1st grade team building games

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Animalisms

*Prevention Calendar:  DECEMBER
Targets: Accountability/Positive Identity
**Variation to tie with Ethical and Developmental Themes: Have ‘it’ try to guess WHO the person is making the animal noise, perhaps by ‘it’ being allowed to ask the person he/she is pointing to one yes/no question. Debrief focusing on how identity is tied to names of people and how being ‘known’ can have both positive and negative impact on our lives.

Play: Everyone stands in a circle. One person is ‘it’ and stands in the center of the circle with a blindfold. When ‘it’ says “go”, the players begin moving around in a circle. When ‘it’ says “stop”, everyone must stop. ‘It’ then points in any direction and asks the person closest to being pointed at to make an animal noise (ex. “Bark like a dog.” “Moo like a cow.”). The person pointed at must make the noise. ‘It’ tries to guess the person’s identity. If ‘it’ guesses correctly, the person they pointed to becomes ‘it’. If ‘it’ guesses incorrectly, the person that was pointed to gets to pick a new ‘it.'
Balloon Pop

**Materials:** One 10” round balloon for every two participants

**Play:** The group is divided into pairs, and each pair is given a balloon. Each pair tries to pop their balloon using both persons’ bodies. No hands or feet are allowed.
**Prevention Calendar: OCTOBER**  
**Targets: Pursuit of Excellence/Constructive Use of time**  
**Variation to tie with Ethical and Developmental Themes:** Debrief with focus on having them improve the number of times they could keep the balloons in the air, or how many total people they could get involved. You can vary the game and increase the difficulty by having them use only their non-dominant hands, their heads, etc. Discuss their standard of excellence both in this activity and in general life. Discuss what other activities in which they’re involved that they can pursue excellence.

**Materials:** Several balloons, possibly water guns  
**Play:** Pairs of players try to keep a balloon up in the air by hitting it with their hands in alternating turns. The goal is to hit the balloon up as many times as possible without it hitting the ground.  
**Variations:** More than two players can be used to alternate hitting the balloon. Other body parts can be used to keep the balloon in the air. Other objects such as water guns can be used to keep the balloon in the air.
Check-In

*Prevention Calendar: SEPTEMBER, NOVEMBER
Targets: Respect for Others/Positive Identity, Concern for Others/Support
**Variation to tie with Ethical and Developmental Themes: Using the variations below, work this activity in as often as you’d like. Focus on which objects, etc. students use to ‘check in’ and whether those reflect a positive personal identity and a respect for themselves. When doing a partner interview, be sure to focus on showing concern for others’ differences and preferences as well as a general support for people as they share their feelings.

Materials: Vary
Play: Often before a group gets started on their activities, they will have a “check-in” where they let the other group members know how they are feeling that day. Basically, everyone gets a chance to tell the group how they are feeling, what specific goals they might have for the day, any concerns… This can be done in a more creative way than simply discussion.
Variations: Each group member can describe themselves as being one of a certain set of objects such as: If you were a type of cereal what type would you be? What magazine are you? You can have the group pair off and have the partners interview each other, then report to the group on their partner’s status for the day. Individuals can draw or write how they are feeling. Members can act out how they are feeling that day. A group of assorted objects can be placed in the center of the group and individuals can describe themselves as one of the objects. The list goes on and you can use any combination of ideas that you want.
Chef’s Salad

**Materials:** One carpet square for each participant.

**Play:** One person is the ‘chef’ and everyone else is divided into pairs. Each pair chooses a vegetable; no two pairs should choose the same vegetable. The group should make a circle, with partners as far from each other as possible. Each person forming the circle should be standing on a carpet square. The ‘chef’ should stand in the center. The ‘chef’ calls out the name of vegetable. The people who have chosen that vegetable have to try to switch places. The chef tries to grab one of their places while they are switching. The person who is left without a square becomes the ‘chef’. The chef now becomes the vegetable of the place she/he took. The ‘chef’ also has the ability to call out “chef salad”. When this is done, everyone changes places at once. The person without a square becomes the ‘chef’ and the former ‘chef’ takes the new ‘chefs’ vegetable name.

**Variations:** The group could be divided into subgroups 3 or 4 people instead of pairs. The facilitators could pass out cards telling the group members what vegetable they are. The group could sit on sturdy chairs or stand in hula-hoops rather than carpet squares.
Copy Cat

*Prevention Calendar: NOVEMBER
Targets: Concern for Others/Support/Social Competencies
**Variation to tie with Ethical and Developmental Themes: This game lends itself to laughter and is great for discussing how support and concern for others comes across both in verbal and nonverbal types of communication (i.e., laughing at someone can convey a message of hurt vs. support and concern depending on the situation.)

Play: The entire group sits in a circle. Everyone must look down at his or her feet. Instruct them that when they look up, they must look at one (and only one) person. They must copy whatever that person does. Count to three; then, everyone should look up and start copying. Continue until everyone gets too silly.
Committee Ball

Materials: Baseball bat, softball, bases (can be carpet squares or other similar objects)
Play: The group is divided into two groups: the fielding committee and the batting committee. The fielding committee scatters themselves in the outfield. One of the fielding committee is chosen to pitch and one of the batting committee is chosen to bat first. When the ball is hit, the fielding committee must make sure that each person touches the ball at least once before they yell “Bartleby.” Once the ball has been hit, the batting committee runs in a single file line behind the batting committee that crosses home plate before “Bartleby” has been called. Then three batters have been up, the committees switch; pitchers are switched for each batter. There are no strikes; the goal is to enable the batter to hit the ball so the ball can be thrown until the batter hits it. If the batter has made several tries, they can pass the batting to another player.
Do This Do That

**Play:** Show the group some kind of motion or stretch and tell them, “Do this.” After a short time of that motion, pick another motion and tell the group, “Do that.” Continue doing several different motions until the group has stretch significantly.

**Variation:** Have students come up with additional motions/stretches and lead the group.
Ducks and Beans

Materials: The bean bags, two group members
Play: The group sits in a circle. One person is ‘it’ and places a bean bag on his/her head. ‘It’ walks around the group with the bean bag on his/her head and holding the other bean bag. ‘It’ places the second bean bag on another member’s head. That player then tries to tag ‘it’. Neither person is allowed to hold the bean bag on his/her head. If the bean bag falls, she/he must stop and place it back on his/her head. If the second player tags ‘it’, then ‘it’ will remain ‘it’ for another turn. ‘It’ tries to make it to the second person’s chair. If ‘it’ does make it to the chair, then the second person becomes ‘it’.
Frozen Bean Bag Tag

**Materials:** One bean bag for each group member

**Play:** Each participant puts a bean bag on his/her shoulder (they cannot hold it on with their head). Every participant is trying to tag everyone else. A person is tagged if their bean bag gets knocked off. If a player’s bean bag falls off, even if not knocked off by another person, they are considered tagged. Once tagged, they are frozen.

**Variations:** A person can be unfrozen if someone places their bean bag back on their shoulder. They can only be frozen for a certain amount of time (ex. until they sing the alphabet).
Group Hug

**Play:** Have the group stand in a circle, shoulder to shoulder, and facing the inside of the circle. Everyone should have their arms around the shoulders of the people next to them. Instruct everyone to pick up one foot and take a large step into the center of the group. The result is a large group hug. This is a good closing activity with some groups at the end of a challenging day, but be careful to assess the appropriateness of doing this activity with certain groups. Also make a point to monitor emotional and social safety while doing this activity.
Hoop The Group

*Prevention Calendar: DECEMBER
*Targets: Accountability/Boundaries & Expectations
**Variation to tie with Ethical and Developmental Themes: Debrief on topics such as how each person’s role (the entire group) was important to the success of this event. Time the event for a baseline and have students continue to try to improve the time it takes to pass the hoop without errors. Using the hoops as a visual for ‘boundaries’, have students names boundaries that are placed upon them that they agree and disagree with.

Materials: 1 or more hula hoops
Play: The group forms a circle holding hands. Have two members drop hands and place a hula hoop around one of their arms; have them link hands again. The group is then to try to move the hula hoop all the way around the circle without letting go of each other’s hands.
Variations: Two hula hoops can be used in opposite directions.
Name Choo-Choo

**Play:** A leader should be chosen from the group to start the game. The leader walks over to a person in the group, sticks out his/her hand to shake hands, and says (very enthusiastically) “Hi! My name is ---------! What’s yours?” When the person (whose name, for example, might be Anne) responds, the leader cheers and yells the name as follows: Anne! Anne! Anne! Anne!, Anne! The leader then yells “Ready! Reverse!” and turns in the other direction. The person whose name was just cheered (in this case, Anne) puts their hands on the leader’s waist, and “choo-choos” with the leader up to another person. Play continues in the same manner until everyone is part of the train. Note that the person who leads the train will be different after the first two introductions because of the reversing.

**Variations:** Adjectives can be added to the cheer (for example, “Anne! Anne! Active, Active, Anne!”)
Non-Elimination Musical Chairs

*Prevention Calendar: FEBRUARY
*Targets: Honesty/Support

**Variation to tie with Ethical and Developmental Themes: A variation could be to have students asked, “What are your strengths?” over and over again. Debrief this activity by checking the level (1-10 scale) of honesty that participants felt they used when answering. Check in with the students to see how the climate with their partner felt (checking for a trust level, encouragement, etc.)

Materials: One chair for each participant and music.

Play: The game will need to be modified if more than 10 participants play. Each participant starts by sitting in a chair. When the facilitator turns on the music, the players must walk in a circle. The facilitator takes one chair away and then stops the music. The participants then rush to find a chair to sit in. Everyone must be in a chair, even if they are sharing. The facilitator then starts the music again, removes another chair, and then stops the music. Again, all participants must rush to get in a chair. Play continues until there is only one chair and all participants try to find a way to be on the chair.
Pin Your Name on the Floor

*Prevention Calendar: OCTOBER, APRIL
*Targets: Pursuit of Excellence/Constructive Use of Time, Fairness/Support
**Variation to tie with Ethical and Developmental Themes: Have students measure their attempts to see if there was improvement. Debrief by asking questions pertaining to how they improved each time. What methods did they find helpful? How did the support from others help or hinder the success? Be sure to discuss how fairness plays into this game and into success.

Materials: Several blindfolds and a roll of masking tape
Play: The facilitator makes a mark on the floor. The rest of the group tries one at a time and blindfolded to put a piece of tape on the mark. The rest of the group should not be talking at all. Try again, although this time the group can give advice. During debriefing, discuss if there was a difference between the two tries.
Popcorn Tag

Play: All players must hop up and down like popcorn at all times. Start with one ‘it’. ‘It’ hops around trying to tag pieces of popcorn. When ‘it’ tags someone, they join hands, forming an ‘it’ chain. Continue playing until everyone has become part of the ‘it’ chain.
Red Handed

**Materials:** 5 balls

**Play:** The group sits in a circle with several balls. The balls are passed from person to person. The ball can only be passed to the person directly next to you, but the direction can be changed at any time. The object is to get 2 balls in someone else’s lap, but not your own. If someone gets 2 balls in their lap they must scream “AHHHHHH you caught me red handed”. Play then begins again.
Simon Says Ooops

*Prevention Calendar: JANUARY, MAY
*Target: Loyalty/Support, Law-abidingness/Positive Values
**Variation to tie with Ethical and Developmental Themes: Debrief on how being loyal to a team, family, group of friends plays out in real life vs. during this game. Explore how following the rules helps or hinders people in their road to success in life vs. this game. Ask how rules can help or hinder someone’s ability to have positive values.

Play: The group is divided in two. Each group begins with a leader (“Simon”). Each group plays Simon Says with the usual rules, but rather than being out of the game when you do something Simon doesn’t say, you simply holler “OOOPS!” and move to the other group playing. Players will end up moving back and forth between groups but never eliminated from the game. You can periodically stop the game and select new “Simons” for the two groups.
Snap Shot

*Prevention Calendar: FEBRUARY
*Targets: Honesty/Positive Values/Social Competencies
**Variation to tie with Ethical and Developmental Themes: This activity plays nicely into a conversation about honesty. Encourage your participants to create as honest as a ‘title’ as possible but be prepared to share why. A variation would be to have the titles included a positive values or competency that was observed during the game experiences.

Play: Have the group sit in a circle. Tell the group that they are going to take a picture of what their cooperative game experience has been like. Give them a minute to think about their experience. Then have everyone (one by one) tell the group what the title of the snap shot of their experience would be.
Snatch It Tag

**Materials:** 15 comet balls (hose with tennis ball in the end)

**Play:** Everyone puts a comet ball on their head (do not cover eyes). Everyone tries to grab someone else’s comet ball off their head. If your comet ball gets removed, you are frozen. Continue play until almost everyone is frozen.
Telephone

*Prevention Calendar: MARCH, MAY
*Targets: Promise-keeping/Empowerment, Law-abidingness/Positive Values

**Variation to tie with Ethical and Developmental Themes:** Focus the debrief in this game on whether students were empowered by having ‘top secret’ information told to them, and if so, did that make passing on the information correctly any more possible. Further, how discouraged or encouraged did participants feel when receiving the information, to pass it on correctly? Did some participants choose to create variations in the message since they were unclear when receiving it? Ask students what they do when they get ‘hot’ information that they are unclear about and with which they are uncertain in how to proceed (i.e., drugs, stealing, etc.)

Play: Group members sit in a circle. One member is chosen to begin play. This person then whispers a message into the ear of the next person; this person does the same by passing the message on to the third person. This procedure is followed until the message gets to the last person. The last person tells the secret out loud to see how it compared to the original message.

Variations: You can have two messages going in different directions. Signs (wink, smile…) can be used instead of messages. Two groups can be used to see how different changes are made with each group.
Tin Can Pass

**Materials:** Several tin cans of different sizes (make sure to tape the cut edge)

**Play:** Group sits on the ground in a circle. They must pass a tin can around the group using only their feet and not letting the can touch the ground. If the can touches the ground, it starts back at the beginning of the group.

**Variations:** For an added challenge, more than one can should be passed around the group going in different directions.
**Welcoming Circle**

*Prevention Calendar: SEPTEMBER*
*Targets: Respect for Others/Positive Identity*

**Variation to tie with Ethical and Developmental Themes:** Debrief about how participants felt to be welcomed so vigorously and when, if at all, they’ve experienced this kind of welcome before. Ask them how feeling ‘welcomed’ in the classroom can help or hinder learning.

**Play:** Teach the group this cheer: hit knees 2 times, clap twice, snap twice, then point to someone and in a funny voice say “Yaaa”. Everyone stands in a big circle and practices this cheer. Then the leader calls certain people they would like to welcome (ex. everyone from Texas). All of those people run to the center and the group welcomes them with the cheer. Note: Whoever is being welcomed also does the cheer, but they point to themselves. Continue welcoming a variety of different groups. Make sure everyone gets included. Let the group do some of the welcoming.
Wicket Freeze Tag

**Play:** This game is another close relative of *Everyone Is It*. Everyone is trying to tag everyone else. When players are tagged, they are frozen in the spot where they were tagged, but must stand with their legs apart. When any non-tagged players pass underneath the legs of the frozen players, this unfreezes them, and they are then free to chase others.
Yarn Ball

*Prevention Calendar: AUGUST, FEBRUARY, MAY
*Targets: Integrity/Social Competencies, Honesty/Positive Values, Law-abidingness/Empowerment

**Variation to tie with Ethical and Developmental Themes:** Using the variations as well as the original instructions, this game is great to debrief almost anything during any part of the year. You can have students name ethical principals they have seen other students demonstrate during the year; you can have students name developmental assets that they or someone else possesses. The possibilities are endless but continue to stress that honesty and sensitivity is the basis for this activity.

Materials: Ball of yarn

Play: One player holds one end of the ball of yarn. She/he states something good that they have seen someone else do during the previous social skill activities. She/he then tosses the ball of yarn to that person, while still holding on to the end of the ball. The second person wraps a piece of the yarn around a finger. That person then states something that someone other that the first person had done well. She/he still has hold of the ball of yarn. The third person then does the same thing. This continues with each person saying something good about a different person (no person will have the ball of yarn tossed to them twice.) The last person to receive the ball will then toss it to the first person along with a compliment. The end result will be a web (someone can drop their piece of yarn to demonstrate), then the rest of the group will support them. If everyone drops their piece, then there is no one left to support the group. Compare this to real life situations.

Variations: Each person can name one area another person improved in or name something that person did to help another person. You can also use this game as a deinhibitizer and ask questions rather than making statements.