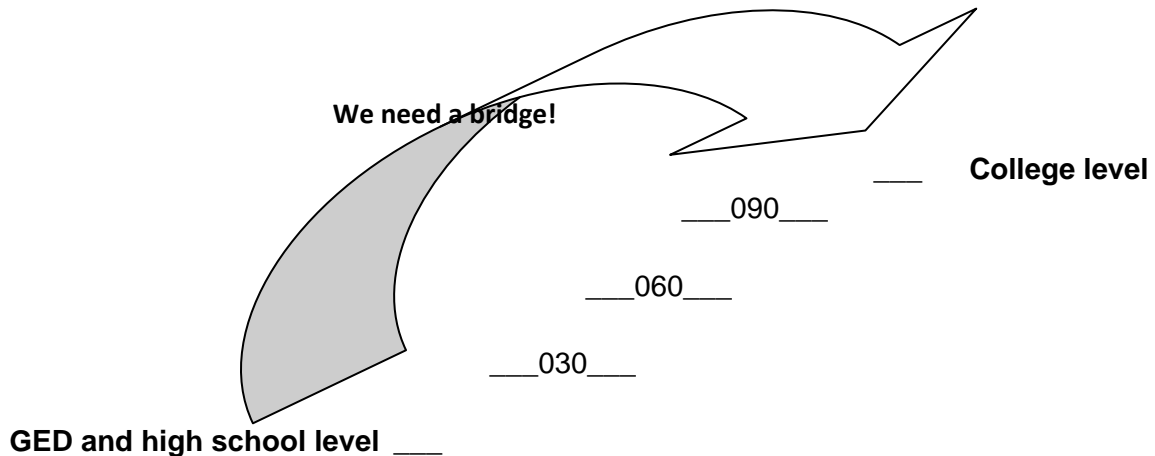


Teambuilding Activities for Development of Learning Communities

Staff/faculty, Navigator and student introductions (sitting in chairs arranged in a circle)—telling a little bit about ourselves, how we heard about the SUN program and one interesting fact about ourselves.

Students have already each been briefed on how the program works:



These developmental classes serve as stepping stones to get you to college-level classes

70% of all students admitted to college need remedial courses.

The idea here is to quickly go through the info with REALLY good (“the best”) teachers to bridge the gap between the GED or high school diploma and college. (The GED is a major accomplishment; in fact, 40% of high school graduates cannot pass the GED. However, like the high school diploma, it’s simply not ALIGNED to college-level math courses.)

Wherever you are, the goal is to help you move forward as far as you can go.

The first step in this process is to get to know one another!

Activity 1: Group Juggle

1. Participants, including facilitator, stand in a circle, with room to move around a bit
2. Facilitator chooses someone across the circle and asks their name. (For example, “Joe”.)
3. Facilitator says, “Joe” and tosses the ball to Joe.
4. Facilitator REMEMBERS that Joe is the person he will throw the ball to from now on.
5. Joe then chooses someone across the circle who has not yet received the ball, and asks their name. (For example, “Susan”.)
6. Joe says, “Susan” and tosses the ball to Susan.
7. Joe REMEMBERS that Susan is the person he will throw the ball to from now on.
8. This process continues until every person has had the ball exactly ONE TIME; the final person tosses the ball back to the Facilitator.

Facilitator leads this process once or twice to ensure that everyone knows to whom they will throw the ball.

After everyone is comfortable with the process, Facilitator begins another round, and halfway through, introduces (as a surprise) a second ball into the mix.

Repeat, adding three, four, or as many balls as the group can handle, then add another!

Processing questions

- What worked well?
- What didn't work well?
- What challenges or hurdles did you observe?
- What was needed in order to effectively deal with these challenges?
- How did the group handle these challenges?
- Who took on leadership positions? (What did that look like?)
- Who took on support positions? (What did that look like?)
- How might this relate to other challenges you've experienced in life?
- How might this relate to going to college?
- How might this relate to your College Connection cohort?

If it feels necessary, Facilitator can debrief with something like this:

“Just like in this exercise and in dealing with challenges in other parts of our lives, we need these tools in our toolkit in order to succeed:

- effective communication skills;
- active listening skills;
- the ability to sometimes lead and other times follow;
- the ability to follow directions;
- and the ability to work as part of a team...
- ... can you think of any others?”

Activity 2: Helium Hoop

This activity, also called “Helium Stick”, can also be adapted for use with a long, thin, light rod such as a tent pole. Instead of standing in a circle, participants line up in two rows that face one another and proceed accordingly.

MATERIALS: One standard hula-hoop for a group of up to 12 participants.

1. Participants stand in a circle facing inward with arms outstretched and index fingers pointing straight ahead.
2. Facilitator explains to the group that the GOAL is for the group to collectively lower the hoop to the ground and set it down.
3. Facilitator explains that all participants must be touching the hoop at all times, and pinching, grabbing or holding the hoop is not allowed. If anyone is caught not in contact with the hoop or holding onto it, the group will restart.
4. Facilitator lays the hoop down on their index fingers.

NOTE TO FACILITATOR

Despite the group’s efforts to lower the hoop, it will likely raise much to the surprise of the participants. This is due to the collective upward pressure exerted, which is commonly greater than the weight of the hoop. Do not share this information with the group until the end of the exercise, after the processing questions. Instead, ask them for their ideas about why it might have risen.

Processing questions

- What happened? (What did you see/hear?)
- What worked well?
- What didn’t work well?
- What challenges or hurdles did you observe?
- What was needed in order to effectively deal with these challenges?
- How did the group handle these challenges?
- Who took on leadership positions? (What did that look like?)
- Who took on support positions? (What did that look like?)
- How might this relate to other challenges you’ve experienced in life?
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Activity 3: Two of a Kind

PREPARATION: Facilitator thinks of objects/characters that come in pairs. Write the name of each half of each pair on a separate slip of paper.

For example:

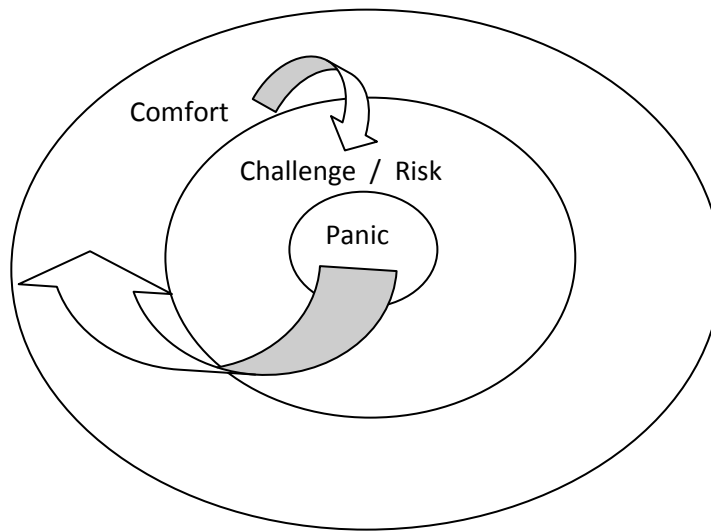
Snow White	The Seven Dwarves
Goldilocks	The Three Bears
Jack	The Giant Beanstalk
Cinderella	The Glass Slipper
Three Little Pigs	The Big, Bad Wolf
Pinocchio	Giuseppe the Puppet Maker
Aladdin	The Magic Lamp
Hansel	Gretel

Hand the slips of paper out to the students. Each student must find the student with the slip of paper that completes her/his 'pair'. This person becomes their partner for the next activity.

Activity 4: In the Zone

PREPARATION: In advance, Facilitator draws the following diagram on the board so that all participants in the room can easily see it. Facilitator will be referring to this diagram throughout the rest of the session, as well as throughout the 8-week College Connection session.

“Introduce yourself to your partner and take two minutes to share your Big Learning Experience (the one experience in your life that you’ve learned the most from).”



When we find ourselves in the “panic” zone, it is necessary to first move to a place of emotional comfort before moving to a place of challenge/risk.

(NOTE: Examples may include childbirth, travel, death of a loved one, end or beginning of a job, etc. Facilitator should be prepared for students to share experiences that may seem shocking or disturbing to others. It’s important in these instances to show acceptance of the student and refrain from judging the student’s experience or perspective.)

How many felt **panicked** during your Big Learning Experience (“B.L.E.”)?

How many felt **challenged** during your BLE?

How many felt **comfortable** during your BLE?

Where do you think we learn the best? (“Which zone provides the best environment for learning?”) Why?

(Some said “comfortable”): What made it comfortable?

(“I’d had two children before; this was my 3rd child. I’d done it before.”)

(“It was my first child, but I was comfortable because I had a strong family support system.”)

Possible Facilitator response: “Would it be fair to say that when you were actually giving birth, that there were challenging moments involved, or were you completely relaxed the entire time?”

*(It's fine if students believe that they learn best when comfortable or when in a panic...
Facilitator can simply follow up with...)*

It turns out that we learn the best when we're in the **Challenge/Risk** zone; when we're not TOO comfortable or TOO uncomfortable (when there's SOME challenge involved, but not too much).

When we're feeling panicked we're in 'survival mode', which is not the best emotional state for optimal learning and retention of new information...

And when we're too comfortable we don't have enough motivation to change (e.g., internalize new information).

So our goal during this next 8 weeks is to put ourselves into the Challenge/Risk zone.

At times we may find ourselves feeling like we're in the Panic Zone and wanting to move to the Challenge/Risk Zone, but to get from one to the other we have to go somewhere else first.

We can't go directly from Panic to Challenged... we must go from Panic to Comfort, and THEN to Challenge/Risk.

(So if I'm in the Panic Zone about a certain type of math problem, I need to back off and go back to problems I AM comfortable with, and then move into more challenging problems from there.)

But here's the deal: I have to TELL my teacher that I'm in the Panic Zone, otherwise they might not know, and then they won't be able to help me!

This next activity can help us to see some real-life examples of these three Zones at work.

Activity 5: Informal Assessment

Divide Room into three sections:

Comfort

If you feel comfortable when I say the Topic Word (snakes, math, college), stand over here.

Challenge/Risk

If you feel emotionally challenged when I say the Topic Word (snakes, math, college), and that there's some risk (but not too much) involved, stand over here.

Panic

If you feel a sense of panic when you think of the Topic Word (snakes, math, college), stand over here.

When I say a word, I want you to stand in the area of this room that matches how you feel.

1. "Snakes" (Students physically move to the portion of the classroom that matches their emotional response to the word 'snakes'.)

Okay, Joan feels panicked. How do we get her from Panic to Challenge? She needs SUPPORT.

Support comes in many forms...

Encouragement from classmates

Educate:

- 1) Start with a cartoon snake
- 2) Non-poisonous snakes
- 3) Book about snakes
- 4) Look at a snake behind glass
- 5) Be in the same room with a snake, but not touching it
- 6) Stand next to it
- 7) Touch it
- 8) Hold it

2. Reading out loud in front of an audience

- 1) Reading aloud on her own (in an empty room where no one can hear her)
- 2) Reading aloud with supportive person/people
- 3) Reading aloud in front of peers
- 4) Reading aloud in front of strangers

3. Interview for a job

Practice:

- 1) Interview in front of the mirror
- 2) Interview with friends
- 3) Interview with employers

4. Math

(Speaking to those in comfort zone): “You guys are comfortable right now. How can we get you into the Challenge Zone? (More challenging work.)”

(Speaking to those in panic zone): “You guys are feeling panicked. How can we get you feeling more comfortable?” (Practice.) “We’ll give you lots and lots of practice tests.”

If you feel like you’re in the Panic Zone, you need to TELL ME so I can help you get to the Comfort Zone, then on to the Challenge/Risk zone. If you don’t tell me, I won’t know and I won’t be able to help you.

5. College

How do we get you from Panicked to Comfortable?

Meet teachers, meet peers, **get to know your environment and the people you’ll be working with.**

Meeting with Instructors—College Connection 8-week Overview

Instructors review syllabus and expectations with students and answer any questions. They may also choose to review some important factors in succeeding in college:

- Know what resources are available to you
- FAFSA
- Scholarships
- Career Goals
- Help you decide what you want to do sooner rather than later
- Assessments
- Interests
- Personalities
- The College Experience

LUNCH

Make SURE you provide a quality lunch –preferably hot—and have it catered, if possible.

Q&A Session with College Connection Completers, Other Successful College Students and College Graduates

Preparation: Navigator/Facilitator invites former students/grads at least a month in advance to come share their stories, share challenges they faced while going to college, discuss how they met those challenges, and answer any questions about their college experience from the current cohort. This discussion may take place WITHOUT Navigator/Teacher supervision in order to allow students to share their honest thoughts with guest speakers.

We provided \$20 gift cards as 'thank you' gifts to our guest speakers.

Wrap up with students, answer any final questions, END.

Activity 6: Web of Gratitude

Materials: one ball of yarn

1) Everyone stands or sits in a circle.

NOTE: I like to start this activity out simply by opening up a conversation based on gratitude, to get the ball rolling in that direction. I'll ask a question like, "So, looking back on the past 8 weeks, what went well? What do you feel proud of? What have you accomplished? How did you surprise yourself?" Then, after everyone has had the opportunity to share a little bit about what she/he feels proud of, we shift into sharing traits/characteristics of fellow students or teachers that they feel grateful for.

2) Facilitator has a ball of yarn. Chooses one person in the group she/he appreciates, tells the group why (overcoming challenges, hard work, cheerful attitude, etc.) and tosses/hands the ball of yarn to that person **WHILE HOLDING ON TO THE END OF THE YARN.**

(Another **NOTE:** if there's someone in the group who I think might not receive recognition from the group, I as the facilitator may choose that person to be the person I recognize, and think of a solid, real-life example of how that person demonstrated or embodied something I appreciate.)

3) The person receiving the ball of yarn finds someone who has not received the yarn yet and tells the group what she/he appreciates about that person, while holding on (and not letting go) of a piece of the yarn. Continue until everyone has participated.

4) At the end of this exercise, after everyone has received the yarn and passed it on, everyone should be holding a piece of the long string of yarn and it should look like a big web.

5) Facilitator asks some processing questions:

What does this look like? (a web)

How might this relate to our group? (we're all connected)

What are some ways we might carry this 'connectedness' with us after we leave the building today? (stay in contact-- get e-mail addresses/phone numbers; set up study groups together, etc.)

6) Closing-- ask for any last thoughts about the importance of connection. If none, and if you're up for it, share your own feelings about it. Mine went like this: "Even though sometimes we may FEEL isolated or alone, this web is a perfect reminder of the fact that we're all interconnected, and what we do affects those around us. We CAN reach out for

support when we're feeling down, or when we're feeling up; we CAN ask for help and offer help. What we think, say and do DOES matter. And your hard work over the past 8 weeks is proof of that. Please remember, after you walk out the door this afternoon, that you can call me or visit my office. I'm part of your web of support, and I want very much to see you continue your success in school and in life."