

PIVOT

PROJECT • LIVE

STAFF BUILDING ACTIVITIES

SIMON SAYS

Nothing beats a little high-energy movement to get your thoughts flowing. Start slow and then ramp up the speed, don't forget to use the space around you, hop on one foot, do some jumping jacks, or incorporate your favorite balancing pose. Students love to be competitive during this game, so don't forget to offer a little prize for the winner(s), even if it just a shout out. (5-10 minutes)

NAME THAT TUNE

Create a list of the latest pop songs, movie scores, or childhood favorites that your staff will know instantly, even if they hate the songs, what matters most is being able to name them quickly. Use any method you like, but Spotify works great to create a playlist and we recommend only playing 3 seconds of any song (surprisingly that's all it takes). Want extra points, dress up as a DJ, incorporate lights, and decorate your space to get them in the mood. (10-20 minutes)

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SCAVENGER HUNT

Call out common household items for this virtual version. Start out with the most common items and then make it harder to find for elimination scavenger hunt or have them grab more than one item at a time. (10-15 minutes)

Facemask	Dollar bill	Yearbook
Spoon	Toothbrush	Novel
Cereal box	Toothpaste	Magazine
Ice cube	Hair brush	Lined paper
Flash drive	Sweater	Dryer lint
Stuffed animal	Coffee mug	Coat hanger
Keys	Driver's license	Pillow
Rock	Student ID	Colored socks

YEARBOOK SCAVENGER HUNT

This is best done with returning staff that have the most recent yearbook. Have them search for page numbers without using the table of contents or index. Call out a specific classmates portrait, sport, school dance, club, student life page, or make it more difficult and call out a well-known headline or caption. (10-15 minutes)

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SHOW AND TELL

Always a classic and for good reason too, students love to share their latest purchase, favorite accessory, sentimental trinket, or family pet with the class. Use this as an interactive way to take attendance the first few days of class. If you have a large class, try doing 10 each day to build anticipation and have more time to spotlight each student. (10 minutes)

JOURNALISM BINGO

Have students create their own bingo cards with facts about themselves and remind them they are looking for something in common with their classmates. Have students take turns calling out one of their tiles in hopes of finding others in the class with a matching tile. If you are okay with a little chaos have all the kids speak at once and/or use the chat feature of your online platform. If you are looking to make life a little easier, you can use an online bingo generator and input the most common yearbook terms you want your staff to know. This is a great way to reinforce vocabulary so pair it with a lesson or video from Herff Jones. (15 minutes)

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MEME OFF

Have students compete to create the best meme's. See which meme goes viral. Get creative and use images of staff (with their permission of course). Post a fun image of yourself if you dare and have students use it to create the meme. There are many meme creating websites and apps readily available online. (5 minute brainstorm then assign as homework)

JERD CRIBS

Assign a few students to give a two-minute tour of their home. Be sure they start at the front door and include the basics: living room, kitchen, bedroom, backyard, pool, and pets. This might be a great way to highlight new staffers and welcome them to the yearbook family. This is best assigned a day in advance and left optional for students that feel comfortable sharing.
(10 minutes)

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ALIENS AMONG US

Place students into breakout rooms and have them work together to create symbols to communicate this year's theme nonverbally (they are aliens after all). Give them freedom of color choice to see what colors they associate with the theme on their own. Once teams have presented, analyze their work and see what similarities shine through. The results may be strong enough to incorporate into the book.

(20-30 minutes)

PENNY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS

Have every student bring a penny to class. Have them research the date of their coin and find at least one significant event that happened during that year. When students present the next day have them go in ascending chronological order and use this time to relate the importance of journalism throughout history.

(20-30 minutes)

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PERSONALITY TESTS

There are numerous personality tests online, some are legit and others should just be for entertainment purposes so it's important to preface the test accordingly.

Students always seem to love the playfulness of the "Draw a Pig" personality test and it continues to be a staff favorite. The "Draw a Mountain Range" personality test is less silly, but takes a little longer to complete for the best results. The "Colors" personality test can easily be found online in numerous formats. Once you have the basics it's best to assign a returning staffer to create a Google form to complete this virtually. If you have time to spare, the "16 Personalities"(www.16personalities.com) test will be the most useful to your staff to learn more about themselves and to better pair up students and teams. Always proof the tests ahead of time, as they are notorious for including information that would not be suitable for teens. (5-15 minutes)

BITMOJI MANIA

Have students create their alter ego bitmoji self to use embedded in their emails, messages, and profile pictures. If you are feeling brave, have students create a bitmoji of you and then choose the best one to use. Once everyone has made their bitmoji, put them together as a virtual staff photo. www.bitmoji.com
(5-20 minutes assigned as homework)

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HUMAN BOGGLE

Have each student hold up a paper with a single letter written on it, large enough for everyone to see. Give students 1-3 minutes to write down as many words as they can generate using those letters. This is best with 5-8 students in a break out room, or assign that many students to hold up letters in the general room and rotate through students. Everyone still gets to generate lists each round. This will also work well using the chat feature with a partner to. (5-20 minutes).

BOX OF LIES

Based on the Tonight Show's game, have one student grab a random item (the more strange the better) and place it in a box off camera. Return to camera and have students ask questions about the object in the box. The player can give honest details or choose to lie. At the end of the round have students vote to see if they are lying or telling the truth. For a more authentic spin go head to head with another player and turn around while the student shows the object to the rest of the class.
(5 minutes per round)

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CODE NAMES

Modeled after the popular card game, www.horsepaste.com has a digital version of Code Names that can be played over Zoom or other online platforms quite well.

The caveat is that the spymaster will need two devices, one for the game board to be shared digitally, and another device (a mobile phone works great) to look at the boards' answers. This will require two teams designated as the red and blue team. In order to allow for collaboration it's best to have three to four players per team. Any more than that and it gets difficult to hear everyone on the team. If you want to connect this back to journalism there is an option to create your own game board. (10 minutes per round)

NOT ALL BAD WORDS

This game is very similar to Apples to Apples. Students will need an Internet connected device to play. It's not necessary to stream live at the same time, but it does add a nice exchange for play and spirited dialogue. Players will be given a list of words to use to complete a phrase. A designated player will choose the words they think best complete the phrase; often the funny phrases win out. Think of this as a digital Mad Libs of sorts. It is best played with four to five players, more than that and it becomes a lot of reading and slows the game down.

(2-3 minutes per round)

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NEVER HAVE I EVER (PG)

Tailor this PG version to your own staff or have your editors create some of the questions to bring out little known facts about the staff. Of course you will want to proof these for appropriateness. Students' start with all five or 10 fingers showing and put down a finger for each experience listed that they have done (Never have I ever been to Russia. If you've been to Russia you put a finger down). The last student with fingers up is the winner. If you are short on time a quick search can reveal many questions suitable for students. (10 minutes)

BEST OF SERIES

Start each Friday with a quick "Best OF" challenge. Students can show off their favorite pajamas, stuffed animal collection (yes high school students still have these), office space, dance move, photograph, crazy socks, ugly sweater, virtual background, or any other item that is widely available to students at home. This should be done quickly at the start of class as a group or have the student hold up their item as you call them for attendance. Don't forget to print some tacky certificates of achievement. (5-10 minutes)

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BLIND DRAWING

Have students ready with at least a half sheet of paper to draw on. Instruct them that they will be drawing whomever they want on their screen, but they cannot look down at their paper at all. Students must also keep their pen or pencil on the paper at all times so that they are making one continuous contour drawing of the face. Have them use the whole sheet of paper if possible. Make sure there is absolute silence in the meeting while students are drawing and do not allow them to look down until all students are finished (start with a one minute timer the first time around). This is a great activity to loosen up the group and teach them how to look quietly at a situation before reacting. When the timer goes off have all the students look down at the same time so they can laugh together. If you notice a student looking down too early or throughout the drawing process, instruct them to get a blank piece of printer paper and have them put their pencil through the middle of it. They should hold the pencil below the piece of paper so that when they look down all they will see is the blank sheet of paper. (5-10 minutes)

ZOOM Pictionary

This works seamlessly if you have access to Zoom and enable screen share. When the dialog box opens select the “whiteboard” function to begin. If you want students to be able to draw you will need to enable the “multiple participants can share simultaneously” feature before you select the “whiteboard.” Use an onscreen timer to build anticipation for a fast paced, competitive game. Students can call out answers or write them in the chat if needed. To make a learning experience use terms you’ve recently gone over in class that need reinforcing. (15 minutes)

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VIRTUAL CHARADES

Most everyone knows how to play this classic game and it translates well to the virtual world. When using a platform like Zoom it can be tricky if students are in “speaker” mode because the presenter shouldn’t be talking at all so Zoom will not know who to focus on. The work around for this is to teach students how to “pin” a video so the acting student will stay on their screen. Be sure to mute the acting student so they can’t give verbal clues, plus it makes it a whole lot more interesting to see them rant hysterically in complete silence. (10-20 minutes)

VIRTUAL GALLERY WALK

Have students post their best photo of the week as their Zoom profile picture. Have all students turn off their video so that their picture is displayed and give them a few minutes to look at all photos of the week. Start by choosing a favorite and explain why. That student then chooses their favorite photo and it continues on from there. Five to 10 students is typically the sweet spot for this, any more and it loses its momentum and students start losing reason to find excellent photos. This same idea can be used with design elements saved as screen shots (command+Shift+4 on a Mac) and then posted as profile pictures. (5-15 minutes)

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VIRTUAL STAFF POSITIONS

Assign each student in a group a special position as the official joke teller, recorder, speaker, stretch/dance expert, and chat moderator. On days with lots of instruction it is great to break up the monotony with some movement and dialogue in small groups. If you aren't able to quickly break into virtual groups you can assign a different student to each of these positions weekly and demonstrate their position for the whole class. (continuous)

LEARNING TO COUNT

This is a great task to reinforce the importance of listening to your team and learning to pick up on non-verbal communication. Depending on the number of students involved, have them count from 1-10 or more if needed. Students may not talk other than saying a number in order from 1-10. If any two students speak at the same time the whole team will need to start over at one. You may need to guide the students if they are having trouble reaching it to 10 after a few minutes. Teach them to slow down, breathe, and try to pick up on non-verbal cues from one another. Once they have mastered counting to 10 try seeing how high they can count without having to start over. (5-10 minutes)

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NO REPEAT ROLL CALL

This little tweak to the traditional roll call immediately engages students at the start of class and takes just a few minutes to implement. Ask a simple question such as naming a favorite color, TV show, children's book, favorite food or even their least favorite food. The spin is to be sure that no one repeats anyone else in class. While many students might have blue as their favorite color they will have to think of the many different names for blue so as not to repeat one another. This gets students listening, thinking, and seeing what they have in common with each other. Be sure to start at different spots on your attendance sheets each day so that everyone gets a chance to go first and most importantly everyone will have to listen to one another.

This activity can go very quickly or you can slow it down and make comments after each response. Challenge students to think of other questions they want to ask of their classmates to use the next day. Occasionally it's nice to announce the next day's question in advance to build some anticipation and get students talking. If you are using Zoom you may want to post the daily attendance question in the waiting room so students can start thinking about their response before entering the meeting.

(5-10 minutes)

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TABOO

This well known game can be played with any number of templates found online, however, it works quite well to reinforce vocabulary and check for understanding.

Create a top 10 list of words your staff needs to know and be sure to include at least three words associated with each one that students cannot use (ex. Interview: question, ask, answer). This form of word association game works well to brainstorm ideas for headlines and themes as well.

(10-20 minutes)

STAFF OLYMPICS

Split your staff into groups and have them compete on any number of the above activities. This can be done in a single class period or stretch it out over a week and keep a leader board to build anticipation. This is a great time to implement any new teams your students will be staying in for an extended period of time. Don't forget to have a closing ceremony complete with awards. (time varies)

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