



Justice Leaders
C O L L A B O R A T I V E

**THE RELATIONSHIPS INITIATIVE
K - 12**

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Many of the activities found in The Relationships Initiative are commonly used in youth spaces, extra and co-curricular activities, summer camps, afterschool programs, and educational settings.

Justice Leaders Collaborative has compiled, tweaked, and edited a number of activities that we have led and participated in through our roles as teachers, youth workers, afterschool programmers, social workers, and parents. We have also created a number of new activities that are included in this handbook. We do not claim ownership of any of the activities found in this handbook.

Activities and handouts are for educational purposes only.

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INTRODUCTION

All educators know the importance of relationships in how students learn, behave, and feel about school and themselves. Studies find that relationships with teachers and peers significantly influence students' experiences in schools—especially for low-income students, students of color, students with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ students, and students in need of mental health support. And yet, too often there is not adequate time, space, or opportunity in schools to build the kinds of relationships we know matter for students.

Almost a decade ago, a school superintendent was innovative enough to know there had to be a better way and commissioned Shayla Reese Griffin, PhD, MSW—co-founder of [Justice Leaders Collaborative](#)—to create an intentional, strategic plan that would provide educators with two full weeks of relationship building activities, exercises, and lessons. Their vision: pause on the academics, testing, and review of syllabi, and start the school year by focusing on truly getting to know students' lives, needs, and interests and helping them build relationships and community with one another.

Since that time, many individual educators, some who were part of the very first cohort, have been using The Relationships Initiative every single school year. Even as school leaders have come and gone, as they've changed buildings, roles, and grade levels, these committed educators continue pulling out The Relationships Initiative every fall because truly attending to relationships has transformed their practice and transformed student learning.

Over the past few years, Justice Leaders Collaborative has worked to support educators, schools, and districts through a global pandemic, in an increasingly polarized country, as youth mental health crises and school violence have escalated. It has become clear that now more than ever educators around the country are in need of resources to support them in creating schools where students facing untold and unprecedented challenges feel seen, heard, supported, and safe. We know that putting time into making sure our schools are places where students feel they belong is essential to any academic or behavioral goals we have. This revised version of The Relationships Initiative, in collaboration with [Michigan Learning Channel](#), is our contribution to this effort.

PLANNING

HOW TO USE

The Relationships Initiative consists of more than 70 activities divided into 9 topic areas. There are no limits to how The Relationships Initiative can be used. If entire school buildings would like to work together to implement it in the way it was originally designed, it can serve as the primary content during the first week or two of school (see more about how to do this on pg. 8). If you are an individual educator who would like to focus on cultivating better relationships in your specific classroom you can put together a series of activities that work for you or sprinkle various activities throughout the semester. How you use it is entirely up to you!

We should also note that while The Relationships Initiative provides a great foundation for cultivating supportive classrooms, it can (and probably should!) be paired with other efforts that seek to foster belonging, inclusion, and connection, such as those specifically focused on social and emotional learning, mindfulness, restorative practices, trauma informed practices, talking circles, diversity, equity, and inclusion, or even similar activities from other sources.

If you have better ideas for how to build relationships in your classroom, use them! And don't just use them, share them with your colleagues, your administrators, the superintendent, and district consultants. In fact, send them to us so we can add them to this handbook!

Many of the practices and structures found in The Relationships Initiative should be incorporated in classrooms throughout the school year such as feeling check-ins, closing circles, debriefs, regularly reviewing and practicing norms, and the playlist of digital resources from Michigan Learning Channel. It is not the intention of this initiative to make everyone do the same thing in the exact same way. Rather, the goal is to provide enough resources that are simple enough to implement so that everyone will do *something* deep and meaningful with their students.

The only intention of The Relationships Initiative is to help students and educators have better, more connected experiences in schools—use it in whatever way achieves this goal!

For more support in using The Relationships Initiative in your specific context contact us at:

<https://www.justiceleaderscollaborative.com/contact-us>

TOPIC AREAS

The Relationships Initiative consists of more than 70 activities divided into 9 topic areas:

- **Breaking the Ice**—fun activities to get participants working together
- **Checking In**—easy activities to encourage participants to share how they are doing in the present moment
- **Recognizing Commonalities**—activities and lessons designed to reveal the many similarities participants share
- **Building Foundational Skills**—activities and lessons meant to support participants' awareness of their own emotions and help them develop skills in listening and sharing with others
- **Creating Community Norms**—activities and lessons designed to help participants develop their own norms of behavior and interaction
- **Sharing Who We Are**—activities and lessons that encourage deeper personal sharing for authentic relationship building
- **Setting Goals**—activities and lessons intended to help participants think about their lives, goals, and aspirations beyond the present moment
- **Creating Inclusive Spaces**—activities and lessons designed to interrupt bias & bullying
- **Affirming One Another**—activities that encourage participants to share what they appreciate about one another

See each section for more information.



DIGITAL EDITION

in Partnership with

Michigan Learning Channel

The new digital edition of The Relationships Initiative, available from the Michigan Learning Channel (michiganlearning.org/relationships), includes curated resources meant to support deeper conversations about identity, diversity, inclusion, community, care, learning, and visioning. When you navigate through the digital version of The Relationships Initiative, you'll find playlists of videos, along with journaling and discussion prompts for each section of the handbook. These videos are meant to prompt thinking, generate inquiry, and open up conversation as you work through the activities with your students. Use them before or after related activities, or any time you want to insert an inspirational, teachable, or helpful story. We recommend previewing any of the videos to ensure that they will be appropriate, relevant, and helpful rather than harmful for any of your students.

Additionally, these supplemental videos can be great opportunities to introduce and practice visible thinking routines in your classroom! We have included links in the digital curriculum to our collection of Michigan Learning Channel videos which are meant to help guide your classes through these strategies. Again, use them as you need them and remember that you can come back to them throughout the year!

You'll also find a playlist with mindfulness videos that we have created for year-round use and especially for classrooms participating in The Relationships Initiative. We encourage you to pause and play one of our mindful moments any time you feel like your class could use a chance to sit, breathe, and practice mindfulness – and we hope that this practice can show up in your classroom all year long.

Finally, we have curated resources for additional project-based learning around identity, community, and mental health for all grade levels. If you're able to extend your time with this content and empower your students to research and learn more deeply about some of the concepts that The Relationships Initiative invites them to think about, you will likely find our Michigan Learning Channel and PBS student-led media toolkits to be useful.

We also want to amplify student voices and offer our platform for any classrooms seeking an authentic audience for projects, so whenever your students collaborate to create podcasts, video messages, photo galleries, and other expressions of their learning and stories, please send them to the production and engagement teams at Michigan Learning Channel (find the submission guide at michiganlearning.org/relationships) so that we can share them across our state.

BUILDING-LEVEL PLANNING

For more support on how to use The Relationships Initiative in your specific context contact us at <https://www.justiceleaderscollaborative.com/contact-us>.

If you are planning to use The Relationships Initiative at the building level—meaning all or many educators in your school will be facilitating lessons with students over the course of days or week—it is going to take a bit of planning and coordination to make work!

There are four things to consider in a model like this:

1. How to scaffold experiences in developmentally appropriate ways

Some activities in The Relationships Initiative are fun low-stakes exercises while others ask participants to share deeply about their lives in ways that may reveal trauma, abuse, or mental health challenges. It is not appropriate to start with the riskier activities. Instead, it is essential to first build trust and comfort and establish norms and foundational skills for dialogue and reflection.

2. How to avoid repetition for student participants

One of the ways introductory material often goes awry in schools is that students are asked to do the same activities over and over again in every class, which is just boring. While repetition cannot always be completely avoided, one of the goals of The Relationships Initiative is to provide enough variation in exercises and activities that students can do different things in most class periods every day for many days in a row. Getting as close to this as possible will take coordination on the part of the adults in the building. You should know what your colleagues are doing and plan around and with each other.

3. How to make sure educators learn about and share with each of their students

Part of the goal of The Relationships Initiative is for educators and students to learn about each other. This means that building level models must be designed to ensure that each educator has the opportunity to learn meaningful things about their students and share with them authentically, rather than being designed in a way that only a few teachers get to do the more high-risk sharing activities.

4. How to make this work in your specific context

Every classroom and school is different and context matters. For example, if you are not in a place of readiness to have agreed upon community norms be reflected in the behavioral expectations and disciplinary procedures of your school, it would not make sense to engage students in an activity in which they collectively develop community norms.

Moreover, there may be some activities that individual educators do not feel comfortable facilitating due to their own lack of knowledge, skill, background, or experience. It also would not make sense for educators to try to lead these activities.

Finally, there are some activities that do not make sense for the specific population you serve or the specific ways in which your school day is structured. How many class periods do you have per day? How long is each class? Are some days half-days? All of these things will need to be taken into account.

Sample 2-Week (10 Day) Scaffolded Schedules

(*Each day/session should include a Breaking the Ice or Checking In activity*)

Version A.

Scaffolded Topics	Elementary	Secondary
Recognizing Commonalities	3-5 days	1 day
Building Foundational Skills	1-5 days	1 day
Creating Community Norms	1-5 days	1-2 days
Sharing Who We Are	5-10 days	4-5 days
Creating Inclusive Spaces	1-4 days	1-2 days
Setting Goals	1-5 days	1 day
Affirming One Another	1-10 days	1 day

Version B.

Scaffolded Topics	Elementary	Secondary
Recognizing Commonalities	3-5 days	1 day
Creating Community Norms	1-5 days	1 day
Building Foundational Skills	1-5 days	1-2 days
Sharing Who We Are	5-10 days	4-5 days
Creating Inclusive Spaces	1-4 days	1-2 days
Setting Goals	1-5 days	1 day
Affirming One Another	1-10 days	1 day

Version C.

Scaffolded Topics	Elementary	Secondary
Building Foundational Skills	1-5 days	1 day
Creating Community Norms	1-5 days	1-2 days
Sharing Who We Are	5-10 days	4-5 days
Recognizing Commonalities	3-5 days	1 day
Setting Goals	1-5 days	1 day
Creating Inclusive Spaces	1-4 days	1-2 days
Affirming One Another	1-10 days	1 day

The Relationships Initiative can be used in a variety of orders beyond these sample versions. However, be cautious to make sure you have established some Foundational Skills and Community Norms *before* asking participants to engage in deep personal sharing of who they are. Many topic areas such as Recognizing Commonalities, Building Foundational Skills, Breaking the Ice, Checking In, and Affirming One Another can be incorporated throughout the year.

Once you have a rough idea of how you would like to scaffold the learning for students it is time to figure out what each educator is going to do each hour of the day. If your building is divided into small learning communities you could use the same format in each leaning community.

SECONDARY | Building Level Method 1. Every educator/facilitator does the same lesson at the same time. So, for example, first class period all educators in the building do the Name Dash and Mix It Up. The benefit of this model is that fewer people are needed to create one master schedule that everyone abides by. The drawback is that all educators/facilitators would be responsible for doing all the activities chosen, rather than repeating activities they like or feel most comfortable leading with each of their classes. The other challenge is making sure all educators do a variety of the activities with each group of students they see so they get to know and share with all of their students.

SECONDARY | Building Level Sample Method 1. Version A.

	1 ST PERIOD	2 nd PERIOD	3 rd PERIOD	4 th PERIOD
DAY 1 Recognizing Commonalities	Breaking the Ice: Name Dash	Breaking the Ice: Name Adjective Action	Breaking the Ice: Name Matching	Breaking the Ice: Name Warp Speed
	Mix It Up	Finding Commonalities	I Have a Link	Web of Connection
DAY 2 Building Foundational Skills	Breaking the Ice: Name Warp Speed	Breaking the Ice: Name Matching	Breaking the Ice: Name Adjective Action	Breaking the Ice: Name Dash
	Identifying Our Feelings	Processing Hard Feelings	Listening Deeply	Dialogue v. Debate

SECONDARY | Building Level Method 2. Every educator or department picks their favorite lesson(s) that they will do all day with all of their classes. For example, perhaps all English classes will do Name Dash and Mix It Up on the first day, while all math teachers do Name Matching and I Have a Link.

In this version, students would get through the same activities each day but in different hours and different orders. The benefit of this model is that educators can get comfortable leading more limited content. If they are part of the planning process, they could also advocate for the activities they are most excited about leading. The drawback is that it may be harder to coordinate, it may be harder to avoid repetition for some students, and some lessons (like Creating Community Norms) may need to be done in a particular order that would require Method 1.

SECONDARY | Building Level Sample Method 2. Version A.

	ENGLISH	MATH	SCIENCE	ELECTIVE 1
DAY 1 Recognizing Commonalities	Breaking the Ice: Name Dash	Breaking the Ice: Name Adjective Action	Breaking the Ice: Name Matching	Breaking the Ice: Name Warp Speed
	Mix It Up	Finding Commonalities	I Have a Link	Web of Connection
DAY 2 Building Foundational Skills	Breaking the Ice: Name Warp Speed	Breaking the Ice: Name Matching	Breaking the Ice: Name Adjective Action	Breaking the Ice: Name Dash
	Dialogue v. Debate	Identifying Our Feelings	Processing Hard Feelings	Listening Deeply

ELEMENTARY | Building Level Method For elementary teachers who keep the same students in their classrooms all day long, planning will be more straight forward. You can simply pick the activities you like best that work for the population you serve and scaffold them to meet the needs of your students. One thing to consider is working with electives teachers to make sure you are not repeating the same content.

ELEMENTARY | Building Level Sample

	TOPIC	ACTIVITY
DAY 1	Breaking the Ice	Name Whip
	Recognizing Commonalities	Mix It Up
	Building Foundational Skills	Identifying our Feelings
	Building Foundational Skills	Processing Hard Feelings
DAY 2	Breaking the Ice	Name Warp Speed
	Recognizing Commonalities	I Have a Link
	Building Foundational Skills	Dialogue v. Debate
	Building Foundational Skills	How to Listen

CLASSROOM-LEVEL PLANNING

Perhaps you are a classroom teacher in a building where no one else is planning to use The Relationships Initiative. Not to worry! You can still utilize it in your class for your students! If this is the case, you should still make sure to:

1. Scaffold experiences in developmentally appropriate ways

Some activities in the Relationships Initiative are fun low-stakes exercises while others ask participants to share deeply about their lives in ways that may reveal trauma, abuse, or mental health challenges. It is not appropriate to start with the riskier activities. Instead, it will first be important to build trust and comfort and establish norms and foundational skills for dialogue and reflection.

2. Consider your specific context

Every classroom and school is different and context matters. For example, if you are not in a place of readiness to have agreed upon community norms be reflected in the behavioral expectations and disciplinary procedures of your classroom, it would not make sense to engage students in an activity in which they collectively develop community norms.

Moreover, there may be some activities that you do not feel comfortable facilitating due to your own lack of knowledge, skill, background, or experience. It also would not make sense for you to do these.

Finally, there are some activities that do not make sense for the specific population you serve or the specific ways in which your school day is structured. How many class periods do you have a day? How long is each class? Are some days half-days? All of these things will need to be taken into account as you plan. Then you can simply pick the activities you like best that work for the population you serve and scaffold them to meet the needs of your students. It would still be a good idea to ask other educators in the building if they are planning to use The Relationships Initiative in order to avoid repetition for students you share where reasonable. For example, if another teacher in the same learning community or an electives teacher your students visit is planning to use it, coordinating between the two of you would be ideal.

See sample schedules in Building-Level Planning section above.

ADDITIONAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- Always explain to participants the agenda and objectives. What will they be doing and why?
- Once norms have been established review them every single session and regularly reflect:
 - How are we doing with our norms?
 - What do we need to tweak, shift, or change?
 - How can we better support each other in abiding by our norms?
- Consider how Icebreaker and Check-In activities fit with certain content and topic areas. For example, “Do Nothing” is meant to get participants thinking about how they impact others. This may be a good activity to pair with days you are developing Community Norms.
- Always do a closing debrief circle for each activity
- Consider extending every activity by including a relevant book, video, song or other multimedia. See the [Michigan Learning Channel](#)’s playlist for ideas.
- Be prepared to reach out for support from social workers, counselors and other professionals should students report feelings of depression, suicidal thoughts, abuse, neglect, etc.
- Set a tone of collaboration, connection, and fun, rather than competition for all activities.
- Ask participants for feedback! This can look like:
 - an official evaluation form (see appendix for sample questions; consider using a virtual system if appropriate for your community)
 - minute papers
 - thumbs up/thumbs down/thumbs sideways
 - opening with reflecting on how the previous session or day went
 - closing each day with asking how the day went

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION & SOCIAL JUSTICE

The Relationships Initiative stems from our commitment to making sure all students from all backgrounds feel a deep sense of belonging and connection in their schools and with their educators and peers. The majority of activities in this handbook do not specifically delve into issues of race, gender, or other social identities. However, facilitators should know that part of getting to know each other authentically will likely include students sharing about their unique life experiences related to their identities. You should be prepared to engage in and navigate these conversations.

Moreover, one of the most important goals of any good diversity, equity, inclusion or social justice effort is to *do no harm*. This means educators and facilitators need to be thoughtful and reflective about what they are asking of their specific students and how students from various backgrounds might experience these exercises. If you think something will harm some of your students, don't do it! Some examples of things you should always consider:

- **How do ability and disability matter for this activity?**
 - Will my Deaf and Blind students be able to fully participate?
 - Will students with mobility disabilities be able to participate?
 - Will students with learning disabilities be able to participate?
 - Will students with cognitive disabilities be able to participate?
- **How do class and family structure matter for this activity?**
 - Will students from low-income backgrounds be able to do this activity?
 - Does this activity presume students have adults at home who can help them?
 - Does this activity presume students have access to material resources?
- **How do other identities such as race, gender, religion, and sexual orientation, matter for this activity?**
 - Am I grouping students from marginalized backgrounds in ways that will make them feel more isolated?
 - Should I partner with an adult from a different background than my own to lead this activity?
 - Am I making assumptions about students' identities or backgrounds?
 - How are my own biases shaping my expectations or assumptions?
 - Who can I check in with to make sure this activity is not problematic for my students?

FACILITATOR ROLE

The role of the person facilitating these activities (teacher, staff person, youth worker, or student leader) is to create an environment where participants feel they are included, valued, and belong. If you are interested in learning more about how to facilitate difficult conversations we recommend [*Race Dialogues: A Facilitator's Guide to Tackling the Elephant in the Classroom* by Donna Rich Kaplowitz, Sheri Seyka, and Justice Leaders Collaborative Co-Founder, Shayla Reese Griffin](#). A few tips to get you started:

- Facilitators should participate in all the activities they lead. Relationships go two ways. You cannot have connections with students who do not have connections with you. It is not fair or appropriate to ask students to share about their lives, experiences, hopes, and dreams if you are not willing to do the same. The goal of this project is not for you to collect information about your students to store away, but rather to engage with them, learn with them, and grow with them. In this model everyone is a teacher and a learner. Sometimes it will not be possible for you to participate as you will need to keep track of time or circulate to respond to questions. One way you can address this is to use your own life and experiences to model for students what you are expecting of them. Facilitators should also model opting out of questions or sharing that for any reason feels triggering or unsafe.
- Facilitators should always be thinking about the backgrounds, experiences and identities of participants and the level of risk and resources specific activities may entail. This should be considered in grouping, in debrief questions, and even in what you ask of participants. For example, if you ask students to bring something from home in order to do an activity you are inherently making something more difficult for lower-income students or students who do not have adults at home who can help them. To the extent possible consider how students' race, class, family structure, ability status, sexual orientation, culture, and other identities may make specific activities or exercise harmful or inappropriate. If you are unsure, check-in with someone you trust. Do not do an activity you think will harm your students.
- Most all of the activities require that participants sit in a circle, work in groups, or move around the room. If you are planning to do multiple days of relationship building it will save time to arrange your room appropriately.

PARTICIPANT EXPECTATIONS

The purpose of The Relationships Initiative is for students and educators to build a foundation of trust, support, and community that will sustain them for the rest of the year. The expectation is that everyone participate in the best way they can while maintaining their own emotional and physical health.

For different students this may look different depending on life circumstances, history, mental health, disability status, social identities, and more. Because facilitators do not know everything about individual students' lives, health, and needs, participants should always be given choice as they engage in The Relationships Initiative. This could look like "passing" on certain questions or choosing not to share out to the large group after a pair-share. While participants should have choice in how they show up, the expectation should be that they not engage in behaviors that are disruptive or harmful to others. Establishing norms or guidelines early in the process can help create an inclusive space for all (see Creating Community Norms pg. 51).

SAMPLE EXPLANATION FOR STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

We believe that one of the keys to your success as students is having good, supportive relationships with your teachers and your classmates. We care so much about every one of you and want you all to have opportunities to be the absolute best student you can be. Sometimes, though, we are not always successful at our goal because we have not spent enough time really getting to know each other.

So this year we are going to do things differently! For the first (insert # of days) of school we are going to focus on really learning about each other—our names, our families, our likes, our dislikes, what we're good at, what we struggle with.

We will also be working together to come up with some of the community norms/guidelines/ground rules we will be using this year to make sure this is a safe learning community for you all. Often teachers tell you what the rules of a class are. We think that you all are very smart and capable and that you should have say in what they should be! Our hope is that as we do this together, we will be able to better hold each other accountable for how we treat each other, how we behave, and what we say.

Each day/class we will be doing activities related to different topics. Sometimes the activities will involve the whole class, sometimes you will break into small groups, sometimes you will do or write things by yourself. We know that we all learn in very different ways so we hope there will be at least one thing that each of you really likes.

It is going to be very important that you all listen closely to the directions and to each other and that you take turns and treat each other kindly. Because we all have different life experiences some of these activities may be riskier for some of you than others. Our goal is to create a brave space where everyone feels they can fully participate, but if there is anything that you don't feel comfortable sharing you can choose not to. Our hope is that by the end all of you feel like this is a place where you belong and are supported and that there are peers and adults in this building you can count on.

At the end you are going to put together a final portfolio/project to share with your classmates and your teachers. We can't wait to see them! Let's get started!

CULMINATING PORTFOLIOS & PROJECTS

Some educators or schools may decide to have participants compile their Relationships Initiative work into a culminating portfolio or project. Final portfolios can be a good opportunity for participants to reflect back on all they have done and revisit later in the year, for teachers to review what they have learned from and about individual students, and to share with each other as a culminating activity at the end of The Relationships Initiative days or weeks. They can also provide an opportunity for students to get credit for their work, although educators should be very cautious not to “grade” students on these activities.

If portfolios are collected for credit or review make sure to return them to participants. A number of the activities in The Relationships Initiative would be appropriate to include. For group projects or other activities that cannot be kept individually to include in a portfolio consider taking pictures that can be shared with all participants to include.

Other ideas for culminating projects include: podcasts, videos, voice messages, community presentations, school-wide rallies, or photo galleries.

We encourage you to share your culminating projects with the production and engagement teams at Michigan Learning Channel (find the submission guide at michiganlearning.org/relationships) so that we can share them across our state. **Be sure to get consent from students in advance!**

WAYS TO SHARE

Most of the activities in The Relationships Initiative invite participants to share with each other. While the activities have suggestions about how sharing can occur, facilitators should feel free to engage in any number of approaches to grouping and sharing based on the relationships, comfort level, and needs of their specific group. The goal should always be to create spaces that are as safe as possible for all participants. Establishing community norms (pg. 51) and starting with low-stakes sharing in pairs or smaller groups and gradually moving to higher vulnerability sharing will help in this process.

How to Group Participants

There are many ways to pair and group participants. Keep in mind the friend circle, race, class, and gender make-ups of groups. For example, if you are asking students to share about their personal lives, it may not be appropriate for there to be only one girl in a group of boys, or only one student of color in a group. Moreover, if students consistently choose the same partner you should consider how to assign them to someone new next time. Remember the goal is to give students diverse experiences. Sometimes they should get to be with people they know and choose; sometimes they should be with people they do not know very well; sometimes they should be with people very similar to them; and sometimes they should be with people very different from them.

Some possible methods include:

- Counting off
- Picking names from a hat or list
- Allowing participants to pick their own partner
- Turning to the person next to you
- Finding someone you do not know well
- Forming a group of people who know each other very well
- Finding someone you have something in common with

How to Invite Sharing

There are also many ways to invite participants to share their reflections. Facilitators should be aware of how much individual participants are participating and make sure they are doing everything possible to balance sharing time. Some possible approaches:

- **Think, Pair, Share** | let participants reflect on their own individually, then put them in a pair or small group to share, then invite some or all to share with the entire group; alternatively put two or more smaller groups together to make a bigger group
- **Large Group Share** | invite participants to share reflections in the large group; it is best to sit in a circle
- **Gallery Walks** | ask participants to display their work on walls or tables around the room and invite them to walk around and look at the “gallery”
- **Post-It Notes** | invite participants to share reflections on post-it notes and then post them on the walls for others to walk around and read
- **Fishbowls** | invite a small group of participants to form a circle in the middle of the room and engage in sharing together; if others outside of the circle would like to add something to the discussion, they can “tap out” one of the circle participants and take their place
- **Inviting** | facilitators call on specific participants, perhaps asking specifically for volunteers they haven’t heard from or calling on people by name until every person has had a chance to share
- **Spokesperson** | invite groups to decide on a representative to share out

KEY

The Relationships Initiative K-12 is intended to be used by educators and schools K-12. However, not every activity is appropriate for all grade levels or all students. The following key is meant to provide some guidance on which activities could be used with which grades, the level of vulnerability required for various activities so that they are appropriately scaffolded, and whether or not the activity can be included in a culminating portfolio or virtual school model. The key is meant to provide guidance, but educators should use any activities they think will be useful for the students and communities they serve.

E | Elementary (Grades K-5)

S | Secondary (Grades 6-12)

L | Low vulnerability required

M | Moderate vulnerability required*

H | High vulnerability required*

P | Can be included in a culminating portfolio

V | Can be adapted to be done virtually**

*During moderate and high vulnerability activities participants may reveal experiences of abuse, neglect, or trauma. Be prepared to provide follow up support with social workers, counselors, and other mental health professionals. It will also be important to talk to participants about the importance of *not* sharing or gossiping about other people's stories or experiences. Creating Community Norms may be an ideal time to discuss the importance of being a trustworthy community member.

**The Relationships Initiative was originally developed before Covid-19 and was designed to be used in face-to-face settings. However, with a little innovation, many of the activities can be adapted for virtual learning and online programs. If you are planning to use The Relationships Initiative in a virtual setting we encourage you to explore resources such as Jam Boards and Breakout Groups to allow students to engage in as many of the activities as possible.

ACTIVITIES

BREAKING THE ICE

The activities in this section include fun icebreakers and name games that help students get comfortable sharing with each other while learning each other's names. After all, it's pretty hard to build relationships with someone whose name you don't know! All of the activities in this section require very low levels of vulnerability but pretty high levels of fun—a great foundation for deeper relationship building. Plan to use these early in the year and feel free to return to them throughout the semester any time your class is in need of a bit of energy!

SUPPORTING MEDIA



<https://www.michiganlearning.org/icebreakers-and-name-games/>

NAME DASH

MATERIALS |

None

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to learn each other's names and build community by having fun together.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Ask participants to stand or sit in a circle.

Each participant says or signs their name in the order they are standing in as clearly as possible so that everyone in the circle can hear and/or see them.

Continue going around the circle, saying or signing your name, increasing the speed until you do it as fast as you can as a group.

Do the dash clockwise and counter-clockwise and time which way is faster.

Then repeat doing it as slowly as possible.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- Why is it important to know each other's names?
- How did we treat each other when we were doing this? Were we kind?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/icebreakers-and-name-games/>

NOTES |

ACCESSIBILITY: This activity can be done using sign language and can be done seated or standing



NAME ACTION ADJECTIVE

MATERIALS |

None

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OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are to learn each other's names and to learn interesting facts about each other while having fun together.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Ask participants to stand or sit in a circle

Invite each person to think of a verb or adjective that describes something about themselves *and* begins with the same letter or sound as their first name. They should then think of an action they can do to symbolize that verb or adjective.

- Example: "My name is Shayla, and I like to Shimmy" (verb: shimmy; action: doing a shimmy)

Invite the first person to introduce themselves with their name, adjective/verb, and action. Next the person directly next to them will go and so on. Each new person must introduce all the people who went before them, using their name, adjective and action, starting with the first person and ending with themselves.

- Example: "That is Shayla, she likes to shimmy (student shimmies); That is Dave he likes to dance (student dances); I am Mimi and I can merengue (student merengues)"

If people forget someone's name, action, or adjective others in the circle can help them. You may want to say: "The game is to see if we can get everyone's name as a group. So if someone is having a hard time jump in! Help them! We are all a team here, so let's work together!"

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What did we learn about each other in the process?
- How did we treat each other when we were doing this? Were we kind?

NOTES |

ACCESSIBILITY: This activity can be done seated or standing



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/icebreakers-and-name-games/>

NAME MATCHING

MATERIALS |

note cards and writing
utensils

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are to learn each other's names and to learn interesting facts about each other while having fun together.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Give participants a note card or small piece of paper

Ask participants to write one word that begins with the first letter or sound of their last name that reflects something about themselves. For example, Quinten Brown might write the word: Bold.

In a circle ask everyone to say their first and last name, the word, and the connection they have to the word they chose.

Then ask everyone to throw their card in the circle or collect them.

Using a timer, ask a volunteer to gather the cards in the middle of the circle and see how fast they can return the correct card to the person who wrote it.

Do this multiple times with different participants volunteering to collect and return cards. See who can do it the fastest.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What did we learn about each other in the process?
- How did we treat each other when we were doing this? Were we kind?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/icebreakers-and-name-games/>

NOTES |

The goal of this activity is to have fun, not to “win” or be competitive. Encourage participants to help each other and approach it from a light-hearted perspective.

This activity is not appropriate for groups in which participants are not able to write or read.

NAME WARP SPEED

MATERIALS |

a ball that is easy to catch

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to learn each other's names and build community by having fun together.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Ask participants to stand in a circle.

Explain: "This is a game to help us learn each other's names and to begin interacting as a group. When the ball is thrown to you, say the name of the person who threw you the ball, then say the name of someone else and throw the ball to them. Each person touches the ball only once, so you cannot say throw the ball to someone who has already gone. We stop when the ball goes back to the first person who threw it. We all lose if the ball touches the ground. And remember the order of who threw to whom as we will repeat this pattern more than once."

- First round: the ball gets passed and people say each other's names.
- Second round: repeat this process. Facilitator should record the amount of time it takes to get the ball around the circle in the same order.
- Third round: try to get the ball around the circle in the same order as fast as possible without saying each other's names.
- Fourth round: repeat one more time and see if you can beat your speed

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- How did you communicate in different ways to improve your speed?
- Did knowing you were going to get more chances matter in how you felt?
- How did you treat each other when you were doing this?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/icebreakers-and-name-games/>

NOTES |

If you drop the ball, it's just more fun!

ACCESSIBILITY: This activity may not be appropriate for groups in which there are participants who have mobility disabilities.

GET IN ORDER

MATERIALS |

None

OBJECTIVES | The purpose of this activity is for participants to explore different ways to communicate with each other, especially in challenging situations, and to continue building community while having fun.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Explain to participants that this is a silent activity.

Without using any verbal words ask participants to line up in order from one end of the room to the other. Some options:

- Month and date of your birthday
- ABC order by first name
- ABC order by last name
- Reverse ABC order
- From least to most letters in your name

Allow participants to figure out how to communicate with each other to complete this task without direction from you. They can use any method they choose as long as they do not speak verbally.

Once participants think they have finished have them go down the line sharing their birthdays, names, or whatever the line up has been based on. If they have made a mistake stop them and ask them to be silent and try the activity again.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did you all communicate with each other? Did some people do a better job taking the lead, following direction, or communicating non-verbally than others?
- What was challenging about doing this activity?
- How might we learn to successfully communicate in other challenging situations?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/icebreakers-and-name-games/>

NOTES |

ACCESSIBILITY: This may not be an appropriate activity for participants who are Deaf.

EXTENSIONS: Discuss all the various ways in which people communicate with each other—through written spoken and signed words, through looks, through body language, through touch etc. Extend by considering how people from different cultures, backgrounds, and families communicate differently.

ZOOM / IRK

MATERIALS |

None

OBJECTIVES | The goal of this activity is to build community by having fun together.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Invite participants to stand or sit in a circle.

Ask for a volunteer to start. Going clockwise around the circle each person says or signs “zoom” consecutively.

If someone chooses, they can say “irk” at which time the consecutive “zooms” change direction.

For example, if participants were saying “zoom” around the circle clockwise, and one person says “irk,” the person right next to them going counterclockwise must now say “zoom” and the “zooms” will continue in that direction until someone else says “irk.”

All “irks” reverse the direction of the zooms.

If a participant misses a beat or says “irk” instead of “zoom” (or vice-versa) they are out and must leave the circle.

The goal is to be one of the last two people standing.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- How did we treat each other when we were doing this? Were we kind?
- Why is fun an important part of building relationships and community?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/icebreakers-and-name-games/>

NOTES |

It is often helpful to do a short practice round before doing the real thing.

DO NOTHING

MATERIALS |

None

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to understand how people differently interpret rules, to acknowledge that decisions and behaviors are often more complex than we think, and to recognize that even when we do not think of ourselves as doing anything in particular we are having an impact on the world and space around us.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Ask the participants to form a circle—standing or sitting.

Tell them there are two rules to this activity:

- Rule #1: Do nothing.
- Rule #2: Look at the person standing six people to your left. Do everything they do but exaggerate it just a little bit.

Repeat the two rules, then begin.

Let participants “Do Nothing” for at least 10 minutes

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- How did you interpret the rules?
- How did you handle the contradiction in the rules?
- What do you think you were supposed to learn from this activity?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/icebreakers-and-name-games/>

NOTES |

This activity is especially good to pair with days focused on creating community norms or classroom rules.

GROUP RAINSTORM

MATERIALS |

None

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OBJECTIVES | The objective of this activity is for participants to understand on how their small individual contributions can create a larger outcome when they work together.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Ask participants to sit or stand in a circle and tell them they will be working together to create a rainstorm.

The facilitator will go first and in clockwise order the other participants will transition as the person next to them transitions to a new move.

First, rub your hands together to make a swishing sound.

Next, snap your fingers, right hand, left hand, right hand, left hand, etc.

Then, slap your thighs, right, left, right, left, very fast.

Finally, stomp your feet, right left, very fast.

The sound should move around the circle as participants transition their moves one at a time.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What are other examples of how our individual efforts, skills and contributions can contribute to a greater whole?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/icebreakers-and-name-games/>

NOTES |

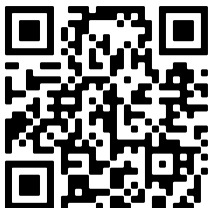
This activity is especially good to pair with days focused on creating community norms or classroom rules.

ACCESSIBILITY: This activity may not be appropriate for groups in which participants are Deaf or hard of hearing.

CHECKING IN

The activities in this section give students an opportunity to become more in touch with their own emotions, feelings, hopes, challenges and fears. The goal is to create intentional space in the classroom for students to share where they are in the moment so that educators can respond appropriately to the mood of the room. These activities require moderate levels of vulnerability. Plan to use them regularly throughout the semester for a quick and easy way to provide space for sharing or to get feedback on how an assignment or day is going.

SUPPORTING MEDIA



<https://www.michiganlearning.org/check-ins/>

TEACHER & LEARNER

MATERIALS |

None

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OBJECTIVES | The objective of this activity is to help all participants and facilitators think of themselves as having something to offer the group and something to take away from the group.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Ask participants to sit in a circle.

Introduce the idea of Teacher & Learner

- Often in schools we think of adults as teacher and young people as students or learners. But what we have hopefully been experiencing this week, and will continue to experience, is that no matter what our age or education level we all have things to teach and things to learn. Teachers like me can learn a lot from students like you about your lives, experiences, about perspectives on the world that we did not know before.

Ask participants to brainstorm and share examples of times when they have been learners and times when they have been teachers.

Starting with the teacher, have each person go around and say “My name is _____, I am a teacher and a Learner.”

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel do to do this activity?
- Have you ever thought of yourself as a teacher before?
- Why is it important to consider the things we can contribute or teach and the things we can take away or learn?

NOTES |

EXTENSION: Ask all participants to brainstorm a time when they were a teacher and a time when they were a learner and share with a partner.



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/check-ins/>

HOPES & FEARS

MATERIALS |

Note cards or small pieces of paper and writing utensils

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to identify their own feelings, hopes, and fears and to explore how their feelings are similar to or different than those of others in the group in order to build community.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

On note cards or paper invite participants to write “Hope” at the top of the front side and “Fear” or “Concern” at the top of the back side.

Invite participants to write one thing they hope for the day, year, or session under the word “Hope” and one thing they are worried or concerned about under the word “Fear.”

Collect cards and shuffle them.

Pass them back out. Remind participants that, if they get their own card no one will know that but them.

Divide participants into groups of 4 or 5 and ask them to read their cards to one another and answer the following questions:

- What common themes do you notice on the cards?
- What are some differences?
- Do these resonate with your own hopes and concerns?

If there is time, have each group gather their cards and pass them to the group next to them so that each group has a new set of cards to read and reflect on.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What common themes came up on our cards?
Why do you think this is?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/check-ins/>

NOTES |

If you have the resources, students could type and print their hopes and fears.

If participants are not yet able to write or read share hopes and fears out loud.

WEATHER REPORT

MATERIALS |

None

OPTIONAL: The Feelings Wheel (see appendix)

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OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to notice how they are feeling and for the facilitator and the rest of the group to quickly gauge the feelings of others in the room.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Ask participants to sit in a circle

Invite each person to answer the following question:

- “What weather best describes how you are feeling and why?”

For example, if a person is feeling sad or confused, they may say that the weather that best describes how they are feeling is “stormy” or “cloudy.”

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- Why is it important to regularly check in about how we are feeling?
- What similarities and differences did you notice in people in the room feel today?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/check-ins/>

NOTES |

ALTERNATIVE: Use a different metaphor to check in about how people are feeling. For example, “what color best describes how you are feeling right now and why?” or “what animal best describes how you are feeling today?”

EXTENSION: Invite participants to elaborate on why they are feeling the way they they are feeling.

ROSE & THORN

MATERIALS |

None

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OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity for participants to quickly check in about what is going on in each other's lives.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Ask participants to sit in a circle

Invite each person should share the following related to school, their home life, their day, their family, etc.:

- one "rose" (something they're pleased about)
- one "thorn" (something they're upset about)

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What did you learn about each other through this activity?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/check-ins/>

NOTES |

EXTENSION: Ask participants to also share a "bud" or something they are looking forward to, that is exciting to them, or that they anticipate happening in the near future.

RECOGNIZING COMMONALITIES

The activities in this section give students an opportunity to recognize the many things they have in common with others in the room. Feeling a sense of belonging and inclusion requires space to celebrate difference and space to recognize that we often have more in common with others than we realize. Having a sense of shared life experiences, perspectives, and interest can help create a strong foundation upon which students can share more vulnerably about their unique life experiences. Returning to commonalities can also provide strong closure to activities that highlight our differences. The activities in this section require moderate vulnerability.

SUPPORTING MEDIA



<https://www.michiganlearning.org/recognizing-commonalities/>

MIX IT UP

MATERIALS |

chairs

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to realize how much they have in common and to build community by having fun together.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Ask participants to sit in a circle with one chair too few.

The person without a chair stands in the middle of the circle and states something that is true for them. While it is not necessary to do so, facilitators may decide to give more specific prompts. For example, you may prompt participants to share something they enjoyed about the week, something they like to do in their free time, or something they are proud of.

Everyone else in the group who agrees with the statement or for whom it is also true, must stand up and switch seats. They cannot choose a seat directly to their left or right. The person in the middle of the circle should also now try to find a seat.

Whoever is left without a seat must now stand in the middle and make a statement that is true for them. Repeat until time is up.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What did you learn about each other?
- Why is fun an important part of building relationships and community?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/recognizing-commonalities/>

NOTES |

This activity can be used as a closing activity. For example, you could invite participants to share something they learned, something they appreciated about the day/lesson/class, something they are taking away from their time together etc.

ACCESSIBILITY: This activity may not be appropriate for groups in which participants have mobility disabilities.

CAUTION: Remind participants to be aware of their bodies. People can easily run into each other if they are not being cautious.

I HAVE A LINK

MATERIALS |

None

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to realize how much they have in common and to build community by having fun together.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Ask participants to sit or stand in a circle. Ask for a volunteer to go first or go first yourself.

The first participant stands in the middle of the circle and says, "I have a link..." and then says something that is true about themselves. For example, "I have a link, I like the color blue."

If the statement is true for another member of the group, they come and link elbows with the first person. They then add their own link by saying "I have a link" and making a statement that is true about themselves. If the statement is true for multiple people in the group, the link is made with whomever arrives first. Alternatively you could invite everyone for whom it is true to link arms at the same time. This will likely create a sillier experience that is less reflective and may be more difficult to manage.

If the person makes a statement that no one else in the room can link to, they can continue identifying other links until one connects. For example, if no one else in the room like blue, the first person might say, "I have a link, summer is my favorite season." Alternatively, if a link cannot be found, someone else with a free elbow can take another turn.

Continue until everyone in the room is linked together. This will require that the final two people find a link with each other.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What did we learn about ourselves and each other in this process?
- How can we use what we learned about each other to better work together this year?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/recognizing-commonalities/>

NOTES |

This activity requires that participants touch each other which may not be appropriate in all groups or situations.

WEB OF CONNECTION

MATERIALS |

ball of thick string or yarn,
scissors

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OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to realize how much they have in common and to build community by having fun together.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Ask participants to form one large circle.

Invite one person to start by introducing themselves and sharing something about themselves or answering a question prompt that you have presented. For example: What is your favorite memory? What do you enjoy most about this group? What do you appreciate most about this school?

After the first person is finished sharing ask the other participants to raise their hands if there is something about what was shared that they connect with—either emotionally or in terms a shared experiences or outlook. The first person tosses the ball of string to one of their peers who felt a connection. Now invite the second person to share their response to the prompt.

Repeat this process until all members of the group have shared something about themselves.

At the end of the activity, there should be a visible web made of string connecting all members of the group. You can note how the web represents the ways we are all interconnected.

Use scissors to cut the web so that each person can keep part of it to remember their connection.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What did we learn about ourselves and each other in this process?
- How can we use what we learned about each other to better work together this year?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/recognizing-commonalities/>

NOTES |

Alternatively, you could toss the ball of string and have others share without asking who has a specific connection.

If there is time you can ask each person to elaborate on why they felt a connection to the person before them.

ACCESSIBILITY: This activity may not be appropriate for groups in which there are participants who have mobility disabilities.

WE HAVE IN COMMON

MATERIALS |

paper and writing utensils

OPTIONAL: create an accompanying handout

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are to help participants build community by identifying how much they have in common and to help them practice engaging in dialogue with one another.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Ask participants to fold their paper into thirds or draw two lines down a piece of paper to make three columns. Alternatively pass out a handout you have created that is already divided in this way.

Invite participants to find a partner they do not know well or use one of the grouping techniques to put participants in pairs.

At the top the first column, participants should write their partner's name.

Give the pair two minutes to write in the column all of the similarities they have that they can identify (physical characteristics, commonalities between their families, what they both like or dislike, things they have, places they have visited, etc.). Both partners should write the commonalities they find on their own paper.

Participants should repeat the process two more times, putting the name of each new partner at the top of the column and the commonalities they share below.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- Was there anything surprising about what you had in common? How many similarities did you find the first time? The last time? Did it get easier? Why might that be?
- How can recognizing our commonalities help us navigate conflict?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/recognizing-commonalities/>

NOTES |

EXTENSION: For the second and third rounds ask participants to find 1-2 commonalities that were also shared with their partner from the first round. In the end, all 3 people can note what they have in common.

This activity is not appropriate for groups in which participants cannot read or write.

COMMON GROUND

MATERIALS |

Common Ground statements

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OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are to help participants build community by identifying how much they have in common and to help them practice engaging in dialogue with one another.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Ask participants to stand or sit in a circle. Read the list of Common Ground statements (or create your own). If the statement is true for participants ask them to step into the center of the circle (alternatively you could ask participants to raise their hands). Invite everyone to take a moment to notice who is standing in the circle after each prompt before returning to the full group.

Claim common ground if...

- you've worn mismatching socks in the past week.
- you don't have a favorite color or have changed it multiple times.
- you prefer the winter over the summer.
- you have ever felt pressured to play with certain toys or games.
- you have ever been teased.
- you have ever felt ignored or left out.
- you have had friend who said a joke that offended you and you couldn't tell them how you felt.
- you have ever felt discriminated against or treated unfairly by a school administrator or teacher.
- you have ever been made fun of because of something about who you are like your race, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation, age, how much money your family has, etc.
- you have ever felt pressure to pretend you are someone you aren't or lie about who you are or what you believe.
- you have ever felt unsafe.
- you have ever posted something on social media that you regretted.
- you have ever made fun of someone because of who they are.
- you have ever been misunderstood by someone from a different background.
- you have ever been dismissed or ignored because of your age.
- you wish you did better in school academically.
- you ever became friends with someone you did not like at first.
- you have ever changed your thinking after listening to another person share their perspective.
- you are excited about this school year.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- Was there anything surprising about what you had in common?
- Does this cause you to see your classmates any differently?
- How can recognizing our commonalities help us navigate conflict?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/recognizing-commonalities/>

NOTES |

This activity can be low, medium, or high vulnerability depending on the types of prompts you choose.

BUILDING FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

The activities in this section help students develop some of the foundational skills for building relationships and developing strong, inclusive communities. Successful communities require that community members understand their own feelings and learn healthy ways to process them, that we learn to engage in dialogue about various topics without it devolving into unproductive debate, that we learn to listen deeply to one another, and that we use inclusive language that is not harmful to others. The activities in this section require moderate or low vulnerability and should be done *before* students are asked to share deeply about their lives so that such sharing is as safe as possible.

SUPPORTING MEDIA



<https://www.michiganlearning.org/building-foundational-skills/>

IDENTIFYING OUR FEELINGS

MATERIALS |

paper, writing utensils,
“The Feelings Wheel”
handout (see appendix)

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to understand the many emotions humans feel and to be able to better recognize their own feelings.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Ask participants to individually brainstorm all of the emotions they can think of.

After they have created their lists discuss the following. It may be helpful to invite participants to choose just one of the feelings from the list to reflect on:

- How do you know when you are having these feelings?
- What sensations do you have in you body when you feel these feelings?
- How do you act when you are having these feelings?

Now inform participants that while many people recognize feelings like “sad,” “mad” or “happy,” there are actually many more feelings that humans experience throughout their days and lives.

Pass out or display “The Feelings Wheel” handout and read through it with the group. After you’ve reviewed the handout, invite participants to close their eyes and reflect on how they are feeling right now. Ask them to quietly reflect to themselves.

- How do you know you are feeling this way?
- Where do you feel it in your body?

Now invite participants to locate their feeling on The Feelings Wheel and identify what the root of their feeling is noting that at the core of most feelings are: sad, mad, scared, peaceful, joyful, or powerful. Ask them if the root on the wheel feels right and true. Invite them to consider picking a different word or feeling if they find it would more accurately capture how they feel.

Explain that all feelings are valid—there are no bad feelings. We will all experience all of these feelings in our lifetime. What we need to be careful about is how we emote when we are mad or upset, so that we do not hurt others with our words or actions, and how we can seek out support and comfort from others when we are feeling sad. Let them know that many of the activities you will be doing together will include them sharing how they feel so they can become more aware of their own emotions.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- What did it feel like to do this activity?
- What new information did you learn about feelings and emotion?
- What did you learn about yourself?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/building-foundational-skills/>

NOTES |

ALTERNATIVE: Divide participants into small groups and assign each group a feeling from The Feelings Wheel. Ask them to come up with an example of what it is to feel this way or brainstorm times in their lives when they have felt this way. Have each group share out an example or explanation with the full group.

EXTENSION: This is a good opportunity to check in with students about who in the school (or in their lives) they feel they can go to for support when they need it. If students do not report having a person like this facilitators should connect them with resources.

PROCESSING HARD FEELINGS

MATERIALS |

paper, writing utensils,
“The Feelings Wheel”
handout (see appendix)

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to reflect on how they handle difficult emotions like anger or anxiety and how they could process their feelings in more helpful ways.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Pass out The Feelings Wheel and re-introduce the concept of challenging feelings.

- Recall the Feelings Wheel. A number of human emotions are challenging for us such as, angry, anxious, or sad. When we feel some of these challenging emotions we may express them in ways that are harmful to ourselves or others. While all feelings are valid and okay to have, today we are going to practice some techniques to help us feel our feelings in ways that are not harmful to ourselves or others.

Invite participants to reflect on times they have been angry, mad, sad, or scared.

- Divide participants into pairs and ask them to share: “When you feel these feelings how do you usually handle it? What are the strengths of your approach? What are some of the challenges?”

As a large group brainstorm mindful ways to process challenging emotions. Some possibilities include: taking five deep breaths, slowly counting to 30, taping each of your fingers in order with your thumb 10 times, taking a break or finding a quiet space, listening to a song you find calming, watching a calming video (like cake decorating, sculpting, or painting), screaming, punching a pillow, shaking your body vigorously, relaxing each muscle of your body one at a time, journaling, doing jumping jacks, squeezing a stress ball or playdough, stretching, sharing how you feel with someone, scribbling vigorously on a piece of paper, giving yourself a hug, tearing up or crumbling paper, taking a walk, positive self talk, blowing on your hands, etc.

As a large group practice doing some of these techniques together.

Direct students to find a new partner and brainstorm three things they can do or say when they are angry that resonate with them from the list you brainstormed and the techniques you practiced.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did doing this activity feel?
- How could we support each other when one of us is feeling angry, scared, or sad?
- What could we provide in this space to help us with our feelings (examples: playdough, stress balls, a space to walk around, etc.)?

NOTES |

Repeat this activity throughout the term or year so that participants get multiple opportunities to practice.

EXTENSION: Ask participants to write down the techniques they would like to try or that they think will best work for them. Invite them to add this to their portfolios to refer to when they need support.



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/building-foundational-skills/>

DIALOGUE v. DEBATE

MATERIALS |

Dialogue v. Debate Visualization Exercise (see appendix)

OPTIONAL: Dialogue handouts (see appendix)

OBJECTIVES | The objective of this activity is for participants to understand the difference between dialogue and debate so that they can begin communicating with each other in ways that are closer to dialogue than debate.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Lead students in Dialogue v. Debate Visualization Exercise (See Appendix)

Ask: “Which of these two experiences do we usually have when having controversial conversations?”

Explain the difference between dialogue and debate:

- Often when we have conversations in which there are disagreements they end up in debates in which one person is trying to prove their point or win the argument. Debate is competitive and usually emphasizes winning or having only one right answer. In a debate you usually feel disconnected from others and perhaps angry, sad, frustrated, anxious or afraid.
- In contrast, in dialogue the goal is to listen deeply to the other person’s perspective and to try to understand where the other person is coming from, even if you don’t fully agree with them. The goal of dialogue is to develop trusting relationships and to feel more connected to and understanding of each other. Dialogue requires that we be curious about each other and interested in learning about other’s experiences and perspectives.
- Unfortunately, most people tend to communicate using debate instead of dialogue. In our time together we are going to work hard to shift to engaging in dialogue instead of debate.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- What did it feel like to do this activity?
- How could using dialogue be helpful in our class?
- What can we do when we notice we debating instead of dialoguing?

NOTES |

EXTENSION: Invite participants to practice having a conversation using their new understanding of dialogue skills (see “How to Listen” activity for ideas).



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/building-foundational-skills/>

HOW TO LISTEN

MATERIALS |

“5 Levels of Listening”
handout (see appendix)

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to understand what it means to listen empathetically and to begin practicing doing so.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Explain to participants that the Relationships Initiative requires a lot of sharing and listening. Although humans do a lot of listening in our lives, we are often not very good at it. Introduce Stephen Covey’s 5 Levels of Listening (see appendix).

Invite participants to recall the last time they were speaking to someone. What kind of listener were they in this conversation? How were they listened to by the person they were talking to? Share out as a large group.

Brainstorm as a large group ways to listen empathetically—What would it look like? What would you be saying? What would you be doing? Where would your phone be? How much would you interrupt? What kinds of questions would you ask, etc.

Divide participants into pairs and invite them to have a discussion in which they practice empathetic listening. Provide a prompt such as: What is something you are really passionate about? Or What is your favorite tv show, song, or artist right now and why?

Give each person 3-5 minutes to share while their partner listens and then switch roles.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- How do you think you did as a listener?
- How well did you feel your partner listened to you?
- What additional things could you work on to be a better listener?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

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NOTES |

Feel free to use a different listening framework if there is one you are already using or familiar with.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

MATERIALS |

paper and writing utensils

OBJECTIVES | The objective of this activity is for participants to identify language that may be harmful to themselves and others so that they can avoid using it.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Introduce the concept of discriminatory language & slurs

- Often we use language that is harmful to others because of histories of discrimination, stereotypes, and biases. Sometimes we don't even realize the words we use are harmful. Today we are going to talk about the language we use and how to make sure we are not being discriminatory when we talk to each other.
- Give example: The term "that's so gay" has become very popular but this is a very problematic term because it takes someone's identity, being gay, and makes it a put down. But we don't often think about what we are really saying when we say "that's so gay."
- As a large group brainstorm: what do we really mean when we say "that's so gay?" What more accurate words could we use? Some examples might be ludicrous, naïve, bogus, awkward, etc.

Invite participants to share words or terms that have been directed at them that have been mean, discriminatory, or made them feel bad. Keep track of the list on the board. Keep in mind you should consider in advance if students are allowed to say these words during this activity and make this clear. You may also decide as a class if this will be acceptable. It may be necessary for people who are not targeted to share words as well in order to get a robust list that reflects the reality of the climate of your building or classroom. If so, proceed with caution. Possible examples: the N-word, lame, no homo, terrorist, "like a girl," tone deaf, oriental, etc.

Divide students into groups of 3-4. Assign each group a word. Ask them to reflect on how and when they hear this word used and by whom, then brainstorm a list of "alternative" or preferred words they could use instead of this word. Invite each group present their alternatives.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What commitment are you willing to make to ensure that you are not using offensive language?
- How can we hold each other accountable?

NOTES |

EXTENSIONS: Ask participants to explain *why* these words are harmful.

Create a class list of inclusive terms and display them on the wall for the year. Keep these lists in mind when you are reading books or doing other school related activities. For example, students should not read the N-word out loud in English or Social Studies classes.



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/building-foundational-skills/>

CREATING COMMUNITY NORMS

The activities in this section help students work together to develop norms for how everyone will be expected to behave and interact in order to create safe and inclusive classrooms and schools. All educators know the importance of norms for creating safe classrooms. When students have a say in those norms it allows them to take ownership of their behavior and hold themselves and others accountable. The activities in this section require moderate or low vulnerability and should be done before students are asked to share deeply about their lives so that such sharing is as safe as possible.

SUPPORTING MEDIA



<https://www.michiganlearning.org/creating-community-norms/>

COMMUNITY BRAINSTORM

MATERIALS |

sticky notes and writing utensils

OBJECTIVES | The objective of this activity is for participants to begin creating a shared vision of what it is to be in community with each other.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Introduce the concept of “community.”

- Ask participants to brainstorm what it means to be a part of a community:
 - What does it mean to be a part of a community?
 - What kinds of communities are you all a part of?
 - What responsibilities do you have if you are a member of a community?
- Some things you might want to say: a community is a group of people who are in relationships of accountability with each other. This may be because they live close to each other, because they are part of the same family (see My Family activity to broaden ideas about “family”), or because you share values, worldviews, or responsibilities. Being in community with others often requires working together, solving problems, navigating conflict, providing support, looking out for each other, taking care of each other, and sharing joy. One of our goals as a class/school is to be in community with each other.

Tell participants they will now have the opportunity to brainstorm what specific attributes, values, they would like to see as part of their community.

Allow participants to individually brainstorm the kind of community they would like their school to be. Ask them to write as many things as they can on different post-it notes and post them around the room. Invite the group to do a gallery walk to read through everyone’s ideas around the room.

Divide participants into groups and give them time to come to consensus about the kind of community they want. Remind them to use their dialogue skills while working together.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What things do our lists have in common? How are they different?
- What do you personally have to do to have the kind of community you want? Is there anything you need to do differently than you have before?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/creating-community-norms/>

NOTES |

This activity can be done alongside the Community Vision Board.

EXTENSION: Participants can use markers, dot stickers, or sticky notes to identify the things on other people’s lists that they agree with.

COMMUNITY VISION BOARD

MATERIALS |

Large paper, magazines,
glue, markers/crayons

OBJECTIVES | The objective of this activity is for participants to work creatively to develop a shared vision of how they want to be in community with each other.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Divide participants into groups of 4 or 5

Invite them to think about their “Community Brainstorm” and share the following with their groups

- How did they define community?
- What kinds of things did they say they wanted to see in their school community?

Invite participants to work with their team to make a vision board using images, words, magazine cut outs, etc. of what their ideal school community would look like, sound like, and feel like.

Encourage them to be as creative as possible!

- What would your ideal school community look like?
- What would it sound like?
- What would it feel like?
- How would people treat each other?
- What supports and resources would be available to you?
- What would the rules or norms be?

Give each small group a turn to share their board with the large group. You may do this in a “gallery walk” first in which everyone walks around the room to look at each other’s boards and then allow each group to say a few words about their vision.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What did our visions have in common? How were they similar? How were they different?
- What do you personally have to do to have the kind of community you want? Is there anything you need to do differently than you have before?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/creating-community-norms/>

NOTES |

If participants have not done a “Community Brainstorm,” consider starting by introducing the concept of community found in that activity.

Consider displaying the vision boards in the hallway or classroom and reviewing them periodically throughout the year.

This activity can be done as an alternative to the “Dream Classroom.”

DREAM CLASSROOM

MATERIALS |

Large paper, magazines, glue, markers/crayons

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OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to collaboratively identify what has worked well for them in school and what kinds of supports will make it more likely for them to have a successful year.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Ask participants to think of a learning experience they have had in the past that they enjoyed. Perhaps a class from a previous school year or an extracurricular activity or sport. Give them time to individually write or illustrate what it was about that experience that they enjoyed. What worked well for them and what didn't?

Divide participants into groups of 4 or 5.

Invite participants to work with their team to make a vision board using images, words, magazine cut outs, etc. of their "Dream Classroom" based on the ideas they brainstormed about learning experiences they've enjoyed before.

- What would your ideal classroom look like?
- What would it sound like?
- What would it feel like?
- How would people treat each other?
- What supports and resources would be available to you?
- What would the rules or norms be?

Give each small group a turn to share their board with the large group. You may do this in a "gallery walk" first in which everyone walks around the room to look at each other's boards and then allow each group to say a few words about their vision.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What did our dream classrooms have in common? How were they similar? How were they different?
- How could we work together to incorporate some of these ideas into your space or classroom?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/creating-community-norms/>

NOTES |

If participants have not done a "Community Brainstorm" consider starting by introducing the concept of community found in that activity.

This activity can be done as an alternative to the "Community Vision Board."

COMMUNITY NORMS

MATERIALS |

post-it notes, or flip chart, markers

OBJECTIVES | The objective of this activity is to develop agreed upon community norms.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Divide participants into groups of 3 or 4. Instruct them to think about what the classroom rules/norms should be for the year based on the brainstorming and visioning they have done and based on what they have found to be important in previous years:

- What norms do you need to be your best student?
- What norms do we need to make sure everyone is safe?
- What norms do we need to make sure everyone has an opportunity to learn and participate?
- What norms do we need to make sure the class runs smoothly?
- What norms do we need to achieve our visions that we developed earlier?

Invite each group to come up with as many norms as they can think of and then write them on on post-its that can be put on the wall.

After everyone has put their ideas up around the room work together to regroup them so that similar or common ideas are located near each other.

Work as a group to re-write the common ideas in language everyone can agree to. This is the time to condense overlapping ideas or get rid of those that are repetitive.

After you have a draft final list, share it with participants in a way that they can see (on a blackboard or projector) and ask if people feel there should be any additions or deletions and why. If there is disagreement send students back to their groups to discuss. Each group can then make its case for why to keep (or remove) the norm. As a large group vote on whether or not it should stay or if it needs to be removed/revised.

Display the final list of norms on the board for everyone to see and ask everyone to raise their hand if they are willing to agree to the final version. For subsequent classes ask participants to compare the list they came up with to the list in the new classroom. Ask students to share things that are common/different about this list and the list they created in their last class. Are there any things on this list that they would change or revise? Are there things that they would want to add? Teachers should keep track of each class's specific lists—or alternatively work with students to come to one that all classes agree on.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did I feel to do this activity? Was it difficult? Easy?
- How do you feel about having say in what our norms will be?
- How will we hold each other accountable for keeping up with our norms?

NOTES |

If your school is using already established norms this is a good opportunity for students to think very specifically about what these rules/norms means. If it is not possible to change the school or classroom rules, invite participants to brainstorm concrete examples that respond to already established categories.

Facilitators should make sure to participate in this activity so that their ideas are also considered and discussed.



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/creating-community-norms/>

VISUALIZING OUR NORMS

MATERIALS |

flip chart paper
markers

OBJECTIVES | The objective of this activity is to practice living into the agreed upon norms in order to create a community that is supportive and inclusive.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Write each of your agreed upon norms on a large piece of flip chart paper or a blackboard and post around the room (see “Community Norms” activity).

Divide participants into small groups based on the number of norms around the room.

Direct each small group to come up with a concrete example of what it looks like to abide by the norm (you could also ask them to come up with what it looks like if they are violating the norm). You might want to use the “looks like,” “sounds like,” “feels like” protocol as a means of generating ideas. They could write, draw, or act something out. Be as creative as possible!

Invite each group to share their example with the larger group.

Each group can open the floor for questions and additional comments after their presentation.

The large group will then agree upon the established norms which will be posted in the room.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What is one norm that you think you will do well?
- What is one norm that you think is going to be hard for you?
- What can we do to help you?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/creating-community-norms/>

NOTES |

This activity requires you have established community norms or rules.

This may be a time to double check that your norms are clear and relevant. If not now is an opportunity to change them.

You may consider having participants sign their name to support the norms by creating a “Class Pledge/Constitution/Contract.”

PRACTICING ACCOUNTABILITY FOR OUR NORMS

MATERIALS |

None

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V

OBJECTIVES | The objective of this activity is for participants to get a chance to practice the norms they are being expected to abide by.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Divide students into groups of 5

Assign each group one of the norms you created

Invite each group to come up with a skit to share with the larger group to act out the norm they were assigned.

They should develop a scenario in which someone might be breaking the norm and then come up with a response that they could make to hold their classmate accountable for keeping the norms.

If there is time, each group performs their skit for the class.

After a group performs allow time for questions and answers from the audience. Some suggested follow up questions:

- What other approaches could you take in this situation?
- Is there anything about this norm that you are still finding confusing?
- How can we support each other in abiding by the norms we agreed upon?

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What can we do as a class to remind each other of the norms or to indicate when we are not doing a good job of following them?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/creating-community-norms/>

NOTES |

This activity requires you have established community norms or rules. If you do not yet have norms see “Community Norms” activity.

CONSEQUENCES

MATERIALS |

poster paper, markers, craft supplies, copies of Community Norms, School Handbook, Student Code of Conduct or other rules students are expected to abide by

OBJECTIVES | The objective of this activity is for participants to clearly understand the disciplinary processes and procedures in the school.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Display and read aloud the norms students are expected to abide by—preferably ones they developed collectively. Then go over the student handbook with your class. Ask them to share reflections:

- What are the overall school rules? How are they similar or different than our classroom norms?

Divide participants into small groups. Invite groups to create posters representing the consequences for breaking school rules based on what the handbook says or based on what you have decided as a class. Perhaps this looks like a flow chart with a progression of steps. Depending on the nature of the rules in your school it may make sense to assign each group one rule to represent the consequences for breaking.

When groups have finished making their posters invite them to share one by one. Allow other groups to help if there are mistakes.

Next, ask students what they think the consequences should be for breaking the community norms they developed and why. Discuss with students the goals of community norms being to cultivate safety, to build community, and to make sure everyone has the opportunity to learn. This is an opportunity to discuss the importance of approaches like restorative practices rather than punitive consequences. Return participants to their groups to develop a flow chart of consequences for violating classroom norms. Guiding Questions:

- What should happen when we violate one of for breaking one of our norms or agreements?
- Do different norms have different consequences?
- What can we do to make sure we learn from our mistakes?
- When do mistakes become a part of the larger school consequences?
- What can we do as a class to remind each other of the norms when we are not doing a good job of following them?

Let each group share their ideas and then collectively decide which ideas make most sense for your community.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- How can we support each other this year in abiding by the rules and norms?



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NOTES |

This activity may reveal discrepancies in the kind of community norms participants developed and the school or district-wide rules. Be prepared to navigate this possibility.

THEME SONG

MATERIALS |

access to YouTube or other music internet site

OBJECTIVES | The objective of this activity is to collectively decide on a song that will serve as inspiration for the year.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Introduce the importance of music to inspire, motivate, center us, and help us feel things (see “Music As Inspiration” activity)

Option 1: Pick a Song

Divide participants into groups of 3-4. Invite each group to think of a song that they feel captures the kind of community they want to have with each other or inspires them to be their best selves. This may require them being able to play various proposed songs for each other and read or listen to the lyrics. Ask each group to pick one song that they can all agree on.

After all of the groups have submitted their songs write the song titles on a board and listen to them as a class, while reading the lyrics. Ask participants to put a tally mark on the board under all of the songs they like.

After tallying, invite people to make a case for the song they think best captures the community they want to have with each other. Then take a vote! There are many ways to do this. You can allow each student to vote once or allow each student to vote twice and then narrow between the top two.

Option 2: Change the Lyrics

Ask participants to brainstorm a list of popular songs that have inspirational beats but maybe not inspirational lyrics. Go on YouTube and play “clean” or “musical” version of song if possible. Vote on the song that students like best. Divide students into groups to brainstorm lyrics for different sections of the song relevant to their vision of the kind of school community they want. At the end of class collect lyrics and type them.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What is one thing you liked about today?
- Why does this song inspire you?



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NOTES |

Be prepared to address inappropriate language in songs or play “clean” versions.

Consider keeping track of all of the proposed songs for a community playlist.

Once a song has been decided play it regularly for students throughout the year as an opening, closing, energizer, or if students need inspiration.

EXTENSION(S): Consider inviting participants to choreograph a dance to the song they chose; or Video tape or record students singing or performing the song. Do not share on social media without express consent.

SHARING WHO WE ARE

The activities in this section are designed to engage participants in deep reflection and relationship building so that they can truly get to know one another. They provide space for students and teachers to share authentically about their lives outside of the classroom—What are you interested in? What is your home life like? What are you proud of? What do you value? What do you need from school to do well? How have your previous school experiences shaped your feelings about school? The activities in this section are intended to make up the bulk of The Relationships Initiative content and provide the most meaningful opportunities for relationship and community building. These activities require moderate to high vulnerability and should not be done before student have practiced foundational skills, have created and practiced community norms, and had some fun together!

SUPPORTING MEDIA



<https://www.michiganlearning.org/sharing-who-we-are/>

CONCENTRIC CIRCLES

MATERIALS |

develop a list of introductory questions, device to keep time

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to practice active listening, to meet each other in a short amount of time, and to begin building community.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Ask participants to form concentric circles—one inner circle and one outer circle—with equal numbers of people in each circle. Each person in the inner circle should be facing a partner in the outer circle.

Ask participants to introduce themselves to their partners.

Tell participants that they will each have 1 minute to respond to a question read by the facilitator before rotating to a new partner to introduce themselves and answer a new question.

Read the first question and start timer for 1 minute. Depending on when this activity is done, questions can be low-stakes, like what is your favorite season, hobby, or food, or higher stakes like tell me about your family. Partners should show they are paying attention non-verbally but they should not interrupt or ask questions.

After one minute instruct the first person to stop sharing and invite the second person to begin sharing. After one minute instruct the second person to stop sharing and ask them to move one person to the right.

Repeat process with a new question. Rotate until each person in the inner circle has paired with each person in the outer circle.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What was it like listening without getting to respond? What were the benefits? What were the drawbacks?
- How can we make sure we are listening to each other intently in other conversations with each other?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

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NOTES |

ACCESSIBILITY: This activity requires movement. To accommodate participants with mobility disabilities the activity can be done seated and movement can be restricted to the circle that does not include participants with mobility disabilities.

IDENTITY: Beware of how race, class, or gender differences may make some questions inappropriate.

PRIDE NAME ACROSTIC

MATERIALS |

paper and writing utensils

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to learn each other's names while building relationships by learning more about each other's specific life experiences.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Introduce the concept of "pride"

- Ask participants what they think it means to be proud of something. Write list on the board as they brainstorm.
- Share that being proud means we appreciate something about ourselves, that we value ourselves, and that we think highly of something we have done or something about ourselves. You can be proud of many different kinds of things—something you are good at (like drawing), something you have accomplished (like doing all of your homework), something about yourself, your family, or your ancestors (like the fact that your grandmother fought for Civil Rights), something you did not do (like not throwing something even though you were really angry), something you have overcome (like making it to school even if no one in your family wakes you up to get you there).

Introduce the importance of names.

- Ask participants to brainstorm why names are important.
- A few points you could make: everyone's name is different; sometimes our names reflect our culture, background, and history; sometimes people decide to change their names for various reasons; our legal names might be different than what we would like to be called; some people like their names and some people do not; some people experience bullying or favor as a result of the name they have; in the United States most people do not get to pick their own names; names can be a great point of connection because we all have them!

Participants write their names down the left side of a piece of paper and then think of a word or phrase that corresponds with each letter and represents something about themselves that they are proud of. For example, if your name is SHAYLA, your acrostic may read: **S**illy, **H**ardworking, **A**ware of those around me, **Y**outhful spirit, **L**oving, **A**dventurous. Facilitators should model sharing their own name (first name only or full name), what they prefer to be called, and what words describe things about themselves they are proud of.

After everyone finishes working independently each person should share their name and why they chose their specific words or phrases with a partner or group.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What is something special about you that you are proud of? Why?
- What things do you have in common with others? In what ways are you different?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

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NOTES |

Participants may choose their first name, middle name, last name, nickname, or any combination of the above for this activity.

Extend this activity by discussing different naming customs common in different cultures, the importance of honoring the name that a person would like to be called, or why names are often connected to future opportunities.

Consider connecting this activity to diverse picture books or other texts that explore the importance of names or pride.

STORY OF MY NAME

MATERIALS |

None

OPTIONAL: paper or cardstock for name tent

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to learn more about the lives and backgrounds of others, to practice deep listening, and to build meaningful relationships with each other.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Introduce the importance of names.

- Ask participants to brainstorm why names are important.
- A few points you could make: everyone's name is different; sometimes our names reflect our culture, background, and history; sometimes people decide to change their names for various reasons; our legal names might be different than what we would like to be called; some people like their names and some people do not; some people experience bullying or favor as a result of the name they have; in the United States most people do not get to pick their own names; names can be a great point of connection because we all have them!

Facilitators should model sharing the story of their own name and then invite participants to share in pairs or small groups. Some potential questions each person may choose to answer:

- What is your name?
- How did you come to have this name? Did someone give it to you? Did you choose it?
- What is the significance of your name? Does it mean anything?
- How do you feel about your name? Do you like it? Do you wish it were different? Why?
- What is the best thing about your name?
- What is the worst thing about your name?
- How have you been treated by others as a result of your name?

Write out the story of your name if you'd like to include in your portfolio.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What did we learn about each other in the process?
- How did we treat each other when we were doing this? Were we kind?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

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NOTES |

INCLUSIVITY: Be cautious about demanding participants share the history of their names or answer any specific questions as this can be fraught for people who are transgender, nonbinary, adopted, in foster homes, or estranged from family.

OPTIONAL: Have participants write their full names on a name-tent (folded paper or cardstock) to be displayed throughout the class period or even over the first few weeks of school.

SCAVENGER HUNT

MATERIALS |

create a “Scavenger Hunt” handout

OBJECTIVES | The objective of this activity is for participants to learn more about each other in a fun and active way.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

TO DO IN ADVANCE

Ask participants to share with the facilitator one interesting thing about themselves, their families, their culture, their history or something they know that others in the group are not necessarily aware of or that isn't immediately obvious about them. For example, “I am the oldest child,” or “my favorite color is green,” or “I have broken a bone before.”

Create a list of these facts without names to use as the scavenger hunt handout.

TO DO THE DAY OF ACTIVITY

Explain that we are going to do a scavenger hunt to learn about each other.

Provide participants with the handout you created.

Invite participants to walk around the room and find the person that fulfills each of the statements. They should write the name of the person who fulfills each statement on the line next to it.

There may be more than one person who fulfills a statement. If this is the case it provides an opportunity to identify surprising or unexpected commonalities.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- What did it feel like to do this activity?
- What did you discover about your classmates?
- What did we have in common?
- How were we different?
- Did this activity challenge any assumptions or stereotypes you had about one another?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/sharing-who-we-are/>

NOTES |

ALTERNATIVES: Do this same activity as a Bingo Game rather than a Scavenger Hunt.

Rather than asking participants to submit a fact about themselves, facilitators could come up with a list of statements in advance that are likely to apply to many people.

Do this activity using prompts about various teachers in the building. Let students go around the building looking for the teacher it applies to and asking for them to expand on the fact shared.

TRADE CARDS

MATERIALS |

note cards or small pieces of paper and writing utensils

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to practice asking meaningful questions, learn to consider other people's perspectives and experiences, engage in dialogue, and build relationships with each other.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Ask participants to brainstorm a question they have about their classmates and write their question legibly on a note card. Questions can be about anything so long as they are kind and will not intentionally make others feel bad. Some things to consider:

- Would this question be harder to answer if you had more or less money than others?
- Would this question be harder to answer if you had a different family structure than others?
- Would this question be harder to answer if you had a disability?
- Would it be harder to answer if you had a different kind of housing than others?

Facilitators collect the questions and quickly look through them to make sure they are appropriate and do not perpetuate stereotypes or contain bullying, discriminatory, or inappropriate language. If there is a problematic card, facilitators should replace it with one they have made in advance.

Facilitators shuffle and re-distribute the cards anonymously. Remind participants that if they get their own card they do not have to tell anyone—only they will know.

Participants find a partner. If needed there can be one initial group of three. However, as the activity goes on students should find just one other person. Participants read their question to their partner and allow their partner to answer. The partner will then read their question and allow the first participant to answer.

Once both participants have answered their respective questions they should trade cards and go find a new person to ask their new question. Repeat the process with your new partner. Continue until time is up.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- How did you decide what question to ask? Did you think about what you would like to answer?
- What things did you have in common with others?
- What things were surprising or different?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/sharing-who-we-are/>

NOTES |

ACCESSIBILITY: This activity requires movement. To accommodate participants with mobility disabilities the activity can be done with some participants remaining seated.

It is okay if the student answers the same question multiple times.

Some pairs will talk longer than others so they may be at different stages in the process at any given time. This is fine.

PAIRED INTERVIEWS

MATERIALS |

paper and writing utensils

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to learn more about the lives and backgrounds of others, to practice deep listening, and to build meaningful relationships with each other.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Tell participants they will have five minutes to interview another person in the group. At the end of the interview, the interviewer will introduce their partner to a larger group using information they gained in their interview as the foundation.

Give participants a few minutes to come up with interview questions they would like to ask their partner. Questions can be about anything so long as they are kind and will not intentionally make others feel bad. Some things to consider:

- Would this question be harder to answer if you had more or less money than others?
- Would this question be harder to answer if you had a different family structure than others?
- Would this question be harder to answer if you had a disability?
- Would it be harder to answer if you had a different kind of housing than others?
- What kinds of questions would *you* like to answer?

Decide as a group on how participants can respond if they do not want to answer a question posed by their interviewer.

Divide participants into pairs and give each participant five minutes to interview their partner for a total of 10 minutes of conversation. Interviewers may want to take notes about their interviewee's answers.

Depending on the size of the group, each person should then introduce their partner either to (a) the entire group or (b) to another interview team for a total group of 4 participants.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity? Did you feel worried, nervous, excited?
- How did it feel to have someone else introduce you?
- What is something you learned about your classmates that will help you support them this year?

NOTES |

This activity may not be appropriate for groups in which participants cannot write.

ALTERNATIVE: Come up with a list of questions as a group that everyone will answer.



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

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PERSONAL INVENTORY

MATERIALS |

paper and writing utensils

OPTIONAL: create a handout to accompany activity

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to reflect deeply about their own lives and to share with others in ways that build relationships and encourage deep listening.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Give participants time to individually answer the following questions as they choose. Remind participants that they *will* be sharing their answers with others in the group.

- Something I worry about is...
- Something I think about all the time is...
- The most boring thing in my life right now is...
- The most exciting thing in my life right now is...
- One thing my family expects of me is...
- One thing that makes my family proud is...
- The worst/best thing about being me is...

Once participants have individually answered the questions, put them into pairs or small groups to share their answers with others as they feel comfortable.

Remind participants to abide by the community norms and recall listening techniques.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What did we learn about ourselves and each other in this process?
- What do we have in common? How are we different?



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NOTES |

Answers to the personal inventory questions can be first written or recorded using a phone, computer or audio recorder.

Facilitators can make a handout of these questions to distribute if that would be helpful.



“I AM” POEM

MATERIALS |

paper and writing utensils

OBJECTIVES | The goal of this activity is for participants to reflect deeply about their own lives and to share with others in ways that build relationships and encourage deep listening. Participants can also learn about the function and structure of poetry.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Introduce the concept of poetry

- Poetry is one way we can express ourselves through words. There are many kinds of poetry. Poetry can be written, it can be spoken, it can be put to music. It can also be a way to creatively learn about ourselves and each other. Today we are each going to write a poem about ourselves.

Give directions for creating this kind of poem

- This poem will have four stanzas, and each stanza will have four lines.
 - Each Stanza begins with the words: “I am from...” after which you will write the following:
 - 1ST Stanza: Familiar sights, sounds, smells of your neighborhood
 - 2ND Stanza: Familiar food
 - 3RD Stanza: Family sayings
 - 4TH Stanza: Friends, family, other important people in your life
- Note: You can add stanzas if you like

Give everyone time to individually write or record their poem. Once everyone is done divide students into groups of three.

Each student should read their poem to their small group and allow the group to ask questions:

- Tell us about the sights and sounds you listed. Why did you include those?
- What do your family sayings mean?
- Are the familiar foods the ones you like the most? The ones you eat the most?
- Who are the important people you mentioned?

If there is a time, ask a few volunteers to share their poem in front of the entire group.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What did we learn about ourselves and each other in this process?
- What do we have in common? How are we different?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/sharing-who-we-are/>

NOTES |

This activity may not be appropriate for groups in which participants cannot write.

Consider sharing other forms of poetry, spoken word, or rap with students.

OUR GIFTS PUZZLE

MATERIALS |

Large blank puzzle pieces made from paper or cardstock that all fits together; markers/crayons

OPTIONAL: Other art supplies such as magazines, glitter, construction paper, or glue

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to recognize their own strengths and those of their classmates and to begin considering how to build on these strengths to create a supportive classroom environment.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Introduce the concept of “gifts”

- Your gifts are special skills, ideas, approaches, perspectives you have that can make a contribution to the group.
- For example, some participants may have the “gift” of humor, which can help lighten a mood, make people feel better, or bring other’s joy. Perhaps others are good at asking questions, or good at listening and being quiet, or good at taking notes, or gifted in explaining things clearly, or organizing.

Give participants a paper or cardboard puzzle piece to decorate or illustrate in a way that represents the “gifts” they bring to your community. Puzzle pieces can be as creative as participants wish and can include illustrations, words, cutouts, or murals.

After participants have finished their individual puzzle pieces invite each person to share with the group what their gift(s) is and how they chose to represent it.

Put puzzle together in a large mural to represent that everyone has something to contribute to the broader community.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What did we learn about ourselves and each other in this process?
- How can we use what we learned about each other to better work together this year?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

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NOTES |

Consider taking a class or group picture to put in the middle of the puzzle.

ONE THING I WISH

MATERIALS |

OPTIONAL: paper and writing utensils

OBJECTIVES | The goal of this activity is for participants to reflect deeply about their own lives and to share with others in ways that build relationships and encourage deep listening.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Invite participants to sit or stand in a circle.

Give each participant a chance to write or reflect on their answers to the following questions:

- One thing I wish people would never say or do to me again is...because...
- One thing I wish people would say or do more often is....because...
- One thing I wish my peers/classmates knew about me is...because...
- One thing I wish my teacher knew about me is...because...

Answers can be as deep as participants feel comfortable. They may say something very low-stakes or very high-stakes.

After each participant has answered individually, go around the circle and ask them to share their answers to one or all of the questions depending on time and willingness.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What did we learn about ourselves and each other in this process?
- How can we use what we learned about each other to better work together this year?



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NOTES |

Facilitators should be especially prepared to provide follow up supports after this activity as it may reveal experiences of trauma, abuse, or neglect.

MY FAMILY

MATERIALS |

paper, markers or crayons

OPTIONAL: other art supplies such as magazines, glitter, construction paper, or glue

OBJECTIVES | The objective of this activity is for participants to learn about each other's families.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Introduce the concept of family:

- Ask participants: "What do you think it means to be a "family?" Take note of their responses on the board.
- Often when we think about family we think about the people we live with or the people we are related to. But family can mean a lot of things. It can be the people we feel most safe with, or people we just really love, or friends we are so close to that it feels like we are family. There are all kinds of families. Some people's families are their mom and dad, other people might just have a mom or just have a dad. Some parents are divorced. Some people might have a grandma or grandpa. Some people might have two moms or two dads, or an aunt. Some people may be biologically related to their family members, others might not be. Some people have siblings they consider family, others do not have siblings or are not very close to their siblings. Everyone's family is important and special—not matter what it looks like or who is in it!
- We also hope to become a kind of family here at this school and in this class. What does would it mean to be a family in this classroom? Take note of examples.

Facilitator shares about their own family.

- Explain who you consider to be part of your family and why : *"I think of my family as.....because....."*
- Share a picture, video or other visual representation of your family. If you bring in pictures pass them around so everyone can see them.
- If you want to make it a bit more fun, you could have students guess what your family is like before you tell them: *"Who do you think is in my family? Who do you think I live with? Any guesses?"* or you could pass around photos first and ask participants to guess who they people are to you.

Invite participants to think about what the word family means to them and who they consider to be a part of their family. They should creatively represent their family on a piece of paper. They might choose to draw a picture, create a "family tree," write an essay, write a poem, write some words that represent important things about their family, etc.

Break students into groups of 3-5 and allow each person to share about their family with their group.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What do our families have in common?
- How are they different or unique?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

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NOTES |

WARNING: This activity may be challenging or triggering for participants with complicated family histories.

EXTENSIONS: Read a book or watch a film or short video clip that explores the idea of family or presents diverse families and family structures.

Invite participants to bring in a picture of their family to share.

FAMILY RECIPE

MATERIALS |

None

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity is for participants to learn about each other’s life experiences and to identify how food can be an important reflection of our cultures and backgrounds as well as a way of connecting with others.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Divide participants into groups of 3 Or 4

Remind participants of our expansive definition of “family” that moves beyond who you are related to or may live with (see “My Family” activity).

Ask participants to think of a family event—real or imagined—such as a holiday gathering, a Sunday dinner, or some other event where there might be food.

- What is the one dish that is almost always there, or that you wish were there, or without which it would not feel like a true family gathering?
- Do you know the recipe?
- Do you like it? Or is it just tradition?
- Who usually makes it in your family? Or who would you want to make it?

After each person has shared have participants reflect on whether or not there are any similarities or differences in what they shared.

- Do you all have similar food traditions?
- If your foods were similar, why do you think that is? If they were different, why do you think that might be?
- How were your experiences similar or different?

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- What did it feel like to do this activity?
- What did we learn about each other?
- In what ways are we similar? In what ways are we different?
- What kind of things may have made this activity harder for some of us than others?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

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NOTES |

Ask participants to write down their family recipes if they would like to include them in their portfolios.

WARNING: This activity may be triggering or harmful to participants who do not have positive connections with their families or for whom food is not always accessible. Emphasizing the option of creating a fantasy gathering may help address this challenge.

MAP OF MY NEIGHBORHOOD

MATERIALS |

paper and writing utensils

OPTIONAL: large paper or poster-board, markers, magazines, & other craft materials

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to learn more about each other's life experiences and backgrounds and to practice working together as a team.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Divide students into groups of 3 or 4. Option 1: Group students who live near each other (ask the students who else in the class lives nearby or who rides the same bus as them). Option 2: Group students randomly and consider the community around your school your shared neighborhood.

Each team should create a map of their neighborhood or community being as creative as possible. The maps do not have to be geographically accurate. They can be somewhat abstract and can have words or not, pictures, not words, etc. Participants should identify and represent the following on their maps to the extent that they feel comfortable:

- Where do you each live and what is the place where you live like?
- What places are important or special to you and why? What do you do there? What is the best thing about these places? The worst thing?
- Are there places that you avoid or feel unsafe going to? Why?
- Are there places in your neighborhood that some groups of people (or people in your group) go to and others don't? Who goes where and why?
- How do you get around your neighborhood? Do you walk? Drive? Bike? Ride the bus? Stay home?
- Who are the most important people in your neighborhood and why? Where can you find them?
- What is the best thing about living in your neighborhood?

Each group should present their map to the rest of the class.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What would you like us to know about where you live?
- What is similar about your maps? What is different?
- What allowed you to work more/less successfully together as a team?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/sharing-who-we-are/>

NOTES |

Keep in mind that participants may live in very different housing conditions including apartments, mobile home communities, shelters, or foster homes.

ALTERNATIVE: Each participant can complete this activity individually and then share.

EXTENSION: incorporate use of an online mapping tool or paper map.

WHERE I FEEL AT HOME

MATERIALS |

paper and writing utensils

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to learn more about each other's lives and to consider how to make the classroom welcoming for everyone.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Introduce participants to the concept of home.

- Ask participants how they would define "home."
- Home is often thought of as the place where you live, but home could also be about where you feel most comfortable, happy, or safe. There might be a particular place that makes you feel at home, a particular person, or a special thing.

Ask each participant to write or draw a representation of where they feel at home. This may be a picture, a collage, a poem, or a short essay.

- Describe the place, person or thing.
- What is it about this place or thing that makes you feel at home?
- How do you feel when you are there?

Share with a partner or in a small group.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What could we do to make our classroom or school feel more like home for everyone?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

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NOTES |

EXTENSIONS: Play a song, read a book, or show a video that introduces or expands the concept of "home."

Invite participants to bring or share a song, poem, book, or video clip that addresses "home" or makes them feel at home.



VALUES SHOW & TELL

MATERIALS |
show & tell items

OBJECTIVES | The objective of this activity is for participants to learn more about each other's values and lives, and to practice sharing with each other in order to build relationships and community.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

DAY 1

Introduce the concept of "values." Ask participants to brainstorm:

- What is a value?
 - What does it mean to "value" something?
 - What does it mean to "have values"?
 - How do you know what you value?
 - Why do we value the things we value? Where do our values come from?
- Explain that a value is something that is important and meaningful to us. Things we think are valuable are things we care about greatly. Sometimes we talk about "having" or "living by" our values. When the word "values" is used in this way it is about the things we believe that are important to how we see the world, how we live our lives, and the decisions we make.
- Facilitators should give examples of things they value and values they hold, like justice or honesty.

Ask participants to bring or create an item that represents something they value or a value they hold for the following session. For example, a student might bring a picture of their family because family is one of the things they value most, or they might bring an item they saved up to buy with their own money because it symbolizes reaching a goal, or they might draw a scale to symbolize that they value equality.

DAY 2

Divide participants into pairs, small groups, or large groups depending on group size, comfort, and time. Ask each participant to share their item and why it is meaningful to them.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What were some similarities and differences in what we valued?
- How can knowing this help us work together as a team?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/sharing-who-we-are/>

NOTES |

This is a two-day activity!

EXTENSION: Do this activity in pairs and have each person introduce their partner to the larger group. If the person they are introducing has anything to share they can do so after their partner's comments.

ABOUT ME POSTER

MATERIALS |

paper and craft materials such as markers, glue or tape, magazines,

OPTIONAL: Printed photos of each participants

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to learn more about the lives and backgrounds of others, to practice deep listening, and to build meaningful relationships with each other.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Provide each participant with a large piece of paper or cardstock. This will be their “About Me” Poster.

If you are using photos instruct participants to attach their picture somewhere on the paper.

Invite participants to think back to all of the activities they have done thus far and to use their reflection to make a creative poster that encapsulates who they are.

Some things they may want to include:

- What names they like to be called
- Who they consider to be part of their families
- What their homes or neighborhoods are like
- What their favorite hobbies, songs, tv shows, or video games are
- What they enjoy reading or learning about
- What they value
- What makes them feel at home
- What their goals are for the future

When participants finish their posters invite them to find 3 other people in the room to share with.

With each person they should identify three things they have in common and three ways they are different.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What did you learn about your classmates today?
- Was there anything surprising about what you had in common or how you are different?
- How can we use what we learned about each other to better work together this year?



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NOTES |

If you ask students to bring a picture of themselves to school or that facilitators take and print pictures. Consider how this request could affect participants from various backgrounds.

EXTENSION: Cut pieces of string or yarn in two different colors. Post “About Me” posters on a wall. Use one color of string to connect posters that have things in common. Use the other color of string to connect things that are different. Discuss the importance similarities and differences.

IF YOU REALLY KNEW ME

MATERIALS |

paper and writing utensils

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to learn more about the lives and backgrounds of others, to practice deep listening, and to build meaningful trusting relationships with each other.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Individually ask students to write on a piece of paper three things about themselves that people who know them well know about them but that may not be common knowledge among teachers or classmates. They should start each sentence: "If you really knew me you would know that..."

Remind them that they can write anything but that they should only write things they are willing to share with the class.

Go around the circle and let each student read their three items while everyone else listens quietly and respectfully.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What did we learn about each other? How does this information matter in how we treat each other?



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NOTES |

EXTENSION: Add an additional line "most people think _____ about me..... *but if you really knew me...*"

WARNING: This activity may reveal experiences of abuse or neglect that facilitators should be prepared to address.

TWO TRUTHS & A LIE

MATERIALS |

None

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this exercise are to learn more about each other in a fun way and to begin thinking about the stereotypes and assumptions we make about our classmates.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Sit in a circle and ask for a volunteer to begin.

The volunteer should say two things that are true about themselves and one thing that is a lie, in no particular order. For example: *"I like to roller skate, I'm a good swimmer, I used to be a basketball player."*

Invite the group should guess which of the three things is a lie.

Large Group Debrief Fishbowl: Invite a group of students who shared to bring their chairs into the middle of the circle and form a smaller circle. Tell them that they are in the "fishbowl" and only they are allowed to speak. Everyone else is an observer.

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- How did you decide what you wanted to share about yourself?
- What do you think people assumed about you?
- Why do you think they made these assumptions?

Now reverse the fishbowl and ask students who did not share to come to the middle. Ask them the following questions:

- Why did you assume certain things were lies and other things were not?
- What assumptions were you making when you made those guesses?
- Were there things that were surprising about someone that were different than what you had assumed about them?

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- Where do our assumptions about others come from?
- Are our assumptions usually accurate or are they sometimes rooted in stereotypes?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

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NOTES |

Depending on the size of the group everyone might get a chance to go. You could ask for volunteers to share. Participants can yell out guesses, form teams to guess, or even write their answers on a piece of paper.

WARNING: This may not be an appropriate activity for LGBTQIA+ students who are not out and have had to lie about their identities—especially older students.

This activity may also reveal experiences of trauma, abuse, neglect or discrimination depending on how participants answer.

A DAY IN MY LIFE

MATERIALS |

paper and writing utensils

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to learn more about the lives and backgrounds of others, to practice deep listening, and to build meaningful trusting relationships with each other.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Invite participants to write or draw a typical day in their lives. Some questions to get them started:

- What time do you wake up? What do you usually do when you wake up?
- What are your responsibilities in a typical day? What do others expect of you?
- Who are you typically with?
- What do you typically do?
- What do you eat in a typical day?
- What time do you typically go to sleep?
- What parts of your day do you most enjoy?
- What parts of your day are the most challenging?

It may be helpful to write or draw something for every hour they are awake. For example, you could create a handout or instruct them to report on what they're typically doing at 8am, 9am, 10am, and so on.

After participants have created their typical day, divide them into pairs or small groups to share.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What did you have in common with others? What things were different about your days?
- What is something you learned about your classmates that will help you support them this year?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/sharing-who-we-are/>

NOTES |

This activity may not be appropriate for groups in which participants cannot write.

WARNING: This activity may reveal experiences of abuse or neglect that facilitators should be prepared to address.

MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY

MATERIALS |

Paper and writing utensils or tablets or computers

OPTIONAL: pictures or self-portraits and crafting supplies

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to learn more about the lives and backgrounds of others, to practice deep listening, and to build meaningful trusting relationships with each other.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Introduce the concept of an autobiography

- Ask participants to brainstorm what they know about autobiographies
- Show them an example of an age-appropriate autobiography
- Explain that an autobiography is a story of your life written from your perspective while you are still alive
- Share your own autobiographical essay

Invite participants to write an autobiography of their own lives. Some things to consider:

- Where they were born and to whom
- What they were like at different ages
- What schools they have gone to
- What various hobbies or interests they have
- What struggles or challenges they have faced
- Who have been important people in their lives

When everyone is finished divide participants into groups to share.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What did you have in common with others?
- How have your lives been different?
- What is something you learned about your classmates that will help you support them this year?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/sharing-who-we-are/>

NOTES |

This activity may not be appropriate for groups in which participants cannot write.

WARNING: This activity may reveal experiences of abuse or neglect that facilitators should be prepared to address.

EXTENSION: Create a multimedia presentation of our life using magazines, collages, power point presentations, photos, etc.

WHAT I NEED YOU TO KNOW

MATERIALS |

paper or notecards and
writing utensils

OPTIONAL: create a handout
to accompany this activity

OBJECTIVES | The purpose of this activity is to provide students with an opportunity to share things about themselves that will be important for teachers to know.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Invite participants to answer the following questions on a notecard, piece of paper, or handout.

- What would you like to be called in this classroom?
- What would you like me to know about your family or home life so that I can best support you this year?
- What holidays or celebrations are particularly important to you and your family? Tell me a bit about them.
- What languages are you most comfortable communicating in?
- What resources or supports have been helpful to you in the past? Were there any things that have been unhelpful? Are there things you have never had access to that you think could be helpful?
- What are your biggest strengths as a student? What are your biggest challenges?

Collect their responses and make a plan to talk to each person one-on-one about how you can best support them in light of what they shared.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What other things are important for me to know about you or for us to know about each other?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

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NOTES |

Consider other important questions that you would like to pose.

Consider how you can creatively use your school day or class time to have one-on-one conversations with students.

In groups where participants cannot write consider just having one-on-one conversations.

WARNING: This activity may reveal experiences of abuse or neglect that facilitators should be prepared to address.

MUSIC THAT INSPIRES ME

MATERIALS |

access to YouTube or other
music internet site

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are to understand how music can inspire us and to identify which particular songs we find inspirational.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Introduce the importance of music in many of our lives.

- Music can put how we feel into words and sounds. It can make us happy or sad. It can make us want to dance or sing. It can also inspire us to be the best we can be. Today we are going to share with each other some of the songs that have inspired us to be our best selves.

Facilitators should model this by either:

1. Playing a song for students that inspires YOU to be your best self and explaining why you chose that song.
2. Playing one or more songs that others find inspirational

Ask participants to think of a song that they find inspiring, motivating, or calming and why.

Invite participants to play their song for the group. They should write their song and artist on a list when they come up to play it to create a group playlist.

Participants should sit quietly as the song is played and listen to the lyrics closely.

After each song is over, the person who chose it should explain why they chose the song and why they find it to be inspirational.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What did your songs have in common?
- How were they different?
- When could we listen to these songs?



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NOTES |

If teachers have access to YouTube (Pandora, Spotify, etc.), most songs will be easy to find through a search feature. Students can tell the teacher their song and artist and the teacher can search and play it. If there is a video with the song you could play that as well. Speakers may be required. Be prepared to address inappropriate language in songs or play “clean” versions.

EXTENSION: Select someone to coordinate collecting all of the class play lists. Decide with students how to best give them the list (e.g. YouTube links, a Spotify play list, etc.). Students can then play this list whenever they are feeling down or need a bit of inspiration.

SELFIES

MATERIALS |

camera

OPTIONAL: printer

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to learn more about the lives and backgrounds of others, to practice deep listening, and to build meaningful trusting relationships with each other.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Using cell phones or other technological devices have each student take a “selfie” (a picture of themselves) that they think represents who they are.

Each student should then write a blurb that captures who they are in four sentences or less. You may pose the following prompt questions:

- What do you wish people knew about you?
- If you had to tell someone who you are, what would you say?
- Why do you think this picture captures who you are?
- What has made you who you are?
- What is important about you that people can't tell just from looking at you?

Have students share their picture and their blurb in a group of 3-5.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What did you like about it?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- What did you learn about your classmates?



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NOTES |

OPTIONAL: Print pictures and post them in the classroom with blurbs.

Consider how this activity will best work in terms of technology. Keep in mind this activity may reveal economic inequalities among students (those who have phones and those who do not) that you should be prepared to navigate. You may want to have everyone take pictures using one of your devices.

TEACHER INTERVIEW

MATERIALS |

paper and writing utensils

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for students to get to know more about their teacher and for students and teachers to continue building more equitable relationships with one another and to practice working together as a team, delegating tasks, and taking turns.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Tell participants that today they will get a chance to interview you so that they can learn more about your life, your interests, your background, and your experiences. You can reserve the right to “pass” on any questions you are not comfortable answering just as they should have this right in other activities.

Brainstorm what kind of questions make good interview questions. For example, they might not want to ask a “yes” or “no” question because these kinds of questions do not solicit a lot of information. So rather than saying “do you have children?” they might say, “Tell me about your family.” They should also consider what kinds of questions might make a person uncomfortable answering.

Invite each participant to individually think of a question they would like to ask you and give them time to write their question down if appropriate.

Divide students into pairs or triads and ask them to share their question with each other and decide on one question they would like to ask from their pair or group. Invite them to identify one person from their team to ask their question.

After groups have decided on their question, all participants should sit in a circle that includes the teacher. Each group should ask their question and the teacher should answer or pass. After all groups/teams have gone, provide an opportunity for those who did not speak to ask follow up questions.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What did you learn about me today that was surprising to you?
- How did you work together to come up with one question as a group?



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NOTES |

Consider how to help students who cannot write develop and track their questions.

EDUCATION LIFE MAPS

MATERIALS |

paper and writing utensils

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to reflect on their own successes and challenges in learning and for teachers to gain insight into the educational histories of their students.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Ask participants to think of 3-6 significant experiences or events that occurred at different points in their educational history that have shaped how they feel about learning. It may be something that happened within the school, or it could be something that happened outside of school. It may be something that happened that went well or that they are proud of, or something that was hard or upsetting. It could be about grades, about an experience with a classmate, about a fight, about a relationship with a teacher or adult, etc. They should only come up with events they would be willing to share.

Using drawings, words, etc., invite them to draw a map of these events on a timeline indicating the year or grade they were in. Under each event they should answer or be prepared to answer the following questions:

- What was the event?
- Why was it significant to you?
- How did this event make you feel?
- What did you learn when this happened to you?
- How do you feel about learning now as a result of this?

Each person should then share their life-maps with two other people in the room.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What is one thing you learned about yourself doing this activity or that you would like to share with the group?
- What is one thing you need from your classmates/students to be the best student/teacher you can be this year?



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NOTES |

WARNING: This activity may reveal experiences of discrimination, abuse, or neglect that facilitators should be prepared to address.

FAVORITE TEACHER

MATERIALS |

paper and writing utensils

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are to allow participants to reflect on what they need from teachers to do well and to provide teachers with an opportunity to learn more how they can best support their students.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Divide participants into groups of three or four.

Ask participants to answer the following questions:

- Who has been your favorite teacher since you started school and why?
- What specifically did you like about them?
- How did they make you feel?
- If you have not had a favorite teacher, why do you think this is?

Have students write a letter to their favorite teacher explaining why they liked them so much.

Teachers can collect these at the end of the class and read through them. Return to have them included in students' portfolios.

If the teachers are still working in the district or in another known district students may decide to mail the letters to their former teacher.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What things did we have in common in terms of what we have liked in our teachers?
- What things were different?



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NOTES |

It is possible students have never had a teacher they connected with, in which case they could write about why that is or how they wish teachers in the past would have been different.

ALTERNATIVE: Have students share some of the negative experiences they have had with teachers.

SETTING GOALS

The activities in this section are designed to help students think about their future goals and aspirations so that they can become the person they would like to become. This section include things like how we learn from our mistakes, how we make decisions, what we need to be our best selves, and where we we see ourselves in 20 years. The goal is for students to see their schooling experience as one important piece in their broader life journey.

SUPPORTING MEDIA



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MY BEST SELF

MATERIALS |

paper, markers, crayons and other arts and craft supplies

OPTIONAL: blank face handout (see appendix)

OBJECTIVES | The objective of this activity is for participants to begin envisioning the kind of person they would like to be.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Introduce the concept of being our “best selves.”

- Ask participants to brainstorm what it means to be our best selves.
- Explain that being our best selves is when we feel good about who we are, when we are happy, when we feel proud of how we treat others, and when we feel we are making the best decisions we can in the circumstances we are in. It does not mean we are “better” than others or that we are winning or achieving anything in particular. It just means, as Maya Angelou says: “liking yourself, liking what you do, and liking how you do it.” The only judge of your best self is you.

Invite participants to draw or write what it looks like when they are their best selves.

- What does it look like when you are your best self? For example, maybe you’re more likely to smile or laugh.
- What does it sound like when you are your best self? For example, you might use kind words towards others and ask for help when you need it.
- What does it feel like when you are your best self? For example, you might feel pride or joy.

Ask participants to share their image in pairs, small groups, or with the large group depending on comfort and time.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What can you do this year to try and be your best self in this class?

NOTES |

You may want to post students’ pictures somewhere so they can reference them throughout the year.



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/goals-and-aspirations/>

SETTING GOALS

MATERIALS |

paper and writing utensils

OPTIONAL: create a Goal-Setting worksheet with guiding questions

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to set goals for themselves, to consider the concrete steps it will take to achieve their goals, and to begin considering what it means to be accountable to yourself.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Introduce the concepts of goals and goal setting

- Ask participants to brainstorm: What are goals? Why is it important to have goal? Can anyone give an example of a goal they have had before and how they achieved that goal?
- Explain that in order to achieve things in life it is often (though not always) important to set goals and map out what it will take to achieve these goals. Sometimes there are things outside of our control that stop us from achieving our goals, but other times we struggle to achieve them because we have not taken the time to think about what we really want to accomplish or to consider what it will take to get there. Today we are going to set some goals for ourselves for the school year (or semester) and think about the steps it will take to achieve these goals. Goals can be personal goals, academic goals, community goals
- Facilitators should give an example of a goal they have had and how they achieved it. Make sure to give as many details as possible of the steps involved and the mistakes you made along the way. So for example, if your goal was to become a teacher the steps might include: studying and working hard in high school, hanging out with people who were going to hold you accountable, & applying for financial aid

Invite participants to set three goals for themselves:

1. A personal goal (something you want to do for yourself in terms of the person you want to be)
2. An academic goal (something related to how you do in school)
3. A community goal (something that will contribute to your school, neighborhood, or home community)

For each goal they should answer the following: What is your goal? Why did you choose this goal? What are the steps it will take for you to achieve this goal? Be as detailed as possible. If you do not know what it will take to achieve this goal, how could you go about finding out? What resources will you need to achieve this goal? How will you hold yourself accountable for achieving this goal? What will be the evidence that you have succeeded?

Students should then be paired with an “accountability partner.” They should share their goal and the steps to achieve this goal with their partner. The partner should ask probing questions like: Don’t you have to do this first before you can do that?

Partners make a commitment to check in which each other every week or month.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- Share one of your goals.
- What can you do if you feel like you are getting off track from achieving your goals?



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NOTES |

Consider how to help students who cannot write develop and track their questions.

EXTENSIONS: Read a book or play a song about setting goals.

Take the opportunity to discuss ways in which society is unfair and how that makes it harder for some of us to have and achieve goals than others.

I DECIDED

MATERIALS |

paper and writing utensils

OPTIONAL: create a handout to accompany this activity

OBJECTIVES | The objective of this activity is for participants to think about how they can make decisions that best serve them.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Introduce the concept of decisions

- Ask participants to brainstorm what it means to make a decision.
- Explain that every day there are moments when we are making decisions, sometimes consciously, sometimes not, about what we will say, how we will behave, what we will or will not do. A lot of times we do not think of ourselves as making decisions, but we are. For example, this morning you may have decided to wear one thing over another. You might decide you will or will not run in the hallway or play fight with a classmate. Sometimes things happen in our lives that are not our decision. For example, we may not have say in what kind of food is available in our house or whether or not someone is available to drive us to school. There may also be decisions we make that *feel* outside of our control because we have not learned to manage how we emote when we are excited, angry, or frustrated. We may need more support in this area.
- Today we are going to think about the decisions we *are* in control of and the consequences—positive, negative, or in between—of those decisions.

After facilitators model the following, Invite participants to think of a recent decision they made—it could be one that turned out well or one that did not. Ask them to individually complete the following sentences:

I made a decision to _____ because _____ (this is a good opportunity to emphasize thinking about why we do the things we do).

This decision made me feel _____.

As a result of my decision _____ happened.

Based on the options available to me, I could have decided to _____ or _____ instead.

If I had chosen one of the other two options _____ or _____ was likely to happen.

If I was faced with the same decision again I would _____ (note, this may be the same thing that they actually decided to do).

Students share with one partner the decision they made and what the consequences were.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What kind of decisions are the hardest to make?
- What kinds of decisions are easy to make?
- What parts of our decision-making are in our control? What parts are not? How can we best navigate this?
- How can we support each other in making decisions that best serve us?



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NOTES |

Consider how this activity could work for participants who cannot write.

Be cautious not to blame or shame individual participants for larger systemic problems that limit their choices. For many people it is not that they *made* good choices, but that they *had* good choices. It will be imperative to balance this reality as you facilitate this activity.



LEARNING FROM MISTAKES

MATERIALS |

paper and writing utensils

OPTIONAL: create a
handout to accompany

OBJECTIVES | The objective of this activity is for participants to consider what they can learn from past mistakes and how they can make better decisions in the future.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Introduce the concept of mistakes

- Ask participants to brainstorm what it means to make a mistake
- Share that a mistake is an action or decision that we may wish we had not done or made. Sometimes we make mistakes on accident, sometimes we make decisions that don't serve us intentionally, and sometimes they happen for reasons outside of our full control. But mistakes are also a chance to learn and grow. In fact, without mistakes there is often very little learning, growth, or change possible. As long as you are alive you will make mistakes! The hope is that you learn and grow from them.

Ask participants to think of a mistake they have made that was something *within* their control or that was their decision:

- What was the mistake?
- Why did it happen?
- What did you learn from it?
- If you were presented with the same issue now what, if anything, would you do differently?
- What do you want people who know you made this mistake to know about you now?

Divide participants into pairs and invite them to share.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- How can reflecting on our mistakes help us in the future?
- What did we learn about each other that will help us be of support to each other this year?



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NOTES |

Consider other "ways to share" from the list in the introduction of this handbook.

WARNING: Be prepared for participants to admit significant mistakes that may be triggering or traumatizing and require additional support or follow up.



ROLE MODELS

MATERIALS |

None

OPTIONAL: pictures of role models, created handout

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to think intentionally about who they look up to and why, and for teachers to learn more about who their students admire and begin considering how to provide affirming and inspiring images to students.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Introduce the concept of “role models”

- Ask participants to brainstorm what it means to have or be a “role model.”
- Explain that role models are people we admire and look up to. They are people we learn from and perhaps would like to be like. For some people having role models is important because often it is hard to imagine what our lives could be like or what we are capable of accomplishing. Role models allow us to see what is possible for us to achieve and the work it will take to get there.

Facilitators should share who one of their role models is and why.

Invite participants to think about who they look up or consider a role model and choose three people: a person in their life, a person in history, and a person who is currently in the media. Then answer the following:

- Who are they?
- How do you know them or how did you learn about them?
- What is it about them that you admire?

Divide participants into small groups and invite them to share who their role models are and why.

Educators should attend to what students’ role models tell you about them and about what they need from you as a teacher. What is the racial background, gender, role, etc. of their role model? Were there common people who kept coming up? If so, why do you think this is? What does this mean about your students’ experiences and exposure to different kind of people? Were there any people listed who you did not know or had never heard of? Why do you think this is? What do you think this says about the differences and similarities between your experiences and your students?

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What did your role models have in common? Why do you think they are similar in this way?
- How were they different?
- What does who we look up to say about our values and our life experiences?
- How can we be role models to others?



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NOTES |

EXTENSION: Invite participants to share a picture of their role model (perhaps one they have found online or one they have), provide materials for them to make a poster about their role model, or ask them to write about their role model based on what they already know or based on a bit of research.

IN 20 YEARS

MATERIALS |

Paper and writing utensils

OPTIONAL: create a
handout to accompany

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to begin thinking about their future in order to set goals and for teachers to learn how students see themselves and what they think their possible futures will look like.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Ask participants to individually answer the following questions:

In 20 years I will be _____ years old
I HOPE to be living in _____
I HOPE to be doing _____ with my time
I HOPE my family will consist of _____
I HOPE my friends will be _____

I worry that I will ACTUALLY BE living in _____
I worry that I will ACTUALLY BE doing _____
I worry that my family will ACTUALLY CONSIST of _____
I worry that my friends will ACTUALLY BE _____

Invite participants to find a partner to share their answer with.

After both people have had a chance to share ask them to find a new partner and share again.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- Were there differences between what you hope will happen and what you think will actually happen? Why do you think that is?



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NOTES |

ALTERNATIVE: Invite participants to come up with questions they would like to consider rather than providing questions.

Consider doing the same activity with different years. For example, “in 5 years” or “in 10 years,” etc.

MY LEGACY

MATERIALS |

paper and writing utensil

OPTIONAL: internet access
with projector and audio

OBJECTIVES | The objective of this activity is for participants to think about their goals more long-term and the kind of life they want to live more broadly.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Introduce concept of a “legacy.”

- Ask participants to brainstorm what it means to leave a legacy.
- Share that a “legacy” is what will be remembered of you when you are no longer living. It is about how you impact people around you, your community, and the world more broadly. Although many of us have been touched by the legacy of someone famous, even everyday people like grandparents or teachers, who are not famous can leave a lasting impact on others.
- Facilitators should give an example of someone whose legacy has impacted them—perhaps one person who is famous or a historical figure, and another person who is from their family or community. If it is a famous person ask participants to brainstorm why they think you (and others) admire this person.

Ask participants to brainstorm one person whose legacy has impacted them.

- What about this person has been meaningful or inspiring to them?
- What impact have they had on your life?

Divide participants to share their person with a small or large group.

Now ask participants to brainstorm what kind of legacy they would like to leave. Facilitators can model this by sharing the legacy they hope to leave. Invite participants to write a letter to future generations about the legacy they hope to leave. They are free to be as creative as possible in how they structure their letter. Some prompts:

- How do you want people to remember you?
- What do you want them to say about you when you are no longer here?
- What impact do you want to have on other people’s lives?
- How do you want people to remember you treating them?
- What kind of work do you want to be known for doing?
- Who will you want to play you in the film about your life?

Invite participants to share their letter with two other people in the class.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- Share one thing about the legacy you would like to leave.

NOTES |

EXTENSIONS: Consider arranging for participants to share a picture, clip, or excerpt of the person whose legacy has touched them.

This exercise could be done over multiple days.

OPTIONAL: After portfolios have been submitted to teachers they can ask students for a stamp and a self-addressed envelope and mail their letters to them at the end of the school year as a reminder of the person they want to be.



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

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SCHOOL TOUR

MATERIALS |

OPTIONAL: "School Tour"
handout (see appendix)

OBJECTIVES | The objective of this activity is make sure students understand how to navigate their school and identify what resources and supports are available to them.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Divide students into small groups

Invite participants to work together to answer questions about the school (see examples below or in appendix). Consider giving participants the opportunity to go on a "fieldtrip" or excursion around the building to find the answers. They may want to "interview" other teachers or ask questions in different offices.

- What are school-wide rules, procedures, and consequences?
- What is the quickest way to get from ___ to ___ (pick multiple places in the building; consider inviting students to draw a map)
- What do you do and where do you go if you are having issues with your class schedule?
- What are the procedures for walking in the halls? Or going to the bathroom?
- What do you do if there is a school emergency? If you are sick? If you are frustrated or upset?
- What is our school social worker here for?
- What do our counselors do?
- What is the mission of our school?
- What extra curricular and co-curricular activities do we offer? How can you join them?
- Who are important people in the building you should know?

After each group has completed their tour, return to the classroom and review the answers together as a large group.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What did you learn about our school?
- How can you use this information to have a great year?
- What else do you still want to know that we did not address?



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NOTES |

Note: this day it could be helpful to have different classes or teams do this activity in a slightly different order so that there aren't as many students in the hallway at once.

EXPERTS

MATERIALS |

paper and writing utensils

OPTIONAL: item to share

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are to recognize all the many ways people are smart, knowledgeable, and capable beyond what is often recognized in traditional academic or school measures and to continue leaning more about each other.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Tell each person to think of something they feel confident they know a lot about or are good at. It could be something very complicated or something simple. It could be something that they do at school, at home, or in some other place. For example, they might be an expert at making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, or doing their little sister's hair, in dinosaurs, Lego building, playing video games, finding the best prices when they're shopping, climbing, etc.

Ask each person to pick one thing they are an expert in and answer the following questions:

- What are you an expert in?
- How did you become an expert in this? (Did someone teach you? Did you practice on your own? etc)
- What is one tip you have for us about how to do this well or one fact you can share about the topic you are an expert in?

After participants have answers for themselves, invite them all to sit in a circle and allow each person to share their answers.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- What did you learn about your classmates?
- What are the many different ways in which we learn and become good at things?



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NOTES |

EXTENSIONS: Invite participants to share an artifact (picture, short clip, book, etc.) or demonstration of their area of expertise. This may require doing this activity over two days so that they can bring something from home.

Talk to students about the various ways people learn: by doing something, by figuring it on their own, by reading independently, by talking to an expert, by making mistakes, by taking a class, etc.

TRIPTYCH REFLECTION

MATERIALS |

paper, writing utensils,
markers, crayons, and
other crafting supplies

OBJECTIVES | The goal of this activity is for participants to reflect on where they are in their lives and think about future goals and aspirations.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Give everyone a piece of paper and ask them to fold it into thirds. The paper will be their triptych mural.

Using drawing, collage, and words invite participants to visually represent their answers to the following questions in each of the three columns:

- Column 1: What was your experience like last year?
- Column 2: How are you feeling right now in your life?
- Column 3: Where do you see yourself a year from now?

Divide participants into pairs or small groups and invite them to share their murals.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- What did you learn about your classmates?
- What do you need to get from where you are now to where you want to be?



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NOTES |

ALTERNATIVES: Come up with different question prompts, perhaps ones focused specifically on school experiences or interests with the column order being: Where I was, Where I am, Where I want to be.

EXTENSION: Discuss the tradition of triptych art with participants.

CREATING INCLUSIVE SPACES

The activities in this section are designed to help participants interrupt bias, bullying, and stereotypes in order to create schools and classrooms where students from all backgrounds feel a sense of belonging and inclusion. Too often in our schools students are the victims of biases and prejudices from their peers and even at times from teachers. We know that without helping students debunk stereotypes and interrupt bullying these things frequently go unchecked and become a source of isolation for students—especially those from marginalized backgrounds. Engaging in these activities is especially important given how polarized our country has become around issues of identity. The activities in this section require moderate vulnerability.

SUPPORTING MEDIA



<https://www.michiganlearning.org/creating-inclusive-spaces/>

FOUR CORNERS OF BULLYING

MATERIALS |

questions posted in four locations around the room

OPTIONAL: "Ally Pledge" handout (see appendix)

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are to help participants better recognize bullying, to note commonalities in their experiences, to recognize ways that they have treated others unkindly, and to begin practicing ways they can act as allies and interrupt bullying in order to create a safe classroom.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Ask students to brainstorm what it means to be a **bully**, a **target**, a **bystander** and an **ally**. Add information to help them understand these definitions.

- Bully (or aggressor): the person who engages in behaviors to harm, hurt, or intimidate someone physically, emotionally, or socially
- Target: the person being harassed by the bully/aggressor
- Bystander: a person who witnesses the situation but does nothing
- Ally: someone who works with and acts in support of the person or group being targeted, harassed, made fun of or discriminated against

Put the following four prompts on newsprint and put one question each in four different places in the room.

1. Describe a time when you were the target of bullying
2. Describe a time when you were the perpetrator or aggressor of bullying
3. Describe a time when you were a bystander of bullying
4. Describe a time when you were an ally or intervened in bullying

As a facilitator, prepare your own answers to each of these questions to be shared as you introduce the exercise. Choose answers that demonstrate that this exercise incorporates a range of identities. Since this exercise asks participants to be vulnerable with each other, also be aware of how your own examples model risk taking.

Divide participants into groups of three or four with one group situated in each corner of the room (for larger groups, assign two small groups to a corner rather than increasing the size of the small group). Set a timer so that each person in the group has 3 minutes to answer the question prompt (or you could give each group 10 minutes). They should share without others interrupting or asking questions. When they are done sharing the next person will go.

Once everyone has answered the question in their corner, groups should rotate to the next corner until all groups have answered all four questions.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What did you learn as you thought about and shared your own responses?
- What did you learn from listening to your classmates?
- What can we do to make sure people in our community are treated better?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/creating-inclusive-spaces/>

NOTES |

EXTENSIONS: Invite participants to come up with skits or role plays for how they can be an ally if something similar happens again.

Ask students to complete the ALLY PLEDGE.

DEBUNKING STEREOTYPES

MATERIALS |

paper, writing utensils,
internet access or
reference texts

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to become more aware of the stereotypes and biases they hold, why they are problematic, and how they can disrupt them in themselves and others. It also provides an opportunity to practice working together as a team.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Review community norms and preferred language. Remind participants they should make sure not to use discriminatory or oppressive language while doing this activity and that they should be aware of how others might experience their comments.

Introduce the concept of stereotypes

- Ask participants if they know what stereotypes are and to brainstorm definitions.
- Explain that stereotypes are generalizations about a group of people. Sometimes they are true for some of the people in the group but often they are unfair overstatements (or even lies) for many others in the group. Even though stereotypes are often unfair, untrue, or overstatements, they can affect how we feel about ourselves and others and they can impact how we treat each other. Stereotypes are the basis for prejudice, bias, and discrimination—the ideas that some people are less deserving, less smart, or less capable than others.

Invite participants to brainstorm common stereotypes they have heard circulating in their school or community about people from *their own* group. Remind them to remember their norms, dialogue skills, and community visions as naming stereotypes can be hurtful.

Divide participants into groups and assign each group one of the stereotypes (ideally of their choosing) to debunk. Consider breaking participants into groups based on the stereotype they are most interested in debunking, or asking participants to choose a stereotype that affects a group they are NOT members of. For example, if one of the stereotypes is “girls can’t throw balls well” perhaps a group of boys or nonbinary students will work to debunk it.

Instruct participants to find 3-5 pieces of evidence that debunk the stereotypes. Evidence may include a person they know who challenges the stereotype, a research study or news article, a historical figure, data and statistics, etc. Invite each group to share what they learned that debunks the stereotype they were assigned.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did doing this activity make you feel?
- Where do our stereotypes come from?
- How can we work to acknowledge and disrupt the stereotypes we hold?
- Which stereotypes can we now cross off of our list because we know they are not fully true?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/creating-inclusive-spaces/>

NOTES |

It may be important to introduce students to how to find and vet reputable sources, facts versus opinions, and the risks of “fake news.”

WARNING: This activity will likely involve talking to students about race, gender, class, bias, prejudice, stereotypes and other related concepts. Facilitators who have not done a significant amount of their own work in these areas or who do not have the knowledge, skill, or confidence to lead others in these conversations should not lead this activity.

HOW TO BE AN ALLY

MATERIALS |

None

OBJECTIVES | The objective of this activity is for participants to practice interrupting discrimination and bullying.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Review the definition of an ally—someone who works with and acts in support of the person or group being targeted, harassed, made fun of, or discriminated against.

Brainstorm a list of ways you could be an ally to someone. Some ideas:

- Say “hey that’s not cool.”
- Say “I don’t think that’s funny.”
- Walk with the person being targeted
- Use inclusive language
- Treat others kindly
- Invite someone new to eat lunch with you
- Tell an adult

Brainstorm a list of examples of times they witnessed someone being bullied, picked on, or treated badly at school.

Break participants into groups of 4 or 5. Assign each group a scenario that was brainstormed. Give participants time to create a skit in which one person (or more) acts as an ally to someone being bullied or picked on using one or more of the ideas you all brainstormed. Share skit with the rest of the class.

Ask the audience for other ideas they could have tried. Re-do the skit a new approach or different technique after getting feedback from the group. You could invite others to try the skit re-do.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- Why is it so difficult to be an ally?
- How can we keep practicing being an ally?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/creating-inclusive-spaces/>

NOTES |

Although participants will be acting out scenarios of bullying and discrimination, they should still make sure to avoid using discriminatory or problematic language or taking on stereotypical voices in their skits.

Consider posting the list of ideas of how to be an ally or compiling them into a handout.

WE ARE BEAUTIFUL

MATERIALS |

paper, markers or crayons
and craft materials

OBJECTIVES | The objective of this activity is for participants to think more deeply about what is beautiful, what they find beautiful, and why. To empower students to view themselves as beautiful.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Invite participants to write a few paragraphs (or draw a picture) about what they think of as beautiful.

Next invite participants to write a paragraph or draw a picture of what they think society or other people find beautiful.

Divide participants into pairs and invite them to share their reflections with each other.

Return to the concept of beauty

- Ask participants to share what they noticed about what they think beauty means or what it means for something or someone to be beautiful
- Share that we live in a world where some people think only certain skin colors or body types as beautiful, but this is not the case. Beauty comes in all forms and fashions and for many of us is about more than what we see on the outside. Often the most beautiful things in the world are things found in nature or things inside of us, like how we treat each other.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel do to this activity?
- Where your two definitions of beauty the similar or different? Why?
- Why do you think certain things are thought of as more beautiful than others?
- What is one thing we can each do to make sure that everyone in our school/class feels beautiful and valued?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/creating-inclusive-spaces/>

NOTES |

This activity can be as simple or elaborate as you wish. You could just ask participants to share or you could create posters.

EXTENSION: Connect to a broader lesson about how beauty standards change over time and across culture and context.

AFFIRMING ONE ANOTHER

The activities in this section are designed to help participants express their appreciation for one another. It allows each student to experience themselves through the perspectives of others and for each person to practice sharing what they value and admire about their peers. Affirmation exercises help solidify strong relationships and support communities of mutual support. The activities in this section require moderate levels of vulnerability and should not be done without first building foundational skills and sharing meaningfully. Affirmations can be done throughout the school year to reinforce the community you have built together and serve as nice closings to many activities.

SUPPORTING MEDIA



<https://www.michiganlearning.org/affirmations/>

SEATED AFFIRMATIONS

MATERIALS |

None

E
S
M
V

OBJECTIVES | The objective of this activity is for each participant to be affirmed by their peers.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Ask participants to sit in a circle

Introduce the concept of an “affirmation.”

- An affirmation is a comment or observation about someone else that is meant to affirm them and make them feel good. Affirmations can be based on something you like about a person, something you admire about them, something you learned from them, something you noticed, or something else positive. The best affirmations focus on things about who a person is or how they have shown up or treated others. This means that while sometimes people can feel positive when others comment on their physical appearance, great affirmations are not about how a person looks or things outside of a person’s control. For example, saying: “you’re so pretty” or “I like your name (that you likely didn’t pick)” is not as powerful as saying “I really appreciated how you shared so honestly with others” or “I love how funny you are.”

Give each person a few minutes to think of an affirmation for the person sitting to their right. They may choose to write it down.

Go around the circle and let each person look at the person next to them and share their affirmation.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- How did it feel to affirm others?
- How did it feel to receive affirmations from others?
- What kinds of things do we appreciate about each other?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/affirmations/>

NOTES |

Affirmations are only possible to do once participants know each other, have had meaningful interactions, or have deeper relationships.

Even though this is not a written activity facilitators could track affirmations to share with participants or include in their portfolios.

WRITTEN AFFIRMATIONS

MATERIALS |

paper, writing utensils, markers, etc.

E
S
M
P
V

OBJECTIVES | The objective of this activity is for each participant to be affirmed by their peers.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Ask participants to sit in a circle

Introduce the concept of an affirmation.

- An affirmation is a comment or observation about someone else that is meant to affirm them and make them feel good. Affirmations can be based on something you like about a person, something you admire about them, something you learned from them, something you noticed, or something else positive. The best affirmations focus on things about who a person is or how they have shown up or treated others. This means that while sometimes people can feel positive when others comment on their physical appearance, great affirmations are not about how a person looks or things outside of a person's control. For example, saying: "you're so pretty" or "I like your name (that you likely didn't pick)" is not as powerful as saying "I really appreciated how you shared so honestly with others" or "I love how funny you are."

Give each participant a piece of paper and instruct them to creatively write their name at the top.

Each person should pass their paper one person to the left so that their neighbor can write an affirmation about them. You could include a meaningful quote, song lyric, or other comment on everyone's paper.

Keep passing papers until they get all the way around the circle.

At the end each person should have a sheet full of positive affirmations from their classmates.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- How did it feel to affirm others?
- How did it feel to receive affirmations from others?
- What kinds of things do we appreciate about each other?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/affirmations/>

NOTES |

This activity may not be appropriate for participants who cannot write.

Affirmations are only possible to do once participants know each other.

ALTERNATIVES: You could have each person attach their paper to their back with tape and have students circulate around the room writing affirmations anonymously. You could write affirmations on notecards or small pieces of paper and collect them in a paper bag or a jar for each person.

CONCENTRIC CIRCLE AFFIRMATIONS

MATERIALS |

None

OBJECTIVES | The objective of this activity is for each participant to be affirmed by their peers.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Introduce the concept of an affirmation

- An affirmation is a comment or observation about someone else that is meant to affirm them and make them feel good. Affirmations can be based on something you like about a person, something you admire about them, something you learned from them, something you noticed, or something else positive. The best affirmations focus on things about who a person is or how they have shown up or treated others. This means that while sometimes people can feel positive when others comment on their physical appearance, great affirmations are not about how a person looks or things outside of a person's control. For example, saying: "you're so pretty" or "I like your name (that you likely didn't pick)" is not as powerful as saying "I really appreciated how you shared so honestly with others" or "I love how funny you are."

Participants should form a concentric circle, one inner circle and one outer circle in which each person has a partner they are standing with face to face.

Each person will get 30 seconds to speak without interrupting the other person.

The first person to go should affirm their partner by sharing something they have appreciated about them, admired about them, learned from them, or noticed over the past two weeks. The second person should then share about their partner.

Once both partners have gone direct participants in the inner circle to move on person to the left and repeat the process.

Do this activity until you run out of time or until you get through everyone.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- How did it feel to affirm others?
- How did it feel to receive affirmations from others?
- What kinds of things do we appreciate about each other?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/affirmations/>

NOTES |

Affirmations are only possible to do once participants know each other, have had meaningful interactions, or have deeper relationships.

PORTFOLIO SHARING

MATERIALS |

Portfolios

E
S
M
V

OBJECTIVES | The objective of this activity is for each participant to feel a sense of accomplishment and closure and to continue sharing and building relationships with their peers.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Divide participants into groups of 4-5.

Instruct participants to introduce themselves and to share items from their portfolio to the extent that they feel comfortable. They may want to focus on the item that they are most proud of.

If there is time each group can share with the rest of the class.

Alternative idea: Each person in the class can share one thing that they are particularly proud of or that was particularly meaningful to them from their portfolio. Teachers may choose to display the item that the student is most proud of in the class for the remainder of the semester.

If relevant, students could turn their portfolios in to their teachers so that they can get credit for doing them. Note: portfolios should not be graded. Make sure to return them to students.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to share your portfolio with others?
- What has been the most meaningful part of The Relationships Initiative for you?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/affirmations/>

NOTES |

If necessary give students some time to finalize their portfolios in class.

Other culminating projects could include student created podcasts, video messages, or photo galleries.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

You've participated in The Relationships Initiative alongside your students, and you've initiated powerful conversations and laid the foundation for a strong relationships-centered school year. What's next?

First, remember that relationship and community building in our learning spaces is always ongoing. We encourage you to come back to the activities from this collection throughout the year. It can be interesting and exciting to see how we and our students all change and share differently as we learn, grow, and develop stronger connections with one another. As you revise and discover new activities that work for you and your students, please remember to share them with us at michiganlearning.org/relationships.

If you have approached the activities throughout The Relationships Initiative with intention and authenticity, it is likely that your students are invested, interested, and ready to dive deeper into some of the concepts and themes from the activities. We have curated Project Based Learning extension opportunities available on the Michigan Learning Channel to support student-led inquiry and media creation driven by topics related to social-emotional learning, diverse communities, and youth mental health.

Whichever direction you and your students take in your inquiry and learning, we want to see your products! Use the form available on the Michigan Learning Channel website to submit what your students create so that we can share to viewers and other classrooms across the state. Together, we want to build a statewide gallery that showcases what identity, community, and mental and physical health look like to Michigan students and educators at all grade levels. We'd like to think of it as our statewide Relationships Initiative, and we want everyone to be included and celebrated! Stay in touch for updates on where you and your students can find your published creations.

SUPPORTING MEDIA



<https://www.michiganlearning.org/relationships-initiative-extension-activities/>

APPENDIX

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MATERIALS |

OBJECTIVES |

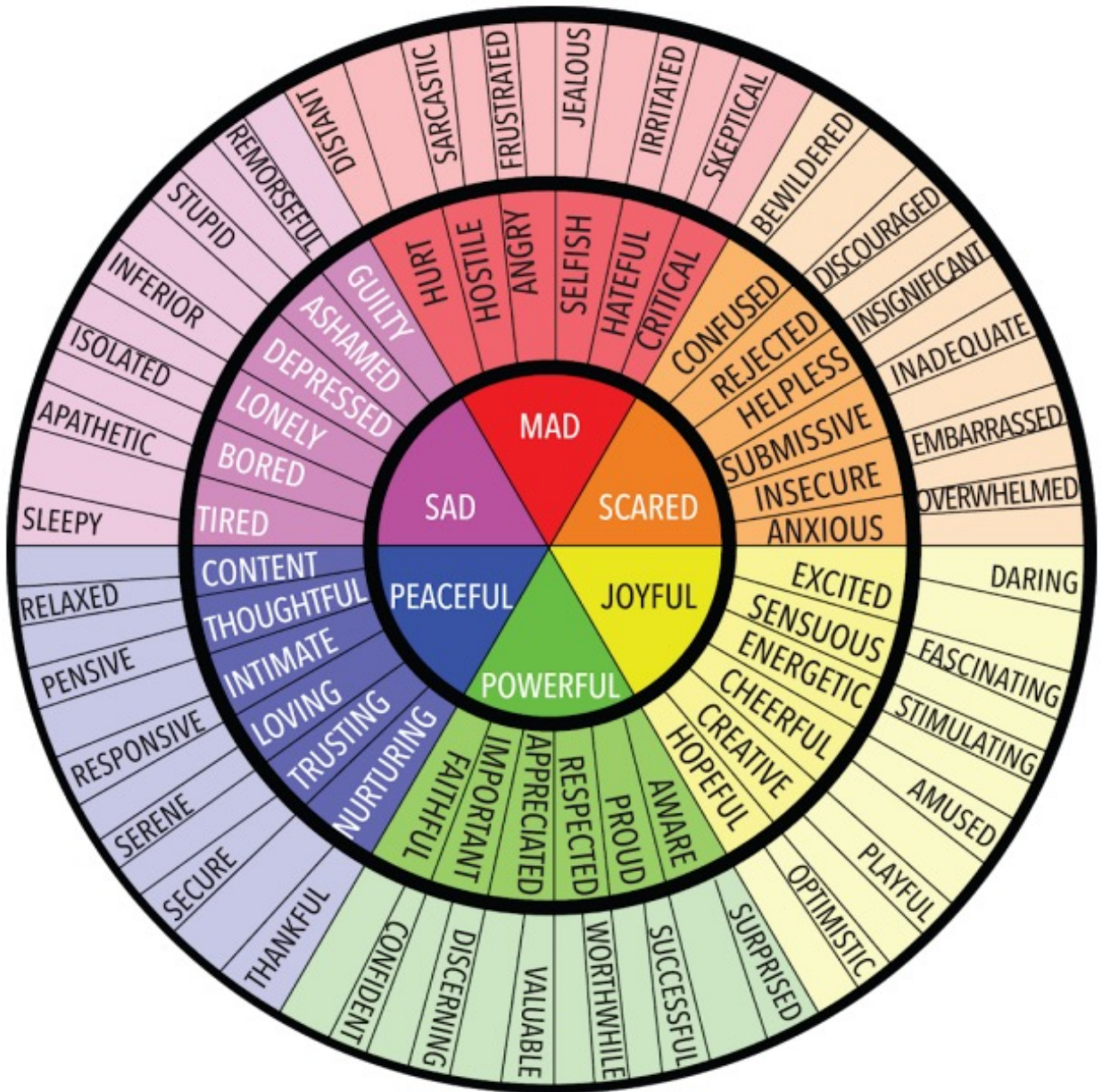
FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

NOTES |

SUPPORTING MEDIA |

The Feelings Wheel



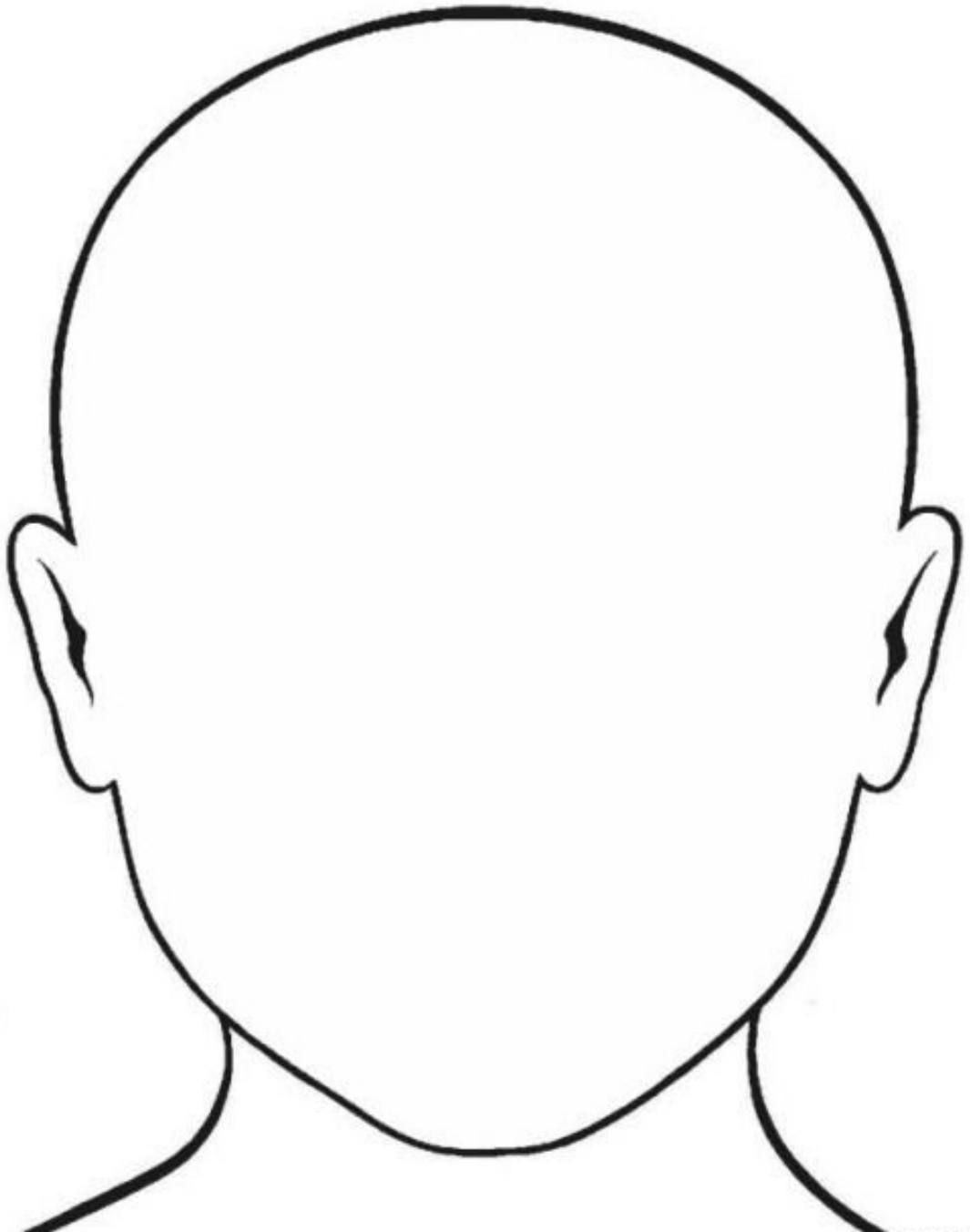
by Gloria Willcox

The Five Levels of Listening

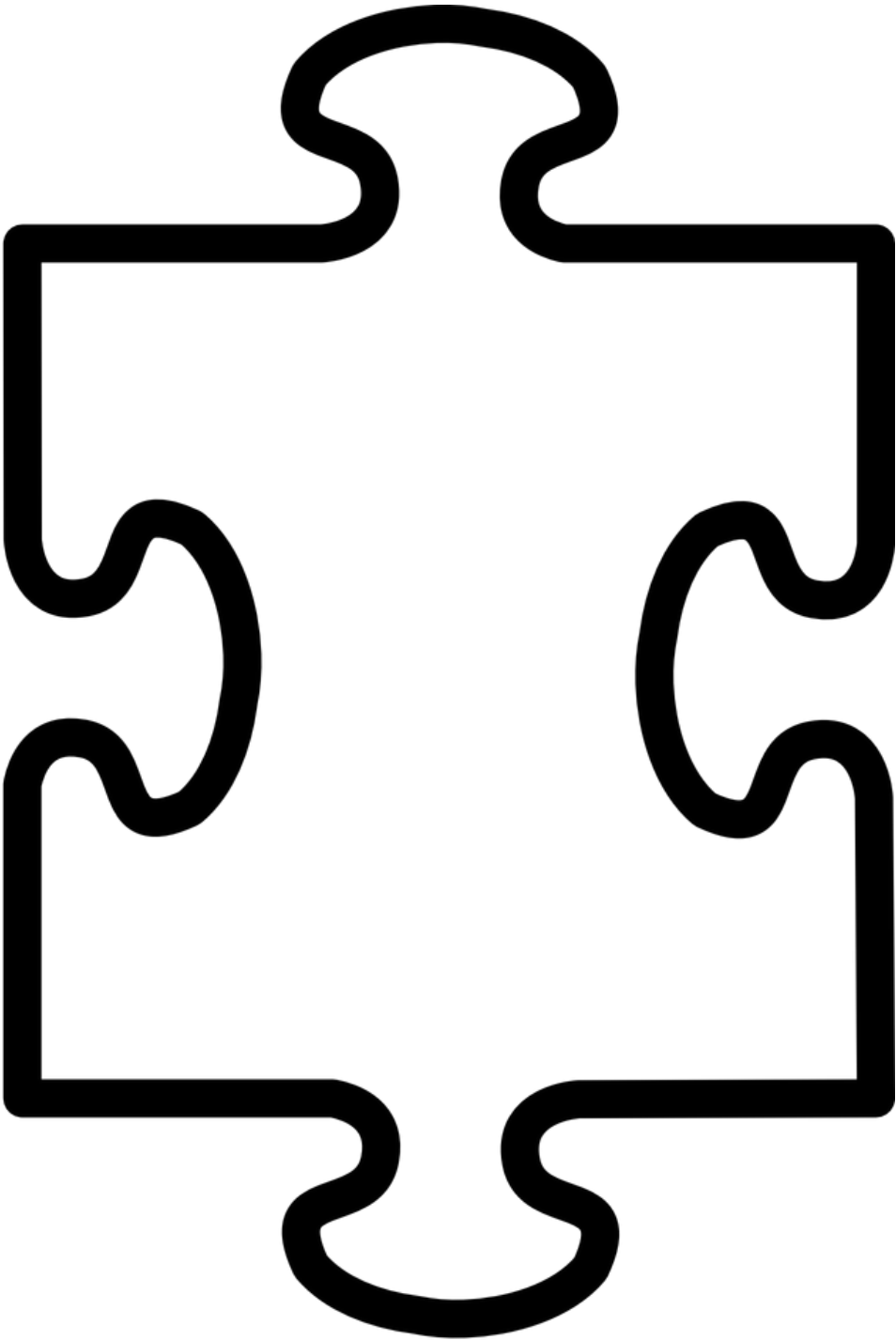
Ignoring	someone is talking or sharing but you are not really listening to them at all
Pretend Listening	you may be facing someone and may seem like you are listening but you still aren't really paying attention to what they are saying or are distracted by other things
Selective Listening	you only pay attention to or recall the things that are interesting to you or that you agree with in what someone else has said; this can lead to misinterpreting or misrepresenting what the person actually said
Attentive Listening	you are actively listening, paying attention, and asking follow up questions but you may still be filtering what they say through your own perspectives, making judgements based on your own experiences, focusing on what you can take away, or listening with the intent to respond rather than trying to understand the other person and their perspective
Empathetic Listening	you are fully focused on the person you are listening to and are seeking to to put yourself in their shoes and understand their perspectives, needs, and feelings, rather than your own

Adapted from Stephen Covey

My Best Self



Our Gifts Puzzle Piece



“I AM” Poem

Directions

There are four stanzas in the poem.

There are four lines in each stanza.

Each Stanza begins with the words: “I am from...”

- 1ST Stanza: Familiar sights, sounds, smells of your neighborhood
- 2ND Stanza: Familiar food
- 3RD Stanza: Family sayings
- 4TH Stanza: Friends, family, other important people in your life

Example

I am from green grass, climbing trees, stone houses, deep snow.

I am from chicken casserole, Kool Aid, BBQ, and collard greens.

I am from “you chose him to be your brother”

“skinny mini”

“bed roll”

“half-in-two”

I am from Pamela, Thomas, Geneva & Margarete times two.

-By Shayla Reese Griffin

Dialogue v. Debate Visualization

I am going to lead you through two different scenarios. If you feel comfortable, please close your eyes while I read them. If not, please simply look toward the floor so that you don't see anyone else during the visualization. At the end of each I will ask you to pause for a few seconds and think about how you are feeling. We will have a brief discussion following both the scenarios.

1st Visualization: Imagine a conversation you are having with a friend, a classmate, a family member, or even a small group of people. Things are getting heated in the conversation. Lots of different opinions and perspectives are coming out, and the perspectives are contrary to each other. You are feeling excited but soon start feeling that it is hard to get a word in. The other people have very strong opinions. When you share your own perspectives, you are interrupted and basically told that your argument is invalid. You start noticing a shift in how you are participating in the conversation too. You start finding flaws in others' arguments. You start being forceful about your own perspective in an attempt to prove your point. There is a sense that there is only one right answer. After a while, realizing that no one is really listening to each other, you start disengaging from the conversation. You start having an internal dialogue with yourself, judging yourself and judging the other people in the conversation. You are so frustrated and upset you want to leave the group.

Think about how you are feeling in this situation for a few moments.

[PAUSE FOR 30-40 SECONDS]

Now, feel free to open your eyes and quietly think about this scenario. (If you like, you may jot down how you were feeling and what you were thinking in this visualization.)

[PAUSE FOR 20-30 SECONDS]

Now close your eyes once more or look down so that you do not see anyone else in the room.

2nd Visualization: Now I would like you to imagine another conversation. Perhaps it is a continuation of the last conversation or a completely new one with different people. Like the last one, you are having an exciting conversation where you and others are raising some interesting points. Many of the perspectives shared are different from each other and sometimes contradict each other. However, as you share your own perspective, perhaps nervously because it is different from what most people in the group think, others are curious and ask you to elaborate on what you are saying. As you share more, some people start reflecting on their own opinions. They say what you shared has made them think harder about their own perspectives. You start asking them how they formed their opinions. You realize that in a way, you all hold some truth about the issue. You all start sharing from the heart and bring in your own different lives and experiences to the conversation. You begin to realize how the issue impacts some of you in similar ways and others differently. Even though you hold different perspectives, you feel connected to the others in the group, engaged in the conversation, and you realize that there is much more to the issue than you had first thought.

Think about how you are feeling in this situation for a few moments.

[PAUSE FOR 30-40 SECONDS]

Now, feel free to open your eyes and quietly think about this scenario. (If you like, you may jot down how you were feeling and what you were thinking in this visualization.)

Invite some participants to share how they felt during the first scenario. Affirm the responses, ask for elaborations if needed. Try to keep the responses brief. If participants start sharing too much of details of the situation, say that you would just like them to focus on their feelings.

Invite other participants (who haven't shared yet) to share how they felt during the second scenario. Again, affirm the responses, ask for elaborations if needed, and try to keep the responses brief.

Ask: "Which of these two experiences do we usually have when having controversial conversations?"

If you want, you can pass out and explain one of the following handouts

Adapted from University of Michigan Intergroup Dialogue National Institute (2013) .

Debate v. Dialogue

Assuming that there is one right answer and that you have it

Assuming that many people have pieces of the answer and that only together can they craft a solution

Combative—participants attempt to prove the other side wrong

Collaborative—participants work together toward common understanding

About winning

About learning

Listening to find flaws and make counterarguments

Listening to understand and find meaning

Defending assumptions as truth

Revealing assumptions for reevaluation

Critiquing the other side's position

Reexamining all positions

Defending one's own views against those of others

Admitting that others' thinking can improve one's own

Searching for flaws and weaknesses in other positions

Searching for strengths and value in others' positions

Seeking a conclusion or vote that ratifies your position

Discovering new opinions, not seeking closure

Adapted from Daniel Yankelovich (1999)

Discussion | Debate | Dialogue

In DISCUSSION we try to...	In DEBATE we try to...	In DIALOGUE we try to...
Present ideas	Succeed or win	Broaden our own perspective
Seek answers and solutions	Look for weakness	Look for shared meaning
Persuade others	Stress disagreement	Find places of agreement
Enlist others	Defend our opinion	Express paradox and ambiguity
Share information	Focus on 'right' and 'wrong'	Bring out areas of ambivalence
Solve our own and others' problems	Advocate one perspective or opinion	Allow for and invite differences of opinion and experience
Give answers	Search for flaws in logic	Discover collective meaning
Achieve preset goals	Judge other viewpoints as inferior, invalid or distorted	Challenge ourselves and others' preconceived notions
Acknowledge feelings, then discount them as inappropriate	Deny others' feelings	Explore thoughts and feelings
Listen for places of disagreement	Listen with a view of countering	Listen without judgment and with a view to understand
Avoid feelings	Discount the validity of feelings	Validate others' experiences and feelings
Avoid areas of strong conflict and difference	Focus on conflict and difference as advantage	Articulate areas of conflict and difference
Retain relationships	Disregard relationships	Build relationships
Avoid silence	Use silence to gain advantage	Honor silence

Adapted by Tanya Kachwaha 2002 from Huang-Nissan (1999) and Consultant/TrainersSouthwest (1992)

School Tour

Sample Prompts

- What are the most important school-wide rules, procedures, and consequences?
- What is the quickest way to get from this classroom to (Draw a Map)....
 - The auditorium
 - The gym
 - The cafeteria
 - The library
 - The main office
 - A counselor
 - A nurse
 - A social worker
 - Someone to help when I have a conflict
 - My home
- What do you do and where to you go if you are having issues with your class schedule?
- What are the expectations for completing homework in this class?
- What are the procedures for walking in the halls?
- What do I do if I need to go to the bathroom?
- What do I do if there is a school emergency?
- What do I do if I am feeling sick?
- What do I do if I am feeling frustrated or upset?
- What do I do if I need to reach my parents or guardians during the school day?
- What is the rule about cell phones and other electronic devices?
- What is our school social worker here for?
- What do our counselors do?
- What is the mission of our school?
- What extra curricular and co-curricular activities do we offer? When do they meet? How do I join them?
- What other important people should I know in this building?
- What do you need to do to make a good impression on teachers and get along with them?
- When does the semester end?
- How are my grades determined?
- How can I check to see how I am doing in each of my classes? How often should I do this?
- How is my GPA determined?
- Where can I get information about colleges?
- Where can I get information about jobs and employment opportunities?

Ally Pledge

When students at my school are being harassed, made fun of, bullied or discriminated against I pledge to...

Printed Name

Signature

Date

THE RELATIONSHIPS INITIATIVE

Evaluation Sample Questions

1. What did you like best about the Relationships Initiative?
2. What was your favorite activity?
3. What did you dislike about the Relationships Initiative?
4. What was your least favorite activity?
5. How do you feel you did keeping the community norms/agreements we developed? Why do you feel this way?
6. How do you think the rest of your classmates did keeping the community norms/agreements we developed? Why do you feel this way?
7. What did you learn about yourself through the Relationships Initiative?
8. What did you learn about your classmates through the Relationships Initiative?
9. What did you learn about your teachers through the Relationship Initiative?
10. Who is the adult(s) you feel most connected to or that you have the best relationship with? Why?
11. What ideas do you have for other things we could do to keep building relationships at our school? What would you like to do next year?
12. What is one goal you have for yourself this year?
13. Is there anything else you would like to share?

OPTIONAL: Name, Grade, Gender, Race

ABOUT THE CREATORS

Shayla Reese Griffin, PhD, MSW is one of the co-founders of [Justice Leaders Collaborative](#) and author of the forthcoming children's book *An Introduction to Race for Kids Who Want to Change the World (and Grownups Too!)* illustrated by [Christina O.](#); two adult books, *Those Kids, Our Schools: Race and Reform in an American High School* (Harvard Education Press, 2015) and *Race Dialogues: A Facilitator's Guide to Tackling the Elephant in the Classroom* (Teachers College Press, 2019); three [Justice Assessment & Transformation Tools](#) for K-12 schools (the EJATT, now available for purchase), organizations (the OJATT), and institutions of higher education (the HEJATT); and lots of [medium essays](#). She has 3 children and lives with her spouse in Detroit, MI.



Justice Leaders Collaborative provides social justice education, training, resources, and coaching to individuals, organizations, K-12 schools, and universities. To learn more about how Justice Leaders Collaborative can support you visit www.justiceleaderscollaborative.com.



The Michigan Learning Channel (MLC) is a statewide public television partnership and platform offering instructional and supplemental content, project-based learning resources, and opportunities for student-led media creation, all intended to support teaching and learning in schools, homes, and other sites across the state. Access the Michigan Learning Channel programming and resources for free via broadcast television through all six regional Michigan public media stations and online at michiganlearning.org.



The RELATIONSHIPS INITIATIVE

Justice Leaders Collaborative | Michigan Learning Channel



The Relationships Initiative Workshop

Join us and plan for a meaningful, responsive,
and relationships-driven school year
with Justice Leaders Collaborative and Michigan Learning Channel!

The Relationships Initiative curriculum challenges K-12th grade educators and schools to **PAUSE** and commit two weeks at the beginning of the school year to identity, relationship, and community building. During this workshop, participants will learn about the Relationships Initiative curriculum and the research behind it as we **PLAY** with the flexible options for implementation in various classroom contexts, including how we can **REPEAT** the activities as we build community throughout the school year!

AUGUST 15
2022
9:00am – 2:00pm

Eastern Michigan University Student Center
900 Oakwood St. Ypsilanti, MI 48197

PRESENTING PARTNERS



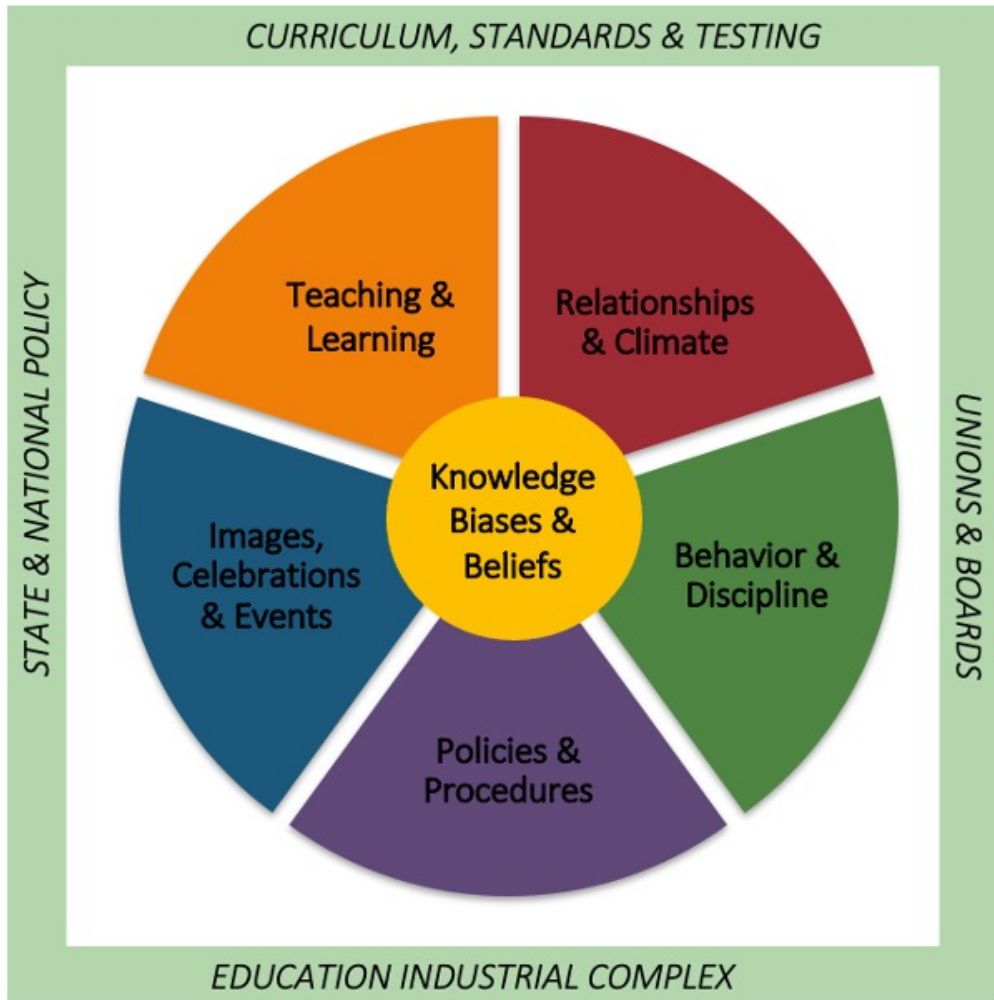
ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FROM





EDUCATION JUSTICE ASSESSMENT & TRANSFORMATION TOOL

A Vision for Classrooms, Schools & Districts



Shayla Reese Griffin, Ph.D., M.S.W.

Revised Winter 2022

Learn more about how to create inclusive schools with [Justice Leaders Collaborative](#)! Explore our [Education Justice Assessment & Transformation Tool \(EJATT\)](#), our [Standards for Justice](#), our [Professional Development Offerings for K-12 Educators](#), and more!