

eeFacilitator Best Practices

Use name tags and do your best to learn participants' names as quickly as possible. It is much more effective to call someone by their name.

Teach, don't preach! Always treat your participants like the adults and professionals they are. Never attempt to tell them how to teach or what to teach. Encourage participants to share their ideas. Respect and value each contribution regardless of how you feel about the ideas suggested.

Debrief and Reflection. Give participants time after each activity to reflect on the activity and share ideas or thoughts with a partner. Let them share their ideas with the group and learn from each other.

Any Questions? Create an open atmosphere from the start. Ask participants to stop you any time they have questions. When asking questions, try to use open-ended questions. For example, instead of asking, "What is this tree called?" ask questions that require more discussion such as "Let's describe this tree. Who would like to start?" Use wait time when having discussions. Pose your question and then slowly count to 15 or 20 before calling on anyone. Do not always call on the first person to raise their hand; you will find that participation in discussion is increased.

Don't fear saying "I don't know." There is no need to be afraid to work with educators or to admit that you do not know the answer to a question posed. Better to say, "Good question, I'm not sure but will try to find out and get back to you on that," than to muddle your way through (and possibly present inaccurate information). This is part of the learning process and sets the expectation that teachers are learners, too.

We've got a great thing going! Get participants excited about the project with success stories and examples.

Get outside! Model good environmental education and take participants out as much as you can. Be sure to tell participants ahead of time that you'll be taking them outside and to dress accordingly.

The "Eyes" have it! Use good eye contact when facilitating. This makes you more personable and helps prevent nervousness on your part. It also allows you to read the body language of your audience.

KAEE, NRCS, RC&D, SWC, and KDHE? Use common, everyday language and terms that everyone will understand. Don't use acronyms or jargon without first explaining what it means - even if it seems obvious to you.

Can the commercials! When conducting a workshop, your only job is to provide professional development for the participants by using Project Learning Tree, WET, WILD, Underground, or Leopold. Do not use the opportunity to try to influence the audience about environmental issues, your employer, or your personal agenda. Introduce yourself and your professional affiliation and let that be it. KAEE is a non-partisan organization and is not involved in any advocacy issues.

Teacher's Pets - Encourage the participation of all workshop attendees; resist relying on the one or two who are eager to contribute. Be respectful to participants and resist picking on anyone, even if it is only for fun.

Move around the room as you conduct the workshop. This keeps your participants' attention on you and reduces the chance that you will "hone in" on one side of the room.

Do not make remarks about anyone's sex, nationality, or religion. Avoid referring to teachers in general as female. Do not make off-color remarks, even in jest, and do not use language that some may find offensive. There is no place in any KAEE workshop for any type of sexism or racism!

That's a wrap! If you end your workshop activities without an appropriate wrap-up, you haven't done your job. The wrap-up should include questions about what subjects the activity could be used in (ask, don't just tell) and ideas for extensions and variations. Ask for volunteers to share how it might be used within the context of what they teach. The purpose of a wrap-up is to get participants to think about their use for an activity.

Murphy's Law - Be prepared for the unexpected. If you have chosen outside activities, which are greatly encouraged, be prepared for what to do if it rains. Careful planning and flexibility will help you handle anything that comes up.

Be yourself! Do not try to adopt a workshop persona or mimic someone else's style. Use your own style and be comfortable with who you are. Have fun! If you don't, they won't!

Give participants time to interact and share experience/knowledge. Participants bring valuable experience and ideas to workshops. Structured mechanisms for sharing experiences and expertise must be an integral part of every workshop program. Support this aspect of the program with unstructured social time that supports the development of networks that will last beyond the workshop.

Emphasize practical applications. Emphasizing practical applications and strategies is an important aspect of effecting change in teaching practice. Workshop participants frequently comment on the value of examples of what works and what doesn't.

Make sure that participants leave the workshop with specific plans for future action.

Make a minute-by-minute plan of the workshop session. Good workshops that appear to flow spontaneously reflect extensive planning by leaders and a common understanding of the program and its objectives.

Draft an intriguing workshop description. The description could include specific details of the event, agenda (if possible), intended audience, and previous positive feedback from other workshops. Workshop goals and activities (what the participants will be doing) could also be included.

Whenever possible, collaborate with other eeFacilitators in planning and delivering workshops. Challenge each other to become better, and model a supportive, collaborative approach for workshop participants.