



POSITIVE CONNECTIONS

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

WHERE THE WIND BLOWS	Icebreaker for Social Communication
QUESTION WEB	Icebreaker for Social Communication
RING BALANCE	Verbal Communication and Teamwork
INQUIRY CUBES	Verbal Communication and Academic
BLOCK BUILD	Collaboration and Communication

WHERE THE WIND BLOWS

Community building get-to-know-you game with some physical movement.

Setup: No Materials Required, but chairs are recommended.

Time: The game can continue forever, so choose your own time limit.

Everyone sits in a circle, with one person standing in the middle of the circle.

The middle person says "The wind blows for people who..." and finishes the sentence with something about them.

Examples include "like pasta", "have never gone skydiving", "have a dog", etc.

If the statement is true for circle members, those people must change spots in the circle by moving through the middle.

They must change seats at least two spots away from their current spot.

The middle person tries to find a spot when everyone else moves, and the person left in the middle after movement stops says a new statement.

Tip for Success: Encourage participants to expand their statements to more than just preferences or what people are wearing.

QUESTION WEB

Community building get-to-know-you game with physical component.

Setup: Bundle of yarn and 30 or more creative questions required.

Time: Depending on the group size, 30 - 45 minutes.

Everyone sits or stands in a circle.

One person starts by answering a random question (questions should already be prepared on slips of paper or cards).

After the question is answered, the person says the person they want to go next, and holds the end of the yarn while throwing the rest of the yarn to the person they chose.

The next person answers a new random question, and does the same thing as the first person, making sure to hold the strand of yarn as they throw the remaining yarn across the circle to the next person.

Everyone in the circle answers a question.

The game continues until each person has answered a question, creating a large web in the middle of the circle.

Tips for Success: Make sure the yarn is bundled up so that it can be tossed. Encourage participants to say the name of the person they will toss to before tossing. For easy clean-up have everyone continue to hold the yarn and re-wind the bundle starting with the last person that caught it.

Questions - copy and chop these up for your convenience!

If you could have any pet, real or fictional, what would it be?	If you could spend a whole day with anyone in the world, who would it be?
If you could time travel once and come back, would you go to the past or the future? Why?	If you had to eat the same food for the rest of your life, what would you eat?
If you had to lose one of your five senses, which would you lose?	If you could create your own holiday, what would it be?
If you could be any age you want for a whole week, how old would you be?	Would you rather sleep in a forest of trees or a meadow of flowers?
What is your favorite type of candy?	What would your theme song be?
What would you do with a million dollars?	If you could change your name, what would you change it to?
What would you want to be famous for?	Choose three parts of different animals to create the ultimate animal.
If you built a treehouse, what are	If you could change or write one

three features it would have?	law, what would it be?
If you were in a movie, what type of movie would it be?	If you could invent something to make life easier, what would it be?
If you were a ghost, who would you haunt first?	Would you rather have really long legs or really long arms?
Would you rather give up your phone or never have sweets again?	Would you rather grow up immediately or stay a kid forever?
Would you rather be too hot or too cold?	Would you rather be able to talk to animals or to read people's minds?
If you could speak to animals, which animal would you speak to first?	Would you rather never have to do homework or never have to take tests?
What is the worst food you've ever eaten?	If you could live anywhere for a year, where would you live?
If you wrote a book, what would it be about?	Would you rather have gills for breathing underwater or wings for flying?

RING BALANCE

Community building, verbal communication, and collaboration activity.

Setup: Ping-pong ball and a 1 - 2 inch ring with 30 strings attached required.

Time: Depending on the group size and success, 15 - 30 minutes.

Everyone stands in a circle, each person holding one string attached to a central ring.

The facilitator explains that the goal of the activity is to successfully lift the ball from the floor to above everyone's heads and back down using the ring.

The facilitator places the ball, and counts to three to begin while getting out of the middle.

The group lifts their strings to move the ball.

As circle members struggle to work together, the facilitator should point out positive comments or helpful comments participants are making, ignoring negativity unless it is causing severe conflict.

At the end the activity should be debriefed: What worked and what didn't work? How does this relate to regular life?

Tips for Success: Take pauses to make observations about what participants are saying. This activity can be done with other items in the center as the group progresses. Sometimes this takes time and practice, so decide for yourself if you want to put a limit on how many attempts the group can make.

INQUIRY CUBES

Small group verbal communication activity related to academics.

Setup: One labeled cube per group (groups can be up to five participants).

Time: 10 - 30 minutes, depending on how many different types of cubes you have.

A cube is placed on the table of each group with strict instructions not to touch the cube at all. The faces of the cube are labeled carefully, and the goal is for participants to figure out what is on the face of the cube they can't see.

Participants can move around the table to see all visible faces of their cube, but cannot touch the cube or move it in any way.

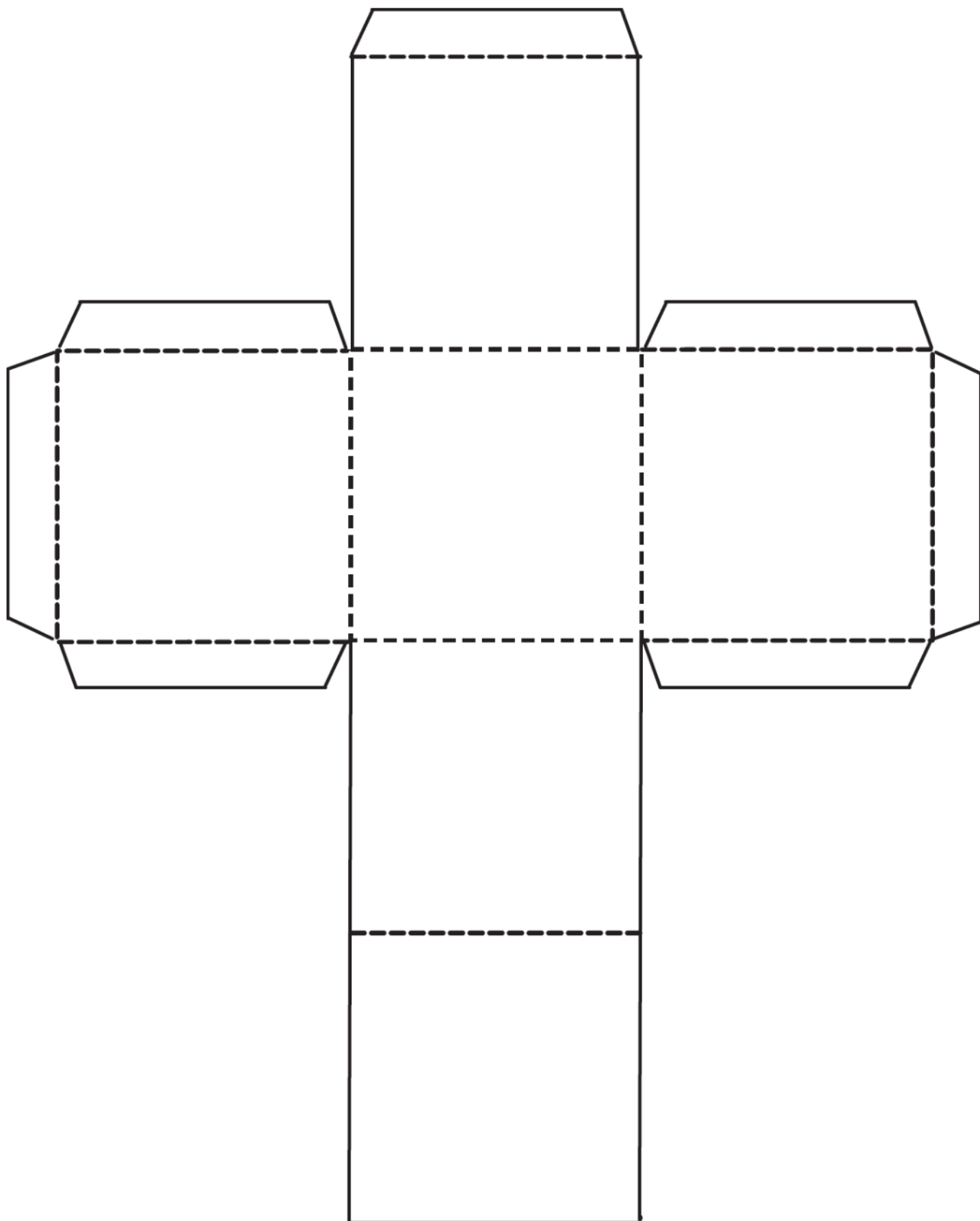
Given a time limit of five to ten minutes, the group must work together to decide what is on the unseen face of the cube by communicating and sharing ideas.

Participants must be able to explain how they know the answer, and be able to explain their reasoning behind the answer.

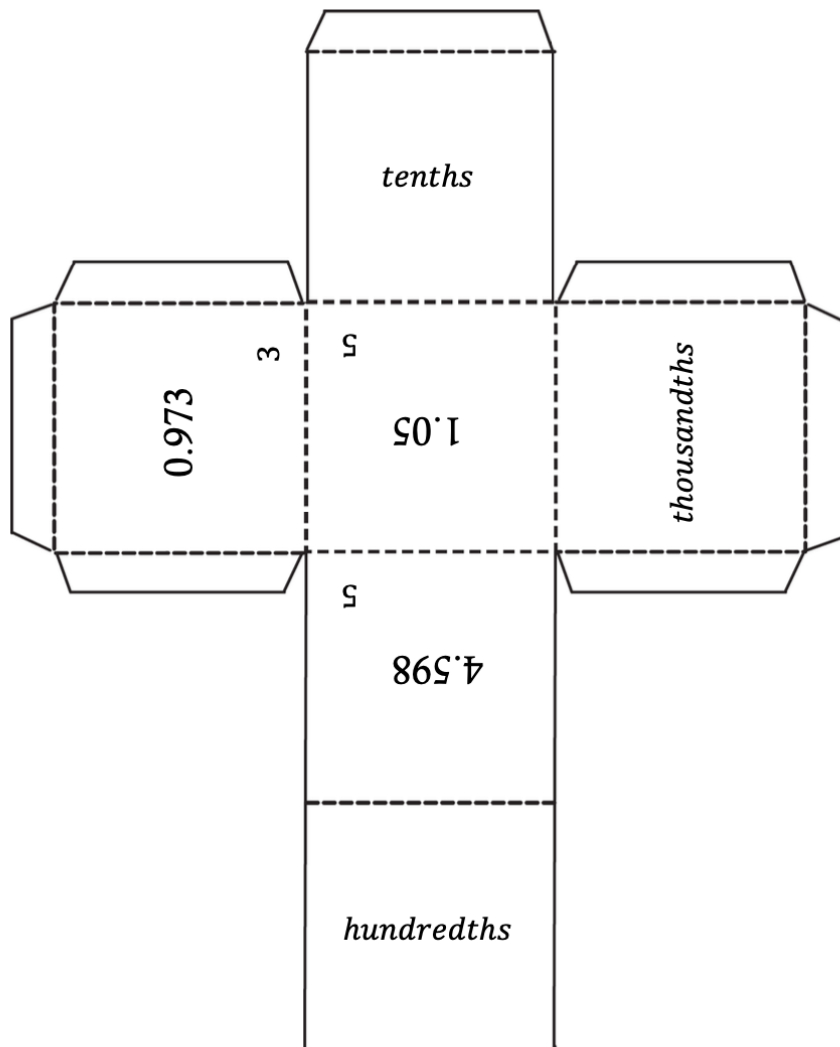
Tips for Success: Make each cube different, or make a couple versions of each cube and place the unseen face differently for each group. Frustration rises quickly, so encourage participants to look carefully at each part of the cube faces.

Cubes and Labeling

You can buy blank cubes or use the cube template below to print on white card stock and build yourself by folding and taping. The trick to labeling the cubes is to make each face a problem that is solved in relation to another face. This can be done for any subject matter. Refer to the example of a math inquiry cube below the blank template.



The inquiry cube below was used to challenge the brains of 4th graders in reviewing decimal place value. When the cube is folded, each opposite face is related. For example, the right and left faces we see here labeled "0.973" and "thousandths" are connected, as the 3 in the bottom corner of one face is in the thousandths place of the decimal shown. This can be changed for any subject and can be done in many creative ways.



BLOCK BUILD

Team-building exercise involving clear verbal communication and collaboration.

Setup: 5 or more small building block formations grouped with their matching blocks separated, 10 or more dividers to block the front and side view of a desk, and a timer.

Time: 30 minutes

Separate participants into groups of an even number (4 or 6 recommended).

Each group will have a builder team and a directive team, with the same number of participants on each of the internal teams. The directive team will have an already built block model and give verbal directions to the builders. The builders will listen to the directive team to build the same block formation as accurately as possible within a five minute time limit.

Each group will not be able to see what the other half of their team is doing, as the builder and directive teams' view is blocked by the dividers set up on desks.

When a team thinks they have completed the challenge, the facilitator will double-check their work, looking for the exact blocks in the exact original formation.

Multiple rounds may be played by rotating the block formations to each group, after each round ask reflecting questions:

What did your group do to be successful? Why do you think your group was unsuccessful this time? What is helpful when working as a team?

Tip for Success: Prepare the block formations and matching blocks carefully, making sure you have the same shape, color, and attachment count on each block. Remind the directive group that taking apart the formation is against the rules.