



OAKLAND
PUBLIC EDUCATION FUND



**OAKLAND
SCHOOL
VOLUNTEERS**

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING ACTIVITIES

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<https://www.oaklandedfund.org/programs/volunteer/>

I. Introductory Meetings

Use the first 1 - 2 sessions to get to know each other by discussion topics like favorites (colors, foods, animals, etc.), siblings, pets, and similar topics. This introductory session could also be used to explain to the student what kinds of activities the tutor and student will be doing together and what the expectations are for working well together, so that the student knows what to expect at the typical session.

Throughout your sessions, remember:

- Be sensitive to student concerns and conditions (tired, hungry, angry about earlier encounters with another student or teacher or family member, family issues, etc.)
- Try to be responsive to student suggestions about how to conduct the session's agenda in ways that will be more interesting to the student
- If a student's id disengaged during a session, consider taking a short break to stretch or take some deep breaths together before returning to the agenda

II. Artistic

A. Draw [this] for our next meeting

Ask your partner student what they'd like to draw before your next meeting. Ask them to bring your drawing to your next meeting to share. Some fun ideas:

- Your favorite food
- Your favorite animal
- Your favorite place
- Your family

III. Conversational/Verbal

A. Informational Student Interview

Gain background information about your student and learn about their interests and attitudes by interviewing them. Interviewing tips:

- Be relaxed. Don't read the questions like a script - make it conversational!
- To prompt for additional information, follow up with: "Tell me more about that" or "Why do you think that is that way?" Don't be pushy!

Example Questions:

- Who are your friends? What activities do you like to do with your friends?
- What do you usually do after school?

- Tell me about your favorite subject in school. Why is it your favorite? Which is your least favorite and why?
- Do you have a special place where you study at home? Tell me about it.
- Do you belong to any clubs at school or outside of school? What are they?
- What do you like to do on the weekends?
- What kind of books do you like?
 - (If none, ask: what topics do you most like learning about?)
- Do you like to write? (What kind of writing do you like to do?)

B. This or That?

Discuss the following, often divisive, questions and be prepared to back up your opinion:

1. Would you rather live in the countryside or the city?
2. Should all students be required to learn a second language?
3. Would you rather be indoors or outdoors?
4. Would you rather travel every single day or never leave home?
5. Which animal makes a better pet- a cat or a dog?
6. Would you rather start school at 5 am or end at 8 pm?
7. Would you rather have a new teacher every week or the same teacher for all of middle school/high school?
8. Would you rather run 1 mile uphill or 5 miles downhill?

C. Desert Island

Each person takes a turn to answer their Desert Island questions and explains:

1. Who would you take on a desert island if you have to choose one deceased person, one famous person, and one person from your friends or family?
2. What book would you take with you?
3. What music album would you take with you? (streaming services don't count!)
4. What three items would you take with you?

D. Show and Tell

1. Each person takes a turn sharing about an item that is special to them. Use these questions to think about the item and why it's important to you:
 - a. Does the item remind you of a special memory?
 - b. Who gave you the item, or how did you get it?
 - c. When do you look at it/wear it/use it?
2. Some ideas for things to share are:
 - a. A favorite photo or picture or piece of art from your home
 - b. A favorite article of clothing
 - c. A favorite toy or game

IV. Written

A. People Poem

Materials: Paper & Writing Utensil

Directions: Use the letters in your name to create an acrostic poem, a poem where each line begins with a word whose first letter contributes to form a word. For example, Tony and Tanya could write the following acrostic poems:

Tall	Talented
Outstanding	Artistic
Nacho fan	Neat
Young adult	Youth leader
	Activist

B. Gratitude Journaling

Do some Gratitude Journaling together- free-journal or draw inspired by one of these prompts:

- What made you smile today?
- What is one thing you love about yourself?
- What are you grateful for and why?
- What accomplishments in life have brought you the most happiness?

V. Suitable for Older Students (Middle School +)

A. Autobiographical Poem

Materials: Paper & Writing Utensil

Directions: Both volunteer and student create an autobiographical poem, following the structure outlined below. Volunteers can start by sharing theirs first.

Poem Structure:

Line 1: First Name

Line 2: Four traits that describe you

Line 3: Relative of (brothers, sisters, grandparents, chosen family) of _____

Line 4: Who enjoys_____ (list three things you like)

Line 5: Who avoids_____ (list three things you don't like)

Line 6: Who needs_____ (list three things)

Line 7: A student who likes_____ (list three things you like/liked about school)

Line 8: Who fears _____ (list two fears you have)

Line 9: Who would like to visit_____ (list a place you would like to visit)

Line 10: Resident of _____ (list 3 places)

Line 11: Last Name

B. Word Summer Stories

This icebreaker is based on the legend that tells us about Ernest Hemingway being challenged to come up with a story in just six words. He wrote "For sale: baby shoes. Never worn." Boom, a complete story in just 6 words. In this icebreaker, the volunteer and student each come up with a 6-word story that tells about their summer.

C. Interview Your Tutor!

Materials: Paper Writing Utensil

Directions: Allow your student partner to find out more about you through an interview where they ask all the questions. Your student may use the example questions or make up his/her own questions.

Example Questions:

- What person has had the greatest impact on your life?
- What is the thing that you like to do that gives you the most joy?
- If you could do anything in the world, what would that one thing be and why?
- What qualities do you like about yourself?
- Who are your best friends and what qualities do you like about them?
- What was your favorite subject in school?
- What were you like when you were my age?
- What did you study to become? Did you like being in college?
- Why are you a mentor/tutor/volunteer?

D. Deck of Cards Game

Materials: [Deck of cards](#)

Directions: The tutor and student take turns pulling cards from a single deck and answering a question that corresponds with the card's face (see below).

1- What is one of your hobbies?

2- What is one of your favorite colors?

3- What is one of your favorite foods?

4- What is one of your favorite music groups?

5- What is one of your dream jobs?

6- What is one of your favorite school subjects?

7- What is one of your favorite memories with your family?

8- What is one of your favorite animals?

9- What is one place you would love to travel someday?

10- What is one of your favorite books?

Jack- What is one thing you would like to improve on as a student?

Queen- What is one of your favorite TV shows?

King- What is one of your favorite movies?

Ace- What is one subject that you struggle with?

Joker- What is one random fact about you?

VI. Additional Icebreaker Ideas

ENGAGING SHY STUDENTS

Youth who are shy or reluctant to talk may need more time to open up. Engaging in an activity together can help. Here are three simple activities you can try:

- Ask the student to draw a picture and describe it to you. Engage the student in a discussion about what they have drawn, and what you notice about the picture (colors, shapes, words, etc.). Let the student draw whatever they want, or provide some suggestions if the student asks for them.
- Create “getting-to-know-me” cards. You and your student each need a piece of paper. Turning your paper horizontally (horizontal orientation) and...
 - In the center of your paper: write an alliterative nickname for yourself (i.e. Adventurous Andrew)
 - In the top right-hand corner: write something that is important to you
 - In the top left-hand corner: write something that you want to learn
 - In the bottom right-hand: write something you are good at
 - In the bottom left-hand corner: write the name of your favorite food
 - Finally, decorate by adding fun symbols or illustrations to your paper

build model cars	mom and dad
Jumpy Joseph	
pizza	skateboarding

OPEN-ENDED CONVERSATION STARTERS

Get to know your students much as you get to know any new person you meet: by asking open-ended, non-threatening questions, while sharing a bit about yourself also. Let the student’s responses and body language be your guide to which topics to explore more deeply and which to street away from. Examples:

- Book show-and-tell: share a book that you enjoy with your student and ask them to tell you about one that they like
- Talk about favorites: animals, TV shows, athletes, foods, movies, toys, games, subjects in school - anything that is age appropriate and sparks the child’s interest
- Ask *What if* questions. For example, *What if you could take a trip anywhere you wanted? Where would you go? What if you could do any job in the world? What job would you choose?*