



We've assembled the following in-class activities, tips and tricks and helpful resources to support your school climate improvement efforts. For more information about any of these resources or information about CSEE's Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI) and professional development services, email us at <a href="mailto:dfaster@csee.net">dfaster@csee.net</a>.

- (1) Classroom Activities
- (2) <u>8 Steps for Creating Supportive Rules</u> <u>with Students</u>
- (3) Increasing Parent Involvement
- (4) Helpful Resources

### Classroom Activities

At CSEE, we integrate **experiential classroom activities** into our professional development workshops with teachers, school staff and building leaders. Schools find these activities to be a powerful component of advisory programs, morning meetings and other programming for students that foster safe, caring and respectful learning environments. These activities often provide students and adults with insights into their behavior, problem-solving strategies and biases, as well as build teamwork and community.

An important component of experiential learning is debriefing or processing the activity. The debrief separates a fun icebreaker or game into a meaningful learning experience. Below are five experiential learning activities that we invite you to consider adding to your practice. None of the activities require materials or a lot of time. Please feel free to change the activities and make them your own.

### **Alike and Different**

**Duration:** 10-15 minutes **Social-Emotional Education:** Respect for differences

**Directions:** Invite the group to move and make smaller groups after you announce the description that best fits them. You will read a statement that will require the group to choose sides and make groups. Even if the statements are light-hearted and appear to be nonthreatening, the exercise can uncover feelings of inclusion, exclusion and commonalities. Some examples of Alike/Different prompts to use in this experiential activity are:

When asked to turn around, do you generally turn to the right or to the left?

Can you wiggle your ears? Raise an eye brow? Curl your tongue?

Do you prefer reality or scripted television shows?

What month were your born?

What is your favorite season?

Do you prefer hot or cold cereals?

What type of music do you like to study to?

What type of pet do you prefer?

**Variations:** 1) Invite the group make up the questions. 2) Invite the group act out their responses.

3) Consider doing the exercise in a different language that may not be familiar to the group.

Debriefing about Emotions & Feelings:	Debriefing about Insights:
<ol> <li>What were you surprised by?</li> <li>Where did you struggle?</li> <li>Where did your group really take off?</li> <li>How did you feel during the activity?</li> </ol>	<ul><li>1. How does this connect to your relationships at home or at school?</li><li>2. How might you do things differently?</li></ul>

### **Everyday Machines**

**Duration:** 15-20 minutes **Social-Emotional Education:** Collaboration and flexible

problem solving

**Directions:** Ask the class to brainstorm any place in the world with human inhabitants (e.g. a beach, a kitchen, a restaurant). Choose a place. Then invite the group to divide into small groups of 4 to six people. Instruct the class that they are going to make a human machine that could be found in the selected place. Provide the small groups with at least five minutes to brainstorm and practice acting out their machine before they perform for the group.

**Variation:** instead of a machine the groups can act out an object that is commonly found in the place.

Debriefing about Activity:	Debriefing about Insights:
<ol> <li>What happened during the activity?</li> <li>What steps did you take to solve the problem?</li> <li>What stood out for you?</li> <li>What did you see and hear?</li> </ol>	<ul><li>1. What does this mean to us as a team, class or learning community?</li><li>2. How does this connect to your work or studies?</li></ul>

### **Mirroring**

**Duration:** 10-15 minutes **Social-Emotional Education:** Collaboration and Cooperation

**Directions:** Ask the group to form pairs. The pairs can either sit or stand. One partner is Person A and the other is Person B. Invite person A to begin the activity by making motions. Inform the group that the Bs will mirror Person As actions. The goal is for your partner to be successful in mirroring you. After one minute, invite the pairs to exchange roles. Person B will lead, while Person A mirrors. After one minute begin the third round. Now invite the pairs to mirror one another but not to signal to the other person when they will switch roles and exchange leading and mirroring.

#### **Debriefing Questions:**

- 1. What was the experience of **being the leader** like for you?
- 2. What was the experience of **being the follower** like for you?
- 3. What was your experience like in the third round when there was **no clear leader**?
- 4. When did you experience **discomfort**? If so, how was your discomfort related to cooperation?
- 5. Have you experienced a similar type of discomfort when trying to cooperate with others in the **real world**? When?
- 6. How can this activity help you understand issues related to cooperation?
- 7. How does our level of **patience** impact our ability to cooperate?

### **Happening Handshake**

**Duration:** 20-25 minutes **Social-Emotional Education:** Nonverbal communication skills, awareness of intent & impact of nonverbal communication

**Directions:** At the beginning of the group's time together, greet the members of the group with a handshake. Be sure to provide the same very greeting to each member of the group. Vary the intensity of the grip of your handshake from strong to weak to nonexistent. After the group is seated, ask for a volunteer to meet you at the front of the room. Shake the volunteer's hand with a very limp grasp. Then invite another student of the opposite gender of yourself to the front of the room. Ask him/her to shake your hand but this time provide a "regular" strength hand shake. Now ask a third student to the front of the room, but this time keep your hand to your side or place it into your pocket.

**Variation:** Divide the students into three groups. Instruct one group that they will give strong handshakes, another weak handshakes and the third group will not extend their hand. Now, invite the students to mingle and greet students from the other groups.

#### **Debriefing Questions**

- 1. What did you notice?
- 2. What **emotional impact** would these handshakes have on you?
- 3. What **signals** did you receive from the verbal and non-verbal greeting that you received?
- 4. What did you see and hear?
- 5. What did you think the person's **intent** was?
- 6. Might this emotional impact affect **future interactions** with that person? How?
- 7. Are there other reasons for someone to give a handshake like the one you received other than what you initially thought?

### **Back-to-Back**

**Duration:** 20-30 minutes **Social Emotional Education:** Awareness of Feelings & Management of Emotions

**Directions:** Before the exercise or together at the beginning of the exercise, choose a specific name that is perceived as negative or derogatory (ex. "Banana Brain").

In class, ask the group to form pairs and stand back-to-back. One person will be **Partner A** and the other **Partner B**. (If there is an odd person out, that person can be the **Observer** of a pair.) Explain to the pairs that when they are given a specific signal (ex. you saying the word "begin" or "forward") they will face each other. Person A will call person B the specific name you chose (ex. "Banana Brain"), and then the pair will turn back to back again. (During this time, the Observer can observe: the group's reaction to the idea of participating in a name-calling activity, how the partners appear to feel during the activity and the level of tension in the air.)

While back to back, Person B will think of a positive response to being called the name, "Banana Brain". (Inform the group that the positive response should not be a sarcastic one.) Ask the Bs to raise their hands when they have a response. After about 80% of the group has raised their hands, call time, and invite the pairs to face each other. Signal to the B to give their responses to the As. The pairs should stay where they are.

Now invite the Bs to share their responses with the large group. (Consider "no response" a response as you go around the group.) Once all the Bs have shared, invite them to turn back to back again with the partner.

Inform the Bs that when given the signal they should turn and face their partner (Person A) and call them "**E-G-G**". (Clearly spell out E-G-G, so that the Bs clearly understand what they are being asked to say.) Once the Bs have called the Bs EGG, the partners should turn around back to back.

This time instruct person A to think of a positive, non-sarcastic response. Invite the As to raise their hand when they have a response. After about 80% of the group has raised their hands, call time. Now, invite the pairs to face their partners and give their response to being called an EGG. As in the first round, invite all of the As to share their responses with the group. Invite everyone to take a seat and begin the debriefing protocol.

#### **Debriefing Questions**

- 1. What was it like for you to have to **think of a positive response** to a name?
- 2. What was it like for you to call your partner a name?
- 3. How easy was it for you to identify a positive response?
- 4. How could this activity inform how you would handle a **real life situation**?
- 5. Did being called a "Banana Brain" or "EGG" help you to avoid taking the name you were being called personally?
- 6. How might name-calling impact our community?
- 7. What can we do to create a **community where people are not called names**?

## 8 Steps for Creating Supportive Rules with Students

The customs, habits and expectations that govern how groups do things are commonly referred to as **group norms**. Here are some widely accepted steps for creating healthy norms in the classroom:

- Invite students to reflect on their hopes and dreams for the class. Take time out
  at the beginning of the school year to give students an opportunity to think about
  and share their core values for the class.
- Invite students to collaboratively brainstorm rules that meet their collective hopes and dreams. Allow the students to work in groups or as a class to define rules that embody the communal class values.
- 3. Frame the rules in the positive.

Wording the rules in the positive focuses students on the "right" behaviors and, more importantly, helps avoid unintentionally triggering negative behaviors by suggesting what "not" to do.

#### 4. Condense the list to a few global rules.

A few key rules can be much more powerful than a host of "do's" or "don'ts." Help the students think through what rules are most important to the classroom culture they want to create.

#### 5. Celebrate, share, and display the rules.

Make the rules a centerpiece to the educational environment and honor them with student-created drawings, slogans, or other works that represent each one. Make the collaborative rules a part of your contract with students. Invite students and their families to sign the pledge.

#### 6. Refer to the rules to hold students accountable.

Utilize disruptive or positive in-class experiences as teachable moments to reinforce the rules that apply.

#### 7. Encourage students to hold the community accountable to the rules.

Provide opportunity for students to hold each other accountable for the rules in respectful ways. You can do this through in-class discussions, hand signals that indicate when a rule is broken, or by infusing SEL-lessons regarding specific rules into a few lessons a month.

#### 8. Revisit the rules periodically.

Over time, some rules may become obsolete, while new ones might rise to importance. It is important to revisit the rules occasionally, so that the right ones can be reinforced and others can be revised or deleted when they are no longer useful.

## **Increasing Parent Involvement**

CSEE led a forum on **Parent/School Collaborations for the Development of the Whole Child**, wherein parents from New York City-area public and independent schools sat down with staff and discussed how to begin and sustain collaborative partnerships.

Here are some key strategies for increasing parent engagement in your school community:

### Suggested strategies for increasing parent engagement:

- **1. Make it easy for parents to participate!** Anticipate and resolve potential barriers in advance. Offer transportation options to and from meetings, serve food/snacks for parents and their children at events, and recruit volunteers to help provide childcare services on-site. All of these ideas take parent's busy schedules and competing priorities into account.
- **2. Locate some meetings and activities off-site** A fresh and upbeat location can help spark new interest in traditionally low-attendance events. Make sure the site is easily accessible by public transportation, or provide transportation for parents.
- **3.** Offer classes and workshops for parents based on *their* interests These offerings build parent engagement and their investment in the school as a resource, not only for children but also for adults. Popular classes include English proficiency, internet/ Microsoft lessons, resume/ career support, or a trade/skill class. Once parents are coming to the school for these classes, you can utilize this relationship as an opportunity to connect on issues involving their children.
- **4. Offer opportunities for the community to "cross-pollinate"** Invite parents to school events and activities that intentionally "cross-pollinate" them across age, race, gender, etc. to expand their social networks, foster cultural understanding, and give them opportunities to learn from people of differing perspectives and experiences about schooling for their children.
- **5. Be creative with event scheduling!** Consider rotating meeting times or providing weekend and off-hour options to fit more parents' schedules.

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- **6.** Implement programs that help parents and children process anger constructively Anger is often used as a mask for feelings of hurt and can erode effective communication efforts. Non-violent ways of resolving differences should be modeled and practiced throughout the school community. (Continued)
- **7. Encourage resource sharing** Utilize meetings as an opportunity to share knowledge and make new connections. Be the first person to reach out to a parent or student in need and they will someday reciprocate the favor.
- **8. Send reliable, timely communications to parents and school staff -** Give ample notification for important matters and make sure you *follow-up* on any outstanding issues with them directly.
- **9. Make lasting connections** If you have made a positive connection with a student or parent, find ways to be a resource and continue sharing even after the school year ends. This type of outreach ensures more effective engagement for years to come.
- **10. Make your school a multi-service site** As a school community, think about what programs and services adults and children need from medical support to housing education and solicit the surrounding community leaders for funding to support and sustain these programs.

### Resources

### **Diversity, Bullying, Violence & Respect**

Southern Poverty Law Center National School Safety Center <a href="http://www.schoolsafety.us/">www.tolerance.org</a> <a href="http://www.schoolsafety.us/">http://www.schoolsafety.us/</a>

Stop Bullying Now! SchoolTipline

http://www.stopbullyingnow.org www.schooltipline.com

Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence <a href="http://crede.berkeley.edu/research/research.html">http://crede.berkeley.edu/research/research.html</a>

Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? A Psychologist Explains the Development of Racial Identity <a href="http://www.dps.state.mn.us/ojp/publications/schoolbrochure.pdf">http://www.dps.state.mn.us/ojp/publications/schoolbrochure.pdf</a>

Making Your School Safe: Strategies to Protect Children and Promote Learning John Devine and Jonathan Cohen, 2007, Teachers College Press, New York, NY

### **School Climate Supports**

School Climate Matters www.csee.net/newsletter

The School Climate Challenge: A White Paper presented by the NSCC <a href="http://csee.net/climate/aboutcsee/school\_climate\_challenge.pdf">http://csee.net/climate/aboutcsee/school\_climate\_challenge.pdf</a>

**CSCI Case Studies** 

http://www.csee.net/climate/csciassessment/case study.aspx

### **Funding Supports**

State Grant Opportunities Grants.gov <u>www.k12grants.org/Grants/state.htm</u> <u>www.grants.gov/</u>

**Education World Newsletter** 

<u>www.edutopia.org/grant-information</u> <u>www.educationworld.com/newsletter</u>

21st Century Community Learning Center www.ed.gov/programs/21stcclc/

### Social Emotional-Character Education Resource List

#### **Center for Social and Emotional Education (CSEE)**

CSEE is a nonprofit that helps schools integrate crucial social and emotional learning with academic instruction to enhance student performance, prevent drop outs, reduce <a href="https://www.csee.net">www.csee.net</a>

Center for Character and Citizenship Character Education Partnership

<u>www.characterandcitizenship.org/</u> <u>www.character.org</u>

American School Counselor Association Association for Conflict Resolution

www.schoolcounselor.org www.acresolution.org

**EQParenting** The Development Studies Center

<u>www.EQParenting.com</u> <u>www.devstu.org</u>

Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR) National PTA www.esrnational.org/Training2001.html www.pta.org

Moral Dilemma Discussion Public Education Network (PEN) www.uni-konstanz.de/ag-moral/home-e.htm www.publiceducation.org/

The Responsive Classroom Teaching Tolerance www.responsiveclassroom.org www.tolerance.org

National Service Learning Clearinghouse New York State Center for School Safety

<u>www.servicelearning.org</u> <u>www.mhrcc.org</u>

National Center for Learning and Citizenship at the Education Commission of the States <a href="https://www.ecs.org/ecsmain.asp?page=/html/ProjectsPartners/nclc/nclc\_main.htm">www.ecs.org/ecsmain.asp?page=/html/ProjectsPartners/nclc/nclc\_main.htm</a>

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) Whole Child <a href="https://www.wholechildeducation.org/">www.wholechildeducation.org/</a>

Center for Social and Character Development, Rutgers University www.rucharacter.org/

The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) <a href="https://www.casel.org">www.casel.org</a>

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Educator Resources

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