# Table of Contents

The Purpose of Mental Toughness................................................................. 4
Themes ........................................................................................................... 4
The Role and Tools of the Facilitator(s)......................................................... 6
  Facilitator Tools ......................................................................................... 7
The Debrief .................................................................................................. 8
Schedule Insert............................................................................................ 8
Exercise Inventory....................................................................................... 11
  AB/XY ......................................................................................................... 11
  Be Like Me ................................................................................................ 11
  Beneath the Surface .................................................................................. 12
  Birthday Line Up ...................................................................................... 12
  Blind Fold Square ..................................................................................... 12
  Brainstorm ............................................................................................... 13
  Build-A-Bridge ......................................................................................... 13
  Circle of Support ...................................................................................... 13
  Color Jacuzzi ............................................................................................ 14
  Comic Strip Chaos .................................................................................... 14
  Cup Stack .................................................................................................. 14
  Cocoon the Platoon ................................................................................... 15
  Color Jacuzzi ............................................................................................ 15
  Egg Drop ................................................................................................... 15
  Hidden Treasure ....................................................................................... 17
  Hula Hoop Pass ......................................................................................... 17
  Human Knot ............................................................................................. 17
  Human Machine ....................................................................................... 18
  Human Taco ............................................................................................. 18
  Letter to Self ............................................................................................ 18
  Link-it-Up ................................................................................................. 19
  Lollipop .................................................................................................... 19
  Magic Carpet ............................................................................................ 19
  Magic Wand .............................................................................................. 20
  Masks ......................................................................................................... 20
  Micro-Lab .................................................................................................. 20
  Mine Field ................................................................................................. 21
  Name by Name ........................................................................................ 21
  Name Toss ................................................................................................. 22
  One Shining Moment ............................................................................... 22
  Over the Bridge ....................................................................................... 22
  Paper Tear ................................................................................................. 22
  Penny for Your Thoughts ........................................................................ 23
  Plane Crash ............................................................................................. 23
  Play Ball .................................................................................................... 23
  Scavenger Hunt ....................................................................................... 24
  Signature Bingo ........................................................................................ 25
  Stepping Stones ........................................................................................ 26
  Superhero ................................................................................................. 27
  Team Skis ................................................................................................. 27
  Thinking Outside the Box ......................................................................... 27
The Purpose of Mental Toughness

All YouthBuild Newark participants are required to take part in the Mental Toughness Orientation wherein, through a series of team-building exercises and other activities, it is determined whether or not they are adequately prepared and/or ready to participate in the YouthBuild program. Mental Toughness is designed to improve participants' abilities to set goals and maintain focus and also helps to assess a recruit's commitment. This, traditionally a 2-week orientation, concludes with an intensive interview and staff deliberation process that results in the creation of a YouthBuild Newark class/cohorts.

Themes

Mental Toughness daily activities are organized around themes. The days' discussion, team builders and activities are designed to connect back to the theme.

Re-focus

This day's exercises will help participants to "invest" themselves at YouthBuild Newark. We recognize that personal development is a difficult and unrelenting process. This day will provide multiple opportunities for everyone to reaffirm his or her commitment to personal development and to each other.

Expectations

Students and staff are given the opportunity to discuss what their YouthBuild Newark environment will look like for the upcoming year. Small groups will work on a list of expectations that will be reported out to the larger student body to develop consensus. This process will become students' code of conduct for the year, once all parties can agree on its elements. This is also an opportunity for the staff to be clear about commitments needed to have the group adhere to code. Core values, (Tools of the Program) are identified during this process.

Choices/Fear of Change

Fear for many of our students is a concrete fear of the unknown. As a spin-off of the success exercises, fear is examined in groups in the context of change and how this change process is planned for students of YouthBuild Newark. Team builders are designed to challenge students' comfort levels in an effort to identify some of the tools needed to overcome the fears many students use to hold themselves below actual skill levels.

Communication

The importance of healthy communication is highlighted during this day. Facilitators of teambuilding activities should be looking for debrief points to identify behaviors for students to examine in themselves. Correlation is made to the day-to-day activities of the program, again highlighting how proactive communication assists the process of development.

Hope/Trust

One of the major theories of YouthBuild Newark is that it takes a communal effort to effect real change in participants, and part of this effort needs trust from the members of the group. The typical YBN student also has been through other systems/programs that did not deliver what the student thought were the end goals, and thus bears some scarring. Group discussion aims to outline the theory and clarify students' role in its practice, and allow members to share concerns with said practice. Activities will highlight the need to
be able to believe in another person/system to achieve at the highest level possible. They also provide a role for students' to understand the role of support.

**Perseverance/Success**

Students' view of success is challenged through a combination of activity and discussions geared to widen the limited view many young people have of success. Facilitators use scheduled activities to allow students to experience victories in groups and highlight the tools to navigate the obstacles in a manner that keeps focus on the larger goal. Group discussion allows students to articulate their vision and what may be keeping them from achieving at the level they see appropriate.

**Goal Setting**

YouthBuild students are encouraged to create S.M.A.R.T. goals using the following acronym:

- **Specific**
- **Measurable**
- **Attainable**
- **Realistic**
- **Timely**

**Specific** - A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general goal. To set a specific goal you must answer the six "W" questions:

1. **Who**: Who is involved?
2. **What**: What do I want to accomplish?
3. **Where**: Identify a location.
4. **When**: Establish a time frame.
5. **Which**: Identify requirements and constraints.
6. **Why**: Specific reasons, purpose or benefits of accomplishing the goal.

**EXAMPLE**: A general goal would be, "Get in shape." But a specific goal would say, "Join a health club and workout 3 days a week."

**Measurable** - Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of each goal you set. When you measure your progress, you stay on track, reach your target dates, and experience the exhilaration of achievement that spurs you on to continued effort required to reach your goal.

To determine if your goal is measurable, ask questions such as...How much? How many? How will I know when it is accomplished?

**Attainable** - When you identify goals that are most important to you, you begin to figure out ways you can make them come true. You develop the attitudes, abilities, skills, and financial capacity to reach them. You begin seeing previously overlooked opportunities to bring yourself closer to the achievement of your goals.

You can attain most any goal you set when you plan your steps wisely and establish a time frame that allows you to carry out those steps. Goals that may have seemed far away and out of reach eventually move closer and become attainable, not because your goals shrink, but because you grow and expand to
match them. When you list your goals you build your self-image. You see yourself as worthy of these goals, and develop the traits and personality that allow you to possess them.

**Realistic** - To be realistic, a goal must represent an objective toward which you are both willing and able to work. A goal can be both high and realistic; you are the only one who can decide just how high your goal should be. But be sure that every goal represents substantial progress. A high goal is frequently easier to reach than a low one because a low goal exerts low motivational force. Some of the hardest jobs you ever accomplished actually seem easy simply because they were a labor of love.

Your goal is probably realistic if you truly believe that it can be accomplished. Additional ways to know if your goal is realistic is to determine if you have accomplished anything similar in the past or ask yourself what conditions would have to exist to accomplish this goal.

**Timely** - A goal should be grounded within a time frame. With no time frame tied to it there's no sense of urgency. If you want to lose 10 lbs, when do you want to lose it by? "Someday" won't work. But if you anchor it within a timeframe, "by May 1st", then you've set your unconscious mind into motion to begin working on the goal.

**T** can also stand for **Tangible** - A goal is tangible when you can experience it with one of the senses, that is, taste, touch, smell, sight or hearing. When your goal is tangible you have a better chance of making it specific and measurable and thus attainable.

**Unity/Community**

As we prepare to move to the second phase of orientation, teamwork is highlighted through the day's activities. At this point, many students have formed new bonds with other candidates and this is celebrated during the debrief. Students are presented with an activity that required students work together in close proximity to achieve the goal (Human Knot). Discussion groups wrap-up the events/activities of the last six days, reminding students of the lessons learned each day. Students are given broken into two groups and given reporting assignments for the next four days.

**The Role and Tools of the Facilitator(s)**

A facilitator is a person that has the role of anticipating, motivating and managing the various people and situations that have occurred. A good facilitator allows others to be heard, the truth to be expressed and supports an atmosphere of physical and emotional trust. The facilitator's own thoughts and feeling are withheld and should strive to remain objective. All debriefs should have a designated facilitator.

The purpose of Mental Toughness is to challenge applicants to think outside of their comfort zones and to examine their own behaviors. It is also a great way to explore people's willingness to reflect, ask for help, work together, problem solve and plan.

Exercise time limits are used as only guidelines. The actual time spent depends largely upon how quickly your group accomplishes the tasks and how much discussion is generated.

Safety First – At all times, remind participants to move slowly and be aware of their surroundings so that safety is never compromised. Be sure no one is doing something that may be hurting or endangering the partnering or group in any way.
The experiences of Mental Toughness form the basis for the rest of the program cycle. Each structured activity, new game, or community service project is an experience from which to draw learning. During activities there are several key dynamics to watch for including:

- People that hide from the rest of the group.
- Any grouping asking for help.
- At which a group finally decided to work cooperatively or compete.
- Participants that are not having fun or have given up because they are convinced an exercise is impossible/un-cool/unproductive.

**Facilitator Tools**

The key to a good facilitation is to let the group discover the learning that is appropriate. As the facilitator, do not try to manipulate the questioning to get the group to discover what you feel is important. This section contains some tools to help you in your questioning to help the group discover their own learning without manipulating the conversation.

1. If you set a time limit and the group is struggling when time is within a few minutes of running out, offer assistance to someone. Then note whether they help the rest of the team.

2. Many people do not ask for help because they are afraid of looking stupid. That is associated with the #1 fear in the U.S. -- looking stupid. In polls and statistics, you will see the number 1 fear as public speaking. What is one possible outcome of public speaking? Looking stupid in front of lots of people. Help the team you are facilitating to agree that it is okay to look stupid in front of the group.

3. The opposite of looking stupid when asking for help is true of offering help. Many people are offended when offered help. i.e. “Do I look like I need help?” or, “Do I look so stupid I need help?” This can be a very embarrassing time.

4. One of the main learning opportunities is for the group to communicate more openly without fear of looking stupid or embarrassing someone. It takes a great deal of risk to offer or accept help.

**Throw-Back**

Team Member: "How can we possibly get through this obstacle?" Facilitator: "If it was possible, what would need to happen?"

**Share Observations**

Facilitator: "It is very quiet. What does the silence mean?"
Facilitator: "It seems that not everyone is actively participating. Is there a reason for this?"

**Review Group Agreements**

It is very important to review when the group becomes disinterested, when rule violations are occurring without thought, and if the group is attacking each other personally. Facilitator: "Remember the ground rules we discussed as we begin to talk about this event." (if there are any)
Check-In

If a group is really struggling or people are becoming very frustrated, interrupt the activity and ask: "So what are you doing right now that is working?" "What is not working? Why?"

Accept/Legitimize/Deal With or Defer

Create a safe environment for participation by:
- Responding neutrally to a speaker whose ideas are "out of synch" with others in the group
- Legitimize his or her contribution
- Agree together how to move forward

The Debrief

A debrief is a specific time assigned for people to learn from themselves and their experiences. During the debrief, the facilitator asks the participants about their feelings and reactions to the experience. The focus is on the individuals' feelings and experiences. Ask questions such as: "How did you feel?" "What did you do?" "What happened to you?" Participants discuss what went on between group members during a given exercise. To process individual reactions into collective ideas, good questions to ask include: "Why do you feel the way you do?" "What caused that particular result or feelings?"

Debriefing allows the group to generalize from the experience to see how it might be reflected in other areas of their lives. Participants should be asked to focus on situations in their personal or work lives that are similar to those in the activity. The task is to identify similarities and state principles that they can apply to other situations. Some questions that could be asked are: "What did you learn from the experience?" "What other similar situations have you experienced?" "How does this relate to your work life?". Finally, participants can decide on a course of action for the future. As a facilitator, ask questions such as: "What do you want to remember from this experience?" "What would you do differently in a similar situation?"

Three Levels of a Debrief:

1. Intrapersonal – Intrapersonal issues relate to a single individual and involve personal feelings. They may include fear, safety, trust, self-concept, acceptance, embedded behavioral habits and personal value. These issues may surface unexpectedly during an interpersonal or group debrief and the facilitator must develop the skill of directing them to the proper venue(s). There are techniques for empowering all members of your group to manage their own intrapersonal debriefs and these skills will become developed in time as a facilitator.

2. Interpersonal – Interpersonal issues focus on the dynamics between individuals both emotional and cognitive. Sometimes these dynamics can profoundly affect an entire group, either holding it back or moving it forward too quickly, therefore rendering the debrief useless. Some examples are negativism, cliques, peer pressure, unwillingness to self-reflect, stereotypes, isms, past history, judgments, and fear. Issues between individuals are tied directly to the group's dynamics, but the group is not comfortable confronting those individuals. Facilitators are also responsible for recognizing these issues until the group develops its own trust and skills for speaking their whole truth.
3. Group – Group dynamics examine what is happening with the entire group. It looks at the intrapersonal and interpersonal attitudes and actions affecting the group’s cohesiveness. It attempts to conceptualize the harmony or challenge in order to solve problems and create happier and more functional workplace. Topics for group debrief include communication, leadership teamwork planning, shared goals and acceptable of ideas. An effective group debrief will gently bring the authentic thoughts and feeling of all members of the group to the table for the benefit of the whole. There is one word that will help in all situations – RESPECT. Respect of self, respect of all others and respect for the work.

Elements of a Good Debrief

1. Agreements – The group defines their own boundaries to feel safe and encourage honesty. Identify the guidelines of behaviors for these debriefs. One tool for this is a Full Value Agreement that outlines what the group agrees to do.

2. Permission – Permission is acceptance of the debriefing process. Each member must be conscious that they are giving themselves and the group permission to discuss relevant issues that emerge. Without active permissions, the debrief will be shallow, ineffective or damaging.

3. Purpose – Purpose generates the opportunity for learning, creates meaning for the experience and allows integration of learning into future endeavors. A debrief with a purpose is a random discussion.

4. Focus – Maintaining the group’s focus is a key responsibility of the facilitator. The “here and now” is imperative. Some people will shift the focus when things become difficult or uncomfortable. Focus must be maintained until closure.

5. Responsibility – Group members must take ownership and responsibility of their own behaviors and learnings. Egos and adolescent attitudes must be placed outside of the circle. Each member must check themselves during the debrief. They may excuse themselves, if necessary, if they cannot keep the agreements.

6. Structure – Establish a structure and time for debriefs that realistically will succeed. A debrief should be simple, focused, brief and complete.

7. Closure – Debrief needs a good ending. Effectively closing a debrief means that everyone in group is ready to move on. All issues may not be resolved, and future discussions with pertinent members may be desired. Closure brings a safe satisfactory ending with the recognition that an issue may need further action.

Universal Essential Questions

2. What was your first thought about the team builder/exercise and what do you think about it now?

3. Did you find yourself doing the same thing over and over expecting different results? Do you do that in other areas of your life?
4. What did you notice about yourself during this challenge? Did you ask for help? Did you want to do it yourself? Were you cooperating or in competition? Why or Why Not?

5. How many times at work, or in life, have you needed help or clarity, but not asked for it?
Exercise Inventory

AB/XY

Students will be broken into groups of 8-10, paired with another group and then isolated.

Participants are given a sheet of newsprint with the scoring table (below) and told that they are paired with another group (in another room) that can only choose from two letters for each round.

Group One can choose either A or B and Group Two can choose either X or Y.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scoring Chart</th>
<th>Group One Points</th>
<th>Group Two Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AX</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>+5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AY</td>
<td>-15</td>
<td>+15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BX</td>
<td>+15</td>
<td>-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BY</td>
<td>-15</td>
<td>-15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A moderator will move between the two groups to record and report the choice for each round and the resulting score. The objective of the game is for participants to realize that through cooperation and not competition both teams can "win".

Possible Essential Questions:

Does success occur in isolation? Can we become successful independently of others or is our success somewhat dependent upon others? How does this apply to family and friends?

Be Like Me

Students will be arranged in a circle, everyone will introduce themselves with a gesture. The rest of the group will repeat the name and the gesture simultaneously.

You can also round-robin this activity.

1st Participant: My name is X and my symbol is "gesture."

2nd Participant: Her name is X and her symbol is "gesture." My name is Y and my symbol is "gesture."

3rd Participant: Her name is X and her symbol is "gesture." His name is Y and his symbol is "gesture." My name is Z and my symbol is "gesture."
Beneath the Surface
Everyone is given an index card asked to write something down about themselves that is not readily apparent to the group.

**Facilitator’s Note: The index cards are going to be passed around so please ensure that the information being shared is not too private/personal.**

The cards will be collected by the facilitator and put in a bag, everyone must then pick an index card and find the person who wrote the statement, interview them about what was disclosed on the card and introduce them to the group at-large

Possible Essential Questions:
Levels of communication. Looking past the obvious, not judging by appearance.

Birthday Line Up
Have the group stand and line up in a straight line. After they are in line, tell them to rearrange the line so that they are in line by their birthday. January 1 on one end and December 31 at the other end. The catch is that they must do all this without talking or writing anything down.

Possible Essential Questions:
Name some of the ways that information was communicated.
Was the exercise difficult or easy?
How can this exercise be related to real life?

Blind Fold Square
Students will be broken up into groups of 15. One person will remain to direct the team as they are blindfolded in forming a perfect square.
Brainstorm
Divide the participants into teams of five people. Ask the teams to list: things that are square, things associated with a holiday, things that are red, things they can make out a coat hanger, etc. The teams are not allowed to discuss, just list items! The team with the most items on their list wins.

Build-A-Bridge
Divide into groups of up to 8 people. The purpose of the exercise: to experience the importance of paying attention to work processes and team relationships, as well as results. The desired results of the exercise: the state or local transportation department needs a new bridge design and the group has been assigned the task of building it.

The available materials are newspaper and masking tape. The criteria for building a successful bridge are to: (1) Be able to stand up on its own, (2) be strong enough to support the weight of a test object. Ask if there are any questions and if they all understand the process. When a group finishes the bridge, check for success.

Possible Essential Questions:
What did you learn from this activity?
What made the team successful?
What process, if any, did you use to “design” the bridge?
Who emerged as the group leader(s)?
What characteristics did the leader(s) display?

Circle of Support
Participants are formed into groups of eight to ten people and asked to form a circle. A heavy gauge rope that has been tied into a circle is placed on the floor in the center of the circle. Participants are instructed to use both hands to pick up the rope. Reposition participants so that no height and weight is distributed evenly around the rope circle (i.e. no two participants of the same stature should be standing next to each other nor should all the heavier or taller participants be on one side of the rope circle). Once positioned, participants are instructed to look down through the rope and move their feet forward so that their toes are seen to be just inside the circle. All participants are then instructed to lean back in unison until their arms are fully extended. At that point all participants should be supporting each other.

Variations of the circle have every other person lean forward after the circle is formed or have one person let go of the rope to demonstrate how lack of support of one person can affect the group.

Possible Essential Questions:
What does it take from each participant to make the circle hold or fold?
What difference does one person make?
Do more people provide more or less support?
How does this exercise apply to YBN or life in general?
Color Jacuzzi
The object of this small group exercise is to get the group to quickly meet the other members. The facilitator calls out a color of the rainbow: - for example RED:
   Red typically is the stop/tum-off color - so each member of the group is instructed to quickly tell what is the one thing (that they can disclose in public) that is really a turn off to them.
   Orange: is the motivation color - what motivates them
   Yellow: is the inspiration or creativity color - what was the best idea they’ve had
   Green: is the money color - what they plan to do for money, or the dumbest thing they ever did for money.
   Blue: is the sky’s the limit color - what is your favorite fantasy about your future
   Indigo: is an odd or different color - what is the most daring thing they ever did.
   Purple: is the color of royalty - if you were ruler of the universe for a day - what is the first thing you would do?

Comic Strip Chaos
Each participant takes a turn at picking a comic frame out of the large container. After the entire group has each chosen one, the participants begin to search for others with the same comic strip sequence. After the participants have found everyone in their group, they must arrange themselves so that the sequence of frames are in chronological order to form the comic strip correctly. Upon completion of sequence, the newly formed group sits down together. This is a great game to break large group into smaller groups.

Cup Stack
Each group (6 people) will receive 10 paper cups and a rubber band with six 3 ft. long pieces tied to the band. Cups will be spread out face down. Students will have to build a pyramid with four cups on the bottom, three in the next row, two then one. Students may not use their hands or any other part of their body. Each person should hold onto one of the strings and maneuver the rubber band to pick up & stack the cups.

Possible Essential Questions:
Was anyone frustrated? How was it handled? Why was teamwork important in this activity? What is so hard about teamwork? How did you contribute to teamwork on your team?
**Cocoon the Platoon**

Divide your group into even teams with 6 to 12 in each team. Have each team line up relay-style, fairly close to the person in front of them, with everyone facing forward.

Place identical, new rolls of masking tape on the floor in front of the first person in each line. On “go”, the first person in each line picks up the roll of tape and begins removing a strip of tape. They stick the first foot or two of the roll across their stomachs and pass the roll to the person behind them, who continues passing and unrolling the tape to the next in line on the opposite side. The cocooning of the team continues until the roll of tape is used up. The first team to raise an empty tube gives a cheer.

**Color Jacuzzi**

The object of this exercise is to get the group to quickly meet other members, learn their name, and a few fun things about them.

Time required: 10 - 20 minutes

What you do

The facilitator calls out a color of the rainbow. For each color s/he calls out, the students will answer the following questions:

- **RED**: typically a stop/turn-off-color-so each member of the group quickly tells what is the one thing (that they can disclose in public) that is really a turn-off to them.
- **ORANGE**: is a motivation color- what motivates you.
- **YELLOW**: the inspiration or creativity color- what was the best idea you've had.
- **GREEN**: the money color- what you plan to do for money, or the dumbest thing you did for money.
- **BLUE**: the sky's the limit color- what is your favorite fantasy about the future?
- **INDIGO**: an odd, different color- what is the most daring thing you ever did?
- **PURPLE**: is the color of royalty- if you were ruler of the universe for a day, what is the first thing you would do?

To mix this activity up, you could have students take these color guidelines home and make a corresponding creative response to be shared with the class.

**Egg Drop**

Students will be given materials and told to construct a carriage for their egg. After the building period has concluded, groups will compete to see who has done the best job of protecting the egg by dropping it from increasing heights until there is one group left. Winning group is awarded leadership of an activity for the following day.
Floating Rod
Participants will need a long, light rod (ex: a tent pole - the kind that unfolds and connects to itself to make a long rod).

First, place the rod on the floor and direct the youth to make two equal lines on each side, facing each other. Then instruct the youth to form their hands into fake pistols and point them at the person across from them. Pick up the rod and hold it over everyone’s fingers and tell the youth that you are now going to place the rod across everyone’s fingers.

The Rules Are:

1. Everyone must keep their fingers touching the rod on the underneath side.
2. No one can use any of their other 8 fingers to help.
3. Everyone must keep their fingers straight. (No curling their finger around the rod.)
4. The object is for everyone as a group to lower the rod to the ground.

At first, because not everyone will lower the rod in the same way at the exact same time at the same speed, the rod may seem to rise even though they know the objective is to lower it. After a couple of tries, they will hopefully work as a team to lower the pole to the ground.

The point of this exercise is to get participants to talk about how problems can "escalate" if we do not get it under control.

Gauntlet
Students will be asked to line up facing each other (12 to 15 on either side) and put their arms out at shoulder height. Beginning with the last person on the line, each student must run through the middle of the line allowing the participants on either side to raise their arms as the runner passes before them. It is an important exercise to prepare participants for higher order trust activities. Facilitators must set a more serious tone, reminding students of the need to protect the safety of their peers. If there are students in the group not taking the safety of others seriously, stop the activity and hold the group accountable before moving on.
Hidden Treasure
This training activity illustrates the value of working cooperatively.
Divide your training group into two teams. Write the following on a flip chart or overhead transparency:

“There is a hidden treasure in this room. Use the clues to help you find it. There are no other clues to help you find it. The winner is the team that discovers the treasure first.”

Tell the teams to begin their search for the treasure.
The game should end after 15 minutes of fruitless searching by either teams, or when the teams realize that, if they work together, their cards will spell out the hidden treasure, COOPERATION.

Possible Essential Questions:
What did you notice about: teamwork, communication, and respect for the ideas of others? How can the exercise be related to the classroom, worksite or life? Was the exercise really a competition?

Hula Hoop Pass
Have the group form a circle holding hands. Ask two people to let go of their grip long enough for them to place their hands through a hula-hoop before rejoining them. The team task is to pass the hula-hoop around the circle in a specified direction until it returns to the starting point. As a variation, the exercise can be timed and then competition can be structured between groups.

Another way to play is two use two hoops and have them go around the circle in opposite directions.

Human Knot
Students break into groups of no more than twelve. Form a tight circle. Place hands in front of you at shoulder height and cross them at the wrist. First reach across the circle and join your right hand with someone across from you. Keeping your right hand in place, second join your left hand with a different person across from you. By stepping under and over each other’s hands, participants arrange themselves in one large circle without letting go of anyone’s hands.

To make more difficult instruct participants that they cannot speak during the exercise.

Possible Essential Questions:
What did you notice about: teamwork, leadership, how leadership shifted, problem solving, point of view, information, decision making, which approaches worked? Which didn’t?
**Human Machine**

This can be done with large or small groups.

If you have less than 10 people you'll create one machine. If you have more than 10, you'll want to divide into teams of 10 to 20 people and have each team create a machine.

Give them the following instructions: You are to make a human machine using all of your team members. Choose an appliance, machine or contraption of any kind, and act out all of its parts with all the members of your team. For example: if you were to choose an electric toothbrush, several people could lay down to be the handle, others would be vibrating bristles. The sky is the limit.

It's best to let them come up with their own ideas. But here are a few great ones:

- A pinball machine (with a kid rolling around as the ball)
- A ski lift (with kids being scooped up by kids with locked arms)
- A washing machine
- A car wash

**Human Taco**

Stick labeled note card (with taco ingredient) on the back of everyone's shirt. (i.e. the word meat printed on a note card) Have each player mingle around asking yes/no questions to find out the taco ingredient that is on their back. Explain the correct order of ingredients in a Human Taco: shell, meat, cheese, lettuce, tomato, salsa and then give the start command, "I'm hungry! Let's eat! Run for the Border!" Each individual must find out which ingredient they are and then find enough to form a complete Human Taco.

**Letter to Self**

This is a large or small group activity.

Participants are instructed to sit quietly and think about the following questions:

1. What has your life been like until this point, and why has it been like this?
2. Why have you joined YouthBuild and what to you expect to personally achieve?
3. What will your life look like in the future and how do you plan to get to that point?

After being allowed to think about the questions for a few minutes the participants are given pencils, paper, an envelope and the following instructions:

1. Be honest while you write a one or two page letter to yourself that: 1) introduces you as you are now, 2) tells why you joined YouthBuild and 3) describes who you will be in the future.
2. Address the envelope to yourself and add a return address for YouthBuild Newark
3. Seal the envelope and turn it in to the facilitator.
Link-it-Up
Use up to 32 strings with loops on each end "links" (one for each person) Purchase a long piece of 1/8" rope from a fabric store or Home Depot. Cut the rope into four foot pieces or longer. The longer the rope (link), the more difficult it is. Tie each string with a loop at each end. You can use any type of knot, but you want the loop to have lots of room to put your hand through. A slipknot will work fine, but watch to see if the person tightens the loop around their wrist. This will make it MUCH harder to figure out! We typically use a simple 'granny' knot. Each link should be roughly two feet long after the loops are tied. TIP: To make it more difficult, you can make the links longer. To do that, simply cut the string into five or six-foot pieces before tying the loops.

Instructions to Participants: You are hostages who have been left unsupervised with only the Team Links to restrain you. If you can manage to free the two of you, you will be able to escape to freedom!

Have the group break into pairs and distribute the "links". Each person receives one ‘link’, or rope with two loops on the end. Have Partner A put one loop on each wrist. If they hold out their two wrists, the rope should be hanging from their wrists. Have Partner B put one loop on one wrist and pass the remaining loop around Partner A’s rope and then put the loop on their wrist. If they pull back gently from each other, there should be a ‘V’ created by their ropes. You may need to demonstrate how to put them on. Make sure everyone is ready before you move on. This should only take a minute or two depending upon the size of your group. The goal is to get all of the pairs so they can separate as quickly as possible. 4. The rules are simple. You may not take the loop off your wrist at any time. You may not cut the string or untie the knot. The whole team must be free in 15 minutes. The solution is not obvious, so you may need to give hints and remind people to help others get out once they have found a solution themselves.

Lollipop
Pass out dum-dum lollipops to the group. For every letter that appears in the flavor, the participant has to share something about him/her with the group.

Magic Carpet
Students are informed that all of the floor around them has suddenly become toxic and will injure them badly if they come into contact with it. They are lucky enough to have a magic carpet, which will protect them, although there is one small problem. The carpet is actually upside down and will only protect them for a short period of time. The group must turn the carpet over without any members of the group touching the floor. If participants do touch the floor, they are seriously injured and the group must complete the turn while caring for the injured party. Facilitator may have the student blindfolded, muted, or instructed to sit in the carpet, depending on the skill of the group.

Possible Essential Questions:
How did the group decide on action? Who led? How did group deal w/ injured member?
**Magic Wand**

If you had a magic wand, what would you change? This is an ice breaker that opens minds, considers possibilities, and energizes your group when discussion is dead.

**Materials Needed:**
A flip chart or white board, and markers if you want to record the results, but this will depend on your topic and reason for playing. It isn’t necessary. A fun wand of some kind to pass around would add to the fun.

**Instructions for Use During Introductions:**
Give the magic wand to the first student with instructions to give his or her name, say a little something about why they chose this class, and what they would wish for regarding the topic if they had a magic wand.

**Instructions for Use When Discussion Dries Up:**
When you’re having trouble getting your class to participate in discussion, get the magic wand out and pass it around. Ask students to share what they would do with a magic wand. 
If you think your topic should be eliciting creative responses from your students, but isn’t, keep the magic on the topic. If you’re open to a little fun and craziness to liven things up, open the magic to anything at all. You might produce some laughter, and laughter heals almost everything.

**Debriefing:**
Debrief after introductions, especially if you have a white board or flip chart to refer to, by reviewing which magic wishes will be touched on in your agenda.

If used as an energizer, debrief by asking the group to discuss how their magic wishes can be applied to your topic. Encourage wide open thinking. The sky is the limit. Sometimes two seemingly different ideas can be combined to create a great new thought.

**Masks**
Participants are given a piece of paper (preferably poster board). They are asked to cut out a face shape (that is fairly large - like the size of a regular face). They can cut out eyes and a mouth if they would like. Participants are then asked to decorate the face. One side represents what they feel people see/know/believe about them (on the outside). The other side represents what he/she feels about themselves (things going on the inside, what people do not necessarily know or see, etc.). The participants then share with the group if they feel comfortable.

**Micro-Lab**
Divide participants into pairs. In a designated time period students will be given a list of questions and must interview their partner.

> **Students will then present a teammate with the introduction**
> *This is my new friend ... who likes to...”*

1. What is your favorite hobby?
2. Who is your favorite music artist?
3. Where were you born?
4. What are your plans after YouthBuild Newark?
5. What attracted you to YouthBuild Newark?
6. If you could be any profession, what would you be?
7. What is your favorite sport?
8. Do you have a favorite team?
9. What is your favorite movie?
10. If you could travel to anyplace in the world, where would you go?
11. Where did you go on your last vacation?

Mine Field
This game exercises students' communications skills as well as highlights the importance of precision in language. The game is supposed to simulate the "Path to Change"—see it, believe it, build it, do something. Strategic planning should be emphasized. The game raises issues such as the importance belief plays in decision-making, the importance of communication to navigate through the obstacles and need to plan for success. Remind them of their list of expectations previously completed.

The objective of the activity is to have the blindfolded participants make it through the minefield without stepping on and/or touching any "mines". Begin by placing tennis balls or paper plates all over the ground. These tennis balls will represent mines. Next, instruct your group to get into pairs (if group is an uneven number, participants can be switched to ensure everyone has a chance to participate). One member of each pair will be blindfolded during the activity. In addition to being blindfolded, they will be unable to speak. The other member of each pair will be giving directions to their partner. The only directions that can be given are left, right forward and back. If a mine is touched, the pair must start over. Several pairs will be going through the minefield at the same time so it is vital that blindfolded members listen carefully to their partner.

Name by Name
Teams will have 30 people. They will stand in a circle. Challenge: with out speaking the students must rearrange themselves in a circle in alphabetical order. No hand signals or hints of letters are allowed. The only hint allowed is pointing to the proper position.

When complete have everyone say their names loudly and clearly to see if they are truly in alphabetical order. If any person is not heard by the entire group, anyone can yell out, "Repeat!" to force everyone to enunciate their names clearly. If they are not, continue the process of rearranging and saying names to check. The goal is to make the circle correctly in the least amount of rounds.

Discuss the importance of listening in communicating, and the role of the participant in communication, also non-verbal communication and queues.
Revisiting expectations- how many people didn't know each other's names? How does that tie in to respect?
Was it more difficult to work in this larger group?
Was there less comfort in this group than the smaller group?
Name Toss
Break students into groups of about 30 and have them go around once to introduce themselves to the group. Add one ball to the circle, having the tosser call the name of the catcher “Here you go ______.” And the catcher responding, “Thank you ________.” As students become more familiar with each other’s names speed up the process and possibly add balls.

One Shining Moment
Divide the participants into groups of no more than 15. Tell the newly formed groups that their assignment is to look back over their lives and find three events, activities, accomplishments, collaborations, or moments of recognition by others that were shining or important to them.

Once participants have a chance to think about their shining moments, ask them to share them with their small group one at a time. Tell the small group members to look for common themes and similarities in the stories. Each person will be asked to share one of their shining moments with the whole group upon completion of the small group exercise, if they are comfortable doing so.

Debrief the exercise by asking the group for their reaction of telling their own stories and hearing the stories of others. Continue by asking the large group if participants noticed themes in the stories. Ask if participants found commonalities in the stories shared in the small or large groups.

Over the Bridge
Students will break into groups. They will be given 3 pieces of 2"x4". There will be two markers a significant distance apart on the floor, say five feet, but the 2"x4" will only be 4 ½" in length. The challenge will be that the groups must get every member of the team across the specified distance using the wood.

Possible Essential Questions:
Was this a frustrating task? How was the frustration handled? Acknowledge those who used their problem solving skills constructively and point out those who gave up superfluous comments or who were overly negative. Ask the team why they think we made them complete this exercise. Also ask the team how this exercise relates to team building and communicating.

Paper Tear
Participants are given a piece of 8 ½ x 11 paper. Once everyone has a piece of paper they are instructed to close their eyes while they complete the following steps.
- Hold the in front of them
- Fold the paper from top to bottom and tear off the lower right corner
- Fold the paper from left to right and tear off the lower left corner
- Fold the paper from right to left and tear off the upper left corner

Participants are then allowed to open their eyes and compare results.

Possible Essential Questions:
How important are listening skills in this exercise. What feelings were evoked? How did the feelings affect performance? How can the exercise be related to the classroom, worksite or life?
Penny for Your Thoughts
Participants are broken down into small groups of up to 20 people. Everyone receives as many pennies as there are people in the room. When instructed students must go around the room and share one strength and one area needing attention with the other person and exchange the penny.

Plane Crash

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>map of desert</td>
<td>book (edible plants of the desert)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>salt tablets</td>
<td>flashlight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parachute</td>
<td>pistol (loaded)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rain coats</td>
<td>canteen of water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mirror</td>
<td>hunting knife</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You have been a passenger on a plane that has crashed in the desert. These are the items that you have retrieved from the plane before it burned up. The pilot and copilot have been killed and the only survivors are the people in your group.

On a scale of 1-11, number these in the order of importance to survival.

Give the following instructions to each group:

- Work individually for a few minutes
- Appoint a chair person to facilitate the process
- Decide as a group on the correct survival order

As your group starts to discuss, they’ll find out that the priorities vary depending on the goal, or purpose they come up with. For example, the biggest issue is, are they going to stay by the plane (air force pilots, unless in enemy territory and in danger are told to stay with the plane) or leave. If they are going to stay, then the compass and map aren’t much of a priority. You need to establish the frame in which every other decision is made or discussion is useless.

Play Ball

Design a perfect baseball team. Participants will break up into teams of four and talk about potential players and why they want them on their team e.g. athleticism, speed, omnipotence, pride, and perseverance. Participants can choose anyone dead or alive they would like for players: Martin, Malcolm, Dave Chapelle, Denzel Washington, Will Smith, Mohammad, Jesus, Angels (in the outfield). Participants are to fill in their roster and present to the larger group.
Scavenger Hunt
Use as many resources as you can to secure all of the items on this sheet

1. Library card
2. Driver's manual
3. Voter's registration card
4. A bus schedule
5. A change of address form
6. Blank deposit slips from a bank
7. A college application
8. A FAFSA application
9. A SAT booklet
10. Name all of the colleges of Essex County
11. Front page of a local newspaper
12. 3 different menus from a local non-chain restaurant
13. List 10 positive facts about the city of Newark
14. List what started the 1967 riots in Newark
15. Name all of Newark city council members
16. Who are our state senators?
17. Who is our state representative?
18. Who founded Newark, New Jersey?
19. Who is the founder of YouthBuild and when was YouthBuild founded?
20. How many YouthBuild programs exist worldwide?
**Signature Bingo**

The students are to get the signature of a person who meets the criteria for each section. You might want to implement a rule that a person can only sign another person's paper in two spots. The first person with a completed card wins.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>O</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who can count to twenty in a non-English language.</td>
<td>Who has baked a cake.</td>
<td>Who has never broken a bone in their body.</td>
<td>Who has never ridden a bicycle.</td>
<td>Has voted in a political election.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is the youngest child in their family.</td>
<td>Who currently lives in area code 07111.</td>
<td>Who has had a job that required wearing a uniform.</td>
<td>Has ever been on television.</td>
<td>Won a lottery/raffle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who cannot Swim.</td>
<td>Has fought in a snowball fight.</td>
<td><strong>FREE</strong></td>
<td>Performed in front of a large audience.</td>
<td>Who was in someone else's wedding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who has traveled outside of NJ, NY and PA.</td>
<td>Played organized sports.</td>
<td>Has never been on an airplane.</td>
<td>Has been outside of the United States.</td>
<td>Who has never been arrested.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has bungee jumped.</td>
<td>Has a tattoo.</td>
<td>Has a NJ driver's license.</td>
<td>Dyed their hair.</td>
<td>Who wants to attend college outside of NJ.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Page 25 of 44
Stepping Stones

This exercise will need two different colors of carpet squares (the stepping stones) and tape. Before beginning the activity, mark off with lines of tape or rope where the lava bed will be. The bed should be approximately 15-20 feet long depending on the number of participants you have. Explain to participants that their goal is to get all of their team members across the lava bed safely. The group gets half +1 as many stepping-stones as people in their group (i.e., group of 12 or 13 gets 7 stones, 14 gets 8, etc.).

The parameters are as follows:

- Everyone must reach the other side safely, using only the stepping-stones.
- The ________ colored stones can only move forward, the ________ colored stones can move both forward and backward.
- There can be no piggybacking on top of group members.
- Once the squares cross the line where the lava bed begins, they must be touched by a body part at all times or they will be lost FOREVER.
- You have 20 minutes to complete this activity.

The facilitator can make penalties for anyone who dips in the lava bed (i.e. the whole group starts over, that person is muted/blindfolded or needs to choose another person to be mute/blindfold), but you can assign these as the activity goes on and don't need to explain them before the activity starts.

Watch the first stepping-stone VERY carefully. It if very likely that they will forget about the rule that a body part needs to be touching it at all times and will throw it on the lava bed and then put their foot down. If this happens, take away that carpet square away immediately.

If the group loses too many carpet squares to make it across the lava bed successfully, you can offer the chance to "buy" back a square by everyone or one person doing something ridiculous. Suggestions are to sing and dance to Brittany Spears, I'm a little teapot, or anything else you can think of.

Possible Essential Questions:

1. How did it feel to be successful/ unsuccessful in completing this activity?
2. How did it feel to have to start over or had stones taken away?
3. How did it feel to be muted/ blind? (to have to mute/ blind another person)?
4. How well do you feel your team communicated during this activity?
5. How concerned were you with completing the goal?
6. How much time did your team spend planning your strategy vs. actually attempting to complete the goal? Was there too much planning? Not enough?
7. How did your team react to the time restrictions? Were they helpful or a hindrance?
Superhero
First: Create an alternative name for yourself using this formula: your favorite color + your favorite drink/beverage + "man or "woman" to the end". Second: Give yourself a superhero motion or stance.

Team Skis
Participants will mount 2x4 boards with rope attached. With no foot straps to assist them, team members must also lift the nylon ropes in tandem to get moving down a designated course. During the first attempt students will walk in unison across the room talking is allowed.
After the first successful round:
- everyone is muted
- every other student is blindfolded
- every other student will face in the opposite direction

Thinking Outside the Box
Here are nine dots arranged in a square matrix. Can you draw four straight lines, without lifting your pencil from the "paper," through all nine dots?

Solution

Tie Up
You need enough rope for your group to tie two people around the ankles at one time.

Break your large group into groups of 5-10 people. Have everyone in each group tie each other by the ankles. Everyone in a small group should be connected side by side. Once all groups are tied, ask the groups to get from one side of the room to the other. The groups will not be able to move without communication and cooperation. Once they figure out how to get across, let them know they represent different groups in the community, and how ineffective they can be without communication and team work.

Next, connect all the groups by the ankles side by side and tell them to get from one side of the room to the other. The entire group must now use the concepts in their smaller groups to work together as a whole. Once they accomplish that task, let them know how all groups must work together to help the community as a whole.
Touch It
Plates are arranged in a grid on the floor numbered 1-52
Students are to arrange themselves so that each plate is touched once in number order (some multiples do exist)

Students will be challenged to perform the task in smaller time increments
If any plate is not touched, or touched out of turn, the group must start from the beginning.

"TP" Shuffle
Pass around a roll of toilet paper and say something like "just in case this group gets a little messy, everyone needs to take some" (with no other qualifiers or instruction). Then go on with other business (agenda, minutes, and "housekeeping" items...) as the roll makes it way around the room.

Some folks by nature will take many "squares" and some just a few. Once everyone has had the roll, and you've finished other business, ask everyone to introduce himself or herself and share with the group as many "things" about themselves as number of "squares" they took! You can suggest the "things" be generic or make it relevant. You choose.

Two Truths & A Lie
Give each member of the group three minutes to write on an index card two things about themselves that are true and one thing that is a lie. Each group member will share these facts about themselves and the rest of the group has to figure out which fact is actually a lie.

Trust Falls
Students will be instructed as to the proper stance and procedure for falling and catching, including the check in "ready to fall", "ready to catch". Again safety is very important during this exercise.

Up, Down, Back, Forth
Students stand up and are told there are only four directions: up, down, back, forth. They must to do the opposite of the direction the facilitator calls out. Up means slightly stooping down. Down means getting up on tiptoe, back is taking a step forward. Forth is taking a step backwards.
Facilitator will start slowly and gradually increase the pace. If group seems to get the directions, change by saying the directions multiple times. (Example: up, down, up, forth, back, forth, up, up, back, back, down, forth, up, forth, back.
The lesson identified during the debrief should be the illustration of how difficult it can be to willfully do the opposite and how many may be in that mode in their lives currently.
Where Do You Stand?

Have two large pieces of paper. One with the word "agree" and the other with the word "disagree" written. Tape the two pieces of paper to opposite walls from each other at eye level or higher.

Tell the entire group to stand in the center of the room. Advise them that you are going to read some statements aloud and they are to move and place themselves in front of the sign that best describes their thoughts, feelings and reactions to the statement. If they are unsure or in the middle (presumably neutral) they can stay in the center of the room, but this option should not be encouraged. Remind them to be honest and react based on their first impression.

Read the statements below aloud and let the participants place themselves in response. Ask them to notice where they and others are standing. Discuss any "hot button" questions/reactions. Allow students to develop their own questions to supplement those listed below.

Statements:
1. Fruit juice is better for you than soda.
2. Left-handed people are more creative than those who are right-handed.
3. White meat chicken (wings & breasts) has more flavor than dark meat (drumsticks & thighs).
4. Black women with straightened hair look better than Black women with "nappy" hair.
5. It is possible to live a fulfilled and happy life working at minimum wage.
6. More education and more skills will provide a better lifestyle for my family and me.
7. Smoking cigarettes are better for you than smoking marijuana.
8. Condom use is optional in a committed relationship.
9. Families are stronger if they sit down to eat a meal together once a week.
10. Narcotics should be legal because as long as there are "fiends" someone's going to sell drugs.
11. White people, in general, are more ambitious than Blacks.
12. It's okay to refer to someone as a derogatory name as long as you state it as if you are playing.
13. It's okay to work a legit job and support street/gang/drug culture at the same time.
14. I feel comfortable when I am around a person who I know is gay or lesbian
15. I'm comfortable being around lesbian/gay people as long as they don't flaunt their lifestyle or be demonstrably affectionate (like kissing) in my presence.
16. It's okay to succeed by "any means necessary".
Yarn Toss

Start with a ball of yarn. Say your name and an interesting fact about yourself. Then, holding the end, toss the ball to another participant. That person will say his/her name and an interesting fact, then, holding on to part of the yarn, toss the ball to another person. By the time everyone has spoken, there will be a large web of yarn that can be displayed on the wall of the training room with tacks or tape. This activity can also be used as a review tool - each participant says something about the subject, then tosses the yarn.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Task</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:00</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00</td>
<td>Morning Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:45</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:15</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:15</td>
<td>Feeding World queries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:45</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00</td>
<td>Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:30</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:15</td>
<td>Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:45</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>2:00</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:00</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:00</td>
<td>Activity</td>
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<td>9:30</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>12:00</td>
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Estimated Time:

Theme: Education
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estimated Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
<th>Facilitator</th>
<th>Supplies Needed</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: 7:30-8:00</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Entire group</td>
<td>Cereal bars, juice, and cups</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: 8:00-8:30</td>
<td>Morning Meeting</td>
<td>Feeling word quotes</td>
<td>Entire group</td>
<td>Quote books, and feeling sheet</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: 8:30-9:30</td>
<td>PT</td>
<td>Exercise</td>
<td>Entire group</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: 9:30-9:45</td>
<td>Break</td>
<td></td>
<td>Entire group</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: 9:45-10:45</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6: 10:45-11:45</td>
<td>Clean up &amp; Sign out</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7: 11:45-12:30</td>
<td>Staff Meeting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
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Page 37 of 44
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Page 39 of 44
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<td></td>
<td>Interns</td>
<td>Entire group</td>
<td>Poster Paper &amp; Makers/Staff &amp; Interns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Page 41 of 44