



**BRIDGE  
THE  
GAP**

PRESENTS

# Getting to Know Each Other

COMMUNITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES  
FOR STARTING THE SCHOOL YEAR  
STRONG

OFFICIAL SERVICE PARTNER OF



“

**Kids don't learn from people  
they don't like.**

”

**RITA PIERSON**

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# The Team



Daniel Russell is the Co-Founder of Bridge The Gap LLC. Mr. Russell is an accomplished school-transforming educational leader with proven ability to facilitate systemic change to overcome organizational challenges with over 20 years of experience in urban education.

Prior to leading Unlimited, Mr. Russell led the New York based component of the largest nationwide randomized control educational research project in collaboration with Johns Hopkins University's School of Education and the Everyone Graduates Center.

In addition, he oversaw a needs assessment and root cause analysis project to inform targeted supports for designated Title I schools as the initial step in enacting the Maryland Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).



Garrett Richardson is the founder of Bridge The Gap LLC. Bridge The Gap (BTG) is a consulting agency that helps its clients create brave spaces for students to experience joy and achievement. This is accomplished by leveraging the power of relationships through innovative programming and professional development.

Mr. Richardson is an education consultant with 10 years of experience improving key performance indicators at low performing schools in Philadelphia, NJ and NYC.

His co-curricular programming for boys has been endorsed by New York Stated Education Department (NYSED) Regent Dr. Lester Young, NYSED Assistant Commissioner for Access, Equity, and Community Engagement Dr. Anael Alston and Johns Hopkins University's Everyone Graduates Center.

# What We Do

## HOW WE CAN SUPPORT YOUR WORK?

- **COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ANALYSIS**

We facilitate a collaborative needs assessment with school leadership teams and stakeholders to ensure critical alignment of intervention strategies and targeted sub-groups.

This process begins with the technical crafting of a problem statement followed by a comprehensive root cause analysis and culminating with an intentional strategy for intervention utilizing evidence based improvement science practices.

- **CAPACITY BUILDING**

- Timely and relevant professional development series
- Quarterly implementation review
- Data analysis
- Onsite Technical Assistance
- Interactive e-support including e-learning modules

- **COMPLIMENTARY EVENTS**

- Day of Joy Mentoring Events
- Report Card Conferencing
- EOY Retreat
- Networking Events
- Field Trips (College tours, Corporate visits, etc.)
- Resiliency Assessments
- Community Service Projects

# Peer to Peer

**FIND SOMEONE WHO...FIND SOMETHING NEW**

**STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:**

**BUILD GROUP IDENTITY BASED ON INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES**

**MATERIALS: FIND SOMEONE WHO... HANDOUTS**

Walk around the room and find someone who fits one of the characteristics described on the handout. Then ask that person to print his/her name on the line provided.

Next turn the page and ask your partner to tell you something new about him/herself. Try to get as many different names as you can. No person may record his/her name on your handout more than once.

# Peer to Peer

## WHAT'S MY NAME?

### **STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:**

STAY CALM WHILE PERFORMING UNDER PRESSURE  
DEVELOP ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

### **MATERIALS: NONE**

#### Step One:

Everyone sits in a circle and a co-leader removes one chair, so there is one less chair than there are participants. The co-leader without a chair stands in the middle of the circle. Each seated person is given 30 seconds to memorize the first, middle, and last names of the students seated to their left and right.

#### Step Two:

After 30 seconds, the co-leader in the middle approaches a seated student, points to him/her, says "left" or "right," and counts to 5. The person pointed to must recite the full name of the person to their left or right before the counter reaches 5. If the student cannot remember part of the name or mispronounces it, that student is now to stand in the middle while the other person sits down.

# Peer to Peer

## **GUESS WHO?**

### **STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:**

**PRACTICE ACTIVE LISTENING AND PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS**

### **MATERIALS: PRE-WRITTEN NAME TAGS, BLANK NAME TAGS**

Each person has a name tag placed on his/her back with the name of a famous person (fictional and non-fictional).

Everyone moves around the room asking their peers yes or no questions to figure out who they are (e.g., "Am I a famous actress?").

Limit their questions to no more than two questions per person that they speak with. When they think they know, tell them to write their guess on a blank name tag and place it on their chest.

At the conclusion, everyone returns to their seat to share their guess and find out if they were right! Have students share specific strategies they used to help them figure it out.

# Peer to Peer

## TORNADO

### **STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:**

**SUPPORT EACH OTHER WITH NAME RECOGNITION  
BUILD GROUP COHESION  
DEVELOP ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS**

### **MATERIALS: NONE**

Circle Up. State your name in a loud and clear voice for all participants to hear. Choose a volunteer to be the “Eye of the Storm”. The “Eye of the Storm” will say “Tornado” and everyone in the circle will quickly move to another spot within the circle (Vertically, Horizontally or Diagonally). Once the tornado movement has stopped, the “Eye of the Storm” will point at a participant in the circle and say “Left/Right”. If you are chosen you must accurately state the name of whoever is standing to your left/right. If you state the name wrong, hesitate or delay, you now become the “Eye of the Storm”.

# Peer to Peer

ZIP, ZAP, ZOP

**STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:**

PERFORM POSITIVE SOCIAL BEHAVIORS AND ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS UNDER PRESSURE

**MATERIALS: NONE**

Group starts in a circle. The leader begins by placing both hands together, points to someone in the circle, and says "Zip." That person then puts their hands together and points to someone else in the group and says "Zap." That person does the same and says, "Zop." After a few rounds without consequences, if someone says the words out of order or does not respond when pointed to, that person leaves the circle. Play until there is one person left in the circle.

Debrief by discussing the skills necessary to make this game work.

# Peer to Peer

**AHHHHHHHH!!!**

**STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:**

**ENERGIZE THE BODY AND MIND  
BUILD COMMUNITY AND TRUST AND THE SELF CONFIDENCE  
REQUIRED TO LOOK SOMEONE IN THE EYE**

**MATERIALS: NONE**

**Step One**

The group stands up and forms a circle. It's important that each participant can see the eyes of everyone in the circle. A co-leader explains that there will only be two sets of directions in this activity: "heads down" and "heads up."

**Step Two**

When the group hears "heads down," everyone should look at the floor. When a co-leader says, "heads up," everyone looks up, straight into the eyes of anyone else in the circle. Looking up has two possible conclusions:

1. If the participant looks up and into the face of another member who is looking at someone else, then nothing happens.
2. If the participant looks up and into the eyes of another member in the circle, the pair points at each other, screams dramatically, and falls back into their respective chairs.

This process continues until there are two people left in the circle.

# Peer to Peer

## EXTREME ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS

### **STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:**

**BUILD GROUP CAMARADERIE THROUGH A SHARED POSITIVE EXPERIENCE**

### **MATERIALS: NONE**

Everyone pairs up with one person for the first round. Each pair plays one game of rock, paper, scissors to determine a winner. Round 1 losers then begin to cheer the name of the person who beat them and follow them to their next game.

All the winners pair up and face off against each other while the ones they beat are cheering for them. When one winner beats the other, all the people behind the losing player now start cheering for the winning player. Repeat process until there are only two players left.

Each final player should have a large crowd cheering them on from their previous victories. For the final match, it's best 2 out of 3 to declare the Extreme Rock, Paper, Scissors Champion!

# Peer to Peer

21

**STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:**

**PRACTICE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AND PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS, TEAM COHESION AND TEAM WORK**

**MATERIALS: NONE**

Start by sitting in a circle. The group's objective is to count aloud to 21 making sure that only one person calls out at a time. If more than one person says a number at the same time the game begins again at "1".

This is a great opportunity to remind the group to breathe, tune in to one another and speak only when moved to do so. The tendency will be to count as quickly as possible whereas allowing space between numbers encourages the group to communicate more effectively..

# Peer to Peer

## GROUP CONTRACT & NAME

### **STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:**

**PRACTICE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AND PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS, TEAM COHESION AND TEAM WORK**

### **MATERIALS: CHART PAPER, MARKERS**

Explain that as a group we are creating guidelines or expectations for our time together. Ask for a volunteer to act as secretary to write suggestions on chart paper. Ask group for suggestions on what should be on the contract.

Remind the group to use affirmative statements (“Support each other” as opposed to “Don’t be mean” for example). If suggestion seems difficult for group to adhere to (i.e., “Be on time”), discuss whether or not we want to include it. Explain that in order for the contract to be effective and binding, all group members must agree to adhere to the guidelines. If the contract is broken, as a group we will need to re-negotiate its contents.

Finalize the content of the contract on chart paper and make sure it is visible to all. Ask members to sign contract so that signatures are also visible. Group members must also title the contract with their group's name.

# Peer to Peer

## VISION SHARING

### **STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:**

**ESTABLISH A FOUNDATION FOR COLLABORATIVE PLANNING AND TEAMWORK**

### **MATERIALS: CHART PAPER, MARKERS, TAPE**

#### Step One

Divide the group into teams of 4-5 students. Provide each group with a large sheet of paper and markers. Explain that each group of students will produce a visual representation of what they think MBK is, what its purpose is, how it functions, and what its place is with respect to the larger school community. They may not use words, only pictures and symbols.

#### Step Two

At the conclusion of this activity, groups come together to share their visions and explain what their symbols represent. Tape the posters on the wall in the room, and have a volunteer from each group talk about the vision his/her group created.

# Social Emotional Learning

## MEET "ME"

### **STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:**

**FIND COMFORT IN SHARING PERSONAL INFORMATION WITH PEERS**

### **MATERIALS: "ME" HANDOUT, PENS/PENCILS**

The first activity, "Me," is a short activity designed to get the participants to respond to some basic statements by filling in the blank at the end of each statement.

Getting participants to open up and discuss issues they have is critical to developing a productive group. Often it's imperative for the facilitator to set the tone for the discussion.

A good facilitator should observe the interactions of the youth to determine which youth are outspoken and which youth will need some additional support to be able to open up in a group format.

Always remember getting youth to open up is usually based on whether they feel the group is an emotionally safe place to discuss sensitive information.

The facilitator will collect "ME" activity sheets, mix them up and give them to the students. Next, the facilitator will allow participants to read the comments and guess which group members wrote them.

# Social Emotional Learning

## SELF-ANALYSIS

### STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:

EXAMINE HOW WE SEE OURSELVES, HOW WE THINK OTHERS SEE US, AND THINK ABOUT WHERE OUR SELF-IMAGE COMES FROM

### MATERIALS: INDEX CARDS, PENS/PENCILS

Distribute an index card to each student. Students consider words that describe their personality, their character, and any aspect of themselves that contributes to their self-image. They place their ideas in the corners of the index card, as shown below:



### Reflection Questions:

To what extent does your view of yourself match the view that others have of you?

Do you have a different impression of someone than he/she shared?

How do you form your opinions about how others perceive you? How you perceive yourself?

# Social Emotional Learning

## POSITIVE QUALITY ACROSTIC

### STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:

BUILD SELF CONFIDENCE AND ENCOURAGE OTHERS

**MATERIALS:** BLANK PAPER, CHART PAPER, MARKERS

Ask participants to brainstorm positive words (adjectives) that describe themselves. You could have them go around the room or around a circle so everyone gets a chance to share aloud, then move to shout out or raise your hand until called on structure.

As the participants call out the words, have someone notate the words on a piece of chart paper. Review the words and ask if there are any the group would like to add. Pass out a piece of paper to each participant and explain that the group will be creating “Positive Quality Acrostics” using their first names. An example is below



Kind  
Amazing  
Talented  
Intelligent  
Energetic

# Social Emotional Learning

## LETTER TO SELF

### **STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:**

DEVELOP POSITIVE SELF-TALK

### **MATERIALS: STATIONARY, PENS, ENVELOPES, STAMPS, MUSIC PLAYER**

Have participants choose a piece of stationary, stamped envelope and a pen. Explain that each individual will work to write a letter to themselves that will be mailed to them in 6 months' time (or whatever time frame is appropriate for the group). Ask the participants to focus on goals they have for themselves, changes they wish to make or challenges they desire to overcome. The letter should be about reminding oneself of the path they have started on during the group's sessions and motivating their future selves to continue on that path.

Next, put on some relaxing music and have the group take 5-10 minutes to construct the letter, address it and seal it.

Once the letters are complete, have the participants place them in a large envelope which you, the facilitator will hold onto until it is time to mail out the letters.

# Social Emotional Learning

## GREETINGS

### **STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:**

**USE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS, BUILD SELF-CONFIDENCE, AND PRACTICE PERSPECTIVE TAKING**

### **MATERIALS: CHART PAPER, MARKERS, MUSIC PLAYER**

Have participants think about the various ways in which we greet people non-verbally (handshake, hug, high five, head nod...). As the group brainstorms these examples have someone notate them on a piece of chart paper.

Next, ask the group to mill around the room, you might even put music on. When the music stops or when the facilitator signals (claps hands, beats drum...) have the group stop and greet the first person they make eye contact with by using the facilitator chosen option from the brainstorm list (handshake, hug, high five, head nod...). When the music begins again or when the designated signal is heard participants will again begin to mill around the room. The facilitator will then signal for the group to stop, this time they will need to make eye contact with a different person and greet them in the new style chosen from the list by the facilitator.

Use each round as an opportunity to initiate dialogue between participants. Consider prompting participants to portray fictional characters or real people upon greeting one another.

# Social Emotional Learning

## KNEE 2 KNEE

### **STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:**

**USE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AND ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS**

### **MATERIALS: CHAIRS, MUSIC PLAYER (OPTIONAL)**

Have the group pair up with someone they do not know very well. You could have them letter off, A/B. Have all the A's lineup in alphabetical order by last name and the B's line up in order by Birthdays. Then have the 2 lines face one another and whomever you are facing is your partner. Facilitator prompts the pairs to sit, facing one another ("knee to knee") and asks A to tell B about her/his day (or a pleasant childhood memory, something unique about themselves, something they are good at, etc.) while B is instructed to simply listen without commenting, for one whole minute. Switch so that B talks and A listens.

Partners introduce one another to the entire group and attempt to remember 3 details from the partner's story to share.

You can also do this by having A tell their story to B and have the B's switch partners and share A's story as their own. This pattern can continue to see how well people are listening and how stories get distorted as they are passed on over and over.

# Social Emotional Learning

THANK YOU!

**STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:**

PROMOTE POSITIVE THINKING  
DEVELOP EMPATHY AND RESPECT/APPRECIATION FOR OTHERS

**MATERIALS: NONE**

Participants will circle up. Participants will take turns going around the circle thanking someone in the group for something special they offered that day. No one should be repeated so that everyone gets to hear something positive they did that day. For instance, "Thank you Kyla for offering to do the writing in our group today" or "Thank you Kyle for sharing that story about your little brother"... Be creative!

# Social Emotional Learning

## BIRTHDAY LINE/TRUST WALK

### **STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:**

COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY AND BUILD TRUST

### **MATERIALS: BLINDFOLDS**

#### Birthday Line:

Assign the group the task of arranging themselves into a straight line, without speaking, in order of birth month and day (beginning with January 1). Explain that when members of the group believe they have completed the task, they all raise one hand.

#### Trust Walk:

The group's task is to arrange itself in a straight line in reverse alphabetical order by first names. If your first name begins with an A, like Andrea, you will need to go to the back of the line. If your first name begins with a Z, like Zach, you will need to move to the front of the line.

Half of the group must remain blindfolded/eyes closed during this task, and should be paired with a partner for safety. When moving people, put two hands on their shoulders and move them slowly and gently. And once again, no one is allowed to talk.

# Contact Us

LET'S CONTINUE TO EMPOWER OUR YOUTH

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