model for the scholars that you are curious about what is going on in the country, that you are following events carefully and that you can assure the class that everyone is safe right now. By taking a calm and reassuring tone, we let scholars know that current events are important to us, but that our work will carry on.

**Allow time for the Emotion Check In.** If students bring up concerns surrounding the insurrection on January 6 or the inauguration, then take time to address the topic, but be sure to lead the scholars lead the conversation. (See Teaching Tolerance Let's Talk Guide below.)

If students are expressing concern, keep an eye on stress levels and use calming yoga exercises for **movement breaks**. [Pure Edge Brain Breaks](#)

Remind scholars that we know how to calm ourselves and how to be focused, kind, and open by doing a **Mindfulness practice**. <https://pureedgeinc.org/curriculum/>

Be sure to conduct an **optimistic closing** at the end of the day. You might ask if scholars' families watch a lot of news and help them to anticipate what might be on the news, i.e. confusing images of police, protesters, and violence. Remind them that the photographs and videos on TV tell only part of the story, usually the parts that seem most exciting, and that there are caring adults who are working to restore peace and keep young people safe. These caring calm adults are rarely shown on TV because it isn't considered exciting to most viewers. There are lots of memes that illustrate this point like the popular "apple in the mirror" meme.



**After** scholars depart, check back in with another teacher or staff person. Take a few minutes to share how your class went and what was discussed. By briefly sharing your experience, you will be able to leave it at work and focus on your personal needs when you get home. Share at least one thing positive that happened for your **Optimistic Closing**. Remember that you are not alone, we are in this together.

If you are looking for more ways to facilitate conversations with your students, check Beyond the Spotlight [Resources-for-teachers-on-the-days-after-the-attack-on-the-US-capitol/](#)

This is an excerpt from Teaching Tolerance Let's Talk Guide, Jan 2020 on page 33.

[Teaching Tolerance - 44 page guide to leading tough conversations](#)

## **ENCOURAGING OPENNESS** – how to lead a discussion for primary scholars

### **FOCUS ON UNDERSTANDING, NOT PERSUASION.**

Take the role of listener, mediator and prompter rather than evaluator, judge or interpreter. Neutral phrases like, "Please tell us more about that," and questions like, "What experiences have led you to this conclusion?" can encourage students to explain further without feeling defensive.

### **MODEL CONTRIBUTING AND LISTENING.**

Model openness by sharing some of your own experiences. If you feel comfortable doing this, it can be a really great way to build connections in your classroom. Model active listening skills for students, using phrases like, "What I heard you say is ..."

### **KEEP THE DISCUSSION STUDENT-CENTERED.**

Avoid lecturing students, even if you disagree with their claims. Instead, look for ways to make space for students to engage with one another.

**GET COMFORTABLE WITH SILENCE.**

Often, in an attempt to make students more comfortable, educators will jump in to fill silences during critical conversations. But these pauses give students a moment or two to reflect and consider what they want to say next.

**MAKE SPACE FOR IMPERSONAL CONTRIBUTIONS.**

Create opportunities for students to contribute comments that aren't too personal. Ask questions that clarify or expand ideas and allow quieter students an opportunity to join in without volunteering anything too personal. You might try questions like, "Where do the assumptions or ideas about this topic come from?"

**Closing**

You are a special person who has chosen a special line of work. You deserve well-being. Reach out to friends, turn off the news 30 minutes before bedtime so you can unwind, find gratitude and BREATHE to regulate your nervous system. We care about you.