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LEARNING

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Culture Building Projects

Dear [Subject Matter]

Hacktivity Overview
The purpose of this Hacktivity is to allow students to communicate their current and honest feelings about the relationship between themselves and [subject area]. Additionally, students will express their hopes for the relationship's growth throughout the school year. For instance, students may write a letter to "Writing", "Science", "Math", "Art", "Spanish", or "Theater". Letters might take the form of a letter to a close friend, a letter to a stranger, or even a letter to an enemy. The possibilities are endless!

Grade: Middle/High
Project Duration: 2-3 weeks

Materials Needed
Writing utensils
Paper
Camera/s

Essential Questions for Students
- What has your relationship been with [subject area]?
- What relationship goals do you have for you and [subject area]?
- How do you plan to achieve those goals with [subject area]?

Student Objectives
- To reflect on previous growth and development related to [subject area]
- To communicate current feelings toward [subject area] in written format
- To communicate aspirations for [subject area] in visual format
- To publicly present their learning during Back-to-School Night

Essential Questions for Teachers
- What can teachers learn from their students' honest feelings toward [subject area]?
- How can teachers incorporate what they learn into their curriculum design and classroom instruction?

Teacher Objectives
- To understand the myriad of experiences--successes, failures, anxieties, and aspirations-- students bring with them related to [subject area]
- To allow the shared experiences to inform practice
- To create the space for students to publicly present their learning during Back-to-School Night

Final Products
- Letter to the subject area.
- Stage a photo shoot and take a photo that visually represents your relationship goal with [subject area]. e.g. hugging a tree, dancing with a canvas, watching a movie with math etc.

Tips to get started!

Step 1: Brainbow
To ignite thought, have students write down the first five words that come to mind to when they think about [subject area]. Students can pair-share their words with a partner and then share out with the whole class.

Step 2: Modeling
Share with students that they will be writing an honest letter to [subject area]. You can share this student example and have students discuss what they notice in the letter.

> *Dear Writing,*
>
> *We have always known each other. You were always there but we never really talked. That is, until 1st grade. That's when we were pushed and forced to know each other. My 1st grade teacher believed we had a strong relationship and pushed me harder. She challenged me to spend more time with you. That's where our friendship began. After that school year, our relationship only strengthened. As years flew by we faced difficult times as I learned more about your rules. Most of my classmates complained about you, but I didn't. I accepted your challenges and took them head-on. At the end of the day we were best friends. As I entered middle school you became a great source of happiness as I began to spend more time with you for fun. However, now we're distant. I haven't spent time with you in months and our relationship is now...odd. I hope we become close friends again.*
>
> *From,*
> *Sally*
>
> **Sample student letter courtesy of classroom teacher Britt Shirk*

Step 3: Draft 1
Give students time to write the first draft of their letter and to come up with an idea for their #Relationship Goals photo.

Step 4: Critique Round 1

For this first critique round, have students exchange their letters and photo idea with classmates (at least two), then invite them to focus their critique on the content and organization of the letters, as well as the #Relationship Goals photo idea.

Be Kind, Specific, and Helpful

Before students begin their first critique session, it is important to share the rationale behind kind, specific, and helpful feedback.

Explain to students that throughout the year critique may take place in many different formats (verbal or written, individual or group, public or private, by novices or experts) and, that its sole purpose to develop high quality work.

- "Kindness" values what is "working" with the piece and, it can also build confidence.
- "Specific" targets the area for improvement, *frequently one of interest to the reviewer*
- "Helpful" suggests realistic and attainable goals for improvement.

For more detailed instructions on how to facilitate a critique session please see Ron Berger's [resources](#).

Step 5: Draft 2

Give students time to revise their draft based on the Kind-Specific-Helpful Critique Session

Step 6: Critique Round 2-Silent "Two Grows and a Glow" Post-it Critique

For this second critique round, have students display their posters/presentation around the room and give students several post-its so that they can give feedback to their classmates.

Two Glows and a Grow Post-It Critique

1. Student work is displayed throughout the room (on the walls or tables).
2. Each student is given several post-its.
3. As students move through the space, they observe work, then use their post-it to write down "Two Glows" (two pieces of warm, positive feedback) and "A Grow" (one suggestion they have for improvement).
4. Students place the post-its next to the work that is being critiqued.
5. Once the allotted time is up, the work is returned to each and they get to read the kind, specific, and helpful feedback they received. They may ask clarifying questions if they are unsure of what is meant by a specific piece of critique.
6. Students then make revisions to their work based on the critique they received.

*Teachers can scaffold this further with the use of sentence completion or sentence starter critique to jump start the process.

Step 7: Final Draft and Rehearsal
Give students time to revise and complete their final draft, then have them rehearse the vocal performance of their writing in preparation for Back-to-School Night, individually, in small groups, and in front of the class. Practice precedes progress!

Step 8: Exhibition
Students exhibit their Relationship Goals photo and perform their "Dear [subject area]" at Back-to-School Night! Remember to have students share what they hope to do this year, and what support they might need from their families!

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Culture Building Projects

Connectivity

Hacktivity Overview
The purpose of this Back-to-School Night Hacktivity is to allow students to see the relevance of the [subject area] to their own lives. Often times students enter the classrooms with the assumption that the subject matter is irrelevant to their lives. Questions such as, "Why does this matter?" or "When am I ever gonna use this?" are thought about internally and sometimes expressed openly. Teachers have an opportunity to allow students to investigate the connections for themselves and generate excitement about the subject matter at the same time!

Grade: Middle/High
Project Duration: 2-3 weeks

Materials Needed
Poster Paper
Pencils, Markers, Paint (or whatever you want them to use)
Computers

Essential Question
- How is [subject area] connected to your own life?

Student Objectives
- To generate inquiry about the [subject area]
- To identify relevance of [subject area] in students' lives
- To publicly present the [subject area] relevance during Back-to-School Night

Final Products
- Poster, Powerpoint Presentation, or a mini-documentary

Tips to get started!

Step 1: Brainbow
To ignite thought, have students generate a list of the activities they engage in on a daily basis

(e.g. eating, sleeping, shopping, gaming, etc.)

Step 2: Generate Inquiry
Give students time to work in groups to identify ways that [subject area] is connected to their daily lives and then have them support their hypotheses with research. For example, if a student in a Physics class likes to play basketball, she investigates the Physics involved in the sport of basketball. Below are three student examples of how Physics in connected to their interests:

The Physics of Frisbee
The Physics of Dance
The Physics of Tennis

Sample student Physics videos courtesy of classroom teacher Dr. Cate Challen

Step 3: Draft 1
Once students have selected a point of connection, give students time to create a poster or powerpoint presentation that visually explains how [subject area] is relevant to their lives.

Step 4: Critique Round 1
For this first round of critique, have students exchange their poster/presentation with classmates (at least two), identifying strengths in the design, making suggestions about visual choices, as well as asking questions about how the topic relates to [subject area] .

Be Kind, Specific, and Helpful

Before students begin their first critique session, it is important to share the rationale behind kind, specific, and helpful feedback.

Explain to students that throughout the year critique may take place in many different formats (verbal or written, individual or group, public or private, by novices or experts) and, that its sole purpose to develop high quality work.

- "Kindness" values what is "working" with the piece and, it can also build confidence.
- "Specific" targets the area for improvement, *frequently one of interest to the reviewer*
- "Helpful" suggests realistic and attainable goals for improvement.

For more detailed instructions on how to facilitate a critique session please see Ron Berger's resources.

Step 5: Draft 2
Give students time to revise their draft based on the Kind-Specific-Helpful Critique Session.

Step 6: Critique Round 2-Silent "Two Grows and a Glow" Post-it Critique

For this second critique round, have students display their posters/presentation around the room and give students several post-its so that they can give feedback to their classmates.

Two Glows and a Grow Post-It Critique

7. Student work is displayed throughout the room (on the walls or tables).
8. Each student is given several post-its.
9. As students move through the space, they observe work, then use their post-it to write down "Two Glows" (two pieces of warm, positive feedback) and "A Grow" (one suggestion they have for improvement).
10. Students place the post-its next to the work that is being critiqued.
11. Once the allotted time is up, the work is returned to each and they get to read the kind, specific, and helpful feedback they received. They may ask clarifying questions if they are unsure of what is meant by a specific piece of critique.
12. Students then make revisions to their work based on the critique they received.

*Teachers can scaffold this further with the use of sentence completion or sentence starter critique to jump start the process.

For more detailed instructions on how to facilitate a critique session please see Ron Berger's [resources](#).

Step 7: Final Draft and Rehearsals
Give students time to rehearse their Poster/Powerpoint presentations in preparation for Back-to-School Night, individually, in small groups, and in front of the class. Practice precedes progress!

Step 8: Exhibition
At Back to School Night, have students share their learning by presenting their Connectivity Poster/Powerpoint! Students can use their exhibit to introduce themselves to the larger school community. For more ideas regarding exhibition, check out the [Exhibition Tool Kit](#). Remember to have students share what they hope to do this year, and what support they might need from their families!

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Culture Building Projects

Name Tag Project
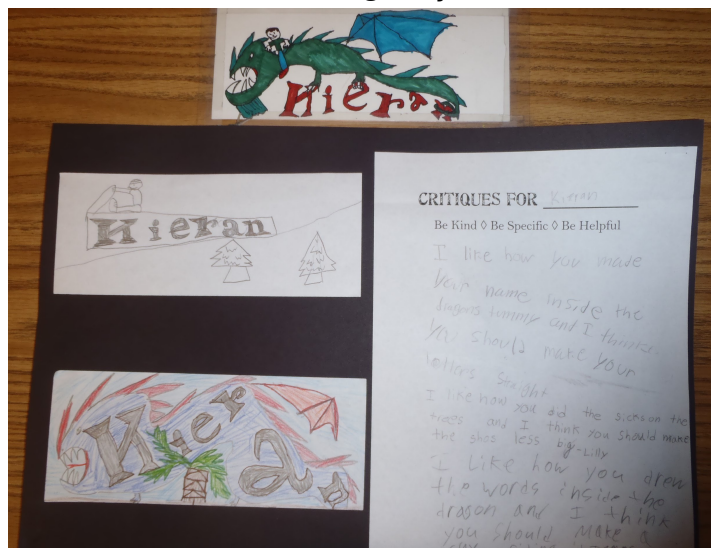
Grade: Elementary/Middle
Timeline: 2-3 Weeks

"We are a class who cares about our work and who works hard to create high-quality work." This is the message that the Name Tag Project conveys to students. This sets the tone for the year by focusing on the process for creating a beautiful name tag that will be used all year. By focusing on drafting, critique and revision, students learn communication, collaboration, and perseverance.

Essential Question: What does it take to create beautiful work?

Materials Needed:
Variety of Fonts (Print the Alphabet in each)
Paper
Card stock
Pencils, Markers, Paint (or whatever you want them to use)

Step 1: Gallery Walk
Intro the project, focusing on the message that while their previous classes may have created name tags in one day, we will spend weeks designing ours because we are a class who takes the time to create beautiful work. Have multiple copies of various fonts on tables. Students walk around and look for one that they would like to master. Students then choose one font to

practice. They will need to learn how to scale the letters to size and how to replicate details in their font.

Step 2: Draft 1
Students create their first draft by writing their name using the font they have practiced. Use pencil only.

Step 3: Lesson on Critique
Here's a handy [lesson on Critique](#) based on Ron Berger's work. Critiques are always Kind, Specific and Helpful. Use this sentence frame to start: "I like _____ and I think you should _____."
Focusing on specific elements, have students practice critique with a group of 2-4.
   Ideas for what to focus on:
   - Letter size (Are all letters the same size? If not, does it seem intentional?)
   - Spacing (Are there equal spaces between letters?)
   - Straight Lines (Do the letters sit on a straight line? If not, does it seem intentional?)

Step 4: Draft 2
Students use the feedback they got to refine their work and create a second draft. This time, they should write their name and begin to sketch artwork for their name tag. Use pencil and, if time, color.

Step 5: Critique Round 2 (Gallery Walk)
Students leave out their second draft and a blank page for people to write critiques.
Critiques are always Kind, Specific and Helpful. Use this sentence frame to start: "I like _____ and I think you should _____."
Focusing on specific elements, have students walk around silently, looking at people's work and writing critiques on their blank page. When everyone has at least 3 critiques, you can stop.
   Ideas for what to focus on:
   - Lettering (Does this look like the font they chose?)
   - Spacing and Size (Do the spaces and sizes of the letters seem appropriate?)
   - Sketch (Is the design clear and easy to see from far away?)

Step 6: Final Draft
Students use the feedback they got to refine their work and create their final draft. This time, use card stock and materials that allow students to create beautiful work.

Step 7: Exhibition Prep
Students reflect on their process to prepare for exhibition. Here's a handy [reflection page](#).

Step 8: Exhibition!
At Back to School Night, have students share their learning in this project! Here's a [handout](#) you can use to help parents engage with their students. For more ideas regarding exhibition,

check out the [Exhibition Tool Kit](#). Remember to have students share what they hope to do this year, and what support they might need from their families!

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Culture Building Projects

Curate Yourself Project
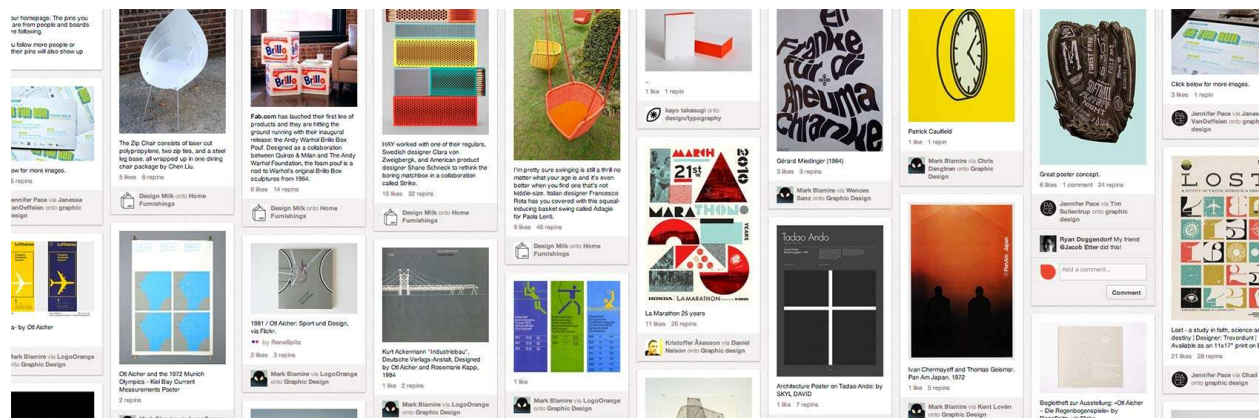
Grade: Elementary/Middle/High
Timeline: 2 Weeks

In this project students learn about curation and exhibition by creating an exhibit that introduces them to members of their community. Each student gets either a small physical space in the classroom or a digital platform (like a version of Pinterest) to curate. Students are tasked with thinking about elements of curation and artifacts that would best showcase their strengths, personality, and passions to their class and their greater community.

Essential Questions: Who am I? How can I use curation to communicate this to my community?

Materials Needed:
Curation Articles
https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/curation/

http://www.cluttermuseum.com/make-students-curators/
https://cooltoolsforschool.wordpress.com/curation-tools/
Artifacts (student contributed)
Computers (for digital curation)

Step 1: Project Introduction
Introduce curation. Use articles and videos to help define this concept. Look for models in the school such as trophy cases, go to a museum, and examine how they put together a collection of artifacts that tells a story. Explain that for this project, students will curate artifacts for an exhibit about themselves.

Step 2: Prototype
Students gather (either physically or digitally) a collection of artifacts that represent some aspect of their identity that they would want to share with their community. Students create a rough prototype of their exhibit (without text).

Step 3: Critique
Students critique the exhibit, identifying strengths in the design and artifact choices, making suggestions about visual curation, as well as asking questions about the artifacts. What do they want to know about this person based on what they see?

Step 4: Draft Writing
Using the feedback from their peers, students write short informational or narrative text to accompany artifacts. Here students think about formatting and purpose when writing. What do they want to convey about the piece? What does the audience want to know?

Step 5: Second Draft
Students add the text to their exhibit, thinking about design and their story of self. How can they use text to tell their reader who they are?

Step 6: Critique
Students critique the exhibit again. Remember that critique is Kind, Specific, and Helpful. Here are some resources for critique.

Step 7: Final Draft
Students make final changes to their exhibit.

Step 8: Exhibition Prep
Students reflect on their process to prepare for exhibition. It may help to have them respond in writing to some reflection questions. Examples of questions might be: Why did you choose these artifacts to represent yourself? What did you leave out? What were some of the challenges with making these choices? What was the process for putting everything together and curating this exhibition? What did you learn about yourself in the process?

Step 8: Exhibition!
Students can first present to one another, using their curated exhibit to introduce themselves to the class.

At Back to School Night, have students share their learning in this project! Students can use their exhibit to introduce themselves to the larger school community. For more ideas regarding exhibition, check out the [Exhibition Tool Kit](#). Remember to have students share what they hope to do this year, and what support they might need from their families!