BELONGING BUILDERS ACTIVITY PACK
MOVE BEYOND FUN GAMES TO MEANINGFUL CONNECTION

CONNECTION QUESTIONS

Build connection through conversation. Use fun questions to help kids feel seen and known while also being imaginative and having fun.

- What do you like most about school?
- Which do you like more—fruits or vegetables? Which fruit or vegetable is your favorite?
- If you could make your house out of any material (like stuffed animals, bouncy balls, candy, and so forth), which would you choose? What do you think it would be like to live there?
- Who lives in your home, and what do you like to do together?
- If you could travel into the past or the future, which would you choose, and what would you want to see?
- What words would you use to describe your friends?
- Would you rather be a giant living in a world of mouse-size people or a mouse-size person living in a world of giants? Why?
- If you had the choice to become a bird or a fish, which would you choose and why?
- If you could choose a nickname for yourself, what would you choose?

CONNECTION TIPS

When building connection, it is important to see all kids—to notice them, think about them, and engage them. Be intentional to include everyone and build belonging for all kids, watching for those who may feel unsure or overlooked.

The Quiet Kid

See: The Quiet Kid often watches closely before participating and rarely speaks unless asked directly.

Think: Ask yourself, *How can I help The Quiet Kid engage in ways that are comfortable rather than conforming to the "loud" and energetic behavior of others? How can I affirm The Quiet Kid's presence and participation?*

Do: Give The Quiet Kid roles that don't require talking, such as being the "Timer" for a game, passing out materials, and so forth. Ask gentle, specific, low-risk questions, such as, "What did you think about that part?"

The New Kid

See: The New Kid does not know routines, may hesitate to join in, and often hangs near the edges.

Think: Ask yourself, *How can I help The New Kid feel comfortable and meet other kids? What small actions could help The New Kid feel a sense of belonging today rather than eventually?*

Do: Explain routines before each activity to the whole group (so as not to single out The New Kid). Pair The New Kid with a kind and confident friend for the day.

The Shy Kid

See: The Shy Kid avoids attention and may freeze when singled out.

Think: Ask yourself, *How can I reduce pressure for The Shy Kid while still encouraging participation? Am I mistaking discomfort for disinterest?*

Do: Offer choices regarding participation, such as playing the game right away or observing a round before engaging. Allow The Shy Kid to have one-on-one discussions as opposed to answering questions to the whole group.

The "I'm Fine" Kid

See: The "I'm Fine" Kid never complains but can tend to fade into the background.

Think: Ask yourself, *How can I invite deeper discussion without prying? What signals can I give The "I'm Fine" Kid that show I notice and appreciate the participation?*

Do: Ask open-ended questions that go beyond yes or no, right or wrong, or simple one-word answers. Notice, compliment, and encourage The "I'm Fine" Kid's engagement.

The Neurodivergent Kid

See: The Neurodivergent Kid often has sensory sensitives and different communication styles. You may even have received a diagnosis from The Neurodivergent Kid's guardians.

Think: Ask yourself, *How can I create a less stimulating surrounding for The Neurodivergent Kid? What ways can I offer flexibility so all kids can participate?*

Do: Offer clear expectations and consider including visual cues. Provide flexible participation for all kids, which helps The Neurodivergent kid be seen without being singled out. Consider including more opportunities for movement, fidget toys, and quiet spaces.

The Language Barrier Kid

See: The Language Barrier Kid has a different primary language than other kids and leaders, leading to limited speech and understanding. The Language Barrier kid often relies on watching others before participating.

Think: Ask yourself, *How can I make an environment that is not overwhelming for The Language Barrier Kid? What ways can I offer participation that does not require words?*

Do: Use visual gestures, prompts, and modeling that do not require words. Learn The Language Barrier Kid's name and use it often. Consider inviting someone who speaks the same language to help as a buddy.

The Late Kid

See: The Late Kid tends to show up late, missing connections. The Late Kid can show signs of feeling left out or behind.

Think: Ask yourself, *How can I quickly help The Late Kid engage without embarrassment? What connections can I build despite our limited time together?*

Do: Plan ways to engage The Late Kid upon arrival in whatever is happening. Invite a friend to catch The Late Kid up with a one-on-one conversation.

The Sensitive Kid

See: The Sensitive Kid shows strong reactions. You may notice that The Sensitive Kid tears up easily and often becomes overwhelmed.

Think: Ask yourself, *How can I model empathy for the rest of the kids? What helps The Sensitive Kid feel calm and regulated?*

Do: Validate The Sensitive Kid's feeling without trying to correct or move on. Allow The Sensitive Kid to take breaks or engage in calming activities.

The Creative-but-Different Kid

See: The Creative-but-Different kid does not fit group norms. Often The Creative-but-Different kid gives offbeat ideas or demonstrates different behavior than other kids.

Think: Ask yourself, *How can I make room for ideas that don't fit the norm? How can I show that uniqueness is valued and appreciated here?*

Do: Invite The Creative-but-Different Kid to explain or show ideas to the group. Create space, expectations, and celebratory language for The Creative-but-Different Kid to be valued rather than corrected or rejected.

The Sideline Kid

See: The Sideline Kid often waits and watches from outside activities. The Sideline Kid may hesitate to jump in, unsure whether the invitation to engage includes everyone.

Think: Ask yourself, *Who might still be waiting for a personal invitation? How can I make invitations to participate and engage consistent and trustworthy?*

Do: Invite The Sideline Kid to participate by name. Be warm and clear about how all kids can join. Encourage other kids to be inclusive through inviting kids to join by name.

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CONNECTION ACTIVITIES

Help build connection through play! Provide activities for kids to break down barriers to belonging, find things in common, and celebrate each other. As kids connect with new friends and deepen connections with others, their sense of belonging grows.

Pass The Paper

Kids will move a stack of paper from one end of the room to the other.

Big Goal: Celebrate every child.

Leader Prep: Use the tape to create a starting and finish line. Set out the paper.

Supplies: Blank paper (5 per child), Masking or painter's tape (1 per group)

What To Do: Today, we are going to play a game called "Pass the Paper." What are we going to play? (*Pass the Paper!*) I will give each of you five pieces of paper. In this game, you and a friend must move all your papers from the starting line to the finish line. But there are two rules you have to follow.

Everyone, say, "Rule number one!" (*Rule number one!*) Rule number one is that you can't use your hands. What can't you use? (*Your hands!*) Everyone, say, "Rule number two." (*Rule number 2!*) Rule number two is that you and your friend must both be touching the paper at the same time. Do you think your team can pass the paper the fastest? Let's see!

Leader Tip: Offer suggestions on ways to move the papers, such as elbows, feet, or hips.

Keep It Going: Invite kids to find new friends and play extra rounds.

Connect It: You all did a super job! Would you have been able to win the game and follow the rules if you played by yourself? (*No!*) No way! Rule number two was that you and your friend both had to be touching the paper at the same time. You couldn't have done anything without your friend. Turn to the person next to you, give them a big high-five, and say, "I couldn't do it without you!" (*I couldn't do it without you!*)

Find Someone Who ...

Kids will follow your instructions to "find someone who ..." has a specific characteristic in common with them.

Big Goal: Find something in common.

Leader Prep: None

Supplies: Music and music player (1 per group)

What To Do: Hi, everyone! I'm so glad to see you today! We're going to play a game to see if you can find someone who has something in common with you. We're going to start by walking around the room while the music plays. When the music stops, I will say, "Find someone who ..." and then say a statement to describe who you're looking for. For example, I might say, "Find someone who has the same favorite sport as you." Once I say that, you will quickly try to find a friend who has the same favorite sport as you. Once everyone finds someone, the music will begin again, you'll start walking, and we'll play a new round. If you don't find someone who matches with your answer, then join up with someone or a pair who you like their answers, even if it isn't your answer. If you're ready, say, "I'm ready!" (*I'm ready!*)

Suggested Topics:
Find someone who has the same favorite color as you.
Find someone who is the same age as you.
Find someone who has the same favorite breakfast food as you.
Find someone who has the same favorite subject in school as you.
Find someone who has the same favorite musical instrument as you.
Find someone who is the same height as you.
Find someone who has the same number of pets as you.
Find someone who is wearing the same color as you.
Find someone who has the same favorite animal as you.

Keep It Going: Encourage leaders to step in and play if there is an uneven number of kids. Add variety to each round by giving kids a different number of friends to group up with who have something in common with them.

Connect It: That was fun! How many of you found something in common with a friend that you didn't know you had in common with before the game? I love getting to know each of you more. We're going to have fun and learn together today. It's going to be a great day!

Cup Mania

Two teams will race to see how many cups they can turn right side up or upside down in one minute.

Big Goal: Be a part of the team.

Leader Prep: Tape a large square on the ground using painter's tape. Then scatter the plastic cups into the center of the square. Make sure some cups are standing up and some are turned upside down.

Supplies: Plastic cups (several), Masking tape (1 per group), Stopwatch or timer (1 per group)

What To Do: This game is called "Cup Mania!" Cup what? (*Mania!*) In just a minute, everyone will be put on one of two teams: Team Up or Team Down. Team Up is trying to stand up as many cups as possible. Team Down wants to flip upside down as many cups as possible.

Team Up or Team Down will both stand on the edge of the square. When I say, "Cup mania!" everyone will jump in the square together and start setting cups right side up or turning them upside down. When time is up, whichever team has the highest number of cups up or down wins! Some rules: You can only touch the cups, and only one person can touch a cup at a time. Also, be careful not to step on or crush the cups!

(*Assign kids to teams. Line up teams along the taped square.*)

Ready, set, "Cup Mania!"

(*Allow kids to play for about 20 seconds.*) Hmmm, seems like you all have gotten the hang of how to set your cups, so let's make it more interesting! Team Up, you will now be Team Down! Team Down, you will be Team Up! Ready, set, "Cup Mania!"

Keep It Going: Direct kids to switch teams for another round. Create a third team by using Team Up, Team Down, and Team Side. In this version, kids will race to put cups right side up, upside down, and on their sides.

Leader Tip: Large Group Option: Form two or more smaller groups of 10–12 players and lead each group to play the game among their group.

Safety Tip: Monitor closely to ensure safety throughout the game. Encourage kids only to touch the cups and not to step on the cups or bump into each other as they play.

Connect It: Great playing! I think "mania" was definitely the right word to describe this game! Whether or not your team won, it certainly was fun to play our game. I'm so grateful we can all be on the same team as we keep learning and having fun today!

Rock, Paper, Scissors On The Move

Kids will jump beside a line of construction paper to meet in the middle and play "Rock, Paper, Scissors."

Big Goal: Be a part of the team.

Leader Prep: Tape 10–15 pieces of construction paper to the ground in a line.

Supplies: Construction paper (several), Tape (1 per group), Dry erase board and marker (1 per group)

What To Do: Hey, everyone! I'm so glad you are here today because we are going to play a super fun game called "Rock, Paper, Scissors on the Move"! Rock, Paper, Scissors what? (*On the Move!*) That's right! First, I will demonstrate how to play "Rock Paper Scissors." (*Demonstrate with another leader or volunteer.*)

Now that you all know how to play "Rock, Paper, Scissors," let's learn how to play "Rock, Paper, Scissors on the Move!" In just a moment, I'm going to place you in two groups. Each group will line up single file at either end of my paper line on the floor. The goal is to get from your side of the line to the other group's side by jumping on the floor next to the papers. Each time you do, your team gets a point.

When I say, "Go!" the first person in each line will jump with two feet, moving beside one paper to the next as fast as possible. When the two players meet in the middle, they'll battle it out playing "Rock, Paper, Scissors!" Whoever loses will hurry back to your group's line while the next person on your team begins to jump, trying to stop the winner from getting to that side and getting a point. Let's play a round to practice!

(*Form two equal groups and direct them to line up on either side of the construction paper line on the ground.*) All right, this first round is practice. On your mark, get set, go!

(*Allow the first kids in each group to jump to the side of the line, moving from paper to paper, meeting in the middle for "Rock, Paper, Scissors." The loser hurries to the back of the line while the winner keeps jumping forward. Encourage the next person in line to jump beside the paper and meet the winner, trying to stop that person from moving forward.*)

Great practice round! Let's play for real! "Rock, Paper, Scissors on the Move!" On your mark, get set, go!

(*Allow kids to play continuously. Keep track of each group's points on the dry erase board.*)

Safety Tip: Ensure that kids are moving safely and not jumping on the papers themselves.

Connect It: Congrats to the winners! You are all champions! This game was quite a challenge! When things are challenging, it's helpful to know you have friends supporting you. Let's keep encouraging and cheering for each other today!

Behind The Back Toss

Kids will work together to attempt to catch a ball their teammate throws over their heads.

Big Goal: Be a part of the team.

Leader Prep: Gather supplies.

Supplies: Ball pit balls (1 per group)

What To Do: Hi, friends! We are going to have so much fun together today! For this game, find a teammate and stand back to back. When you've found your teammate and are standing back to back, yell out, "Back to back!" (*Allow time.*) Awesome! Now, I'm going to give each pair one pit ball. On "Go," the first teammate with the ball will throw the ball into the air toward the other teammate. The other teammate will try to catch it. If you miss, pick up the ball, stand back to back again, and try to successfully toss it to your teammate. If you catch it, see how many times in a row you can catch it! Who thinks you can catch it five times in a row? Let's see!

Keep It Going: Pause play after a few minutes to allow kids to switch and make new pairs.

Leader Tip: Play as part of a pair if you have an odd number. Consider sitting in a chair to make your height more even with the kids. Allow kids to turn around, face each other, and start tossing the ball back and forth, if kids can't catch it and start to get frustrated. Each time a teammate catches the ball, that player can take one small step back, resulting in teammates getting farther away from one another.

Connect It: Great job, everyone! Wow, that was tough to catch the ball when you couldn't see it coming your way, but you worked so well with your teammates! Everyone, find your teammate and give them a high five! Isn't it fun to be a part of a team? I'm glad we are on the same team today! We are going to have the best day together!

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First Word

Kids will say the first word that comes to mind based on a specific letter provided.

Big Goal: Build connections with other kids.

Leader Prep: None

Supplies: None

What To Do: We get to play "First Word!" Everyone, say, "First Word!" (*First Word!*) To play this game, we will all begin by finding a friend! I will call out a letter from the alphabet, and then I will say, "3-2-1, Go!" In your pairs, you will both say the first word that comes to mind that starts with that letter. There is a twist! Say, "Ooo, a twist!" (*Ooo, a twist!*) I will also give you a topic, which means your word has to start with the letter I say and match the topic I give. For example, if the letter is P and the topic is fruit, then I may say the word Pineapple! If you both happen to say the same word, you will both yell, "Same word!" What do you yell? (*Same word!*) When you say the same word, give yourselves a point. If you don't guess the same word that round, keep trying! You cannot talk to your friend before saying your word! Find a friend, and let's play!

(*Play multiple rounds, instructing kids to play with new friends after three or four rounds.*)

Suggested Topics:
Games
Food
Things to do for fun
Animals
Fruit
Candy
Something in the room
Something at school
Kitchen items
Summertime items

Keep It Going: Consider allowing the kids to choose letters and topics.

Leader Tip: Monitor the kids to make sure they are not using inappropriate words or planning words to say together in advance.

Connect It: That was so fun! It was hard coming up with the same word, but you did great! You and your teammates really built connections as you tried to say the same words. That was awesome!

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Question Murals

Kids will answer questions and get to know each other better.

Big Goal: Build connections with others.

Leader Prep: Write one question on each large piece of butcher paper. Tape the papers to different walls around the room.

Suggested Questions:

What is your favorite thing to do at home?

If you could be any animal, what would you choose and why?

Who is your best friend, and what makes that person special to you?

If you could invent something, what would it be, and how would it help people?

What is something new you would like to try?

Supplies: Large pieces of butcher paper (5 per group), Markers and crayons (several), Painter's tape (1 per group)

What To Do: Let's learn more about each other today! I have taped several pieces of paper throughout the room with different questions on them. Go to each paper and either write or draw your answer to the question! Once you are finished with each question, go back to each piece of paper and look at your friends' answers!

Keep It Going: Encourage kids to come up with their own questions for new pieces of paper or allow kids to guess which kid wrote each answer.

Leader Tip: Place papers on the floor or tables if hanging them is not an option.

Younger Option: Direct kids to start at certain papers and rotate at the same time, telling them what topic is on each paper when they switch.

Connect It: Great sharing! Isn't it cool how you can like the same thing as one teammate when it comes to one question, but you are more like another kid when it comes to another question? We are all unique and special, and we have different likes and dislikes. But it is so fun to know and find out new things about one another! Let's keep building connections with each other today!

2-4-6-8! Who Do We Appreciate?

Kids will cheer one another on to help every child feel celebrated.

Big Goal: Celebrate every child.

Leader Prep: None

Supplies: None

What To Do: Today, we are going to cheer on our teammates! We will all show appreciation, meaning we will show that we like and care about each other! Everyone, say, "Appreciation!" (*Appreciation!*) To do this, we will play, "2-4-6-8! Who Do We Appreciate?" Repeat after me: "2-4-6-8!" (*2-4-6-8!*) "Who do we appreciate?" (*Who do we appreciate?*) Great job!

Let's stand in a circle. (*Allow time.*) I will say, "Ready?" Then everyone will cheer, "2-4-6-8! Who do we appreciate?" Once we say the cheer, I will say the name of someone on our team. When I call your name, you will tell the group something about yourself. You can tell us something you like to do or something you are good at. After you share, we will all say, "2-4-6-8! Who do we appreciate?" Then we will cheer your name three times!

Keep It Going: Invite kids to come up with motions for the cheer, such as clapping on the numbers and raising their hands for the second part.

Leader Tip: Assist kids as needed for coming up with fun things to share about themselves.

Connect It: That was so fun! We can always celebrate and appreciate the friends on our team! Was it fun when everyone cheered you on? (*Allow kids to respond.*) One of the great things about being on a team is that we can celebrate one another. Let's find ways to keep celebrating each other today.

Say Something New

Kids will create and use new words and phrases.

Big Goal: Build connections with other kids.

Leader Prep: Set out supplies.

Supplies: Blank paper (1 per child), Dry erase board and marker (1 per group)

What To Do: "Hello!" "How are you?" "I am fine. How are you?" Those are some ways we often start conversations with each other, but not today! Today we are going to say something new! Say something what? (*New!*)

I am going to make a list of words and phrases on the dry erase board that we might use when we are here on our team. Then we are going to come up with new words and phrases—ones that only our team will know what they mean. We will practice talking with each other with our new words and phrases. Ready? Let's get ready to say something new!

Suggested Words and Phrases:

Hello!
How are you?
I'm glad you are here!
Can you help me?
Good job!
Fun!
Awesome!
Thank you!
You are welcome.
Can I play?

Keep It Going: Invite kids to come up with their own new words and phrases.

Leader Tip: Ensure that kids are creating appropriate words.

Connect It: We have our own _____ Team language now! We can keep using these new words and phrases on our team today. Each member of our team is amazing, important, and _____! (Insert one of your team's new words.) Let's keep celebrating our team today!

Name Noodle Tag

Kids will play a game of tag to learn one another's names.

Big Goal: Learn a new name.

Leader Prep: Set out the supplies.

Supplies: Blindfold (2 per group), Pool noodles (2 per group)

What To Do: Today, we are going to play a game using these pool noodles! We will spread out around the room while one player wears this blindfold and holds this pool noodle. This player will move around, trying to tag someone with the pool noodle. If you get tagged, you have to say, "You just tagged _____!" and say your name. After the "tagger" tags five friends, we will switch it up and choose a new tagger.

Keep It Going: Allow the game to continue with two taggers.

Safety Tip: Ensure that blindfolded players walk and stay away from walls or other obstacles in the room.

Connect It: Great job at "Name Noodle Tag!" It was fun to watch you all bob, weave, and duck as you avoided getting tagged! Each of you was able to hear a lot of new names, so see how many names you can remember as we learn more today!