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Conference Vision

The 2020 USAID Global Education Conference is our opportunity to create an ongoing system of learning, build relationships and networks across sectors and countries, and share our collective knowledge, evidence, and experience to better support education as a critical part of a country's journey to self-reliance.



As the education sector, we are committed to creating spaces and opportunities that apply best practices in adult learning and encourage active engagement. This means relying less on lectured PowerPoint presentations and instead applying more innovative formats and methods that are better suited to spark and support learning around a given topic.

Adult Learning Principles



“My conception of adult learning is this: a cooperative venture in non authoritarian, informal learning, the chief purpose of which is to discover the meaning of experience; a quest of the mind which digs down to the roots of the preconceptions which formulate our conduct; a technique of learning for adults which makes education coterminous with life and hence elevates living itself to the level of adventurous experiment.”

- Malcolm Knowles | Author, *The Adult Learner*

[Mel Silberman's Top 10 Training/Facilitation Tips](#)

Mel Silberman is the author of the seminal book, [Active Training: A Handbook of Techniques, Designs, Case Examples, and Tips](#), among many other books on adult education. Below are his top 10 tips for designing and facilitating successful learning sessions for adults.

- 1. It's not what you give them; it's what they take away that counts.** Our minds are like sponges as we soak up knowledge and information. When sponges are saturated, any additional water will run right through. Just as the sponge is overloaded, a learner can experience cognitive overload when he or she receives more information than the brain can store in its working memory. It doesn't matter how much information you disseminate. If the learner does not retain that information, learning has not taken place. The challenge to the trainer is to present information in such a way that participants do not experience overload.
- 2. You can't hide in a pair.** Don't overlook the power of pairs to promote active learning. Asking participants to work with learning partners is an efficient and effective active-learning technique. It guarantees 100 percent participation.
- 3. Telling is not training.** The belief that "I gave them information," "covered the material," or "told them how to do it" is very misleading for both the trainer and the learner. Telling, explaining, or lecturing does not guarantee the receiver of the information understands it. Learning is not an automatic result of pouring information in another person's head. People learn by doing, not by being told.

4. **Distinguish between "need to know" and "nice to know."** When designing your training program (session), focus on what participants absolutely need to know. This is particularly important when there are time constraints. Don't try to cram eight hours of content into a two-hour program. By clearly defining objectives for what participants will know and be able to do by the end of the sessions, trainers clarify content and select appropriate learning strategies.
5. **Inquiring minds want to know.** Human beings are naturally curious. If you have any doubt, just watch young children exploring and learning about the world around them. Take advantage of that innate curiosity. Create learning experiences that require the learning to seek something such as an answer to a question, information to solve a problem, or ways to do his or her job.
6. **When training is active, the participants do the work.** Participants work in concert, encouraging and facilitating one another's efforts to achieve, complete tasks, and reach the group's goals. People understand concepts better and retain information longer when they are actively involved with the learning process. The trainer's role is to create an environment in which learning takes place and to facilitate the learning process.
7. **People will remember what they figure out for themselves.** One of the trainer's objectives is to get participants to think. Learning experiences that require participants to use their minds will result in better retention, both long term and short term.
8. **Get them active from the start.** Getting people involved from the very beginning through some type of opening activity accomplishes several purposes. Techniques that immediately involve participants are very effective in piquing interest, arousing curiosity, and preparing them for the learning experience. They can help reduce tension and anxieties, energize the group, set a tone for the session, and involve everyone. Most importantly, opening activities communicate to the participants that they are not going to sit back and be passive learners or receivers of information.
9. **It's not about you.** Focus on your audience, not on yourself. Unfortunately, some trainers are more concerned about showcasing themselves and demonstrating how much they know. When you put the needs of the learner first, you automatically change the way you design and deliver training.

10. **When I *hear*, I forget. When I *hear and see*, I remember a little. When I *hear, see, and ask questions or discuss* with someone else, I begin to understand. When I *hear, see, discuss, and do*, I acquire knowledge and skill. When I *teach* to another, I **master**.** This Active Learning Credo is a modification of what Confucius declared over 2400 years ago: "What I *hear*, I forget. What I *see*, I remember. What I *do*, I understand."

Panel Discussions

Panels are designed to present multiple viewpoints and perspectives on a single topic. Sessions using this format are strongly encouraged to include panelists from different sectors, agencies, implementing partners, or partner country governments. A strong panel also ensures diversity across genders.

This is an ideal format for exploring a topic through multiple perspectives and across stakeholder groups.

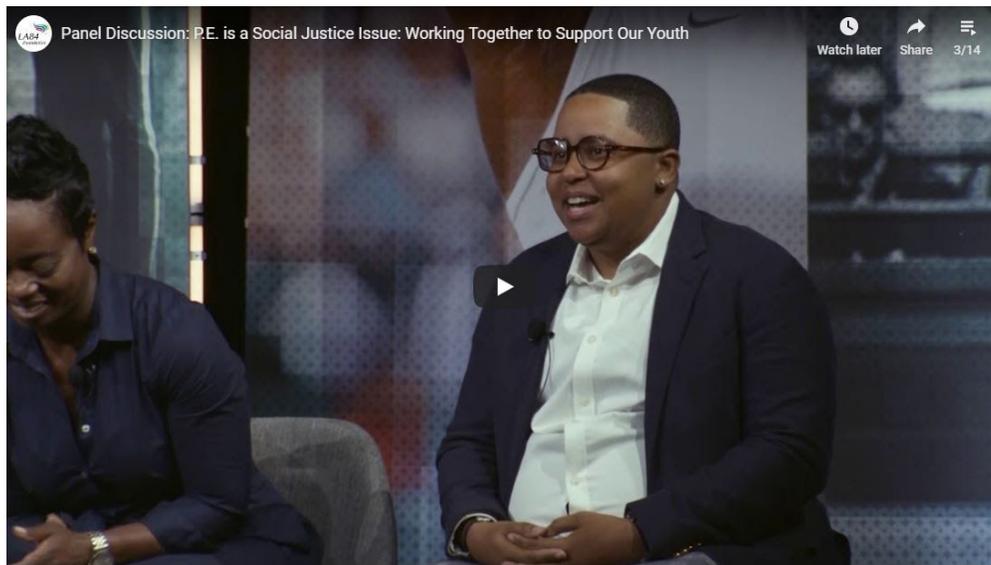


“If you attend enough panel discussions, you already know that the worst ones feel like a plodding public access TV show — and you can’t switch the channel. The best feel like a fast-paced, unpredictable conversation between smart people on stage and smart people in the audience. Keep that goal in mind...”

- Scott Kirsner | Editor, Innovation Leader

[Panel Discussion Example #1](#)

The panel discussion from the 2018 LA84 Conference explores how people can work together to close the play equity gap, because a child's ability to play, should not be determined by their zip code.



(click on the image above to watch the video)

What Went Well?

- **The moderator provides short but adequate introductions for the panelists.** The moderator does not spend a lot of time reading long bios that audience members can read on their own in the program or online. She provides just enough information to establish the reason they are up on stage and part of the discussion. She begins the discussion by asking a more personal question to the panelists about the source of their passion for play equity as a social justice issue.
- **The panelists provide enough space and time for each other.** There is an awareness that there are multiple voices that have been invited to weigh in on the topic. No one panelists goes on for too long.
- **A lot of substantial discussion occurs in just 30 minutes.** This makes time and space available for a robust Q&A with the audience (not seen in the video above).

Panel Discussion Example #2

Part 1 of this series of Facebook Live panel discussions, focuses on the strategic civil resistance and peacebuilding methods used by Dr. King and how they are being successfully applied in various contexts today. Activists and peacebuilding experts examine how nonviolent tactics like protest and non-cooperation work with peacebuilding practices, such as conflict analysis, dialogue and negotiation, to resolve violent conflict and advance positive social change.



(click on the image above to watch the video)

What Went Well?

- **The panelists introduce themselves by answering a thought provoking question that connects the session topic to something that is unique to their life.** The question is also posed to the audience at the start of the discussion and they are asked to respond using a web based platform.
- **Powerful images are shown to anchor different questions and prompts throughout the discussion.** This allows for the audience to be visually and audibly connected to the information.
- **Audience members are invited to pose their questions throughout the discussion using a web based platform.** This allows for questions to be asked in real time as opposed to holding them all to the end of the panel discussion.

Design & Facilitation Tips

- **Engage the audience early and often.** For example, as a moderator you could poll the audience on their reactions to questions or prompts and then have the panel react to what they see/hear from the audience. Polling an audience is relatively simple by posing a question or prompt and having folks in the audience raise their hand, applaud, or stand up depending on their response.
- **Ensure gender balance on the panel.** Make sure that your panel is accurately reflecting the diversity of perspectives that can be brought to a particular topic, especially around gender. For too long, panel discussions have been dominated by men, and have insufficiently represented leading female voices on a topic. The head of the National Institute of Health actually [refuses to participate in any panels](#) that only have men on them.
- **Structure the discussion around a common problem or question,** as opposed to each panelists just giving their own presentation. Make sure that your panel discussion DOES NOT turn into 3-5 separate power point presentations following by a short Q&A.

Additional Resources

- Kirsner, Scott. [How to Moderate a Panel Like a Pro](#). Harvard Business Review, 2013.
- Hough, Karen. [Moderating a Panel: 8 Ways to Run an Excellent Discussion](#). Huffington Post, 2014.