

Relationships Matter: Get to Know You "Name" Activities



Target Audience: Older Elementary, Middle, High School

Message and recommended activities by: Cynthia and Jacob (Members of our Youth Leadership Council)

It's important to start the school year off by making sure everyone feels comfortable, accepted, and welcomed when dealing with new classroom environments. Name activities can help you get to know your students and can teach the use of flexibility when dealing with different people from different backgrounds. Starting with using a student's last name can help them feel comfortable to share what surname they want to be used. This could be a nickname or chosen name which allows students to choose what feels right and share when they are ready.

****Disclaimer: One must consider student needs, classroom culture, relationships, etc. prior to the introduction of these and any activity. Modify accordingly and, with thoughtful intention and a culturally responsive lens.***

Ball Toss

- Supplies: Easily catchable ball or soft object
- Purpose: To learn names and work together to accomplish a goal using communication, collaboration and problem-solving skills

Directions:

- Ask students to stand in a circle
- Have everyone go around and say "Hi. My name is _____" (you can have everyone respond with "Hi _____" to practice saying names)
- Introduce the ball and let students know that they are going to gently toss it to each other.
- Start by saying your own name and correct pronunciation.
- For the second round, have students toss the ball to others in the circle by saying the name of the person they are tossing the ball to.
- Let students know that they need to remember who they tossed to because you are going to do this a few times.
- After a couple of rounds, let students know you are going to time them to see how long it takes to get the ball to everyone in the correct order.
- Let them know their time and challenge them to do it again but beat their time.
- After the second time, if they have not already asked about moving position, repeat that they need to get the ball to everyone in the same order in the shortest amount of time and give them some time to strategize. Usually at this point, someone will suggest moving- they may ask if that is allowed- you can let them know it is totally fine to move. If no one suggests (i.e., standing next to the person they toss to) moving, you could throw the idea out there.
- When they feel good about their time (or just seem done with the activity), take some time to process before moving on.

Reminder: Check in with students throughout the school year so they can feel comfortable to share any name or pronoun changes. Always allow the student to have a choice in how and when they would like any changes to be shared with their peers.

SEL Targets: Relationship skills.

Blanket Name Game

- Supplies: Large blanket, tarp, tablecloth, (can not be see through), etc.
- Purpose: To learn names in a fun way

Directions:

- Divide students into two teams.
- Have them stand on opposite sides of the room with the blanket on the floor in the middle
- Let them know that you will hold the blanket up (unless you have a way to tie it, you may need two people to hold it) and one person from each team will walk up to the blanket
- On the count of three you will drop the blanket and the people at the blanket will have to try to be the first to say the other person's name
- The person who's name is said first has to go join the other team
- If neither knows the other person's name, they both say their name and remain with their team

SEL Targets: Relationship skills.

Opening Activity - A great activity to introduce circles.

Have students share their name and answer a question or finish a statement. This could be a great activity to introduce circles.

- My name is _____ and one fun fact about me is _____
- My name is _____ and one thing I wish I had done over the summer is _____
- My name is _____ and one thing I am looking forward to this school year is _____

SEL Targets: Self-awareness, relationship skills.

