

# Developing Creativity through Team Building in the Classroom

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Turn your gifted students into a team of creative problem-solving, risk-taking collaborators through experiential team building activities that can be used at any time during your school day. Imagine the possibilities for brainstorming and solution finding to fun challenges that can include and expand academics!

## For any activity:

- 1) Explain and check for safety.
- 2) Play!
- 3) Debrief: What went well? What didn't? What brainstorming and planning was involved? How was the task completed? Was there trial and error? How did they work as a team? (communication, trust, leaders and followers, etc)

## Team Building Activities

### **Connection**

Begin by dumping the contents of a toy connection set (LEGOs, K'Nex, Fiddlestix) out into a pile in front of your group. Inform them that the objective for this activity is simply to make one completely enclosed system by connecting all of the pieces. At the end of the activity, all of the pieces should be connected with no open ends. Assign "weaknesses" to each member of the group. For example some people will be blind, some cannot speak, some cannot use their hands, some can only use a right or left hand, etc. This really helps during the debriefing session because you can talk about how they cooperated to keep everyone involved, or lack thereof, in the activity.

Equipment Needed: Toy connection set (LEGOs, K'Nex, Fiddlestix)

Variations: Have students speak in a special language or code (Spanish, math, scientist)

Sample Standards: circuits, connections, communication, problem solving, soft skills

### **Blind Cube**

Give all players a blindfold and have them put them on. Tell them they must find twelve pool noodles around them and put them together to make a perfect cube. For safety, make sure you are watching closely for potential hazards as the players "wander."

Equipment Needed: Pool noodles or similar objects to make a cube, blindfolds

Variations: Have students make other shapes and figures

Sample Standards: Soft skills, shapes, attributes, structures, communication

### **Stepping Stones**

Establish a start and finish line. Give the group "lily pads"/spot markers they can use to cross the "river" (1 per person). The group's objective is to cross the river (lava, jelly, etc.) without stepping into the river. This river is running and if someone is not connected to each lily pad at all times it will float away (be taken by the leader). Establish the consequences for if a person "falls in" (individual or group starts over, lose use of the body part that touched, etc).

Equipment Needed: Boundaries, spot marker for each participant

Variations: Polluted river, volcanic eruption, historic escape

Sample Standards: Soft skills, movement, pollution, volcanoes, habitats, historic figures, related literature, write a narrative

#### **4-way Stepping Stones**

Establish the boundaries of a "pond" by using a rope or string to create 4 distinct corners. Lay the "lily pads"/spot markers throughout the space with at least 2 or 3 close to each corner. Establish each corner with a hula hoop or other boundary. Have the group divide evenly into each corner. Then each small group must cross the square to the opposing corner. No one is allowed to exit the center until everyone in the large group has entered into the middle. They can't touch the ground because it is a river, lava, jelly, etc. Once a lily pad/spot marker has been touched it must be stay constant contact with a human being. If the activated marker is left untouched it will "float away" (be taken). Once the rules have been given the group can start whenever they want to.

Equipment Needed: Rope/string, spot marker for each participant

Variations: Students could be crossing a lava pit, have 2 or more stay connected by hands or bandanas, say math facts as they step on a new spot

Sample Standards: Frogs/toads, habitats, volcanoes, problem solving, soft skills

#### **Human Knot**

Group gets into a tight circle and each person grabs two different group members' hands at random around the circle. It cannot be the people right next to them, and not two hands of the same person. It is now their objective to untangle this "human knot" without letting go of anyone else's hand until they are holding hands in a complete circle. A person can't change hand position or let go for any span of time. (Be patient - it is always possible!) Note: If group doesn't like touching then you can have a bandana as an extension of your hand. This requires one bandana per person.

Equipment Needed: Bandanas optional

Sample Standards: Circuits, soft skills, communication, visual-spatial, experimenting, refining

#### **Key Punch**

Establish a space about 6 feet wide and randomly place numbered spot markers (1 through 30) inside the area with numbers facing up. Place the starting line about 15 feet away and have all participants stand behind it. The objective is for the team to run down around the numbered "keys" and, as a team, touch all of them in order, and then return back past the starting point. Each time they do this, you should time them and let them try to improve as much as possible. The rules are as follows 1) they cannot touch the ground inside the boundary or the boundary itself or they are penalized, 2) they may not touch any of the "keys" out of order or they are penalized.

Equipment Needed: Rope/string for boundary, numbered spots

Variations: Use fractions instead of whole numbers

Sample Standards: Soft skills, brainstorming, planning, experimentation, refining, counting

#### **Back to Back**

Break the group up into pairs. Inform the group that they will be communicating to each other to draw a picture they are given. While sitting/standing back to back, one partner will be handed one piece of paper with a pre-drawn picture or pattern on it. The other partner will remain facing the opposite direction and handed a drawing utensil and a blank piece of paper. The partner with the pattern must articulate what they see and the other partner must try to make an exact replica of the pattern without ever seeing it. After they agree that they have completed the drawing have them face each other and discuss what they find.

Equipment Needed: Paper and drawing utensils

Variations: This can be done with LEGOs or other manipulatives, but must have matching pieces to work with. The patterns/pictures can be premade or students can create.

Sample Standards: Soft skills, communication, visual-spatial, attributes, shapes, structures