Adventure

and the

Classroom Community

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In an era of standards driven education, it's easy to overlook the value of creating a classroom community where students learn and practice the interpersonal skills of communication, cooperation, and conflict resolution. Yet a growing body of research shows that students who feel cared about, supported, and have a say in how their classrooms are run do better academically, have fewer behavior problems, and are less likely to drop out of school than other students.

This project takes a closer look at what exactly is a classroom community, and how a strong sense of community benefits students. Next comes an exploration of experiential/adventure education, and a rational for how incorporating adventure games and initiatives into the classroom builds community. This begins with some foundational perspectives on experience and education, moves into a closer look at the concept of adventure, and then goes into specific components of experiential/adventure programming. Finally, specific and detailed descriptions of adventure games and initiatives and how to lead them are provided along with a proposal for a professional development in-service for teachers.

Chapter One

There can be no peace—and ultimately
no life—without community.
-M. Scott Peck

For 8 years I was involved in the field of experiential/adventure education. During this time I worked as an instructor for Outward Bound leading wilderness courses, a facilitator for teambuilding programs, as well as the Program Director for a teambuilding/adventure program. I learned some powerful lessons about how people learn during this time. First, if people are having fun, they are more willing to take risks and face challenges. Second, there is an amazing amount of learning that happens in a group setting. And finally, learn makes the most sense when there is a purpose and an opportunity to be hands on with the subject matter. The teachers I worked with were always amazed at their students' abilities to collaborate together and tackle challenging problems with great enthusiasm. I was amazed that so many teachers did not realize the value of their students working, playing, laughing, and learning together… the value of community.

The root of the word community is the word common. Among other things, a community shares a common government (as does a city), a common set of values (as a professional group), a common locale (as in the case of a neighborhood) or a common purpose (as a school). For a community to be healthy, it must have healthy relationships, and these relationships must be consciously nurtured and developed (Henton, 1996). The need for community is universal (Serviovanni, 1994). A sense of belonging, of being connected to others and to ideas that make our lives meaningful and significant—these

needs are shared by all of us. Human development, brain research, organizational development, public health and policy verify the need for affiliation. Unless an individual feels safe and experiences positive affiliation, she is unable to engage in the kind of cognitive activity that supports in-depth learning (Henton, 1996).

Establishing an environment in the classroom that supports safe risk-taking and a sense of belonging cannot be left to chance. Yet, most teachers have grown up in traditional classrooms, and learned traditional teaching techniques in traditional universities (Frank, 2001). Skills such as communication, conflict resolution, and cooperation, all elements of a strong community, are not practiced in the classroom. Frank (2001) writes that we would be laughed out of the teaching profession if we suggested that instead of teaching language arts every day in school, we would substitute a "reading day". On this particular day classes would learn and practice their reading skills. Beyond that one day, we would ignore reading unless there was a problem. At that point, the students would be punished for not reading well.

It sound ridiculous, but this is often how skills such as cooperation and conflict resolution are handled in schools. We must ask ourselves "How can we expect students to *act* responsibly, if they are not given the opportunity to *have* responsibility?" (Frank, 2001).

Schools are the perfect place to learn collaboration and conflict-resolution skills. After all, what does democratic life require of us? Democracy requires citizens who participate broadly in informed public decision-making with an eye toward the common good. Citizens must understand not only the rudiments of reading, writing, and computing, but also have an ongoing sense of community. Democracy also requires that

we have courage, that we believe our actions are important and valued, and are necessary in order to nurture community and the common good (Wood, 1992).

Building communing in the classroom not only sets the stage for more in-depth learning, but it also provides the opportunity for students to learn skills that will be useful throughout their entire lives.

One way to integrate community building into the class curriculum is through experiential/adventure activities. Experiential education is shaped by the following theoretical perspectives (Henton, 1996):

- Learning occurs in context and relationship
- Meeting basic human needs for safety and belonging is a prerequisite for cognitive growth.
- Growth (emotional, physical, intellectual) is the product of risk taking.
- Individuals benefit from the collective efforts of the entire group.
- Discovery is essential to learning and the construction of knowledge.
- Learning is an act of caring and reciprocity.

The heart of experiential education is captured by the proverb, "What I hear I forget; what I see I remember; what I do I understand". In experiential education, the learner is directly involved physically, intellectually, and emotionally.

While the practice of experiential and adventure learning can be applied to entire curriculums, the focus of this project is on using experiential activities to actively create a strong sense and practice of community in the classroom. Chapter Two explores several issues important to this concept. The first is the definition of community, and a rational for why building community in the classroom is important. Next comes an exploration

of experiential/adventure education. This begins with some foundational perspectives on experience and education, moves into a closer look at the concept of adventure, and then goes into specific components of experiential/adventure programming. Simply stated, Chapter Two explains why it's important to build community, and provides a roadmap for doing so.

Chapter Three departs from theory and gives explicit instructions on how to lead and facilitate experiential/adventure activities. Included are descriptions of 34 Initiatives that focus on building trust, problem solving, cooperating, and having fun. The focus for this chapter is to give teachers the necessary resources to start using adventure education in their own classrooms.

Chapter Four is a nuts and bolts chapter, as it provides the blueprint for a professional development program that incorporates the theory from Chapter Two with the action of Chapter Three. And the final chapter briefly answers that question, "Now What?"

Chapter Two

Why Build Community?

Step by step the longest march
Can be won, can be won
Many stones do form an arch
Singly none, singly none
And by union what we will
Can be accomplished still
Drops of water turn a mill
Singly none, singly none
-*United Mine Workers preamble*

"Community" is a word that is often used, but rarely given a clear definition. You know it when you see it, but how can you describe exactly what goes into the creation of a community? In his book *A Different Drum: Community-Making and Peace* (1987) M. Scott Peck compares the workings of community to that of electricity. Imagine the light at your desk. It would be fairly simple to take apart the lamp and to explain each part, and how that part functions to create light and heat. That is, until you reach the plug that goes into the outlet and meets up with the electrical current. Something happens at this point that not even electrical engineers can explain. We know a great deal about electricity, but something about it remains mysterious.

Community is another such phenomenon. Like electricity, it is profoundly lawful. Yet there remains something about it that is inherently mysterious, and at times magical. Thus there is no adequate one-sentence definition of genuine community. Community is something more than the sum of its parts, its individual members.

School communities are a current hot topic in educational research. The literature is littered with references to an "educational communities", a "caring community", and a "community of learners". (Frank, 2001; Krall & Jolango, 1998; Kreidler; 1990; Sergiovanni, 1994, p.xi; Wood, 1992) What exactly does this mean? In its broadest sense, community is defined as "a unified body of individuals" (*Merriam-Webster*, 2003). More specifically, community in the classroom is "a place in which students feel cared about and are encouraged to care about each other. They experience a sense of being valued and respected; the children matter to one another and to the teacher. They have come to think in the plural: they feel connected to each other; they are part of an "us" (Kohn, 1996, p.101). Seen this way, community is the glue that binds students and teachers together in a special way. Community can help teachers and students be transformed from a collection of "I's" to a collective "we", and therefore giving them a unique sense of identity, belonging, and place. (Sergiovanni, 1994).

In *Public Schools that Work* (1993), Gregory Smith points out several barriers within the current public school structure that inhibit the growth of a communal "we" spirit. Smith states that as schools developed throughout the twentieth century, they took on the function of helping children acquire norms that include independence, an achievement orientation, universalism, and specificity. Independence refers to the development of self-reliance and self-sufficiency. Achievement refers to the belief that a student can have an impact on their environment by competing against some external standard of excellence. Universalism includes the willingness to set aside group loyalties in interactions with others. And finally, specificity deals with the norm of interacting

with others not as complete human beings but as masters of specific services and skills (Smith, 1993, p. 8).

In addition, Smith writes that children in school must go through a continuous process of evaluation by their teachers that has little to do with their relationships with others. As a result, children come to believe that their value lies not so much in who they are as in what they can do. Furthermore, in many modern schools, students' success is tied to their ability to work quietly and by themselves, complying with the expectations of their teachers rather than the interests of their group. In relationship to the schools as a whole, children learn that they occupy a subservient position to their teachers and that they must acquiesce to the school's behavioral code and standards of achievement. Students are seen as passive learners, and it's a teacher's job to impart knowledge to students (Frank, 2001). As a result, there is little room to learn what it means to share actively in the creation and maintenance of a healthy community (Smith, 1993).

What all of this suggests is that this traditional structuring of schools is poorly designed to foster the creation and maintenance of a healthy community. Instead, children learn to compete as best they can in a market society (Smith, 1993). But this isolationist approach is no longer suitable. We live in an information-rich world that is rapidly shrinking. As our smaller communities open up to a global society, both the number and type of people we interact with is increasing. In order to make sense of this increasingly complex world, people specialize, and this creates greater interdependence among us all (Frank, 2001). In order for children to be successful in this changing world, they need a place to develop and practice collaboration skills; a place to where they can create and maintain a sense of community.

Schools are an ideal place for this community to take root. According to Smith (1993), schools are one of the few sites in American society where children are able to experience an ongoing social relationship with a group of people that extends beyond their immediate family and friends. They offer constant opportunities to interact, and to practice skills such as collaboration and conflict-resolution.

Imagine a classroom where students and teachers are partners in learning. Students are not just engaged in the learning process, but excited about it. In this classroom, it is safe to make mistakes and to *learn* from those mistakes. Here, students support each other and are supported as they grapple with ideas and understanding. This is a classroom where students feel safe and cared about.

This idea that a supportive classroom community is beneficial to students is supported by brain research. Research reveals that the brain actively searches for and creates patterns of information in order to construct meaning (Caine & Caine, 1991). Higher functions of the brain links past and present experiences of the learner in order to deepen understanding. As a result, information in isolation is soon lost to long-term memory (Henton, 1996). The brain is a socially oriented organ whose abilities improves or weakens indirect response to the individual's sense of belonging. Safety and support enhance learning, while threat and intimidation inhibit learning (Caine & Caine, 1991). . Students cannot learn unless a sense of security is created and maintained; their brain simply won't let them. This is the result of the relationship between the limbic system and the cerebral cortex. The limbic system is the "gatekeeper" of all incoming information. If the environment is perceived to be safe, then the limbic system engages the cerebral cortex, which is where academic learning occurs (Kovalik, 1997).

Further research confirms additional benefits to building community in the classroom. Students who experience a strong sense of community are more likely to be academically motivated; to act ethically and altruistically; to develop social and emotional competencies, and to avoid a number of problem behaviors, including drug use and violence (Schaps, 2003, p. 31). Developing social and emotional competencies alone would be enough reason to create community in the classroom. Lack of emotional competency manifests itself in depression, aggression, eating disorders, dropping out of school, addiction to drugs and alcohol, and high pregnancy rates. Young people need more than just information. They need to gain skills including "self-awareness, identifying, expressing, and managing feelings; impulse control and delaying gratification, and handling stress and anxiety" (Frank, 2001, p. 6). These skills are learned by doing, by practicing, and by talking about the experiences that result from the doing and the practicing. (Charney & Kriete, 2001, p. 77) A classroom community is a place where students can experience and practice emotional skills along with academic skills.

The benefits of creating a sense of community in the classroom range from the academic to the social. But what *exactly* makes up a classroom community? For the purposes of this report, I'm going to use William Kreidler's (1990) definition of peaceable classroom community. The ideals in this classroom are cooperation, communication, emotional expression, appreciation for diversity, and non-violent conflict resolution. By creating opportunities to foster these ideals in the classroom, and by giving students opportunities to practice the skills associated with these ideals, a caring community of students will emerge.

Of course, these objectives won't be met simply because we all occupy a specific space. It requires intention, and it requires a plan of action.

What is Experiential/Adventure Education?

Tell me, and I will forget.
Show me, and I may remember.
Involve me, and I will understand.
- Confucius, 450 B.C

There are many ways to approach community building in the classroom. Consider the following scenario:

A casual observer watching a group of 4th graders engaged in an activity called Group Juggle sees only a game involving tossing balls, rubber chickens, stuffed animals, and other small objects around a circle while calling out names. The students are laughing and having fun, but this is much more than just a game. If the observer watches and listens a little longer, she would hear the group discuss how to make sure that everyone is catching what is thrown to them, and what is slowing the process down. Some students might suggest that others not be so aggressive in tossing the objects, or making eye contact before tossing so the "catcher" knows when they are about to be thrown an object. The discussion might turn into a larger metaphor about the various things the students are trying to "juggle" in their lives and how the can help each other make sure that the "ball doesn't get dropped".

This Group Juggle scenario is just one example of deceptive appearances. Students are engaged, having fun, and learning more about to how work effectively as a group. There is much more to this activity than playing games.

This type of education falls under the broad term of experiential education. Experiential education is the process of actively engaging students in an experience that will have real consequences Students makes discoveries and experiment with knowledge themselves instead of hearing or reading about the experience of others. Students also reflect on their experiences, thus developing new skills, new attitudes, and new theories or ways of thinking (Kraft & Sakofs, 1988). This type of education is one of the most significant areas for current research and practice in education, particularly adult education (Fenwick, 2000). Such a broad definition encompasses kinesthetic-directed instructional activities in the classroom, special workplace projects interspersed with critical dialogue led by a facilitator, learning generated through social action movements, and team-building adventures in the wilderness (Fenwick, 2000). Adventure is one form of experiential education that is highly effective in developing team and group skills in both students and adults (Rohnke, 1989). For the purposes of building community in an elementary classroom setting, the focus will be on this specific field of experiential education.

For some people the word *adventure* conjures images of expeditions in remote settings, or physically challenging and exciting excursions such as backpacking or kayaking. Whether the adventure occurs in an exotic location or in one's back year, it is the idea of a physical challenge in an outdoor environment that characterizes the general understanding of adventure.

There is nothing wrong with this view, except that it limits our ability to use the power of adventure in other settings. In her book *Adventure in the Classroom* (1996), Mary Henton states that adventure is more than equipment, physical risk taking, and

remote vistas. It is a matter of significance, support, stimulation, and satisfaction—all characteristics of quality education.

Significance implies that something about a particular adventure is important, whether it is in an academic field such as science, or have personal meaning. For teachers, the challenge is to sustain excitement in the classroom by teaching to high expectations, exploring questions, and assisting students in intellectual growth. The challenge is to make learning significant to students (Henton, 1996).

Support is necessary for the risk taking inherent in adventure. A supportive environment gives permission to "go for it", and to be willing to make mistakes. Strong social support allows student to stretch themselves intellectually, as social support promotes achievement, successful problem solving and persistence on challenge tasks (Henton, 1996).

Adventures are intellectually, psychologically, emotionally, and physically stimulating (Henton, 1996). Even the most well planned adventures have an element of surprise and anticipation. Adventure "lies at the intersection of emotional involvement and unexpected outcomes, where adventure is more than the sum of its parts, more than fun, more than high expectations, more than support. This is the turning point, the point of transfer." (Henton, 1996, pg. 7).

The last element of adventures of all types is satisfaction. People learn, retain what they learn, and use what they learn when they are having fun. Personal satisfaction with learning creates deeper engagement and more effective learning (Henton, 1996).

John Dewey (1938) was a promoter of the idea of learning through direct experience, by action and reflection. Dewey maintained that education consists of a

continuity of developing experiences, where students interact with their environment and gain insight and understanding from those experiences. Dewey stated, "education is a process of living and not a preparation for future living. The school must therefore represent real life." (Riaola, 1986, pg. 58) Some critics characterize Dewey as a romantic visionary who led American educators away from the traditional emphasis on the 3-R's. However, Dewey's concerns were based upon very practical considerations such as transferring the abstract concepts learned in the classroom to application in everyday life (Riaola, 1986).

The field of modern adventure education was born in 1941 with the creation of the first Outward Bound program. The program was designed for the Blue Funnel Shipping Line to reduce the loss of lives due to sinking of their ships in the Atlantic Ocean. A month long course was designed to accelerate the development of independence, initiative, physical fitness, self-reliance, and resourcefulness. The success of these programs led Hahn to support the establishment of Outward Bound schools in England and then throughout the world. By 1995 there were 48 schools on five continents. These schools emphasize the role of character, service, challenge, and physical endeavor (Hattie, Mats, Neill, & Richards, 1997). Hahn's work had a profound effect upon the experiential and adventure education movements with his unwavering belief that individuals are members of a larger community and his desire that education should cultivate a passion for life through direct experience (Frank, 2001).

Recent research in the field of adventure education by Hattie, Mars, Neill, & Richards (1997) concluded that the instructional processes and activities that make the difference to outcomes in adventure programs (such as challenge, feedback, and mutual

group support) have a similar effect in regular classrooms. A closer look at these processes gives further insight.

One of the basic tenants of experiential/adventure education is that is engages participants intellectually, physically, socially, and emotionally. Carver (1995) defines the ABC's of student experience as program objectives.

A. Developing a personal "agency" means developing a sense of how one can become more of a change agent in one's own life, and using that knowledge as a source of power to generate action.
B. Developing a sense of "belonging" means constructing positive interpersonal relationships, positive self-esteem, and positive feelings about community membership.
C. Developing "competence" means acquiring skills, knowledge and the ability to use them in a variety of situations.

Carver asserts that successful experiential education programs and experiences promote the development of the ABC's (above) by "introducing resources and behaviors that allow for active learning in a learning community that values caring, compassion, responsibility, accountability, spirituality, ethics, individuality, and critical thinking." (Carver, 1995, pg. 13) In this view, student experience is viewed as both a process and an outcome.

"Experience is not what happens to you; it is what you do with what happens to you"--Aldous Huxley. While the foundation for experiential education is learning by doing, the experience by itself is not enough. In the mid-1980's, David Kolb created the Experiential Learning Cycle. This model is an integral part of experiential education,

whether used in an academic setting, adventure education, wilderness education, or service learning (Frank, 2001). Kolb's model is four-phase cycle. Phase one is having the actual *experience*. Phase two is *reflecting* on the experience, followed by *generalizing* to make connections and look for patterns. The final phase is *applying* the learnings and insights into daily life, or into the next experience (Kolb, 1984). These processes were understood as an ongoing process, which could occur with the space of minutes, hours, days, or longer (Neill, 2003).

Understanding the life cycle of a group is also helpful in gaining insight into the process of experiential education, and ultimately, the process of building community. Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing, and Adjourning are stages of group development first identified by Bruce Tuckman and Mary Ann Jensen (1977). In the first stage, forming, groups come together for the first time. Group members may or may not have a choice about whether to be involved in a group. Schools are a place where both types of groups are present. Students have little choice about attending school, or about who their classmates are, but they gather in small groups of their own choosing during unstructured time (Frank, 2001). When classes come together for the first time, there tends to be a general feeling of anxiety. Students wonder if they will like and be liked by others, and they are generally polite and unwilling to take risks because they are not clear about what type of behavior is acceptable. This is the "honeymoon" period, and the main issue at this time is one of inclusion (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977).

Storming arrives when students start to know one another better, and feel is safe to take some risks. During this stage, conflicts arise. These conflicts are the result of differences in style, opinion, and perspective. A class identity has not yet been

established, students might turn toward the teacher for more guidance then alternately turn against the teacher for taking too much control. The main issue at this time is one of leadership and decision making (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). During this stage the teacher's role shifts from that of leader, to guide (Frank, 2001).

The third stage in the group development process is called norming. Having sorted out its internal structure, there is then the issue of what the group stands for. What kind of behavior and contribution is acceptable and what isn't (Tuckman and Jensen, 1977) Norms are developed that are unique to the class. These norms are created whether we think about them or not, and teachers need to help students create norms that focus norms that are healthy for all members of the group.

The fourth stage of the group development process is performing. This is the stage where true community forms. At this point, students have practiced ways of working together, and have gained a mutual understanding of what it means to be part of the class. Collaboration is now possible, and students are more willing to take risks. When conflicts arise, people understand what is expected because they have been there before (Tuckman and Jensen, 1977).

Adjourning is the final stage in the process. This is where groups disband. For a class, this time is the end of the school year. It is a time where many group members may grieve for the loss of the group and for what has been (Frank, 2001). During this time, it is helpful to create opportunities to celebrate, share memories, and say goodbyes.

Knowing these theories inherent in experiential education is important in understanding why adventure education works, and why it works in so many different settings. Adventure education was first introduced in schools through physical education

classes. In 1971, Jerry Pieh was the principal of Hamilton-Wenham High School in Hamilton, MA. He grew up in the Minnesota Outward Bound School that his father directed, and was very familiar with the benefits of adventure. Jerry received funding for a grant that proposed to change the school climate and motivate students to achieve through an integrated interdisciplinary program design called Project Adventure. Following three years of development and implementation, the program received an outstanding evaluation from the Department of Education. The evaluation credited the program with improving the self-concept of participants, positively affecting the internal locus of control, and improving the school community (Frank, 2001).

Over thirty-years later, Project Adventure programs have evolved and spread to many thousands of programs all over the U.S. and abroad. PA has helped pioneer a whole field of facilities based and mobile adventure programming. It is important to stress that adventure education is a philosophy-a set of ideals rather than a set of activities-that honors the learning potential inherent in risk, challenge, and the unknown. Its implementation is as appropriate in an academic setting as it is in a physical activity setting if the common goal is to increase students' ability to challenge themselves and work as part of a community. Many foundational concepts and techniques used at institutions of education, recreation, therapy, and professional development come directly from Project Adventure. These include Full Value Contract, Challenge By Choice, and Goal Setting (Frank, 2001). When initiating a community-building process, it is necessary to establish certain ground rules. The ultimate goal is to create a classroom environment where everyone feels safe.

Full-Value Contract

A full value contract is a starting point for any group or class. It allows group members an opportunity to establish ground rules to which everyone can agree. It can be as simple as a verbal "Play hard, play safe, play fair, and have fun", a phrase that was originally created by the New Games Foundation in the 1970's, or as complex as a written document that everyone signs. (Frank, 2001). There are three commitments that are usually made in terms of the contract:

1. The agreement to work together as a group and to work toward individual and group goals.
2. The agreement to adhere to certain safety and group behavior guidelines.
3. The agreement to give and receive feedback, both positive and negative, and to work toward changing behavior when it is appropriate. (Rohnke, 1989). For example, if a student throws an object at someone during an activity or calls someone a name, the members should feel that they have the right to stop the activity to call attention to the problem.

In the beginning, the teacher may need to model the behaviors outlined above, acting as a safety expert until students are more willing to confront the issues themselves. The full-value contract can be something that is created at the beginning of the year, revisited often, and perhaps revised if necessary.

Challenge By Choice

Challenge means going beyond the old, pushing into new territory, new ways of doing things, dealing with fear and accepting help and support. Challenge is also examining that part of ourselves that isn't sure what it is able to do, or to be. But

challenge also has a dark side. While it presents an opportunity for learning and growth, it also potentially exposes the issues of losing face, failure, and injury (Rohnke, 1989). That's why introducing the concept of Challenge by Choice is important, as it addresses individual needs.

Challenge by Choice allows each student to be in control of his or her level of participation. This means that someone may *choose* how much to share with a group, or how much to actively participate. It does *not* mean that a student may sit back and read a book while the group is engaged. Everyone is a member of the group, even if they are just watching.

In every group situation there are various roles to take on. When planning a project, one student may decide to research a particular topic, another take notes, a third to artwork, etc. If students have experience making good choices for themselves, they will benefit when asked to work on real-life projects.

Sometimes Challenge by Choice is difficult to visualize in a school setting, where students are required to do their work, be present, and complete assignments. Here it's helpful to remember that Challenge by Choice is not an either/or concept. Students are given choices within a set structure. The question not "will you do this?" but rather "how will you do this?" (Frank, 2001).

Making appropriate choices is a skill that must be learned and practiced. Depending on the age and maturity level of the students, they will need varying levels of guidance and modeling. If a student chooses (that is, *refuses*) to participate at all, and this is followed by other students making the same choice, it becomes the perfect teachable moment to discuss choices—what makes people choose the things they do,

internal and external motivation, individual vs. group goals, and how to be supportive of others' choices.

Goal Setting

Goal setting is a traditional learning method, and has many proponents. (Frank, 2001). Goal setting offers students the opportunity to define who they are and where they are headed, in addition to creating a direction for the whole class. Making decisions about goals is similar to making smart choices, in that it takes practice to become effective. Once a group, or an individual become adept at making decisions about small goals, they can graduate to larger goals, such as "What do you really want to accomplish in this activity?" or setting goals for class projects. Goal setting is a useful tool for creating action plans that address both behavioral and academic concerns.

SMART goals (Henton, 1996, p.81) are goals that are *specific, measurable*, *achievable*, *relevant*, and *trackable.* This acronym provides an effective guide for setting goals that are appropriate and manageable. *Specific* refers to creating one goal that states exactly what it is that you want to achieve. The idea is to avoid creating an either/or situation. A specific goal focuses on one behavior that a person wants to change in some way. *Measurable* refers to being able to objectify a goal in terms of time or quantity. *Achievable* means that a goal should be realistic, challenging but also doable. *Relevant* means that a goal addresses behavior that makes a positive difference in overall performance and makes sense in the context of the class. The goal may carry over into a person's life outside the classroom, but the focus should be

on classroom performance. And finally, *trackable* means that progress towards the goal can be monitored and measured frequently.

The Full Value Contract, Challenge by Choice, and Goals setting are three tools to help in the community-building process. Another tool, and the focus of this project, is incorporating initiative games in the classroom. It's here that the above concepts spring to life.

Initiative games are used in adventure education with groups to help them work together more effectively and compassionately. Essentially, initiatives are problem-solving tasks. They call upon group members to bring their physical, emotional and intellectual selves to work on tasks that have no ready-made solutions.

There are several things that make initiatives different than other kinds of problem solving activities. First, they're designed to draw upon the different talents and ideas of all the members of the group. Everyone should have something to contribute. Second, no single group member can complete the task without the help of his or her classmates. Even when one group member takes the lead, that person needs the full cooperation of the other members. Finally, there are no "right answers". Every group will come up with its own unique solutions, so no answer is more valid than any other. There are three types of initiative games (*TIOBEC Instructor's Manual*, 1997):

- *Icebreakers*: These games are especially useful for group that is just getting to know one another. They are designed to break down the natural anxiety we all have when encountering new situations or groups. These games are fun

and generally high-energy. Some icebreakers require more cooperation than others, but all get people invigorated and connected to each other.

- *Trust:* Like the name suggests, these games are useful for helping groups to understand how and practice the act of trusting and being trustworthy. They are more complex and involved than icebreakers.
- *Problem-solving*: Almost all initiative games have some degree of problem-solving, but these are especially designed to combine the challenge of an intellectual task with a concrete physical problem. These are generally more mental and less active.

There are two sets of experiences that happen simultaneously when doing Initiative games. The first has to do with each individual's experience. The second is what's happening with the group as a whole--the "collective mind".

At the individual level, initiatives help participants think about how we react when confronted with challenging situations. Do we experience fear, anxiety, or pleasure? How do we react when we get frustrated? Are we willing to play a leadership role in certain circumstances and not in others? Do we have doubts about our abilities, especially when performing a task in front of others? Do we work well with others? What barriers do we have which prevent us from being part of the group and giving ourselves to others? No two people with have the same experience. Someone might be enthusiastic about solving a mental problem, but be frozen in fear during a trust activity. Each initiative brings out different feels in each group member, and all of them allow students to look carefully at how they behave (TIOBEC *Instructor's Manual*, 1997).

Meanwhile, the group has a life of its own. The group is much more than

just the sum total of each member's experiences. It's a collection of interdependent individuals: people who've come together to achieve a goal of purpose that is mutually meaningful. Encouraging a group to work effectively is complicated. Initiatives provide groups the chance to (Rohnke, 1989):

- Increases their effectiveness in communicating their needs, ideas, and feelings
- Examine appropriate decision-making models
- Develop a high degree of cohesion and a sense of community
- Learn how to resolve conflict creatively and cooperatively.
- Encourage participation and leadership among all group members
- Have fun together in a playful environment.

It's important at this point to revisit the experiential learning cycle. The initiatives games are at the heart of experience. Now the process must be taken another step, as the experience is a lever to further learning. If your smiling and laughing group moves enthusiastically from game to initiative to game, etc. without any inclination as to what they are trying to accomplish as a group, you are presenting a fun recreational experience and not much else (Butler and Rhonke, 1995). Staff off playing for the fun of it, but recognize that there are useful insights and learning within each experience that help to achieve curriculum or bottom-line goals.

Steve Butler, in *Quicksilver* (1995) states that debriefing is the distinction between a program focused on facilitation and one on recreation. The following is a list of elements present in a good debrief of an initiative game.

- *Purpose*: A debrief without a purpose is simply a random discussion. Identifying a purpose for the group gives focus. The purpose often

arises from group and individual goals, and these stated goals can be used as a method for measuring how well the group is functioning.

- *Focus*: A focused debrief insures that relevant learnings are brought to the surface and understood. If an unpleasant or difficult issue is brought up, groups will often attempt to shift the focus to avoid dealing with the issue. Ignoring or avoiding does not make an issue disappear! In addition, a debrief with focus allows for connections to the "real world", i.e. the classroom.
- *Responsibility*: The leader/teacher does not have full responsibility for making the group experience work. Group members must take ownership and responsibility for their own learning. The best debriefs are when the participants are doing most of the talking. It isn't about telling people what to learn, it's encouraging people to learn from themselves and each other.
- *Structure*: Discussions need structure and a format that works for the group. This is where creating a climate of warmth that allows for sharing is important. Simple is better, and remember that younger students need more structure.
- *Closure*: Debriefs need to have a clear ending. A brief summary of what was discussed and agreed upon allows the group to move on with clear goals. It's important to remember that closure doesn't always mean resolution, but it does mean that all group members are ready to move on.

To be effective leading a debrief, here are some general guidelines: be non-judgmental; be sincere and honest; show compassion and understanding; be willing to listen; be open to the feelings of others; pay attention to what is said and not said; be observant, watch for clues from body language; and ask questions rather than make statements. (Butler and Rhonke, 1995).

Structuring an effective debriefing sequence can be difficult. Clifford Knapp's *The Art and Science of Processing Experience* (Adapted from Rhonke, 1989), presents debriefing in a three-tier sequence: the What?, the So What?, and the Now What?

The What? begins the discussion with the facts. Because adventure initiatives are active, there are plenty of facts, occurrences, and interactions to work with. What? questions help group members raise their awareness level about issues and behaviors that should be maintained, and those which they might want to change. The point here is to be objective and state just the facts and feelings that happened during the experience. So What? questions presuppose that we do something with what we heard in the What? questions. It's here that group members abstract and generalize what they're learning from the experience. An example of a So What? questions would be "did we honor our full-value contract?" based on what came out of the discussion about what really happened. The Now What? is the process of taking lessons learned from he experience and "reapplying them to other situations" (Rhonke, 1989, pg. 26). That is, taking the discussion and generalizing it to real world situations, such as the classroom.

Experiential activities offer opportunities in a low-threat environment in which to deal with real situations. Rather than sitting around talking abstractly about a situation that *might* occur, activities provide situations that actually *do* occur (Frank, 2001). One

consequence of practicing skills is that mistakes do occur. The ability to make mistakes is vital to learning, as well as establishing trust within a class. Learning from one's mistakes is a powerful way to gain experience (Butler and Rhonke, 1995). The process of community building is it a great time to talk about mistakes. It's important to create an environment where learning from mistakes is a norm, not something to hide. As students become more comfortable with making mistakes, emphasize a few points (Frank 2001).

- Making mistakes is meaningless unless we can find some learning in them.
- Making mistakes is not the same thing as gross negligence. Spend time brainstorming examples and clarifying the difference.
- Making mistakes implies consequences. If I stay up too late and sleep through my alarm, I will have to deal with the consequences of being late to work or school. The idea is to learn from his mistake in order to prevent making the same mistake in the future.
- Along with the consequences comes responsibility. Sometimes it is fine to say "oops" and move on. But other times mistakes might cause hurt feeling. In these cases it is important to find a way to "make things right".

The Morning Meeting

Establishing a caring classroom community is an ongoing process that you can keep alive by helping students assess how they're doing. Incorporating experiential activities on a daily or weekly basis is a powerful way to build community as well as to introduce and practice skills such as problem solving, leadership, communication, etc. Another powerful tool is to hold Morning Meetings in the classroom. Developed and

disseminated by teachers at the Northeast Foundation for Children, Morning Meeting is a structures way to begin each day "as a community of caring a respectful learners" (Kriete, 1999, pg. 3).

The first component of the Morning Meeting is the Greeting. A variety of greeting activities are used over time to help each student gain a sense of belonging. In addition, the greeting provides the opportunity for students to practice both the verbal and nonverbal communication skills that are central to relationship building and participating in group activities in and out of school.

The second component of the Morning Meeting is Sharing. The sharer presents a brief statement to introduce his or her news. The listeners would take turns making comments or asking questions to demonstrate their interest in, and concern for, the sharer and the subject. Sharing gives students opportunities to develop and practice skills of listening, presenting to a group, taking turns, formulating relevant questions, and taking different perspectives. Students learn about each other's lives as well as expand their knowledge about the world.

The third component of Morning Meeting is the Group Activity. This is the ideal time to present an adventure initiative to the group. The final component of Morning Meeting is News and Announcements. This is a time to transition from the Morning Meeting to the rest of the school day (Bondy and Ketts, 2001).

The rational for Morning Meeting is the positive effect these meetings have on the quality of the classroom community. The classroom social environment has a significant effect of student attitudes, productivity, engagement in learning, and academic achievement (Walberg & Greenberg, 1997). Weak community in schools has been

linked to problems with underachievement, high student dropout rates, drug abuse, social exclusion, and gang activity (Stainback & Stainback, 1994)

Research done on Morning Meeting shows that it has a positive influence on students' attitudes (Bondy & Ketts, 2001). When 3rd graders were interviewed about their thoughts on Morning Meeting, they generally viewed it as one of their favorite parts of the day. They described three outcome of Morning Meeting: having fun, being known and knowing others, and stimulating learning processes.

The structure of morning meeting combines well with the nature of experiential activities, and the result is a caring classroom community. Kreite (1999) writes "The sense of belonging and the skills of attention, listening, expression, and cooperative interaction developed are a foundation for every lesson, every transition time, every lining-up, every upset and conflict, all day and all year long. Morning Meeting is a microcosm of the way we wish our schools to be--communities full of learning, safe and respectful and challenging for all." (p.4)

Chapter 3
A Guide to Presenting Adventure Activities
The road to adventure leads to wisdom.

--From a Celestial Seasonings Teabag

Throughout the community-building journey, there are tools that can be used to help the group come together, and they to take care of group needs along the way (Frank, 2001). Before incorporating adventure activities into the curriculum, it is necessary to establish specific ground rules. The goal is to create a classroom environment where everyone feels both physically and emotionally safe. Once this is established, students will feel more comfortable making mistakes, trying new ideas, and taking other risks. This act of risk taking encourages growth also builds confidence.

This chapter is divided into several sections:

1. Review of important community-building tools:
    - Full-Value Contract and activities that facilitate this process
    - Challenge By Choice
    - Goal Setting
2. Briefing Games and Initiatives
3. Leading Games and Initiatives
4. Facilitating the Debrief
5. Tips and Tricks
    - The importance of play
    - Diving the group
6. Description of Games and Initiatives
    - Icebreakers/Acquaintance Games
    - Trust Initiatives
    - Problem-Solving Initiatives

The Full-Value Contract

The Full Value Contract (FVC) asks for two commitments. The first is an agreement to adhere to certain safety and group behavior guidelines. These guidelines must be discussed, and agreed upon, by the group, or they will be meaningless.

The second commitment in the FVC is the agreement to confront and be confronted. For the FVC to be effective this must be a two-way street. It calls someone's attention to the fact that an issue needs to be dealt with. Care needs to be taken so students don't resort to put-downs and other hurtful behavior. Confrontation through the use of the FVC affords group members opportunity to develop empathy. For the empathy to emerge, the confrontation must take place within the context of respect, growth, and constructive feedback.

The FVC allows new issues to be included in the contract as needed and as the group continues to grow. Students monitor their own and each other's behavior. Using the FVC as a tool to deal with issues relieves the teacher from the usual negative role of enforcer or rule infractions. Often the students will be tougher than the teacher when it comes to monitoring issues. The FVC, therefore, has a range of uses from serious offenses to the subtlest of personal goals. All of it centers on the concept of value, and the fact that the group is committed to establishing the highest possible value for one another.

Establishing the Full Value Contract should be a creative and fun endeavor. Remember that the FVC is dynamic, in that it can be changed and adapted at any time to best fit the needs of the class. Here are some examples of activities to do to help create the FVC.

The Village **(adapted from Frank, 2001)**

Focus: **Full Value Contract, determining goals and ideals**

Set Up/Materials:

- **Butcher paper, markers**

Suggested Procedure/Briefing:
Divide the class into groups of 4-6 people, and explain that the groups will be creating their own "village". The groups will determine no more than 20 ideals/values that their village will use to make it work well (respect, communication, etc.). Students will write and draw these ideals on their paper. Ideals go inside of the village.
Next, they will determine what keeps the villagers from sticking to their ideals (stubbornness, being unwilling to participate, racism, etc.). These go outside of the village. Each group will present their village to the class. Villages can be combined to make one large village if desired. With young students, there should be considerable discussion prior to breaking into groups about ideals and what class ideals and values should be.

Circle of Strength

Focus: **Full Value Contract, personal strengths and value**

Set Up/Materials:

- **Construction paper, markers**

Suggested Procedure/Briefing:
This is a good preliminary activity before creating a Full Value Contract. Students will trace the outline of one or both of their hands on construction paper, cut them out, and then decorate their hands in a way that reflects the strengths they bring to the class. The hands are then linked in a circle, and can go around the Full Value Contract, or stand alone as a "circle of strength".

Group History

Focus: **Full Value Contract, identifying attributes, establishing norms**

Set Up/Materials:

- **Roll of butcher paper, markers**

Suggested Procedure/Briefing:
The class will create a group mural/history. Once a week or so, ask students what they have learned or what has changed in the classroom community, and have some students depict it in words or pictures on the scroll. This group history becomes the FVC.

Challenge By Choice

Challenge by Choice allows each student to be in control of his or her level of participation. This means that someone may *choose* how much to share with a group, or how much to actively participate. It does *not* mean that a student may sit back and read a book while the group is engaged. Everyone is a member of the group, even if they are just watching.

Making appropriate choices is a skill that must be learned and practiced. Depending on the age and maturity level of the students, they will need varying levels of guidance and modeling. If a student chooses (that is, *refuses*) to participate at all, and this is followed by other students making the same choice, it becomes the perfect teachable moment to discuss choices—what makes people choose the things they do, internal and external motivation, individual vs. group goals, and how to be supportive of others' choices.

Goal Setting

Goal setting is a traditional learning method, and has many proponents. (Frank, 2001). Goal setting offers students the opportunity to define who they are and where they are headed, in addition to creating a direction for the whole class. Making decisions about goals is similar to making smart choices, in that it takes practice to become effective. Once a group, or an individual become adept at making decisions about small goals, they can graduate to larger goals, such as "What do you really want to accomplish in this activity?" or setting goals for class projects. Goal setting is a useful tool for creating action plans that address both behavioral and academic concerns.

Briefing Games and Initiatives

Before you let a group begin any activity, you should give them a thorough briefing. A briefing provides group members with the information they need to proceed with an activity. A good briefing sets the stage for a positive experience. For some activities, the briefing may be very simple, for others it will be more complex and detailed. Whatever the scenario, the briefing should include the following:

- Objective: **The objective of an activity is essentially what the group is supposed to try to do. The objective of an activity does not change, but the way in which you set the stage, and the level of challenge involved, can vary.**

- Setting the Stage: **There are two general ways in which to set the stage for an activity. The first is to use a storyline that is imaginative and fanciful. The second is much more straightforward, without all of the creative embellishments. Which you use depends on the group, the situation, your mood, and the complexity of the initiative. Both methods require passing along certain information to the group.**
    - Let the group know what resources are available **and restrictions on their use, if any.**
    - Inform the group of any rules and consequences **that are part of the activity**
    - Let the group know of any additional requirements **such as time constraints, safety issues, etc.**

Once the group has been briefed, it's time to turn them loose.

Leading the Activities

There are some things that as a facilitator/teacher you should be aware of throughout an activity. This includes additional safety concerns, as well as other issues that commonly crop up. When necessary, you must be prepared to step in and call a time-out so the group can process what is happening. Some common issues that may require intervention include:

- Inattention to safety
- Planning, or lack of planning
- Gender issues
- Some people are checked-out
- Communication within the group

- Frustration that reaches the point of shutting-down

The most obvious situation that would cause you to stop the action would be if things become unsafe for any reason. Sometimes it's helpful to step in when the process itself starts breaking down, or if the group is repeatedly making the same mistakes. It's important to remember that stopping the action interrupts the group, and therefore should be done judiciously. Remember that in this situation, you are not the teacher, but have taken on the role of facilitator. An instructor tells a group what they need to do, while a facilitator helps them to figure things out amongst themselves. Often, instructional comments can become more facilitative by being turned into a question. Open-ended questions are best. Phrasing questions as "How can you…?" suggests that there are other ways of doing something, but still allows the group to do the problem solving.

Debriefing the Activities

A description and rational for debriefing is presented in Chapter 2, so this section will focus on specific techniques used to debrief initiatives. The What?, So What?, Now What? model is an excellent way to structure a debrief (Rhonke, 1989).

- **What?**—begins with the facts. Here are some methods that can help the discussion along:
    - *The Go Around*: Everyone in the group contributes a descriptive sentence. The description can be shortened to one word as well. For example, you might ask each person to describe something that went well in the last activity.
    - *The Memory Game:* One person starts, explaining in detail everything that happened. If anyone else in the group thinks that the person talking missed something that happened, they should stop the person speaking and say what was missed. Then that new person continues describing, etc.
- **So What?** This can be accomplished by shifting from the descriptive to the interpretive. The goal is to make the leap from the facts of the experience to generalizations.
    - *The Whip*: Do a short round robs "whip", in which each person completes a short statement like "I liked it when…". Because everyone is on the spot briefly, they may be willing to risk sharing a small piece of themselves. Keep the focus on the positive.

- *Finger Voting:* Students "vote" on a statement describing some aspect of the activity. The voting scale is from 1-5 (one being not so great, 5 being phenomenal). For example, you could have the students vote on the statement "We supported each other well in this activity." The group does a 1,2,3 count and "three" each person votes by showing 1,2,3,4, or 5 fingers depending on how they feel about the statement. This allows further discussion about why people voted a certain number.

- **Now What?** This question helps take the learning from one activity and transfer it to the next activity, or beyond the initiatives themselves. The goal is to help students discover connections that are meaningful for them.

The following is a brief description of other debriefing strategies that are particularly useful with elementary students (adapted from the *Genesee Valley Outdoor Learning Center Instructor's Manual*, 1995)

- Give pairs of students a magazine. Send them off together to find a picture that represents how they feel the group is working together.
- Write down *everything* you hear the students say during an initiative then read it back to them. This can reveal a lot about communication, support, and how well the group handles frustration.
- "If someone was watching who was not part of the class—what would they see?"
- Have one or two students observe the group during an activity rather than participate. Have them share their observations with the group.
- M&M's: each student gets a few M&M's then has to say—for example, something fun for every yellow M&M, something about leadership for every red, etc.
- Have the students write a letter to themselves about their role in an initiative, or a group of initiatives, and mail it to them a week later along with your own observations.

Tips and Tricks

Tips on how to play! (Adapted from LeLevre, 1988; Rhonke, 1989)

- Play the game yourself, as this builds trust and players are more likely to respect your judgment. As a player, your attention will be more focused on the game, and

you can monitor the safety aspects. You don't have to play every game, but be ready to get in there and be active with your students.

- Keep rules to a minimum, and explanations as brief as possible. Fuzzy descriptions lead to confusion.
- Bend some rules occasionally. Adapting a game should involve only one change at a time to avoid confusion.
- Keep the players playing. Don't include or involve rules that permanently eliminate participants.
- Emphasize competition against self when competition seems natural. Trying to beat a times establish by your own team or attempting to smash a fictitious (don't tell that to your students!) world record is a fun way to keep the challenge fresh without that second place feeling.

Presenting Group Initiative Problems (adapted from Frank, 2001; Rhonke, 1989; *University of Michigan Challenge Course Instructor's Manual*, 1994)

- Choose a problem suited to the age and physical ability of the group.
- Make all the rules and procedures clear to students before they attempt the problem. Again, fuzzy descriptions lead to confusion that leads to frustration.
- Present the situation and rules, then step back and allow the group to work through the problem. Students might make mistakes, communicate poorly, and stumble through the process. But this interaction is where learning takes place. During these activities your role is that of facilitator rather than instructor.

- Be creative! Have fun with stories. Select a method of presentation that is comfortable for you and suitable for the particular group. Sometimes it's silly and whimsical, other times it's straightforward.
- Find a safe and convenient place to set up the problem that does not interfere with other classes and gives you the space you need.
- As the class attempts to solve the initiative problem situations may arise when a student will break a ground rule (usually inadvertently), thus making the completion of the problem fairly easy.. The penalty for this is usually either a time penalty, or starting the activity over. Whether to employ penalties, and the extent to which they are employed is up to the teacher. Be strict in administering the rules of the problem. If the group suspects that you don't care about following the rules (the framework for these initiatives), the problem will become meaningless.

Some common themes that arise during initiatives: (adapted from Frank, 2001; *Genesee Valley Outdoor Learning Center Instructor's Manual*, 1995; Rhonke, 1989)

There are some issues that seem to cut across both age and maturity levels of groups. Not every group will have to deal with each one of these issues, but most groups will have to confront most of these topics throughout the community building process.

- Thinkers vs. Doers: This is a big one, and it seems that almost every group I've ever worked with is nearly evenly divided between those who like to plan and work things out in their heads before taking action, and those who want to jump right in then figure out what the plan is. Balance is important here, and it's

helpful for students to acknowledge that balance and be willing to compromise with each other. This makes for some great debriefing, which the thinkers are usually happy to involve themselves in. At this point, however, the doers start to check out because they want to get back to the action.

- Sexism and gender roles: Who plays what role? Are the boys necessarily the strongest and/or the most capable of lifting, carrying, etc.? Both boys and girls often seem to buy into this assumption. Remind students to look for different attributes within their group and not make assumptions about each other based on traditional gender roles.
- Competition: a useful issue to explore whether is be competition against self, other teams, the clock, or the infamous "world record".
- Objectification: One of the main goals of community building is to get to know people as *people*, not objects. This is something that groups can go back and forth on, and it's common for students to label each other. For example, if one student is blindfolded during an activity, he becomes "the blind guy". This can lead to a useful discussion not only about objectification, but also the broader issues of stereotyping and labeling.

Adventure

Games and Initiatives

- Icebreakers
- Trust Activities
- Problem Solving Initiatives

Before we begin…

Why these particular activities?

I chose the following activities because they all easily adapted to groups of varying sized and can be played almost anywhere. These activities are also great for teachers because they require little, if any, equipment. The equipment that IS required for the activities is inexpensive and generally readily available. Gimmicky equipment is expensive, and therefore not feasible for most classrooms! Also, all equipment requires maintenance and replacement. The main ingredient here is the students, as well as your imagination.

Where did these activities come from?

Unfortunately, there's no easy answer to this one! Much like old folksongs, the origin of many of these activities is hard to trace. Many of them were originally created by the people at Project Adventure, and are written about in books such as Quicksilver and Cowstails and Cobras II (see references). I first experienced many of these activities while working at various outdoor education centers throughout the years, and I'm don't know where or by whom they were first conceived. Everyone who uses an activity presents it in a unique way, and adapts it to different situations. This way, the activities continue to evolve.

Have U Ever?

Focus: **Mixing with others, learning about others, being silly**

Set Up/Materials:

- **Need open area, large enough for everyone to form a circle**
- **Each person gets a place marker (bandana, poly-spot, etc.)**
- **One place marker goes in the center of the circle**

Suggested Procedure/Briefing:

The facilitator stand on the center spots and gives the instructions that the person on the center spots asks a question that begins with Have You Ever? The question must be true of the person asking. If it is also true of anyone in the circle they must change spots, however not with their immediate left of right neighbor. The person in the center would change spots with any of the vacated spots within the circle.

Safety Concerns:

- **Watch for environmental risks if outside (wet grass, uneven ground, etc.)**
- **The game is not meant for the participants to run full tilt to another spot. For some groups, it might be reasonable to make it a fast walking game.**
- **Warn participants against knocking each other down.**

Rules:

- **The question must be true of the person in the center**
- **The question must be true of anyone moving within the circle.**
- **Spots to the immediate left of right of participants are off limits**
- **No tackling or pushing others off their spot.**

Options:

- **This game also works well with pairs. Have two people link arms and move when the question is true of either one of them. This works well with large groups.**
- **When a new person is on the center spot you may ask them to introduce themselves and have the group greet each "center" person.**

Sample Debriefing Questions for Have U Ever?

- **What types of choices did you have in this activity? (What type of question to ask, whether to move or not move, where to move, etc.)**
- **Why did some people choose to move to nearby spots and others dash across the circle?**
- **What was your reaction to being in the center of the circle?**

Elbow Tag

Focus: **Mixing, generating energy, acting silly**

Set Up/Materials:

- **Large open area or outside**
- **No props needed**

Suggested Procedure/Briefing
Have the group get into pairs and link elbows with their partner. Partner-pairs then scatter about and stay put. Individuals do not move unless tagged. One pair is chosen to unlock elbows. One person in their pair is "it", while the other one is chased. They run around. If the person being chased doesn't want to be caught, then she or he can lock elbows with someone else. Since three is a crowd, the person on the other end of the trio must now unlock his other elbow and become the one who is chased. If "it" catches the person being chased, their roles reverse. This continues until time is up (facilitator discretion), or people fall down from exhaustion.

Safety:

- **Be mindful of linking arms with another person while running and the possibility of pulling them down.**

Notes:
An issue that can arise in some groups is being paired with others. This is a great activity to have people choose their own partners, because the end of the game will mix them up anyway. It is also obvious when students will only latch onto their friends, or if girls pair with girls, and boys to boys (a common issue in upper elementary grades). This offers an opportunity to talk about mixing and why it is important to be able to work with everyone in the class. Be aware that it might be unreasonable to expect them to mix all the time, as this is an age where it can be difficult.

This game is typically a favorite of all ages.

Sample Debriefing Questions for Elbow Tag:

- **Would you rather be "it" or chased? Why?**
- **Did it matter to you whom you were partnered up with? Why or why not? How did you feel about changing partners?**

Group Bingo

Focus: **Learning about others, mixing**

Set Up/Materials:

- **Enough copies of Bingo card for each participant**

Suggested Procedure/Briefing:

Each person gets a Bingo card (see sample). The goal is for students to get as many different signatures on their cad as possible in the amount of time allowed. Only one person may sign a square on a particular card.

Sample Debriefing Questions for Group Bingo:

- **Did you learn something new about someone today? What?**
- **Does anyone have a personal story they want to tell about any of the items on the card?**
- **Were there any questions that no one could sign?**

Notes:

For students with disabilities, the following adaptations can be made:

- **Ink stamps for students who have an impairment that affects hand mobility**
- **Have students pair up for visual or cognitive disabilities. This can also work well with younger students pairing readers who need help with better readers.**

Group Bingo

Someone who has been outside of the United States	**Someone who is left-handed**	**Someone who has more than 2 pets**	**Someone who has gotten stitches**	**Someone who likes to climb trees**
Someone who has been in a cave	**Someone who has a different eye color than you**	**Someone who was born in a different state**	**Someone who has met someone famous**	**Someone who has a scar**
Someone who has broken a bone	**Someone who plays a sport**	**Someone who has been to Disney World**	**Someone who has been west of the Mississippi**	**Someone who has seen a live skunk**
Someone who likes to swim	**Someone whose favorite subject is math**	**Someone who has more than 3 brothers or sisters**	**Someone who has slept in a tent**	**Someone who knows at least 5 words in a different language.**

Lineups/Categories

Focus: **Mixing with others, learning about each other, appreciating diversity**

Set Up/Materials:

- **No props needed**
- **Enough clear space for group to move around with ease.**

Suggested Procedure/Briefing:

Ask the class to line up according to:

- **Alphabetical order by first name**
- **Alphabetical order by last name**
- **Alphabetical order by mother's first name**
- **Birthday**
- **Show size**
- **Height (shortest to tallest)**
- **Hair color (darkest to lightest)**
- **Thumb size (shortest to longest)**
- **Skin color (darkest to lightest)**
- **Etc.**

OR, have them get into group according to a certain category:

- **Number of siblings (count step and half brother/sisters)**
- **Season in which they were born**
- **Favorite ice cream**
- **Favorite day of the week**
- **Eye color**
- **Types of pets at home**
- **Shirt color**
- **Number of generations born in this country**
- **Etc.**

For each set of groupings, have students take a moment to notice the diversity in the room. Make and take comments about what people observe.

Sample debriefing questions:

- **What do we seem to have in common in this class?**
- **What are some of our differences?**
- **What are some other things that make each one of us unique?**

Differences and Commonalities

Focus: **Perspective taking, mixing with others, appreciating diversity**

Set Up/Materials:

- **No props needed**

Suggested Procedure/Briefing:

Following the format of the Lineups/Categories activity, ask the students to get into groups according to a number of the criteria listed. Each time the groups are formed, give 30-60 seconds to come up with as many things as possible that they all have in common that they *cannot see*. Do the same with differences—have them identify at least one person in the group who is different from the others in some way that is not overtly apparent. Have each group report at least one finding each time the category changes.

Sample Debriefing Questions:

- How easy or difficult was it for your group to find things in common?
- When you were the only one who was different, how did that feel?
- What can you learn about yourself when comparing yourself with others? What can you learn about others/
- Was it easier or harder to discover differences as opposed to commonalities? Why?
- When meeting new people, how may you find out more about them?

Beat the Fist

Focus: **learning names, acting silly, being put on the spot**

Set Up/Materials:

- **No props necessary**
- **Have group stand in circle, shoulder to shoulder (best done with no more than 15 participants)**

Suggested Procedure/Briefing

This is easiest to explain when the facilitator/teacher stands in the center to demonstrate. Everyone makes a fist and extends their arms towards the center of the circle. One person on the outside of the circle begins by saying someone else's name ("Joe") who is part of the circle. The person in the center ("Rita") finds Joe and tries to tap his fist BEFORE he says someone else's name. If she gets him before he says someone else's name, Joe and Rita switch places and a new round starts. IF Joe calls out someone else's name before Rita taps his fist, she then has to find and tap the fist of this new person in order to get out of the center. Other errors that will land someone in the center:

- **Flinching—this is very common!**
- **Naming someone who is not in the group.**
- **Calling out the person's name who is already in the center.**

Finally, the person who just got out the center starts the next round by calling out a name.

Safety:

- **Despite the game's name, students should TAP each other's fist, not hit with any force.**

Notes:

This name game can be confusing a t first, but participants catch on quickly.

Hoop Pass

Focus: **Having fun, uninhibited touch, cooperation**

Set Up/Materials:

- **Open area free of obstructions**
- **Hula hoops (2) or webbing loops**

Suggested Procedure/Briefing:

The group joins hand in a circle. Facilitator/teacher breaks one set of hands and places a hoop over one arm and then reconnects the hands. The group then passes the hoop around the circle without breaking or opening hands. The goal is do to this without using thumbs or fingers to help move the hoop. If the group is successful with one hoop, add another hoop going in the opposite direction so that the hoops will need to cross. Attempting multiple trials for fastest speed gives the group a goal.

Zip, Zap, Zoe

Focus: **concentration, acting silly, and energizer**

Set up/Materials:

- **No props needed**
- **Open area large enough for group to be in circle**
- **Can accommodate 10-50 participants.**

Suggested Procedure/Briefing

Ask for one volunteer for every 8 players in the group to step into the middle of the circle. The center players are acting independently of each other and move around the inside of the circle. If an inner player points to any player who is forming the circle and says, "zip", that player should duck down quickly and the players on both sides of the ducker try to turn towards each other, point a finger at each other and say "Zap" as quickly as possible. The last player to turn, point, and Zap the other takes the place of the inner player who started this whole thing. The inner player will determine who was last and takes that player's place as part of the circle. If the player pointed to doesn't duck down, the players on either side turn and Zap the unducker who then switches places with the inner pointer. An inner player can also point to someone of the circle and say, "Zoe" (Zoheee). The player pointed to should freeze making no motion at all. If this "pointed to" players makes a move to duck, he or she switches place with the pointer. The game is meant to be fast-paced and active.

Safety:

- **Make sure there is enough space for arms and hands to move without hitting someone.**

Rules (restated):

- **If someone points to you and says "zip", duck**
- **If the person beside you ducks, turn to the person on the other side of the ducker, point to him and her and say, "zap".**
- **If you are "zapped" first, you must change places with the "zipper".**
- **If you are zipped and you don't duck and then are zapped by the person on either side, then you change with the zipper.**
- **If someone points to you and says "zoe", don't duck! If you do, you change places with the person who pointed to you.**

Blindfolded Trust Walk

Focus: **Trustworthiness, risk taking, physical and emotional trust**

Set Up/Materials:

- **Bandanas for blindfolds (optional)**
- **Can be done inside or outside**

Suggested Procedure/Briefing:

Have students break up into pairs, either by choice or by a random method. Let each pair choose who will start off blindfolded. They can use a bandana or just close their eyes, whatever they are most comfortable with. This activity can be done in a couple of ways: either they follow the facilitator/teacher 2x2 and go exactly where they are lead OR, the group and explore a defined area at random. Partners should describe who or what is around them as secrecy is not the point here! There are different methods for leading someone who cannot see. The blindfolded person can hold hands with the guide, hold the elbow of the guide, or have the guide hold his or her elbow. Another option is using only verbal directions. Each pair must decide for themselves what works best for each individual.

Safety:

- **This is not a fast paced activity, and should be done slowly and with caution**
- **Partners need to make sure that both people can fit through a space**
- **Watch for obstacles**
- **Give the blind partner as much information as possible**
- **Make sure blind partners know what is around them before asking them to bend down, step up, etc.**
- **Teach "bumpers up" position: hands out in front at all times (for the blind person)**

Sample Debriefing Questions:

- **What did your partner do to gain your trust?**
- **Did you feel your partner took your safety seriously? Why or why not?**
- **Did your partner do anything to make you nervous?**
- **Did you feel the need to peek? Did you peek? What caused you to look?**
- **Were you more comfortable being led or being the guide?**
- **Which worked better for you, verbal guidance or touch? Why?**
- **Were you trustworthy? How so you know?**

Prui

Focus: **Trust, honesty, risk taking.**

Set Up/Materials:

- **Bandanas for blindfolds (optional)**
- **Can be done inside or outside**
- **Requires a large area free of obstructions**

Suggested Procedure/Briefing:

Prui is a member of your team's expedition who has wandered off and gotten lost somewhere in the Himalayas. Prui has become so exhausted, that she cannot speak or move anymore! The team needs to find poor Prui. After searching unsuccessfully for hours, every member of your team has become temporarily blinded by the glare from the snow. Everyone either puts on a blindfold or closes their eyes. Choose someone to be Prui in the group. Once everyone is blindfolded/eyes closed, Prui picks a place in the room/field to stand. Blindfolded team members "look" for Prui by propping around until they touch someone to whom they say "Prui?" If they get a verbal response, they know they didn't find Prui. If they get no response, they've found her. Once a team member finds Prui, they need to rest their voice…no more talking. At this point they can take off their blindfold. Prui and those who find her must remain silent and they cannot move. Continue the game until everyone has found Prui.

Safety:

- **Students need some instruction on how to walk blindfolded. Use "bumpers up", move slowly, avoid purposeful collisions, no roughhousing!**
- **Keep an eye out for students who are wandering off into the wrong direction and reroute them.**

Sample Debriefing Questions:

- **What did it feel like to be blindfolded and have no guide? How did you decide where to go?**
- **How did you maintain your own sense of safety?**
- **Did anyone feel tempted to peek? Why?**

Everybody Up

Focus: **Risk taking, physical and emotional trust, trustworthiness**

Set Up/Materials:

- **No props necessary**
- **Requires cleared area, can be done inside or outside.**

Suggested Procedure/Briefing:

Ask for two volunteers to show how the activity is done. Have the two volunteers sit on the floor facing each other with toes touching. Have them grip wrists (more stable than holding hands, or worse, intertwining fingers). Tell the two that are sitting that their foremost responsibility is not to let go of their partner's wrists. After a count to three, they will stand up together, using the tension of pulling on their arms and pushing with their feet to stand up.

Have the group pair up. Initially it's a good idea to have pairs roughly equal in size. The pairs will practice standing up together. Once everyone has tried this with a partner, have students mix up and try it with new partners. Then pairs can combine into groups of 4/6/8/ etc. The grand finale can be a large group stand up!

Safety:

- **It's a good idea to have pairs spot for each other until they get the hang of the activity.**
- **Groups should practice, and not rush to add more pairs to their group.**
- **This should always be done with shoes.**

Sample Debriefing Questions:

- **What worked for you and your partners? What didn't work?**
- **Were you trustworthy? How so you know?**
- **Were your partners trustworthy?**
- **What did you do to make sure you and your partners stayed safe?**

Yurt Circle

Focus: **Risk taking, physical and emotional trust, trustworthiness**

Set Up/Materials:

- **No props necessary**
- **Requires cleared area, can be done inside or outside.**

Suggested Procedure/Briefing:

A Yurt is Mongolian nomad's tent, in which the roof pushes against the wall in perfect equilibrium, keeping the structure standing. If the group works together, they can get their own Yurt supporting itself. For this an even number of people is necessary. If there isn't, then the teacher/facilitator should step in or out to make the number even. Everyone makes a circle, facing the center, and standing almost shoulder-to-shoulder. Go around the circle and label alternating people IN and OUT. (There are many creative ways to do this, i.e. state bird/state flower, senate/congress, blue/green, it can be anything!). The object is for all of the INs to lean in one direction (forward) while all of the OUTs lean backward in the other direction. The facilitator/teacher will determine which group leans in and which leans out. When people lean, they should keep their bodies as stiff as possible, trying not to be at the waist, with their feet stationary. Everyone will hold hands so that they have a good grip. Count to three, and have people slowly lean in their given direction (either in or out). Try this a couple of times, then reverse directions. Some groups are able to start leaning in one direction, then switch smoothly to the other direction.

It usually takes a few tries to get the Yurt Circle to work well. This activity is interesting because it demonstrates that people are connected even when it's not readily apparent. If one person moves too fast, or is out of sync, it affects the entire group.

Safety:

- **Make sure the group moves slowly.**
- **Remind everyone to be careful with each other. It's not necessary to squeeze each other's hands. Try holding wrists if this is a problem.**

Sample Debriefing Questions:

- **What would happen if someone let go?**
- **What adjustments did you make to get balanced?**
- **Was it easier for you to lean in or out? Why?**
- **What made this work?**

Phantom Feedback

Focus: **Giving and receiving feedback, risk taking, emotional trust, trustworthiness,**

Set Up/Materials:

- **No props necessary**
- **Write down each group member's name on a piece of paper, fold, and put them all in a container.**

Suggested Procedure/Briefing:

At the beginning of the day, each group member picks a name of the container. If they pick their own name, they need to return it and choose another. Tell the group they should not discuss the name they chose anyone else. During the day, each group member observes the person whose name the chose in order to give them feedback at the end of the day. Observations should be of a constructive nature, and beneficial to the person being observed. There might be a particular focus for observations such as how people showed leadership throughout the day, how they treated others, or how they contributed to the classroom community. At the end of the day, meet in a circle to share the individual feedback with the entire group.

Safety:

- **Remind students how to give appropriate and POSITIVE feedback, keeping emotional safety in mind.**

Turnstile

Focus: **Making mistakes, working through frustration, trust**

Set Up/Materials:

- **Long rope, 20 feet or longer**
- **Cleared area, a large room, field, or gymnasium is best**

Suggested Procedure/Briefing:

Ask for two volunteers to turn the rope (these roles can alternate). Everyone else stands on one side of the rope. Make sure the rope turners spin the rope toward the jumpers as it arcs over the top. The object is to get everyone from one side of the rope to the other. The first time, count home many turns of the rope it takes to get everyone through (start counting the first time someone runs through). Challenge the group to get everyone through in 10 turns, 5 turns, 2 turns, and finally, one turn. If at any point someone hits the rope, it stops and the group has to start over. This is the most basic variation of the initiative.

Another is this (described in Laurie *Frank's Adventure in the Classroom*, 2001): Tell the group that they are trying to get everyone to graduate from high school. Once they get everyone through one level, they will advance to the next, more challenging level.

- **Level 1: Pre-school—Everyone must get through the rope without it stopping or touching anyone. If the rope stops of touches them, then the person who missed goes back and tries again.**
- **Level 11: Kindergarten—One person at a time runs in, jumps once and runs out. If the rope stops, or the person does not jump, then that person goes back and to try it again.**
- **Level 111: Elementary School—People jump through in groups of two or three—run in together, jump once and run out. If even only one person misses, the small group goes back to try again.**
- **Level 1V: Middle School—Same as Level 11, except that if anyone misses, the whole group goes back and tries again.**
- **Level V: High School—Same as Level 1V except that each time the rope hits the ground another person must be pumping. People continuously follow each other in and out of the jump rope setup. If the rope stops, or the rope turns with no one in it, then the whole group must start over.**

Safety:

- **It is very important to have a discussion about making mistakes prior to doing this activity. Someone will miss, and it's important that the norm has been set that making mistakes is acceptable. This initiative can be presented as a way to practice making mistakes and reacting to others who have made a mistake.**

- **This activity can take up quite a bit of time the way that the variation is presented. However, it's a great opportunity to stop after attaining success at one level and returning to the next, more challenging level at a later time.**

(Turnstile, con't)

Sample Debriefing Questions:

- **How can making mistakes help us?**
- **Did you ever feel like quitting this activity? How did you handle your frustration?**
- **How did you feel when you missed?**
- **How did you feel when others missed?**
- **What was your reaction when someone else made a mistake?**
- **What kinds of mistakes are okay to make? Are they mistakes that are not okay?**

Group Juggle

Focus: **Taking turns, group goals, communication, cooperation**

Set Up/Materials:

- **Many soft throwable objects**
- **Have group stand in a circle**

Suggested Procedure/Briefing:

Begin with the group in a large circle. Toss the ball (or other soft tossable) to someone in the circle, calling out that person's name as you toss. The person who catches the ball must thank the thrower. The ball gets tossed around the group until everyone has received the ball just once. The last person to catch the ball tosses it back to the first person. Once the group gets the hang of tossing, calling out names, and thanking the thrower, they toss the ball again and establish a pattern. They keep this pattern for the remainder of the game, with everyone catching/tossing the ball one time each round.

Tell the group they are going for quality, and trying to drop the ball as infrequently as possible. Start tossing the ball again, and then add another soft tossable. Continue to add tossables (not all in the same round!). The challenge for the group is to figure out how to manage "juggling" all of the objects as smoothly as possible.

Safety:

- **Encourage team members to make sure the person is looking at them before they throw anything.**
- **Caution the participants about throwing objects too hard. Toss is the key word!**

Sample Debriefing Questions:

- **What skills/qualities did you need in order to juggle all of the objects successfully?**
- **What type of help was available to you?**
- **What parts of this were you able to control? What parts did you not have control over?**
- **In real life, how to you successfully "juggle" everything that you have do to? What type of help is available?**

Notes:

Have group members determine what each object represents for them, and how the cooperation necessary in group juggle translates in to their real lives. For example,

for ESL students, the objects could represent learning the language, making new friends, adjusting to new culture, etc. Its more meaningful if the group members come up with the connections themselves, with a little guidance from the teacher/facilitator.

Moonball

Focus: **Group goal setting, taking turns, communication, and cooperation.**

Set Up/Materials:

- **Area free of obstructions**
- **A large beach ball**

Suggested Procedure/Briefing:

Have students stand in a circle. Tell them that the object is to hit the ball in the air. Each time the ball is hit, they score a point. The same person cannot hit the ball twice in a row. If the ball stops or hits the ground, the score falls back to zero and they start over. After some success, have the students determine what their point goal will be, or if they have any other goals.

Sample Debriefing Questions:

- **What goals did you set as a group? How did you choose those goals?**
- **Did it help to set goals? Why or why not?**
- **What did you do in order to achieve you goals? Did your strategies change over time?**
- **Did you feel as if you were included in this activity? Why or why not? How much responsibility do you have to engage as part of the group?**

Notes:

Partway through the activity you can add a new rule: *everyone* must hit the ball once before anyone hits it a second time. This adds another dimension to strategizing.

Some options for adapting this activity include: using a balloon instead of a ball to slow down the action, have students who are limited in mobility to stand/sit in a central location, or limit all students movement.

Warp Speed

Focus: **Group goal setting, decision making, communication, thinking "outside the box"**

Set Up/Materials:

- **One soft throwable object**
- **Stopwatch**

Suggested Procedure/Briefing:

Have students stand in a circle. Ask everyone to raise one hand to show that they have not yet had the object. Call someone's name and throw the object to him. He puts his hand down to show that he's had the object. He will then call out someone else's name whose hand it up and so on until everyone has had the object. Tell everyone that they will need to remember whom they threw the object to. Practice tossing it around in the same order, making sure they call out the name of the person they are throwing it to. Hand the object to one person in the circle; this will be the starting and ending person. Tell the group that this is a timed activity. They must toss the object in the same order as before, and begin/end with the person who starts it. Do this once for a baseline time. Allow the group to plan strategies to get the time lower. Encourage the group to set goals, and do it multiple times until the group has reached their goal.

Sample Debriefing Questions:

- **How did you determine group goals? What were your goals?**
- **How did you decide which strategy to try?**
- **How did your strategies evolve over the activity?**

Notes:

There are many, many strategies that groups employ to accomplish their goals. Some move into a line, others stay where they are and discuss different ways to move the object. This is a good activity to lead into Group Juggle. Once the initiative is complete, have them move into their original circle and use the same pattern to start the juggle. It makes for an interesting change, where the goal moves from speed to accuracy.

Acid River

Focus: **Leadership, decision-making, taking turns, communication, and support.**

Set Up/Materials:

- **Two boundary markers (ropes are good) set about 30 feet apart**
- **Wooden blocks cut to various, small sizes (can also use carpet squares, poly-spots, or bathmats cut up into squares). You will need one less than the total number of people in the group.**
- **Cleared area, can be done inside or outside.**

Suggested Procedure/Briefing:

Tell the group that they are standing on one side of an acid river. They cannot touch the river itself, but they must get across because wild boars, llamas, a flow of hot lava, (be creative!) is chasing them. Luckily, they have these magic stones that they can use to cross the river. The stones will protect them from the acid, but there are a few rules:

- **They cannot be thrown**
- **They can only move forward or sideways, not back toward the group.**
- **Once in the river, they must ALWAYS be in contact with a person, or they will float away (model this by stepping from one block to another, and if no one is touching the block you just stepped off of, it is lost forever)**

If anyone should touch the acid river during the traverse, the whole group must start over.

Sample Debriefing Questions:

- **What worked well in this activity? What didn't work so well?**
- **What happened when you lost a magic stone?**
- **How did you show support for each other in this activity?**
- **How were people chosen to be first and last?**
- **How well did the front of the line and the back of the line communicate?**

Notes:

This is a great initiative for all ages. Depending on the age of the group, it might be wise to leave out the contact at all times rule. It also becomes very difficult if too many stones are lost, but these can always be judiciously returned if needed. I usually ask a trivia question ("Who wrote the Hobbit?" or "What are big, white, puffy clouds called?") for a group to answer in order to earn back a block. Losing blocks can lead to a good discussion about focusing on the goal vs. focusing on the process. The scenarios that surround this initiative are limited only by your imagination.

Path of Excellence/Maze

Focus: **Making mistakes, leadership, taking turns, decision-making**

Set Up/Materials:

- **Fifty-four poly-spots, or other place markers (carpet squares, cut up bathmats, even paper plates that are secured), set out in a grid of 6 across and 9 deep. The maze can be made smaller.**

Suggested Procedure/Briefing:

The challenge is to discover the one and only correct route through the maze, and get the entire team safely through the maze. There is only one path through to the other side. People must enter the maze from one side (indicate where) and proceed to the other end to finish. You may move forward, backward, and diagonally. Spots may not be jumped or skipped over. Spots cannot be marked in any way. When certain spots are stepped on, there will be a "buzz!" sound. This means that the spot is NOT part of the maze, and the person who stepped on that spot must back out of the maze the same way they entered. Only one member of the group is allowed on the maze at one time. Prior to the start of the initiative, the group must determine an order so that every member of the group takes a turn. No one can be skipped, and as the group repeats the rotation, the order must remain the same. The group will have three minutes to plan, and then 12 minutes to execute the plan. As soon as the first person steps on a spot, the group can no longer use words to communicate (although sounds are okay). After the group discovers the correct route, an unlimited number of people may be on the maze at one time.

Most often, groups do not finish this in the time allotted. This is a great time to discuss what happened, and then for the group to try again. Most groups get it on the second round! As the teacher/facilitator, you will create the path and make the "buzz!" sound as the group goes through.

Sample Debriefing Questions:

- **How did you feel when the spots made a "buzz!" sound? Was it okay to make a mistake? Was it really a mistake? (Information gathering)**
- **How did you decide on a plan in the beginning?**
- **Are there places you could have saved time in this activity?**
- **How did you communicate with each other without using words?**

Notes:

Depending on the age of the group, the maze can be more or less complicated. For older students or groups that need a challenge, one option would be to not let them communicate verbally at all during the activity.

Time Machine

Focus: **Creativity, leadership, and decision-making**

Set Up/Materials:

- **No props required**

Suggested Procedure/Briefing:

Divide the group into two smaller groups. Each group is going to "build" a time machine. One group will go into the future, and one group will go back to the past. The time machines will be made up of the students' bodies, and each person will have a specific role (one person can be a passenger). The group must decide what their machine looks like, how it functions, the role of each person, and where in time their machine is going to venture. Once they have worked this all out (generally 20 minutes, for this one a time limit is useful), they will present their machine to the other group and act out the take off, voyage, and landing.

Sample Debriefing Questions:

- **How did you decide to organize your group in order to accomplish this task?**
- **Who showed leadership in this activity? What did that look like?**
- **Did you feel like your ideas were listened to in this activity?**
- **Name at least one thing you did to help accomplish this task.**

Snake Tie

Focus: **Leadership, decision-making, following, communication**

Set Up/Materials:

- **One long length of rope (30-40 feet, depending on group size)**
- **One short length of rope, approximately 4 feet long, with a figure 8 knot tied in the center.**

Suggested Procedure/Briefing:

Everyone in the group must pick up the long rope and hold it with two hands for the entire initiative. *This must be done before moving on!* The bad news is that you just grabbed a very poisonous snake! The good news is that he cannot harm you as long as you do not move your hands, not even to slide them along his body. The object is to tie a knot in the "snake" that is identical to the knot tied in the short rope on the ground. No one may change positions or slide their hands. When finished, the group will lay the rope on the floor and tighten the knot. If it is not correct, the group will start over.

Safety:

- **Caution people to be careful not to trip on the rope.**

Sample Debriefing Questions:

- **How did you decide what to do?**
- **Do you feel you took on a leadership role in this activity?**
- **How did you know you were done with the activity?**
- **Because you were stretched out in a line along the "snake", how did you communicate with everyone in the group?**

Notes:

If working with a large group, have two long lengths of rope, both working on the same problem. The emphasis is not on competition, or who can get done first, but how to accomplish the goal. Another variation would be to have some people (3-4) be the only ones who can see the shorter rope, but they cannot talk. They need to communicate to the rest of the group what needs to be done without speaking.

Chapter 4

The Professional Development Workshop

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how a professional development workshop on this topic would be structured. I propose a single full day workshop, which would provide an introduction to using adventure activities in the classroom. The following objectives would be highlighted:

- Participants will explore the idea of a classroom community.
- Participants will understand the benefits of having a strong community within their classrooms.
- Participants will experience first-hand many of the adventure activities described in Chapter 3.
- Participants will create a Full Value Contract and learn about other tools that are cornerstones of experiential/adventure education and useful tools in the community building process.
- Participants will engage in debriefing and reflective thought about their own group's process in order to understand the experiential learning cycle.
- Participants will learn, discuss, and explore different ways to use adventure activities to strength relationships within their classrooms.
- Participants will play, have fun, and build relationships with their colleagues.

The ideal number of participants for this workshop ranges from 14-20 people, but could accommodate up to 25. A large conference room with a large clear area, as well as an area with chairs set up would be perfect. However, almost any space would work fine.

Examples would be a gymnasium, library, cafeteria, classroom, or a conference room.

Access to outdoor space (on a nice day) would be useful, but not critical.

Required Materials:

1. Paper and pencils
2. Computer and TV for PowerPoint presentation (or flipchart with information pre-written)
3. Butcher paper and markers
4. Soft tossables (nerf balls, stuffed animals, rubber chickens, koosh balls, etc.)
5. Ropes for boundary lines
6. Wooden blocks for Acid River
7. 4-5 pennies, cup of water, 5 eyedroppers for Penny Drop
8. Copies of *Guide to Leading Adventure Activities* (Chapter 3) for each participant.

Proposed Schedule of Workshop
8:00 am to 4:00 pm

8:00 am
Welcome!
8:15 am
Icebreakers/Acquaintance Activities
Purpose: get the group moving, laughing, interacting, and learning a bit about each other. Also to experience three adventure games.

- Elbow Tag
- Have U Ever
- Group Bingo

8:45 am
Discussion of expectations for the day

- Penny Drop (activity on expectations, exceeding those expectations, and the power of working together)

Outline objectives for the day

- Set up Phantom Feedback

9:15 am
Discussion: What is Community?
Power Point presentation: Why Build Community In Schools?

- Break into groups for The Village (introduction to the FVC)

10:30 am

15 minute break!

10:45 am

Presentation/Discussion: What is Experiential/Adventure Education?

- Group Juggle/Warp Speed (experience a problem-solving initiative, debriefing techniques, and build teamwork)

Presentation of "Tools": Full Value Contract (which they have created without knowing exactly what it was!), Challenge By Choice, Goal Setting and SMART goals

12:15 pm

45-minute lunch break

1:00 pm

Energizer

Purpose: get group re-engaged after lunch break

- Zip, Zap, Zoe

Problem Solving Initiative

Purpose: more experience with problem-solving initiatives and debriefing

- Acid River

2:00 pm

Presentation/Discussion: Leading Adventure Activities

- Briefing
- Leading—Instructing vs. Facilitating
- Debriefing—What? So What? Now What?

3:00 pm

- Hoop Pass (get group moving again, experience game)

Discussion: Ways to incorporate these activities into your classroom

3:40 pm

Final Debrief

- Phantom Feedback

Evaluation of Workshop

Chapter 5

Now What?

Adventure education is not going to make every child in the United States pass state mandated tests. However, by using adventure activities as part of a community-building effort in the classroom, we will make school an exciting and interesting place for our students to learn and to grow academically, emotionally, and socially.

The focus of this project was decidedly narrow. The world of experiential and adventure education is big, and my experience is that many educators don't realize the value of infusing their classrooms with adventure. My interest was to explore the research around community in the classroom, the value of using adventure games and initiatives to help build this community, and to create an introductory workshop to give other educators access to this resource.

However, this is much more to research and explore within this area. It's only been in the past 10 years or so that the outcomes of experiential/adventure activities have been studied. Previously, much of the value of this type of education was anecdotal. Adventure education seemed to engage students more fully in their education, and have positive effects on self-confidence, self-esteem, and skills such as communication, conflict resolution, etc., but there was little "hard" research to back up these claims. This is slowly changing, as more universities offer programs in experiential education, and as the field of experiential education matures. In addition, there is a growing movement to create whole schools and curriculums that are based in the experiential model. Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound schools are private schools that are now all

across the United States. The goal of these schools is to incorporate experiential learning and "learning expeditions" into every aspect of the school day.

The value of creating a caring classroom community is well documented. However, there seems to be little research on how to build this community, and what types of or strategies are most useful to teachers. I believe that the process cannot be boiled down to a formula or a specific program. Students and teachers are much too diverse for rote instructions, and community building is an ongoing process. The area of character education, which shares many similarities with community building, is currently the focus of much debate over how best to go about incorporating it into schools, and the value of buying character education programs for implementation in the classroom.

Gandhi once said that if "we want peace, we must start with the children". As teachers, we have a profound influence of the lives of our students. By using our spheres of influence to create a caring atmosphere that encourages students to collaborate, communicate, value themselves and other, and learn to resolve conflicts peacefully, we are shaping the leaders of the future. We are also creating a place where school is fun, and learning is an adventure.

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