

Social and Emotional Learning Resources: Curiosity

Here are several resources you can use to help practice curiosity. If you are a parent, you can help your child complete these activities at home. If you are a teacher, you can deliver these lessons to students in online classrooms. Remember that you can also take the time to complete these activities yourself.

- Paper Plane Flying Contest
- Everyday Objects
- What's in a Name?
- Folk Tales
- Flipside of the Coin

We want to hear from you! If you use these lessons, we would like to know if you found them helpful and what else we can do to improve them for future use. To provide feedback, please visit the link below.

Link: https://act.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_7VszP8jV3kq4d5X

Paper Plane Flying Contest

Objective: To think outside the box and to challenge assumptions that may restrict creativity.

Materials Needed:

- 10 sheets of paper per participating student
- Masking tape

Background: Everyone knows how to make paper planes, right? Turns out that assumptions and previous knowledge often constrain how we think of the world, even for something as simple as building a paper plane. This activity helps students make those assumptions more conscious and helps students learn to think outside the box when completing a task.

Activity:

- First, have students gather all materials needed. Each participating student will need 10 sheets of paper. Students will also need to find a space 10 feet long either inside or outside. Have them use masking tape, or any other available material, to set a “start” line and a “finish” line. The lines should be approximately 10 feet apart.
- You can direct this activity virtually with a large group of students by having students set up their own space in their own home. If you have multiple students in the same space, you can have them share the start and finish lines, but give each student a different colored paper to differentiate the planes.
- Deliver the following contest rules to students:
 - The objective of this activity is to make paper planes and try to get as many of your planes across the finish line as you can in the given amount of time.
 - You will have two minutes to strategize and plan for how to build your planes. During these first two minutes, you will not be allowed to start building your planes. You can only strategize.
 - You will then have five minutes to build all of your planes and get as many as you can across the finish line.
- Have students start on the activity after you deliver the instructions. You should set a timer for two minutes, and then instruct students when strategizing time is over. Then set a new timer for five minutes and instruct them that they can start building their planes and trying to get them across the finish line.
- At the end of the five-minute period, ask students to provide you with a count of how many planes they were able to get across the finish line.

- After the activity, have students reflect on their process and strategy. They should share their thoughts about what went well and what didn't. If you are leading this activity with multiple students, ask them to share their strategies with one another.
- Ask students what assumptions they made that informed their strategy. For example:
 - Did you think to look up strategies for building planes online before starting?
 - Did you assume that the paper had to be folded into the shape of a plane?
 - Did you assume that the plane had to fly through the air?
- The rules of this activity are purposely very few. There is no definition of "paper plane" included in the rules, and no requirement that the planes fly through the air. As such, acceptable strategies include (but are certainly not limited to) making balls of paper and throwing them across (easier than planes) or putting the planes on a wheeled chair and rolling the chair across the finish line. Students can even carry each plane across the finish line. The point is to get students to realize that assumptions or rules they create for themselves can unnecessarily limit creative thinking. Emphasize this point when you debrief with your students.
- Ask students to think about what they could have done differently if they were asked to do this activity again. What assumptions did they make the first time that did not need to be made? You can end this activity by telling students that every time they try to solve a new problem, they should think of any assumptions they are making that may be limiting their creativity.

Everyday Objects

Objective: To demonstrate creativity and ingenuity with everyday objects.

Background: There are countless objects in our homes. Each object is likely intended to be used for one thing. For example, a hammer is meant to be used to hammer nails into a wall. However, a hammer can also be used as a weight, as a doorstop, or (with a bit of imagination) to summon Thor's powers. This activity helps students see everyday objects in a different light and practice thinking of atypical ways to use those objects.

Activity:

- First, have students identify and find five different everyday objects they have in their home (e.g., brick, paper clip, cup, hanger).
- For each object, have students try to come up with at least three different ways to use the object. This will challenge them to think creatively.
- As a further step in challenging students to think creatively, you can have students try to make new things with combinations of objects identified and their new possible uses. For example, a student may be looking for a way to display his or her drawings around the house. This student can create a new object to do this by attaching some paper clips to a hanger.
- Another optional step is to have students try to come up with a story about each object. This can be particularly effective to get younger students thinking creatively. For each object, ask them to use their imaginations to come up with a story for each object, and try to develop this story as much as possible. Stories can involve personification if this is age-appropriate. Students can think about the following questions as they develop their stories:
 - Where was the object created?
 - How did it get into your home?
 - Does it often interact with other objects in your home?
 - Is the object "friends" with any other objects in your home?
 - Does the object enjoy (or not enjoy) any particular activities?
- You can repeat this activity and its variations often and encourage students to choose different everyday objects each time.

What's in a Name?

Objective: To learn about the history and meaning names can hold.

Background: Have you ever wondered what the origin of your name is or what would it have been like to live at the time and/or in the place where your name originated? This activity is designed to help students appreciate that something as simple as a name has a rich cultural heritage.

Activity:

- First, have students research the history and meaning of their names. Using the search term “etymology” following your student’s name can be a helpful place to start.
- Have students share with you and their peers what their name means. Encourage students to also discuss the origin and anything interesting they learned about their names from their research.
- For the next part of the activity, have students try to put themselves in the time and place of their name’s origin. For example, if a name originated in ancient Greece, have your student answer the following questions as if they are a person with their name living during the time period and region in which the name originated from.
 - What would a regular day be like?
 - What kinds of foods might people eat?
 - What do houses look like?
 - How is society organized?
 - What might students be learning in school?
 - What problems might people in this society be struggling with?
- There are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions. The goal of the activity is to have students put themselves in a different time and place and try to imagine life from that perspective. Students can also conduct research online to help them answer each of these questions.

Folk Tales

Objective: To learn about folk tales from different cultures and to demonstrate analytical thinking skills and creativity by writing a new folk tale.

Background: We've all been exposed to folk tales such as *The Tortoise and the Hare* or *The Little Engine that Could*. Folk tales are common in every culture, and so are the values and themes that these tales communicate. In this activity, students can combine analytical thinking skills, creativity, and information about other cultures to create a new folk tale reflecting a common value or theme.

Activity:

- First, have students find at least three folk tales from different cultures around the world. Encourage students to find these from different cultures (e.g., *A Legend of Confucius* from Chinese origin, *Father Frost* from Russian origin, or *The Badger and the Bear* from Native American origin). Have students read each of the folk tales they find.
- Have students identify the theme/moral/message of each folk tale and identify similarities and differences in message and story details among the folk tales. Depending on students' ages, you can have students do this independently or work with another student, or you can read the stories aloud to them and help them to identify, compare, and contrast themes.
- After comparing and contrasting the different folk tales, have students write their own folk tale that includes some of the common themes/messages found in the traditional folk tales. You can have older students write their folk tales, and have younger students create their folk tales by drawing them, making comics, or creating a script that can be used to act them out. When creating their folk tales, students should have a theme or moral established ahead of time. You can work with them to brainstorm the setting, characters, and how the theme will be portrayed by the plot.

Flipside of the Coin

Objective: To practice gathering evidence to support both sides of an argument.

Background: Important issues are often complex and multi-faceted, yet the media often try to present things as one-sided and clear-cut. In this activity, students can develop an appreciation for different perspectives by picking an important topic that has two sides to it and developing arguments that support each of the two sides.

Activity:

- First, have students think of a topic that is important to them, has implications for society, and has at least two unique stances. For topic ideas, students can visit <http://www.procon.org>. Some example topics:
 - Right to bear arms
 - Affirmative action
 - Immediate re-opening of the US economy following COVID-19 social distancing regulations
- Instruct students to develop two arguments, one in favor of and one against the selected topic. Tell students that they will be sharing their arguments with you and/or with their peers. Give students ample time to develop their arguments.
- Immediately before students present both arguments to you or their peers, decide which side of the argument students will present. They will present only the side of the argument that you choose.
- After students present the one side of the argument, engage in a discussion about what students have learned about formulating their arguments and from presenting only one side of it. You can use the following question prompts for discussion:
 - Was your perspective on the topic changed after researching both sides?
 - What did you learn?
 - How did searching for new information on your topic change your perspective?
 - How did it feel presenting only one perspective on the topic?
 - Did you think that both perspectives should have been shared to help give a better understanding of the topic?
- The goal of this activity is to have students understand that most news sources do not clearly address all sides of an issue. You can encourage students to thoroughly research both perspectives on a topic before coming to conclusions for themselves.