

BLUE SKIES

ARTS ACTIVITIES FOR THE CLASSROOM IN ASSOCIATION WITH STRONGER TOGETHER: OPENING DOORS TO MENTAL HEALTH

CREATED BY LYNDA POGUE



**SUITCASE
THEATRE**

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This booklet of Blue Skies arts-based activities was created for Primary and Junior Level teachers.

Blue Skies activities are synonymous with optimism: they are non-judgmental and generate both creative ideas and goodwill in the classroom.

Blue Skies premise is that children need to move... to laugh... to create... to sense that they are a part of a community... to experience joy in their young lives... to practice and experience empathy.

This metaphor is the perspective behind the creation of this booklet:

The Arts provide a kind of flowing river into which children may perhaps dip their toes. Perhaps they safely jump in and swim freely. Perhaps they need someone beside them... supporting, guiding or cheering them on.

Blue Skies builds on strengths rather than revealing weaknesses.

Together, we are helping students to help themselves.

We know that in any classroom there are numerous diverse physical, emotional, and mental health issues. Therefore there is no one-size-fits-all activity. We encourage you to personalize any of these activities for yourself and your students.

Blue Skies activities are designed to be uplifting and encourage students to work with and champion each other. We hope that you will be inspired by some of the following. ENJOY!

Lynda Pogue
Arts Educator and
Consultant

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RAYS OF SUNSHINE



Ask the students:

What do you think this means?

In our class, we believe that we can always help each other; especially if someone is upset, sad, frustrated, or in need of a little support.

Have a big sun face (without any rays) on a cork or display board.

In partners or small groups students brainstorm words/phrases of optimism or encouragement.

Examples:

GREAT WORK!	YOU CAN DO IT!
LOOKING GOOD!	WAY TO GO!
YOU DID IT!	THAT WAS SO COOL!

Once they're spellchecked, they are printed in BOLD print on large yellow and orange triangles and attach them as rays of sunshine.

Once the sun is surrounded by rays, partners or groups can read them out loud to the class. This could be an ongoing activity.

Everyone references these words (and the meaning behind them) all year.

Tell the class that if they need it, those words are there for them!



BE A GOOD LISTENER



This is an excellent technique to ensure that no child is left isolated

Students are in 'scatter formation' around the room or gym.

When I say "MOVE!" start moving slowly all around the room in a zigzag pattern... NOT in a straight line... try to move into different spaces away from everyone else.

MOVE!

Let them meander for about 10 seconds.

FREEZE!

Now, When I say "Go!" quickly stand behind someone standing back-to-back. If you can't find a partner, put up your hand so someone can see you. One Rule is no touching please. GO!

Repeat this action 3 times until they have changed partners a few times.

With your partner choose who is A and who is B. (Give this 2 seconds)

A put your hand up.

B put your hand up.

A... I want you to think about the most delicious meal food you've ever had. (Give this Think Time a few seconds)

Now OVER YOUR SHOULDER tell B what you remember or make up! You can really exaggerate!

GO! (Give this about 15 – 20 seconds the first time)

FREEZE!

B... OVER YOUR SHOULDER repeat everything that A just told you.



BE A GOOD LISTENER



Now switch roles.... B tells A all about a exciting storm they saw.

Repeat the whole activity several times changing the topic to such things as The cutest thing I ever saw was...My favourite book is... A special animal is...

NOTE: Be sure to always give them a Think Time to prepare their little monologue.

Ask them about the importance of truly listening to someone.



YES I CAN!



Begin by telling a little story something like this...

When I was very young, I remember a friend of mine who looked sad and said to me “I can’t do anything!” So we sat down and started talking about all the little things that we both had done that morning. We remembered things like... Holding a door open for someone in a wheelchair... Opening a jar for my little sister... Making my bed... Bouncing a basketball... Feeding some birds... Sitting here beside a friend.

I remember asking “So, can you do anything really helpful or good?” ...and my friend thought about all the things that were achieved in that one morning and replied, with a happy face, “YES I CAN!”

NOW...We are going to think about little or big things that YOU CAN DO !

(Please see: Be a Good Listener for details of this teaching strategy).

With a partner, students stand back-to-back and A tells B everything they did from the time they opened up their eyes until right now. (Remember to give them Think Time.)

Continue until everyone has had a turn.

You see! There are lots of things that you do in a day.

There are so many little and big things that you CAN do that sometimes when you say to yourself “I can’t do” something, it’s good to be reminded of all the things that you CAN do!



YES I CAN



On a bulletin board have a long stem and some leaves and in the centre of the flower YES I CAN ! is written in big bold print.

Pointing to it... See that flower on the wall that has a long stem but no petals on it yet? Let's make a GIANT YES I CAN! flower and on each petal is something YOU can do!

With young children, create multi coloured petals. Have them tell you something they can do by themselves or with a friend.

(It can be as simple as I can brush my teeth)

You print it on the petal and they illustrate around the words.

With older students, they create their own petal with one or several things that they CAN do written and illustrated.

Now a little ceremony takes place.

Each child comes up, one at a time, and chooses to read from their petal or not as they fasten the petal to create a flower.

(Have pieces of tape rolled up around the edge of the flower.)

As they turn back to face the class, the whole class yells

YES HE CAN! or YES SHE CAN!

or

YES YOU CAN!



THE MANDALA



The mandala is a symbol used for insight, healing and self-expression in a circular design. Mandala-making is a way to practice mindfulness: requiring focus, concentration, quietude and calmness.

Each student is given the template on the following page.

Soft music (no lyrics) is playing in the background if possible.

Provide each student with a pencil.

Have them focus upon the dot in the middle of the template while describing the relaxing qualities of a mandala and how creating their own mandala will help them to feel quiet inside.

Instruct students to start creating their mandala by putting the point of their pencil on the dot in the middle of the circles.

Slowly move your pencil to go back and forth touching the outside of the first circle and then back to the dot again. Maybe it could look like petals or a star?

Try to make sure that your mandala is balanced... not too much on any one side.

Fill in the spaces between the lines on the first circle with any design you want. Now let's move to the next circle.

Slowly fill in the space with any shapes you want.

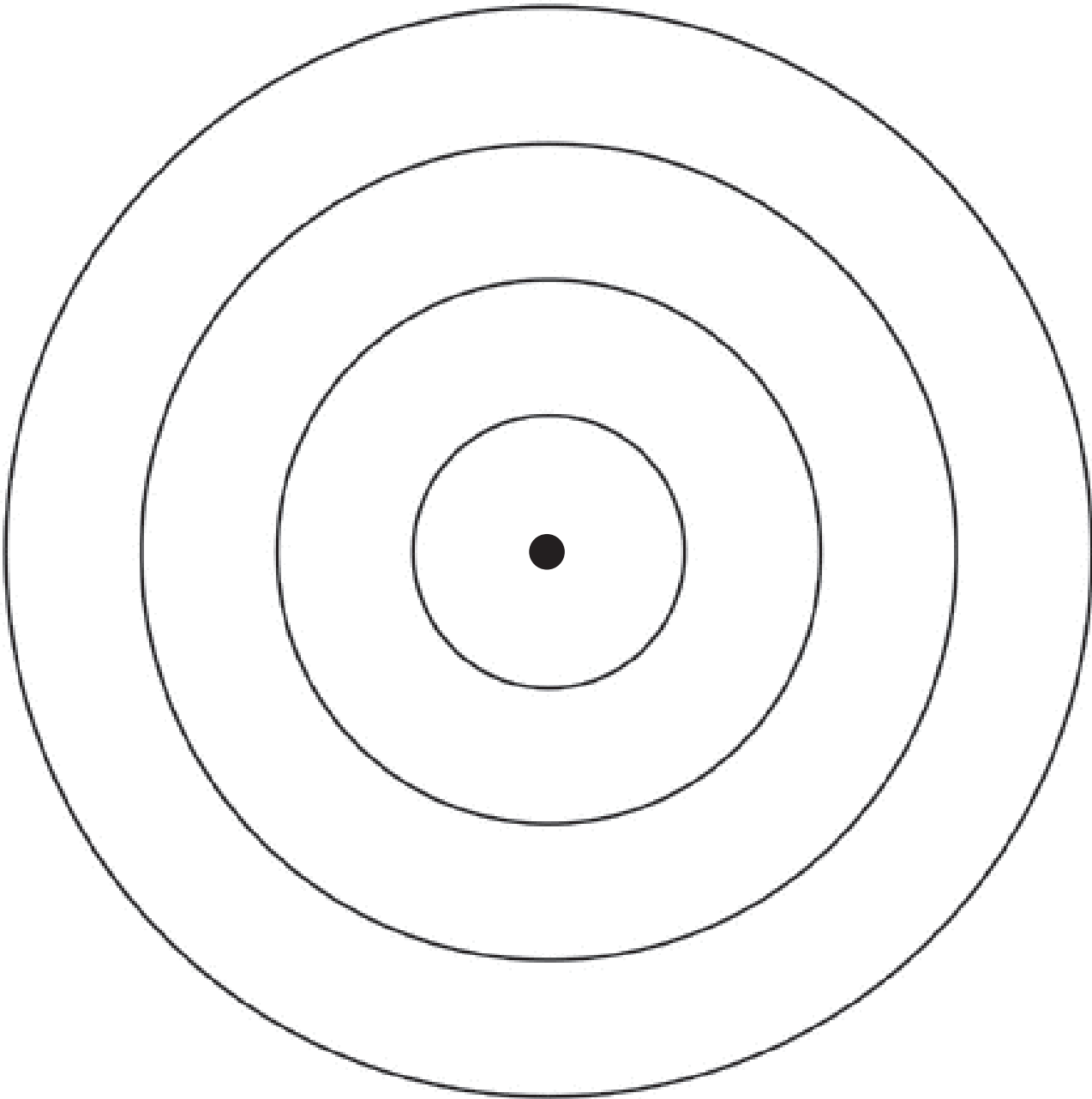
If you want, you can go outside the lines.

The important thing is to repeat your pattern. If you draw a shape on one side of the circle, be sure to draw it on the opposite side too..

This creates repetition, which is important in creating your mandala.



MY MANDALA



NAME: _____



THE MANDALA



When you are ready, fill in the next circle...and then the next.

Keep adding as many details as you wish. You can turn the page around.

When you feel finished add colour with pencils, markers, or whatever you wish.

REMEMBER: *This is YOUR mandala. Create any design you wish!*

Use chalk and/or coloured sand to create large colourful group mandalas outside!

With younger students, the teachers would create the outline first.

Large sheets of craft paper maybe used to create group mandalas, perhaps in the gym?

There are dozens of mandala sites that you may wish to show for inspiration AFTER they have completed a few of their own. If you show them first, students tend to copy rather than create their own designs.

Mandalas can be kept private or displayed if the student wishes.

Older students may create larger mandalas using a compass.





TOGETHER

I'M

SOMEONE



SINGING TOGETHER



Singing in ‘rounds’ is both stimulating and challenging for all grades. Singing, chanting, choral reading and speaking are excellent ‘community’ builders.

Talk about some ways that people travel on water.

Some children will have never seen a rowboat. Show them images. Mime the action of rowing and have them mime with you.

In rowboats, we’re going to go all along the shoreline of this calm lake with blue skies and clouds above. Don’t forget to put on your lifejacket!

During the action you ask them to say out loud what they see while in the calm lake... I see a person fishing... I see a rock up ahead... I see the clouds reflecting on the lake...etc.

***Row, row row your boat
Gently down the stream.
Merrily, merrily, merrily,
Life is but a dream.***

While sitting in their rowboats, teach the children the entire song singing in unison.

What does “merrily” mean?

What does “Life is but a dream” mean?

Encourage students to sing it again and again until they are very familiar with the tune and the words.



SINGING TOGETHER



Devide the class in half. Create a first and second part.

***First Part: ROW, ROW ROW YOUR BOAT
GENTLY DOWN THE STREAM.***

***Second Part: MERRILY, MERRILY,
MERRILY. LIFE IS BUT A DREAM.***

Continue singing the whole song together several times.

The first group starts rowing when the song begins; the second group starts rowing when the second part starts. Repeat this action until the children understand the parts completely.

Start the 'round by' asking the first part to sing the entire song two times; the first time, they will sing it alone. Ask the second part to listen to the song the first time through, start rowing at the point where the second part starts.

During the second pass, help the second part students start singing the whole song on your cue.

Practice, practice, practice, and keep it fun.

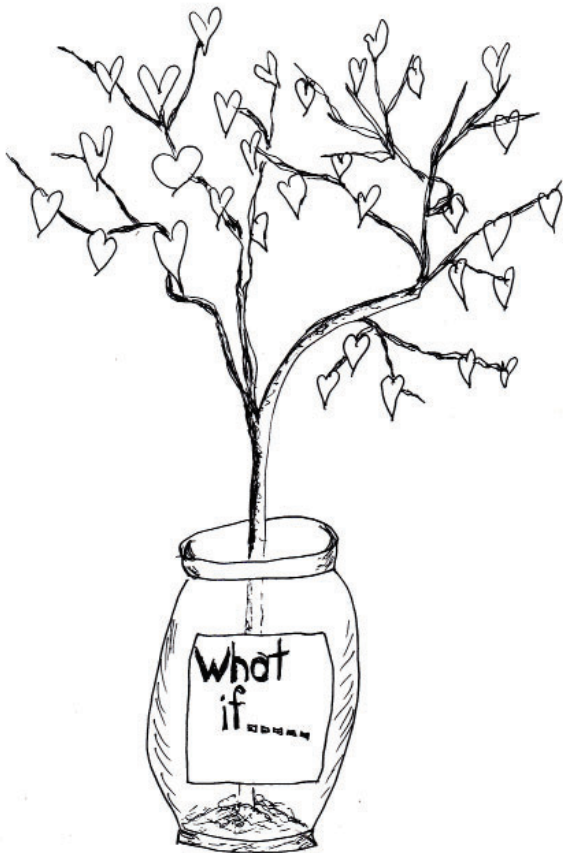
As the older students becomes more accomplished, in partners or groups, they add more parts and actions and practice until they can perform and then teach the class their new version..

E.G.: Climb, climb, climb the tree.... Munch, munch, munch your food... Fly, fly, fly your kite... Brush, brush, brush your teeth... Help, help, help a friend... Laugh, laugh, laugh out loud... Hug, hug, hug a pet...

(They will soon discover syllabication and rhyming is what this 'round' depends upon!)



WHAT IF?



Ask the whole class or small groups to brainstorm answers for 2 minutes for silly questions such as:

What if the moon was made of cheese?

What if fish could talk?

Then introduce questions such as:

What if you laughed every day?

What if someone did something kind for you?

Groups share their answers with another group or the whole class.

Together, you and the class create a WHAT IF... tree.

(Could be a real branch secured with sand/stones OR a tree sketched on a large sheet of blank paper.)

Show the students how to create their own hearts (perhaps all are shades of red/pink)

This could be completed with students in partners or by themselves.

1. This is from your heart!

2. By yourself or with a partner, create a list of 3 to 5 WHAT IF questions that will make your/our world a great place to grow up! Talk from your heart!

3. On one side of the heart write your WHAT IF question and on the other side is the answer.

4. Hang it on our WHAT IF tree!

Note: This activity could be ongoing all year.



RAINBOWS



There are times when stormy or sad thoughts come into our head. Shifting the attentional focus and purposefully changing thoughts reduces anxiety and shifts to positive cues.

Prepare for this activity by having choices of art materials available for use after you tell the following story: gather such things as paint and paper... brushes... water... coloured chalk... coloured pastels... multi-coloured tissue paper... coloured markers... glue...coloured sequins.

Have students put their head on their folded arms on their desks.

Please keep your head down for another moment. Take a couple of deep breaths.

As I tell you this little story I'd like you to keep your eyes closed and to see pictures in your head... just like a movie. (Pause)

Way way up in the blue blue sky there's a little puffy white cloud just sitting there. It's a kind of happy little cloud. (Pause)

Just now another cloud appears to be floating on one side of the sky. It's quite a bit bigger and it's both fluffy and white too. As they float, they are touching each other. (Pause)

From the other side of the sky, another even bigger fluffy white cloud appears. (Pause)

The three of these clouds are now touching.

(Pause)

They are growing bigger and bigger and fill up the whole sky.

(Begin speaking a bit faster and louder)

They are not so white any more. They're turning much darker.



RAINBOWS



They are becoming storm clouds! (Loudly and slowly)

They are faraway but you can see them dancing around each other like puffs of dark grey smoke.

You can hear thunder and see some flashes of lightning and you can see thick and heavy rain way in the distance.

Now... (Slowly) Just as fast as it turned dark, the sky is starting to get a bit brighter and you can start to see little bits of blue sky starting to appear. (Softly)

You can feel the warm heat of the sun coming up behind you.

Wait! What's that you see?

Why it's a WONDERFUL RAINBOW reaching from one side of the sky to the other! It pushed its way through the storm!

See all those colours... red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple.

Your rainbow chased those dark clouds away!

Please keep your head down for another moment. Take a couple of deep breaths.

Think about this... This is very important. Sometimes when you get a picture of something not-so-good, like the storm clouds, in your head/in your thoughts, you have the power to push them away. You can create rainbows in your head if you want.

Open your eyes and slowly sit up strait.

Think about that beautiful powerful wonderful rainbow that you just saw. It will always put a smile on your face and in your heart!

Look at all the colours of the rainbow!

Show them an image of a rainbow.

Have them discover red, yellow and blue.

Then look at the colours in-between: orange, green and purple.



RAINBOWS



Rainbow Dreams!

Using sponges and paint...

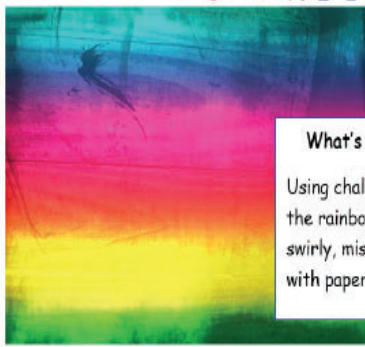
Students create a blue sky and either leave areas white to designate clouds ...OR... after the sky dries, they may sponge on thick white for clouds. Dabbing, sponge on a rainbow over the whole sky.

They may add a landscape along the bottom.

It's Raining Rainbows!

This is best done vertically.

Using thick paint (Glitter paint, or powder paint moistened with hair gel or anything you devise!) students can dribble paint from the top of the page in order of the colours of the rainbow. Paint can be dripped from a spoon or squeeze bottle.



What's Inside a rainbow!

Using chalk and the colours of the rainbow, students create a swirly, misty painting blending with paper towels or tissues.

Talk about the Irish folklore

They say that there's a Pot of Gold at the end of the rainbow!

Equate the pot of gold with good luck, sweet dreams, something you might want to give to someone...etc.

Turn to your partner and ask them what might be some things in YOUR pot of gold!

You may choose to offer any one or all of these possible art ideas for your students to create their own rainbows. You could have 4 different rainbow-painting centres in the classroom.

You may wish to create a giant rainbow that stretches from one corner of the room to the other.

On a flat table set up paper, brushes, water, red, yellow and blue paints.

Demonstrate (perhaps to one group at a time) what happens when you put down a stripe of red, leave a space, and a stripe of yellow, leave a space and a stripe of blue (do this fairly quickly so it won't dry.)

Then the magic happens when you paint a stripe with clear water between the 2 colours (just touching the edges with each side of the brush) and they see orange appear when red and yellow flow together... and then they see green appear when yellow and blue combine before their eyes..

Then what happens when you blend red and blue? (purple)



You are Making RAINBOWS!



RAINBOWS



Your Pot of Gold

Students sketch very small images... (Or use any photo sources such as personal photos, magazines, newspapers, free online images, flyers, brochures, etc.) of things that make them feel happy/ joyous / secure.

They cut out and glue their images onto their rainbow painting creating a mini-photo montage.

When everyone has completed their piece of art, they place it on the desk before themselves and look at it while you say:

You have created an amazing piece of art.

It shows that you understand about the power of your own personal rainbow and the power inside you!

Remember this!

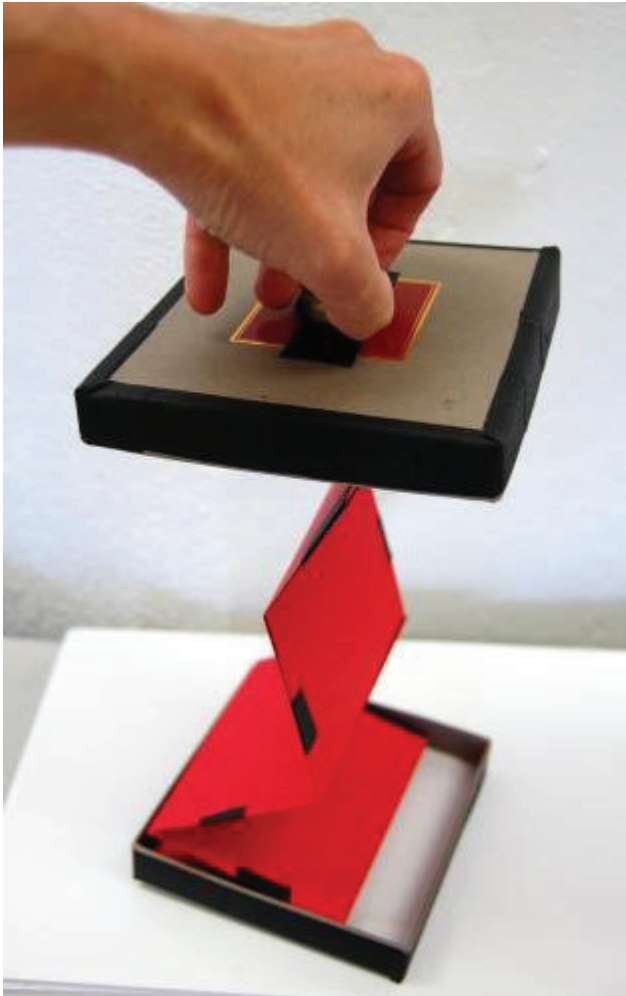
When you see a picture of dark clouds or sad things inside your head, you can push it away with a new picture.

Breathe the rainbow by taking slow deep breaths and thinking your favourite things that match each colour!

Keep adding to your pot of gold!



THE EMOTION BOX



There are several theories that describe emotions. All agree about the importance of expressing and not repressing them.

Begin this activity by talking about how people and sometimes animals show their emotions / feelings in stories that we all know.

For younger or older students read, tell or show a fairy tale such as Little Red Riding Hood or Cinderella. Older students: in small groups... brainstorm a list of fairy tales. Then they decide which one they all know.

Number off (1,2,3,4,5) and re-tell the story with number one starting with Once upon a time... Every 3 or 4 seconds, you say NEXT and the next person continues the story. If someone forgets what's next, they can say "Pass". Or... if someone has skipped an important part, the next person can say "And before that..." . They keep going around the circle until the story is retold.

Possible extension: Create a new beginning and ending for their chosen fairy tale.

Partners or small groups talk about the characters and what they must have been feeling at different times during the story.

Build an ongoing list (this is great on a roll of shelf paper that unrolls as more words are added) of words that describe emotions and/or feelings.

Explain that everyone goes through different emotions every day. That it's normal to have lots of different emotions.

With younger students, play a make a face game that shows: happy, sad, angry, scared, shy... With older students, discuss what these emotions mean: acceptance, anger, anticipation, disgust/revulsion, joy, fear, sadness, surprise, trust. They could create poems or short stories that illustrate each emotion.



EMOTION BOX



NOW comes construction of the Emotion Box

Small cardboard boxes (such as a jewelry box) are used to create a box that can be closed.

NOTE: If it is not possible to collect or purchase these small boxes, the activity becomes the Emotion book.

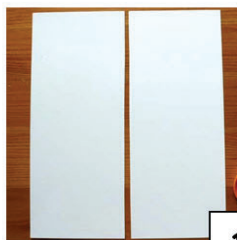
Materials

1. Card paper or light Bristol board, magazines, brochures, newspapers, birthday/get well/congratulation cards
2. Markers, scissors, glue

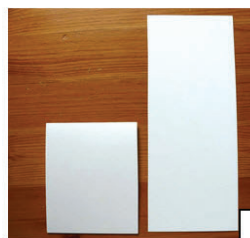
Construction

1. Cut 2 long strips of paper the same width as the box... OR... if not using a box, just make 2 long skinny rectangles
2. Fold each piece in half
3. Fold back the top and bottom of each piece
4. Glue the pieces together to form an accordion
5. Have fun creating!

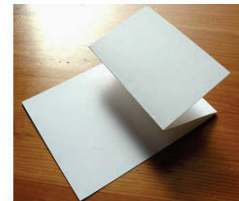
Laying the 1 long paper flat, individuals or partners create each page with a slightly different message with the theme being EMOTIONS.



1



2



3



4



5



EMOTION BOX



What is on each page?

Poems... photos... paragraphs cut from magazines or newspapers... handwritten messages... small sketches/paintings... ANYTHING that conveys EMOTIONS.

Encourage unique ideas for the design of each page. Cutouts? Gluing on a mini-envelope? Pop-ups? Students may cut and fold more strips to tell a longer story.

- If using a box, both the back of the first page and the last page are glued onto the inside of the lids. The front lid is designed to portray what's inside.
- If not using a box, the accordion is folded and a title page is inserted on the front. Tie it with a ribbon.



There are numerous sites available that provide words describing feelings and emotions.

This composite list can be used for: stories, artwork, comic strips, or improvisations. Cut them up and put into a bag and students pick three: in partners or groups they create an improvisation that illustrates the words.



A

Angry, Annoyed, Afraid, Awkward, Affectionate, Anxious, Alarmed, Awed, Aggravated, Amazed, Astonished, Amused, Apprehensive, Absorbed, Ambivalent, Ashamed, Able, Addled, Admired, Admirable, Affable, Agreeable, Aggressive, Abandoned

B

Brave, Bothered, Bewildered, Bitter, Bashful, Blue, Baffled, Blissful, Buoyant, Bereaved, Bold

C

Cheerful, Cooperative, Confident, Calm, Cold, Curious, Content, Considerate, Cautious, Cranky, Crestfallen, Contrite, Chagrined, Carefree, Composed, Capable, Caring, Careful, Contemptuous, Cross, Concerned, Complacent, Charitable, Crushed, Cantankerous, Compulsive

D

Defiant, Depressed, Discouraged, Delighted, Disgusted, Determined, Disappointed, Detached, Daring, Disillusioned, Devious, Dismayed, Disenchanted, Doleful, Disinterested, Disdainful, Dismissive, Dejected, Disengaged, Distant

E

Elated, Enthusiastic, Embarrassed, Edgy, Excited, Envious, Exhausted, Eager, Exuberant, Enraged, Euphoric, Extravagant, Ecstatic, Eager, Emboldened

F

Funny, Frightened, Fearful, Furious, Fair, Foolish, Frustrated, Forgiving, Flustered, Fatigued

G

Grouchy, Guilty, Grief-stricken, Generous, Greedy, Grateful, Grumpy, Guarded, Gleeful, Glad, Gloomy, Glum, Gracious, Grateful

H

Happy, Humiliated, Hurt, Helpless, Hopeless, Horrified, Hesitant, Humbled, Heartbroken, Irritated, Irritable, Interested, Insecure, Impatient, Inspired, Inspiring, Inadequate, Irrational, Ignorant, Indifferent, Irked, Impertinent, Inquisitive, Isolated

J

Jealous, Joyful, Joyous, Judgmental, Judged, Jaded, Jocular, Jittery

K

Kind, Keen

L Loving, Lonely, Lackluster, Leery, Lethargic, Listless, Lazy

M

Mad, Meek, Mean, Miserable, Malevolent, Marvelous, Manipulated, Manipulative, Misunderstood, Mischievous,



Mopey, Melodramatic, Moody, Melancholy, Mirthful, Moved,

N

Nice, Naughty, Nasty, Nervous, Neglected, Neglectful, Needy, Needed, Naive, Nonchalant,

O

Overpowered, Overjoyed, Obedient, Obsessive, Obsessed, Offended, Outraged, Overloaded, Overstimulated, Obstinate, Obligated, Optimistic, Open, Openminded

P

Panicked, Panicky, Peaceful, Placid, Playful, Pensive, Puzzled, Powerful, Powerless, Pleased, Petty, Petulant, Preoccupied, Proud, Prickly, Petrified, Pressured, Perturbed, Peeved, Passive

Q

Quirky, Quarrelsome, Qualified, Quivery, Querulous, Quiet

R

Relieved, Relaxed, Resentful, Rattled, Refreshed, Repulsed, Rational, Reasonable, Reasoned, Rebellious, Reluctant, Reassured, Remorseful, Reserved, Rejuvenated, Restless, Rattled

S

Sad, Surprised, Silly, Scared, Sorrowful, Serious, Shy, Satisfied, Sensitive, Safe, Stressed, Stubborn, Sarcastic, Spiteful, Scornful, Secure, Serene, Smug, Sociable, Sympathetic, Startled, Satisfied, Sanguine, Skeptical, Sincere

T

Thankful, Tearful, Teary, Thoughtful, Tolerant, Tolerated, Trusted, Trusting, Trustworthy, Temperamental, Terrified, Timid, Tired, Tiresome, Troubled, Tickled, Torn, Touched, Threatened, Tender, Tranquil

U

Uneasy, Uncertain, Uncomfortable, Unruffled, Unafraid, Useless, Useful, Unimpressed, Unappreciated, Undecided, Unruly, Uptight, Unnerved, Unhappy, Unsteady, Uplifted, Unsure

V

Vivacious, Vain, Vibrant, Violent, Valued, Vital, Volatile, Vulnerable, Victorious, Victimized,

W

Worried, Wary, Weak, Weary, Wistful, Wishful, Willful, Willing, Woeful, Weepy, Whiny, Worn, Whimsical, Warm, Witty, Withdrawn, Worthless, Wronged, Wasted, Worldly

Y

Youthful, Yielding, Yearning

Z

Zany, Zealous, Zestful



KNOCK KNOCK



Knock Knock jokes are perennial favourites for children of all ages. They are often called “Groaners” because they are usually so silly.

LAUGHTER IS ONE OF THE BEST COPING STRATEGIES FOR ANXIETY (FOR PEOPLE OF ANY AGE).

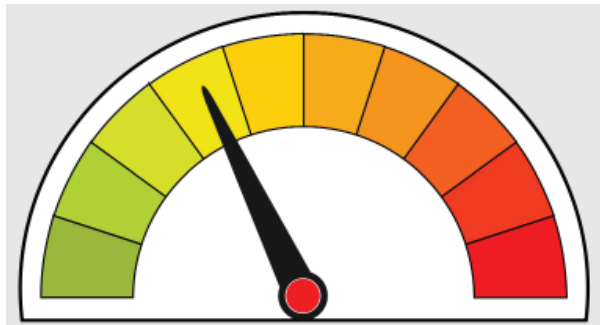
In partners, students choose a Knock Knock from a bag or hat.

They read or memorize the joke. Give them a few minutes to practice setting up a scenario.

Older students create a tableau (frozen picture with their bodies) ... and when you say “Action” the 15 second “play” begins. They build a scenario about where 2 people meet and tell their Knock Knock.

When the Knock Knock joke begins one of the students points to the class. All the class knocks on their desks twice to indicate the beginning of the joke.

Then, when it ends, the groan meter comes out.



GROAN METER

Create a Groan Meter or students create their own.

Using this template, you will need Bristol Board or cardboard, scissors, markers, hole punch and a round head paper fastener for the gauge.

Groans can only last 3 seconds and can be exaggerated with body and facial movements .

(Test the timing BEFORE using the meter. “Start! ... Stop!”)

You can be assured that all the students will go for the biggest groans.



STEP RIGHT UP



This is a variation of an improvisation game that is played by both children and adults around the world.

It's about problem-solving, laughter, and empathy.

Start by having 2 chairs either at the front of the classroom or in the middle of a circle. Explain the game:

We are going to play a game that's about helping to solve a problem.

2 of you will be actors that sit in these chairs.

I will secretly give you a problem that you act out.

The class discovers what the problem is by your words and actions.

After about a minute, someone in the class will see a solution to the problem and says "FREEZE" out loud.

The 2 'actors' freeze and the person from the circle comes up and stands beside the actor on the shoulder and gets in exactly the same position as the actor.

Then that actor sits down in the empty chair in the circle and the scene starts again.

I will say "Action" and both actors are now trying to solve the problem.

If the problem doesn't get solved fairly quickly, then someone else says "Freeze". And the game continues until there's a solution to the problem.

If the 'actors' need to get out of their chair to move a bit, that's OK.

One Rule: No touching please.

Let's try it out!

May I have 2 volunteers please?



STEP RIGHT UP



These are possible scenarios you can either whisper to the 2 'actors' or have one written on a strip of paper and give it to them to read.

Give them a silent moment to think and then say "Action".

Play this "Step right up" improv game several times with different students taking turns.

Two concerns might be:

Putting a shy student on the spot. Don't do it. - Observing and joining in the laughter is important for that child.

A boisterous student gets a little overactive. - You say "Freeze", and YOU step in as one of the actors. The students will get a kick out of you being one of the actors AND an overly-animated student maintains his/her dignity.

Possible Scenarios

- A person is locked in a room and another person can't open the door from the other side.
- A mother is trying to get her small child to sleep.
- A man keeps forgetting to return a lawnmower that he borrowed.
- A shoe salesperson can't convince his customer that the shoe is too small ...or big.
- Two people are sitting in a car and the car won't start.
- A neighbour is complaining that a tree is giving too much shade.
- Sitting in a dentist's office
- Waiting for a bus
- Taking a pet to the vet
- Having a photo taken
- Waiting and waiting in a restaurant



STEP RIGHT UP



In partners or small groups, students brainstorm scenarios in which 2 people might have a real problem.

They may use secondary sources such as newspapers if you wish.

After about 5 to 10 minutes, have them edit and print their scenarios on strips of paper.

The scenarios are now put in a bag.

The class is broken up into groups of 8 sitting in loose, not tight circles (or in a straight line with).

2 empty chairs are in the middle. The whole class can be involved in separate problem-solving scenarios around the classroom.

Or

Repeat the Step right up game over time with the whole class using the students' scenarios.

Note: There are many variations of this game on the net called Freeze or Freeze Tag,

Possible Extension?

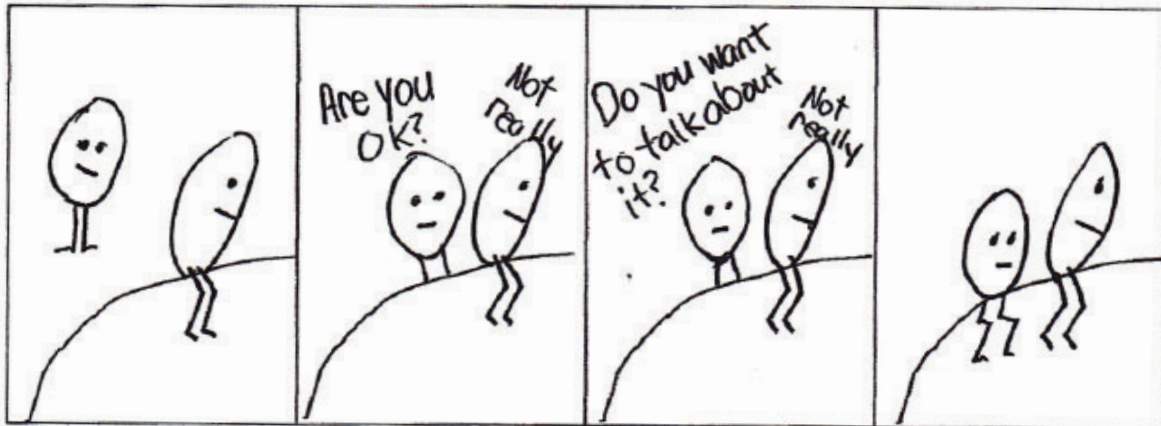
Another improvisation game that is set up exactly the same as Step right up is called SWITCH.

The difference is that when you say "Switch" the partners take the perspective of their partners.

Note: a great technique for solving arguments!



JUST BE WITH ME



There are some times when some children need to be quiet.

However, they may not want to be alone.

Simply having a buddy sit near them for a few moments may be enough to help the child not to feel isolated or different.



A SENSE OF CALM



This series of 3 physical activities have shown to bring about self-control, focus, and a sense of calm. These may be done daily.

Start with the main or favored arm – right handed persons start with their right arm, lefties start with their left while standing if possible.

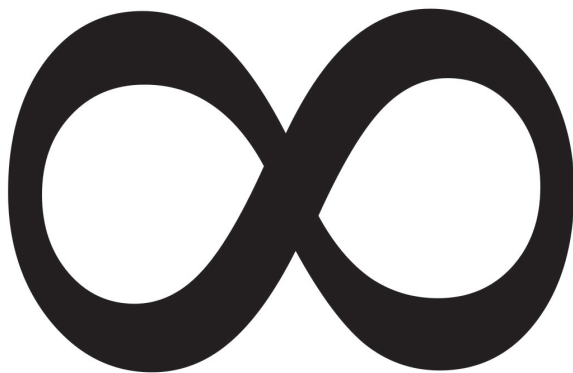
1. Lazy Eight

Draw the number 8 in the air.

Now slowly... do a great big one.

What would it look like if it got lazy and lay down on its side?

(You may have to model this standing with your back to the class.)



- 1. Now we're going to try something different...*
- 2. Start with your main arm straight out in front of you, main hand in a fist, with your thumb pointing up and level with your nose.*
- 3. Draw a lazy eight as large as you can, as if your thumb were drawing it in front of you.*
- 4. Your whole arm remains straight, extended outwards, moving from the shoulder.*
- 5. Begin the first loop of the lazy eight heading sideways towards the left (same movement for both right handed and left handed) and then up, curving to the right and down to make the left side loop of the 8. Continue down and curving towards the right then up and around a curve heading left to form the right side loop. You have completed one full 8 on its side.*



A SENSE OF CALM

Repeat the above 3 times with the following addition:

Fix your eyes on your thumb and do not let your eyes move faster than your thumb. Your thumb will always be in your direct vision.

Do not move your head to favour one eye over the other.

BOTH eyes need to track the thumb for the whole lazy 8 loop cycle. After completing 8 Lazy 8 cycles with your main arm, don't switch arms yet.

Possible Extentions

- The Lazy 8 is the sign for INFINITY. In partners then whole class discuss what infinity means.
- The Never-Ending Story: Whole class or small groups...students sit in a circle and number off. It all starts a story with "Once upon a time there was a ..." In 5 seconds you loudly say "NEXT" and the next person continues the story. If they get stuck they can say "Pass" and the story continues with the next person.
- Another version of The Never-Ending Story: on a long roll of shelf paper students take turns writing a sentence or two or two about Care and Kindness. (Encourage spellchecking) Hang up around the room. Continue all year?

To hear some amazing sounds
click here
[https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=17V-bP1XEao](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17V-bP1XEao)

How might this activity become a script for a short play?



A SENSE OF CALM



2. Trombone

There are wonderful videos on YouTube that identify sounds with images of musical instruments . .

Students may join in and play their own imaginary instruments as you play the video.

Now isolate the movement of the trombone.

Use the same arm as in the previous exercise, and with the same position – fist with thumb up, extending the arm straight out parallel with your nose as before.

Stare hard at your thumb.

Continue staring, don't move your gaze, as you bend your elbow down and move your thumb to your nose, almost touching.

Your eyes will feel slightly crossed.

Now extend your thumb back out to original position straight in front of you parallel with your nose.

That's the movement!

Now, breathe in when you pull your thumb towards your nose, and blow out when extending your thumb back out to straight, so it feels like you are playing a trombone. Do a total of three in-out cycles.

This strengthens “near-far” perception Remember to keep your eyes on your thumb the whole time.

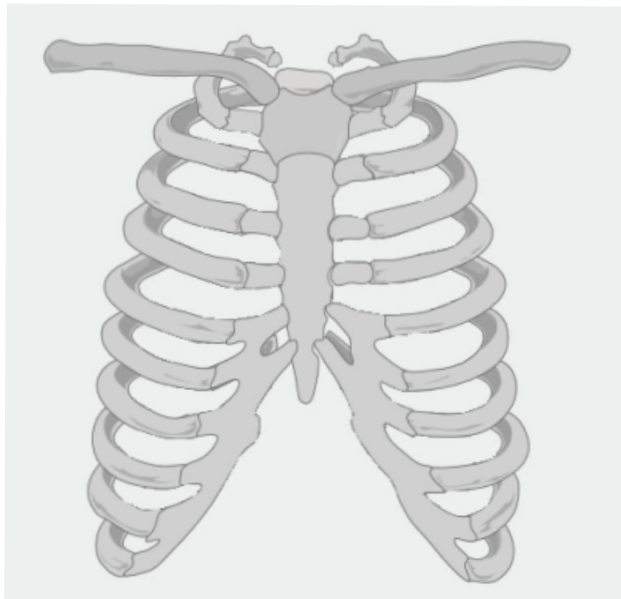
Repeat Lazy 8 and Trombone for your other arm

Possible extensions

- Listening to different types of music, students point to the instrument they hear on the image provided.
- The music department in most high schools enjoy visiting their nearby elementary schools. Why not give them a call and ask if a group of students could visit your classroom to demonstrate wind instruments... especially the trombone?



A SENSE OF CALM



3. Power up your energy

Do you know where your ribs are?

Here's a picture of them hiding under your skin!

Put your hands on the middle of your chest and take a deep breath.

Can you feel them move?

Can you count some of them? They go all the way around to your back. Can you feel them on your front and on sides?

Let's use our ribs to power-up your energy!

We have two points at the top of our rib cage, slightly left and right of center, which when pressed deeply will activate our inner power!

Use your thumb and third finger of one hand, and gently but firmly press both points at the same time.

Move in small circles while gently pressing until I tell you to stop (about 30 seconds). While your one hand is doing the pressing, place your other hand, palm touching your body, gently over your tummy.

Continue to breathe deeply. Repeat with opposite hands.

Doesn't that feel good???

Similar Ideas:

<https://breakthroughsinternational.org/programs/the-brain-gym-program/>



A SENSE OF CALM



If possible, have water available for students after completing these 3 activities.

You may want to share these exercises with other classes. And perhaps parents/caregivers?

Thank you to the artist Nancy Reyner for sharing her successful pre-art, pre-dance, pre-drama (pre-anything!?) 'exercises' with us!

Similar ideas:

<https://nancyreyner.com/>

<https://breakthroughsinternational.org/programs/the-brain-gym-program/>



A SENSE OF CALM



Daydream Bottles

Talk with students about the power of daydreaming as a way of tapping into the “wandering mind” for ideas and for peace. You may create a few Daydream Bottles for younger students. Older students will enjoy making their own. This is a useful coping strategy that can help a child focus and relax.

There is something very calming about shaking a Daydream Bottle and watching the glitter settle down slowly

Materials Needed

- Clear CLEAN plastic bottle (Preferably, not glass in case it falls)
- Warm (not hot) water
- Thickener such as clear glue, hair gel, baby oil, vegetable oil
- Glitter paint and / or sequins and / or fine glitter
- Food colouring or liquid watercolour paint



To Make a Daydream Bottle

1. To make your Daydream Bottle, add glitter paint/thickener to the bottom of the jar until it just covers the bottom of it.
2. Add warm water (about 25% glue, 75% warm water) and as much glitter as desired. (Leave a little room in case you need to make an adjustment)
3. Put the lid on and shake to help the ingredients combine
4. Once you are satisfied with the look and feel of your bottle, then you can super glue the lid shut, so it doesn't spill.



A SENSE OF CALM



If it's really thick, they could add Lego pieces, shells, buttons, plastic stars, etc. Older students may create "Theme Bottles": Underwater, Galaxies, Happiness Is!

Encourage students to use a Daydream Bottle by shaking it and watching until the last sparkle hits the bottom. They may wish to repeat this several times.

Please note: There are numerous websites for "Calming Jars" and "Glitter Jars".

This is purposely called a Daydream Bottle and not a Calm Down Bottle. Some children are told to "Calm down" repeatedly and actually become more anxious when they hear the phrase.



A SENSE OF CALM



Triangle Breathing

There are numerous 'breathing exercises' for students. Some are a bit complicated and for a restless or distracted child, they can actually cause frustration.

Triangle breathing is both simple and effective.

Let's do a little fun activity together.

Do you know what a "triangle" is?

I'm going to draw a big one for you right now.

Now, on your desk, draw a big triangle with your finger.

OK Down in the bottom left corner (show them on yours) put your finger there now.

Now, do what I do (You do the finger exercise part of the triangle exercise below)

Great! Now put your finger on the bottom corner again and take a deep breath until you get to the top of your Count to three in your head

Now hold your breath as you move your finger to the Count to three.

Now let our breath out as you move your finger to the bottom left again.

Let's do this little exercise 5 times.

Wonderful! Now, whenever I whisper TRIANGLE NOW! during the day, you can do this on your desk 5 times!

Immediately you whisper TRIANGLE NOW!



STOMPING TOGETHER



This is all about belonging.

The musical group named “Stomp” has influenced thousands of students.

They are inspiring and provide an excellent prototype from which students may learn to listen and respond to one another without needing to say a word.

There has to be a regular beat that everyone follows.

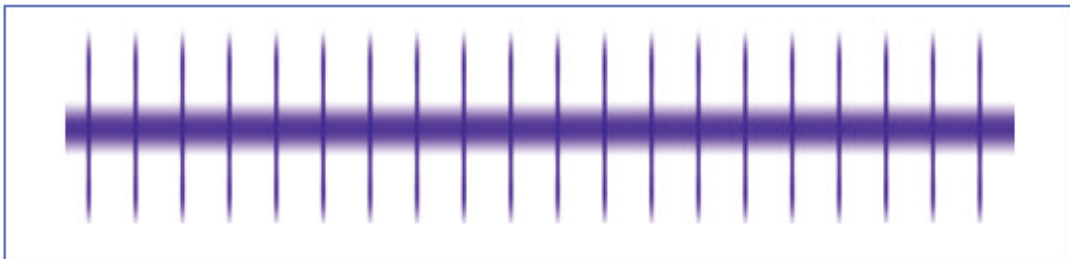
So it may help with young children to have someone keep the beat the whole time.

Using one finger, everyone taps the same rhythm together on their desk.

Put a straight line across the front of your classroom marked off with even spaces and tap each line so students have both a visual and sound cue from with to join in.

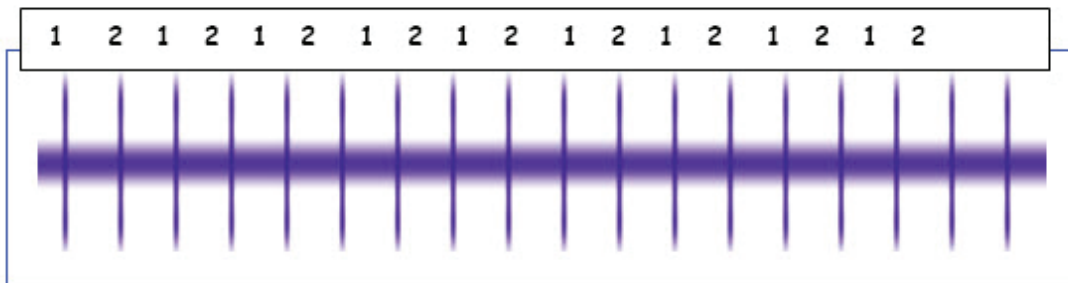
Divide the class in half. One section is ONE, the other is TWO.

Put a straight line across the front of your classroom marked off with even spaces and tap each line so students have both a visual and sound cue from with to join in.



Divide the class in half. One section is ONE, the other is TWO.

Teach syncopation by having ONE tap 1 and TWO taps 2.



STOMPING TOGETHER



YOU ARE TALKING TOGETHER WITHOUT SAYING ONE WORD!

In a group of 5, students number off.

1 starts slowly tapping a beat and keeps it going... 4 beats at a time. On every 5th beat the next person joins in.

One 2 3 4 TWO 2 3 4 THREE 2 3 4 FOUR 2 3 4 FIVE 2 3 4

Groups can practice this several times with different length and strength of rhythms. They may change numbers. If a student is uncomfortable with this exercise, they may sit in the circle and simply tap a finger or just watch and join in whenever they feel at ease.

This layering of rhythms creates an interesting sound.

Students can start with one person and one sound, add another person with a different sound, then another, etc until everyone is playing. Now do the reverse to finish the piece.

In partners or small groups create a list of all kinds of things that would make interesting light or louder sounds.

Here are a few to get you started...

- Bouncing a rubber gym ball
- Foot stomping
- Hands rubbing together
- Slapping my thigh
- Using the bottom of a pail like a drum
- 2 spoons tapping each other
- Pot and lid being open and closed
- 2 sticks tapping together

What else?

Now they are warmed up to see this video (...or part of it) showing how the performers from Stomp talk to each other without saying a word.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ik8jICj8juc>



STOMPING TOGETHER

Share with the class... making one giant list.

Have fun creating new sounds that are reallyreally soft and a few that are louder.

Repetition is critical.

There always needs to be a starting point and an ending point.

Eventually, this activity can be done in the gym or outside.

IF any group of students has rehearsed and feeling confident, they may wish to show another class? Or perhaps the whole school?

In small groups, students can add exaggerated movements and this becomes a dance/movement piece... always keeping in mind that every student has at least one role.

Perhaps it will be an inspiration for older students.



Video of a student created piece
for inspiration

[https://www.yoe.com/
watch?v=ZBwgPa4w7xA](https://www.yoe.com/watch?v=ZBwgPa4w7xA)



RAPPING TOGETHER

Choral reading, rapping, singing, choral speaking and reader's theatre provide powerful moments in which children form a sense of community.



Non-readers and shy children still have a voice. These are not only important literacy tools, they are uplifting! They inevitably bring joy to the participants.

This activity uses a poem: Quick as a Cricket by Audrey Wood.



I'm as quick as a cricket
I'm as slow as a snail
I'm as small as an ant
I'm as large as a whale
I'm as sad as a basset
I'm as happy as a lark
I'm as nice as a bunny
I'm as [fast] as a shark
I'm as cold as a toad
I'm as hot as a fox
I'm as weak as a kitten
I'm as strong as an ox
I'm as loud as a lion
I'm as quiet as a clam
I'm as tough as a rhino
I'm as gentle as a lamb
I'm as brave as a tiger
I'm as shy as a shrimp
I'm as tame as a poodle
I'm as wild as a chimp
I'm as lazy as a lizard
I'm as busy as a bee



Put it all together

AND YOU'VE GOT ME!



RAPPING TOGETHER



Tell the class you need a beat so you can read it like a rap.

(2 beats to a line.. clapping, tapping on their desk)

Really exaggerate the descriptive words (E.G.: Say QUICK quickly, Say S-L-O-W slowly ...)

The whole class joins in with you rapping it the second and third time.

Then, break it up into a collective piece...

2 students say the first line__ 5 students say the second, etc. while everyone's keeping the beat

If you have any students that play the snare drums (or on a flipped over garbage can like STOMP) it makes it even better!

I'm as _____ as a _____
I'm as _____ as a _____
I'm as _____ as a _____
I'm as _____ as a _____

PUT THIS ON THE BOARD / CHART OR CRAFT PAPER

Ask the students tell you which two lines rhyme in the poem/rap...

(2 and 4)

Now as a small group activity brainstorm a list of animals and insects.

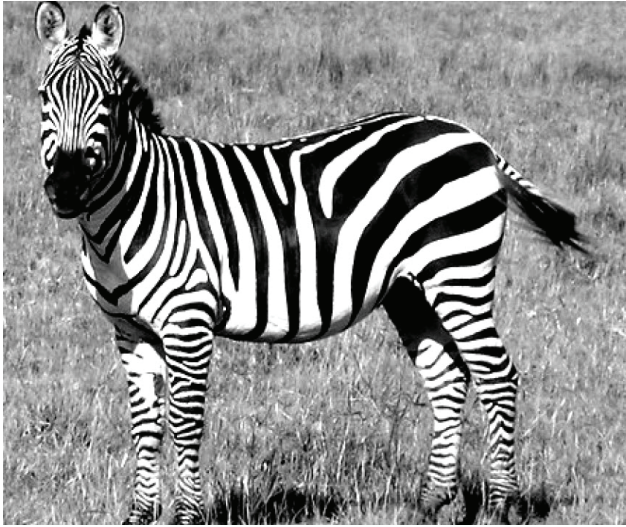
(Student worksheets are provided if you wish to use them)

THEN create one huge list for the whole class.

(Please remember...to be inclusive, never begin with the whole class... always in partners or small groups first>>> then the whole class)..



RAPPING TOGETHER



They can use ANYTHING as their source for ideas...

dictionary? newspapers? magazines? storybooks?

Next, groups brainstorm a list of movement and sound words.

Then create **one** huge list for the whole class

Now, groups brainstorm a list of descriptive words that describe people, animals or insects.

Then create one huge list for the whole class

You might extend this activity by saying

Let's make up some Wild Wordz!

For example... think about this:

I'm a stripey as a zebra....

In partners or small groups, students now experiment with matching make up their own 4 lines remembering that 2 and 4 should rhyme if possible. Explain that they could try to orchestrate/organize their stanza so that lines 2 and 4 rhyme...but don't worry about that.

They rehearse to the same 2 beats per line.

Starting with the whole class saying/reading the original Quick as a Cricket poem, each group raps their own four lines.

Perhaps you might present this to another class?

Possible Extensions

Each student creates their own page.

Look at our list and decide which animal or insect is most like you!

Each student draws an image of him/herself as the animal/insect.

Their phrase is across the bottom of the page.

With the permission from each student, put it altogether and you've got a class book!

It's often quite revealing to see how a student sees him/herself



RAPPING TOGETHER

Animals that Rhyme

- Auk / hawk
- Auks / fox / hawks / ox
- Baboon / loon / raccoon
- Bat / cat / gnat / rat
- Beagle / eagle
- Bear / hare / mare
- Beaver / retriever / weaver
- Bee / flea / manatee
- Buck / duck
- Bug / pug / slug
- Calf / giraffe
- Camel / mammal
- Caribou / cockatoo / ewe / kangaroo / shrew
- Chick / tick
- Clam / lamb / ram
- Cockatiel / eel / seal
- Cow / sow
- Crow / doe
- Deer / steer
- Dog / frog / hog
- Drake / snake
- Eel / seal
- Fawn / prawn / swan
- Ferret / parrot
- Fowl / owl
- Germ / worm
- Goose / moose
- Grouse / louse / mouse
- Guppy / puppy
- Hen / wren
- Jay / ray
- Lark / shark
- Lynx / minks / skinks
- Man / orangutan
- Mink / skink
- Mole / oriole / vole
- Moth / sloth
- Nag / stag
- Quail / snail / whale

Movement Words

- Bolt
- climb
- crab walk
- crawl
- creep
- dash
- drive
- flip
- fly
- gallop
- glide
- hop
- jiggle
- jog
- jump
- leap
- march
- meander
- moonwalk
- move
- prance
- quiver
- roll
- run
- scamper
- shake
- shiver
- shuffle
- skate
- skip
- slide
- slither
- spin
- sprint
- step
- stomp
- stroll
- strut
- swagger
- sway
- tiptoe
- tumble
- twist
- waddle
- walk
- waltz
- wobble
- wriggle
- zigzag



Names of all different kinds of animals and insects

~ ~
~ ~
~ ~
~ ~
~ ~
~ ~
~ ~

Words that say how things move or sound

~ ~
~ ~
~ ~
~ ~
~ ~

Words that describe people, animals or insects

~ ~
~ ~
~ ~
~ ~
~ ~
~ ~

Words that say how you feel sometimes

~ ~
~ ~
~ ~




With a partner or small group fill in the blanks below. Make a new verse for the poem!

Everyone gets a chance to contribute!

Practice saying it together...
nice and loud and clear!

I'm as _____ as a _____

I'm as _____ as a _____ 

I'm as _____ as a _____



THIS IS ME!

I'm as _____ as a _____



LIFE IS A PARTY



Fill the classroom with positive energy! Let's imagine that we're having a party!



Thanks to Beth McRae for sharing this little chant.

On chart or craft paper hang this little fun verse for the whole class to see.

Get a rhythm going by students tapping their feet as you read this first. Invite them to join you while you chant this verse over and over.

They are standing... moving...dancing...swaying... clapping...laughing...

In partners or small groups, students take turns saying any word that makes them feel good.

E.G.: Puppies! Cookies! Sunsets! Showering! Movies! Skipping! Hockey! Babies! Chocolate!

Write the words on different shaped construction paper.

Hang them on curly ribbons on and around the verse. This can be added to over time.

