

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 take risks, share feelings, write without inhibitions | Quiet compliance, self-censoring, "safe" answers only |
| Honour Agency | Are children trusted as capable? | Children choose, initiate, own their learning | Teacher is hardest-working person; children wait for instructions |
| Speak with Intention | Am I choosing my words consciously? | Children ask genuine questions, find their voice | Silence, compliance, curiosity extinguished |
| Design Liberating Structure | Does my structure enable freedom? | Children operate independently, adapt routines | 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 do YOU need to be doing 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 | The Shift You Are Looking For |
|------------------|---|
| 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. Am I enacting my stated values today, or just holding them as beliefs?
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.