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Relationship building activities

As educators, we all know the importance of building positive relationships with and among our students. Good relationships can help students develop a growth mindset, encourage kindness in the classroom, increase student learning, improve student confidence, and make your classroom feel welcoming. However, we also know that creating these relationships in our classrooms can be challenging, especially when we have limited time and resources. This is where these fast relationship building activities come in! In this post, I've created a list of 8 relationship building activities that can easily fit into your busy schedule, help you connect with your kiddos, and will help your students bond with each other. Relationship Building Activities: 5 minutes or less These relationship-building activities are super fast, so they can fit into any short gaps you have during the day. Each takes 5 minutes or less and requires no prep. 1. Non-Academic Turn & Talk If you're a teacher, you've probably heard of turn and talk, a strategy where students turn to each other and answer a question or discuss a topic. Usually, turn and talk is used in an academic context. However, you can use it in a non-academic way to enhance relationships in your classroom! To do that, ask a non-academic question, such as What is your favorite color?. Then students can turn to a partner and respond! This is an easy way to get your kids to share and take very little time. 2. Hugs, High Five, or Handshake For this activity, each student can choose to give you a hug, a high five or a handshake. This is most often used as students arrive for the day or leave at the end of the day, but it can be used at any time. For example, as students leave for special offers, at the beginning of the break, before students enter the cafeteria for lunch, at the beginning of each small group, or any other time you want a quick dose of connection with your children. 3. End-of-the-day Exit Slip We all know that exit slips are given at the end of lessons to check for students' understanding. The end-of-day exit, however, doesn't slip about academic context. Instead, an end-of-the-day exit slip is a non-academic question that students must answer before they go home. They could reply in writing or in person (e.g. tell them their answer when they go out for termination). Either way, an end-of-the-day exit slip is a great way to connect with your kids after a busy school day. Some questions you can ask are: What was your favorite part of the day? What was the best thing you learned today? What's a nice thing you did for someone today? What do you hope to learn about tomorrow? What was the best thing you did during special offers today? Relationship Building Activities: 15 Minutes These Relationship Building takes slightly more time, but is still relatively fast. Use these when you need a boost to your student relationships, but only have a little bit of time. 1. Just Like Me Game If you want to spend some time helping your students learn about each other while having some fun, the Just Like Me game is perfect. Here's how to play: Let your students stand in a circle. One at a time, students step forward and say a fact about themselves (e.g. I have a sister.). If that statement is true for other students, they come up a step and say just like me! The next student steps forward and says his facts. Continue until all students have had a chance to attend (and you can continue, if you have time). 2. Round Robin Share For this activity, students also share something about themselves. However, unlike the Just Like Me game, students can share a little more during this activity. Here's how: Let your students sit in a circle. Ask a non-academic question. (e.g. What is your favorite season? Why?) Walk around the circle and give each student the opportunity to answer the question while the rest of the class listens. Optional: If you want, you can give some other students a chance to make a comment or ask a question after each student shares. Relationship Building Activities: 30 minutes These relationship-building activities take a little longer, usually about 30 minutes. If you feel your relationships with your students need a large dose of positivity, try these activities. 1. Mystery Student Lunch Bunch This activity is super fun, and will improve the behavior of your classroom! Here's how: Each week you draw a student's name (or more than one, if you want). I recommend writing each student's name on a popsicle stick and putting sticks in a cup/jar/etc (which you can also use to invite random students to answer questions during class). The chosen student is a mystery to the class – only you know who it is! Throughout the week, observe the behavior of the mysterious student. If the mystery student had positive behavior all week, then he or she may have lunch gang on Friday! You can also let the student (or students) choose friends to join them for lunch gangs, or you can make it a full class lunch in the classroom. In addition, if the mystery student does not serve lunch gangs, do not reveal the student's name to the class. This will only make the student feel ashamed and can even lead to worse behavior. This not only motivates students to behave during the week, but it also gives you a chance to connect with the students who serve lunch gangs. I call it a win-win situation! 2. Get to know you board games This activity gives students the opportunity to learn about each other and play a game at the same time! During this game, students take turns rolling a die and moving many spaces. Then they answer the question of the space they are landing on. The questions are all designed to help students learn about each other and create connections. Click here to get the free game board! 3. All About Me Initials These All About Me Initials is a great way to get students to share more about themselves in a fun way. To do this activity, give each student a letter for each initial (so I would get a V and an S, because my name is Victoria Skinner). Students can then write or redraw themselves in these letters. You can either give students specific things to write/draw (such as their favorite foods, their family, what they like to do, etc.) or leave it open. After students have completed their initials, you can hang them up in the classroom or in the hallway! All of these relationship building activities will help you build a positive classroom community. You can use them from the very first week of school until the very last day of the year. I hope you found something useful for you and your students to use! If you need any reminders, get this cheat sheet to help you. Do you have any other great ways to build relationships in the classroom? If so, send me an email or leave a comment below! With Valentine's Day around the corner, love and relationships are top of mind for many of us. And for those of us in a relationship, it's a good reminder not to take our partners for granted and to look for ways to strengthen our relationship further. Here are five powerful relationship activities you can try today to do just that. #1: Try something new together. On our second date, my now fiancé and I went to Bingo. We were both total beginners and completely outside our comfort zones. There were at least 300 people in the hall, various tables, sections and machines, and so many different booklets. Of course we were completely lost! Thankfully, we asked a lot of questions and took our time, and managed to get the hang of things. I even won \$91 a round! What was special about this date was that it really felt like a shared experience. We had to figure things out together (like the order of things!) and trust each other as we shared and conquered who looked at which booklets. Three years later, that night stands out in my mind as one of my favorite times together. If you can try something new with your partner, go for it! Here are some ideas: Go to a class of some sort: cooking, ballroom dance, Zumba, yoga Do something you wouldn't normally: Paint Nite is a good one! Travel together somewhere you've never been #2: Unplug and just be together. This is by no means a new idea, but spending time away from technology can do wonders to strengthen your relationship. Even checking your phone a few times or catching glimpses of TV in the background during dinner can relax you from from calls and each other. Even worse, it can make you dislike each other. Instead, try to spend time together every day that is completely free of technology. One of my favorite ways to do this is to sit in the hot tub in the evenings. The water makes it a forced technology-free zone, and we usually stay out there for at least one cycle of jets that is about 15 minutes. We often stop talking about our day in more detail, sharing things that have been on our mind, and asking questions we wouldn't have asked if we were still caught in the night's to-dos. Some other ideas read together before bed and go for a walk together without your phones. #3: Work together towards a common goal. Like the idea of trying something new together, working towards a common goal really helps get you and your partner on the same page, working together as a team. If that work is towards a common goal, even better! You will strengthen your relationship and be productive at the same time. With our wedding for 6 months away, we made a decision over the holidays to prioritize eating better and exercising more. We want to look and feel our best not only for the big day, but for our honeymoon afterwards. And a season of eating and lazing wasn't exactly giving us energy either. We bought an exercise bike, and decided to both use it and start eating cleaner. We have stuck to this and supported each other while we do so. Some specific examples are: Doing weekly meal planning and cooking. Sometimes we cook together which is fun and makes things go much faster! Try new, healthy foods and recipes. Cue idea #1! Spending time together – while Curtis is on an exercise bike, I'll keep him company and work on a puzzle (I work out earlier in the day instead!) It's been a lifestyle shift, but we're both determined to be healthier and it's good motivation for us to each do our part to support each other. #4: Be vulnerable. This one is easier said than done, but it can be one of the most powerful steps you can take in your relationship. (And if you need some inspiration, pretty much any of Brené Brown's books can help!) The key is to be honest, authentic and open about something you want or need to share with your partner. An example from my life is my entrepreneurial journey. As I have shared before, I left my business job in early 2017 to continue growing my Etsy store and blog full time. In my new world, I often feel vulnerable. And while I sometimes feel weak or ashamed, I have learned that it takes real courage to share these fears with people in my support system. Whether it's guilt, fear for the future, or just a bad day, I'm doing my best to be vulnerable and open with my fiancé and let him in how I feel. It has helped our communication and closer to us Reflect on whether there is anything you can share with your partner and be more open about. In which areas can you be more vulnerable? #5: Express gratitude. I love this topic so much that I've written two posts about it (3 Meaningful Ways to Express Thanks and 5 Easy Ways to Practice Gratitude Every Day). Sometimes it can feel easier to thank a colleague or a friend than our partners. We are just in the habit of doing so, and we do not take their actions for granted. With our partners, on the other hand, it's different. Of course, we expect more of them and so many of the things we do for each other are ingrained in who we are. But because of this (not despite it!), we should express thanks to the people closest to us who are our biggest supporters and fiercest champions. They're the ones we should recognize without a thought. How can you express gratitude to your partner today? Something like a sweet text, a heartfelt word, or a candid note is sure to go far. This will not only make them happier, but it will reinforce what behaviors and actions matter most to you. So there you have it – five relationship building activities that you can try with your partner today. If you try any of these, leave me a comment below! And please share your favorite ways to strengthen your relationship. I'd love to hear it! Related post: How to communicate with your spouse (about anything!) 22 of the best cheap date ideas to try this weekend's interfaith relationships: How to talk about religion what to wear when meeting your boyfriend's parents for the first time what men find irresistible (That's not what you think!) Your place, his, or somewhere new? How to choose where to live the best relationship advice to my younger Self 10 of the funniest Date Night Ideas for married couples TwitterFacebookPinterestLinkedInEmail TwitterFacebookPinterestLinkedInEmail