

The Learning Conditions — Quick Reference

At-a-Glance Framework Card

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Cultivate Safety · Honour Agency · Speak with Intention · Design Liberating Structure

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THE LEARNING CONDITIONS

What must be true before children learn.

By Mamta Motwani | thelearningconditions.com

The Framework at a Glance

Condition	Core Question	When Present	When Absent
Cultivate Safety	Do children feel free from judgement?	Children risk half-formed ideas, name feelings, and write honestly because the room has proved safe	Quiet compliance, self-censoring, "safe" answers only
Honour Agency	Are children trusted as capable?	Children initiate choices, explain their reasoning, and show ownership through real decisions	Teacher is hardest-working person; children wait for instructions
Speak with Intention	Am I choosing my words consciously?	Children ask genuine questions, revise thinking aloud, and develop a stronger inner voice	Silence, compliance, curiosity extinguished
Design Liberating Structure	Does my structure enable freedom?	Children use routines independently, adapt them with judgement, and free attention for deeper learning	Either chaos (under-structured) or compliance (over-controlled)

Meta-layer — Practice with Intentionality: None of this happens by accident. The conditions require continuous, deliberate adult effort — noticing, adjusting, designing, and holding yourself accountable.

Quick Diagnostic

Answer honestly. Your first “yes” tells you where to start.

1. Do children hesitate to be wrong out loud? → **Cultivate Safety**
 2. Are you the hardest-working person in the room? → **Honour Agency**
 3. Is your default mode directives, not questions? → **Speak with Intention**
 4. Did children help create the routines they follow? If not → **Design Liberating Structure**
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The Core Claim

Methods fail when conditions are absent. The method may be sound — but the ground was not ready.

The Learning Conditions is a diagnostic, not a method. It works alongside any teaching approach — IB PYP, Responsive Classroom, UDL, Montessori, CASEL SEL, or any other framework.

Key Phrases to Remember

- **Adults create conditions. Children do the growing.**
 - “We do not give agency; we only need to provide opportunities.”
 - “What would being ready look like right now?” (replaces “Hurry up.”)
 - “The program was structured and yet the children felt the freedom.”
 - The gap between values and practice is not a competence gap — it is an intentionality gap.
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Implementation Signals — How You Know It Is Working

Condition	Implementation Signal
Safety	Children share what they actually feel and think without self-censorship; aesthetic care of the classroom signals that this space matters
Agency	Children stop waiting for permission and start making decisions
Language	Children's natural curiosity stays alive; their writing finds genuine voice
Structure	Children operate independently within structure and begin adapting it

Self-Check (Weekly)

1. Which stated value did I enact today, and what specific action made it real for children?
2. Would a child say "I don't understand" without hesitation in my room?
3. Am I the hardest-working person here?
4. When did I last catch myself mid-sentence and choose different words?
5. Did the children help create the structures they follow?
6. Am I still growing — or have I settled into routines I no longer examine?

Three-Move Encouragement Pattern

When a child is stuck, hesitant, or withdrawing:

1. **Recognise** — Name what you see without judgement. ("I notice you stopped writing.")
2. **Stay** — Remain present without fixing. Let the silence do its work.
3. **Name** — Reflect back what the child did. ("You found your own way back in.")

Built from 20 years of cross-cultural classroom practice (India + Canada) and 19 essays of practitioner reflection.

Download the full practitioner guide for detailed chapters, self-assessments, and a 90-day implementation plan.