



Build Essential Skills through Games

Emotional Intelligence, Negotiation, Problem Solving, Coordinating with Others, Judgement and Decision Making

Grades 6-8

Training Learning Skills

Would you like to have a fun way to train your students in learning skills such as collaboration, initiation, self-regulation and taking responsibility? This is the lesson for you! And, once students have some mastery over these learning skills, they are set up to enjoy powerful learning in all areas. The most engaging teaching tools I have found to result in deep learning is through educational drama strategies (see Ontario Arts Document) <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/arts18b09curr.pdf>

Why Play Games?

Learning through games is a fun way to teach children to listen and respond to rules while they keep each other accountable. As well, games teach the basics of skill development in focus, cooperation, collaboration, decision-making, creativity and other 21st century skills. Character education and citizenship skills are also developed through these learning games.



Standing in Neutral: (Standing in neutral is a good place to return to throughout a drama lesson. Students learn to stand still and what it is to have "no character".) Standing in a circle, everyone has their hands in a natural position at their sides, feet are slightly apart, body is alert and looking straight ahead or at the person speaking.

Walk About: (Students learn to walk without character while cooperating with the use of space. Self-regulation is developed through this type of activity.)

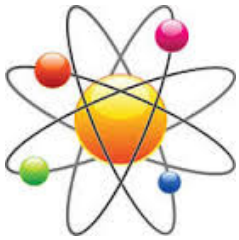
Walking in neutral, arms swinging slightly and naturally with no added movements. Walking in the space, students look for the empty spaces and avoid each other, turning when needed. "Walk Abouts" are done in silence.

Scaffold with the following:

- walk in silence
- look for the spaces in the room
- turn sharply when I ask
- freeze (vocal), form hands as a T (body language), echo clap



- teacher uses his/her body to create a wall and students are led into an increasingly smaller space but must still walk about without touching anyone.



Atom: (This game reinforces that everyone is of equal importance and we work with anyone in the class, not just our friends. It also works on class problem solving and distinguishing inclusion and exclusion. I would play this game from grade 1 and older.

- Call out any number of combinations, "Atom Two!" Or "Atom Four!" The group assembles themselves by sitting cross-legged in a circle creating the associated number.
- If you are not in a group, you are either out (exclusion) or you can be "hidden" by another group (inclusion). Challenge students to see how many different classmates they can include by the end of the game?

One Teapot: (This game works on focus, cooperation, spatial and kinesthetic memory.

- Like Atom, start with a walk about. Call "one." Students freeze. Then call "teapot." Encourage students to creatively make the shape of a teapot using different levels (high, middle, low).
- Walk about, call "two." Students quickly form groups of two. "CN Tower" Two students form the CN Tower. (one CN Tower with two people)
- "Three, Christmas tree"
- "Four, car"
- "Five, snake"
- Repeat these in sequence, then backwards, then in random order.

(This is my favorite game to use as a Minds On activity for any subject e.g. introducing a story such as "Rapunzel." E.g. One witch, two castle, three long hair...)



Press Conference

- Two people leave the class.
- Class decides who they are i.e. peanut butter and jelly.
- Students return and class interviews them i.e. "Do you like being brown while she is red?" Could play on any theme i.e. historic characters, science-parts of the body, fairytale characters, famous people, cartoon characters, math concepts e.g. "How do you feel about being an odd number/multiple of 4/having three sides...?"
- The two volunteers must guess who they are.



Hitch Hiker or Crazy Taxi: (This game teaches quick thinking, listening, reacting and concentration. It lessons self-consciousness. Play this game with one group and have the other students watch...can be very funny!)



- Four seats in a car (4 chairs.) The driver and two people sitting in the back seats. Hitch hiker gets in and sits in a back seat causing someone from the back to move to the front passenger seat, the driver leaves while the passenger becomes the driver (everyone rotates to a different seat when one person, the hitch hiker, enters the taxi.)
- The hitch hiker has a quirk e.g. allergy, dialect, shy, late, having a baby, blind person with a cane... Everyone in the car soon picks up the quirk.
- Car stops to pick up new hitch hiker...driver leaves and everyone shifts chairs.



"You're It" (previously known as "Quick Draw"): (This game teaches quick reflexes and intense focus. Some teachers may not like this game because the pointing reminds them of a gun. Modify the game and call it e.g. "You're It." Students love this game.)

- Students stand in a circle with the leader/teacher standing in the middle. The leader quickly turns and points, with two hands held together, to someone in the circle and says "You're It".
- The person pointed at must duck while the two people on either side of him/her must point to each other.
- The last one to point must leave the game. At the end there will be two people left.
- The two winners must stand back to back and take one step apart from the other. The leader calls "You're It" and they must be the first to turn and point in order to win.
- Variation: Play with the student who is more dramatic. Play with leader saying words in a set and then one word that doesn't belong e.g. pencil, desk, paper, tiger. On tiger the two people turn and point calling "You're It."

Hunter and the Hunted: (This game teaches acute listening skills and reaction.)

- Students are sitting in a circle with two people blindfolded and inside the circle.
- One catches the other but when they get close to the side of the circle, the people in the circle tap the floor quickly. This alerts the people in the middle of their boundaries.
- Debrief with a discussion on risk taking and safe boundaries



Wax Museum: (This game is great to reinforce self-regulation while freezing, cooperating with students near them and being creative with the statues they form. A variety of levels can be reinforced and once they are comfortable with the game, they can quickly form groups for their statues. Then students are ready to work on the elements of a good tableau.)

- Brainstorm rooms related to a theme e.g. First Nations and European history e.g. First Nations building a canoe, hunting for game, skinning animals and cooking, fishing, gathering berries and plants, farming; Europeans sailing big ships, playing card games, chores on the ship...sweeping the deck, preparing the food, repairing the sails and ropes... or e.g. fairytale room, school room, playground...
- Teacher in role as the night watchman carries a flashlight. He/she walks through the entire museum after closing hours to see if the wax statues are in good repair.
- Meanwhile, the students are the wax statues. The night watchman turns his/her back to students while talking out loud to himself, "Now the next room...the fairytale room." After a minute, night watchman turns around slowly and all the students are frozen as wax statues in the fairytale room. Shine the flashlight on particular statues as you inspect them. They should not move. (Blinking and light breathing are permitted.)
- Then the night watchman moves to the next room. When the night watchman turns his/her back, the students relax while listening for the theme of the next room.
- Once students know the game, you can add another layer of difficulty. Shine the flashlight on particular statues and allow others to turn their heads and look where the light is shining. (This allows students to learn from each other.)
- You can also have students slowly follow you when your back is turned. But they must freeze quickly when you turn toward them. If the watchman sees them through his/her peripheral vision, they can be called into the penalty box. (Students love this version.)
- Later, students can take turns being the night watchman.



If you'd like a free strategy session,
I am happy to support you
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