

Five good mixers from Susan Fortin

Attribute Rummy

From individual thought to group values, this “card game” provides active participation and concrete direction.

Materials: 3 small cards (index cards or smaller) per person.
Pen or pencil for each participant.

Time: 30-45 minutes, depending on processing time allowed.

Group Size: 15-200

Activity Level: Low

Procedure:

1. Each person is given 3 index cards. On each card list one value related to the topic, (i.e. Qualities of an ideal school; Values I want our group to live by; Most important character traits for a student leader).
2. Facilitator collects, shuffles, and redistributes the cards so that each participant gets three cards.
3. In a friendly card game, participants mingle and exchange cards until they end up with a hand that they like and can support. The goal should not be to regain your original cards, but to find a hand you support.
4. Form small groups of 4-6. Each person in the group shares their 3 cards in priority order. The group then selects the top three cards and ranks their order.
5. Small groups then presents their top “values” or “qualities” to the entire group. Select one or more of the following ways for presentations. Ideas include:
 - a) Using crayons and butcher paper depict qualities in pictures.
 - b) Create a “freeze frame” photo and sound to represent the qualities.
 - c) Act out the qualities in mime.
6. Use the key words in this activity to form the basis for a mission statement, to establish a code of cooperation, or to set goals.

What’s on your Plate?

Low Risk/Get Acquainted and Self-Disclosure/Low Energy

Give each person a plain white paper plate. Have them write on the plate all of the activities, responsibilities, interests, etc. in which they are currently involved. They may write items randomly or divide the plate into wedges to reflect the various items. With a partner or in small groups, each person shares their plate.

Processing:

1. Host an informal discussion focusing on what you learned about others and what surprised you about yourself.
2. For a more formal processing ask participants to do the following:
 - Mark with a #1 the item you most enjoy.
 - Mark with a #2 the item that takes up the most time.
 - Mark with a #3 the item on which you would like to spend more time.
 - Mark with a #4 the item that drains most of your energy.
 - Mark with a #5 the item that energizes you the most.
 - Mark with a #6 the item you could do without.

Follow with a discussion focusing on what you learned about yourself and others.

Little Known Facts (a.k.a. Who Can it Be?)

Goal: Group learns interesting facts about the members. Great for a group that works together but really doesn't know each other.

Materials: Note card for each member.

Directions: Each member lists three little known facts about themselves on a note card. Cards are collected and at various times throughout the session the group leader reveals the "clues" from a card. From the clues group members try to guess the identity of the person.

Idea: Do this with the entire staff and reveal only a few cards at each faculty meeting.

Groupings

Goal: Random pairs or triads to get acquainted, solve problems, or discuss issues.

Methods for Random playing cards, crayons, matching stickers, etc.

Directions: With a partner(s), members discuss topics as determined by the facilitator. Good staff topics include:

??*The car you learned to drive in.*

??*Why you chose to go into teaching.*

Transition: Do one or two get acquainted questions then transition into a topical meeting question or issue.

Life Line

Focus: Getting Acquainted

Use: Social

Materials: Paper and Pencils

Risk: Low-High

Activity Level: Low

Give each participant a piece of paper and pencil. This activity is done with a partner so group students accordingly. Each member is to make a Life Line for his or her partner that begins with his or her birth date and ends with today's date. Along this timeline students should record memorable events in their partner's life. Record positive events above the line and less than positive events below the line. (A good guideline is to include 3-5 positive events and 3-5 less than positive events.) Students take turns introducing their partner to the group selecting a few highlights from the Life Line to share.

Remember: If group members seem distant and disconnected, they may just need the chance to genuinely laugh together. Energizers and warm-ups are great tools for creating an instant sense of community within a group.