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Preface

This book is dedicated to you — a teacher dedicated to building the cooperative classroom: A classroom in which each student explores the content and is an active member of a learning community; a classroom in which each student celebrates the diversity of every other classmate; a classroom that each student is excited to enter every day and is sad to leave at the end of the year; a classroom that prepares students to become better people who will make the world a better place.

What is Classbuilding?

This book is about Classbuilding. "Well, what in the world is Classbuilding?" you ask. As you would rightfully respond to your students: "If you want to truly understand something, you'll have to investigate it yourself." So look it up!

What's that? Couldn't find Classbuilding in the dictionary? Well it should be in the dictionary as well as every pedagogical manual, but you're right, it's not. So here's a crack at a definition:

Classbuilding (klas•bild•ing), c1980. *v.* The process by which a room full of individuals with different backgrounds and experiences become a caring community of active learners.

Pretty simple right? Right. There are a few interesting things to note about that little concocted definition. First of all, notice the date. Classbuilding is dated circa 1980. The move to create a more cooperative and democratic classroom in which there is a high premium on student autonomy and interaction is by no means a new movement. The date refers to the term itself. The name classbuilding was coined around this time by Spencer Kagan who thought that the term used to that point, "Whole class inclusion activities", was too much of a mouthful!

The second, and perhaps most noteworthy part of the concocted definition is that classbuilding is a verb; it is an action word; it is a process. Classbuilding doesn't happen. Classbuilding is done!

And finally, one addendum: The term Classbuilding should be used quite loosely. Classbuilding refers to any classroom practices that involve the whole classroom which result in improved classroom climate.

Why do Classbuilding?

"So tell me, why do I want to do classbuilding in my class?" OK. You asked so here it goes. The rationale for doing classbuilding is manifold. Classbuilding is great for getting students acquainted with one another at the beginning of the year. Classbuilding throughout the year promotes the liking and respecting of teammates and classmates. Students interact with one another in an open, nonthreatening environment creating mutual support and promoting self-esteem. Students are active, and the classroom becomes fun and energising. Students enjoy the class and the school more. The classroom runs smoothly, and less time is spent on management and more time on active learning. Students learn lifelong interpersonal skills and are better prepared to function in an increasingly pluralistic society. And the world is a little nicer place because of it. Good enough?

By now you're probably saying to yourself, "Yeah, yeah, that's all fine and dandy; I already know all this. That's why I became a teacher, and that is why I picked up this book. If you want to give me anything, don't give me a lecture. GIVE ME ACTIVITIES THAT I CAN USE IN MY CLASSROOM! TODAY!"

OK. OK. Got the message. We'll get to that in a minute. Just one more thing. There are many ways to create a positive classroom climate and, therefore, many different ways to do classbuilding. This book describes one method of doing classbuilding. Let's take a quick peek at a few other methods.

Types of Classbuilding

The most broad-based classbuilding technique is through classroom restructuring. Cooperatively structured classrooms contribute greatly to a positive class tone. Students work together cooperatively in teams, help others when help is requested and request help when help is needed. Frequent

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class meetings are set up for mutual support, to address issues and to improve class functioning. Class goals are established in which all students are positively interdependent in their striving toward the class goal, giving students a common mission and a sense of classroom identity. Also, empowering students by allowing each to participate in the decision-making process gives students a sense of classroom belonging and ownership. How students interact with one another and how they feel about class and school is largely a function of how we structure our classrooms and the behavioural expectations we set forth. A list of resources on structuring the classroom cooperatively is provided in the **Cooperative Learning** section of the resource list at the back of this book.

Another form of classbuilding is through explicit classroom instruction of prosocial behaviours. Providing students with prosocial skills such as caring, cooperating, giving, sharing, empathy, tolerance, peacemaking and conflict resolution skills is another route to building the caring classroom. There are a variety of great literature selections as well as other resources available for teaching social skills. A list of resources for teaching prosocial skills is provided in the **Social Skills** section of the resource list at the back of this book.

Classbuilding may also be done by validating the backgrounds and experiences of individuals and cultural groups. Self-Esteem activities are designed to affirm individuals' competence and individuality. Students learn to value their own uniqueness and respect themselves; they are, therefore, more prepared to extend that respect to others. Multicultural activities celebrate the richness and diversity of different cultures. These classbuilding techniques strive to create an inclusive classroom in which all students feel that they are important members. See the **Inclusive Classroom** section of the resource list.

And finally there are classbuilding activities. These are fun, usually energising activities which involve networking opportunities for all students of the classroom. And that is what this book is all about. Sound good? It is. Want to get the most out of this book? Read on.

How to Get the Most Out of This Book

We selected our eleven favourite cooperative learning structures for classbuilding. Each structure is energising and provides opportunities for students to work (or play) with



classmates. The book is arranged alphabetically by structure. For each structure, we have provided a description, the step-by-step procedures, some hints, the inherent benefits of the structure, the basic principles, variations on the structure and lots of content ideas. Following each structure there are worksheets for different activities to do with the structures. Think of these as sample activities. We have provided activities in a variety of content areas for a variety of year levels. There are a number of really great classbuilding activities here. These, however, are only samples.

A structure is a content-free way to organise student interaction. It is the step-by-step of how students interact with each other. When you add some content to the structure, *VOILÁ*, an activity is born. With new content, you get a brand new activity every time. So really, the structures are like an activity factory. Just put the content in one end, and an activity pops out the other. A structure can be used over and over and over... well, we think you get the picture.

To get the most out of this book, don't just do the activities, master the structures. Read them; try them; make them your own. With these eleven structures, and a little imagination, you can create an endless array of classbuilding activities!

We hope you enjoy these structures as much as we enjoy providing them!

Miguel
Laurie Robertson
Spencer K. Jan

Find-Someone-Who

Students are excited, circulating through the classroom, forming and reforming pairs, writing answers on a worksheet which their partner signs. Students try to “Find Someone Who” knows an answer; they then become “Someone Who Knows”.

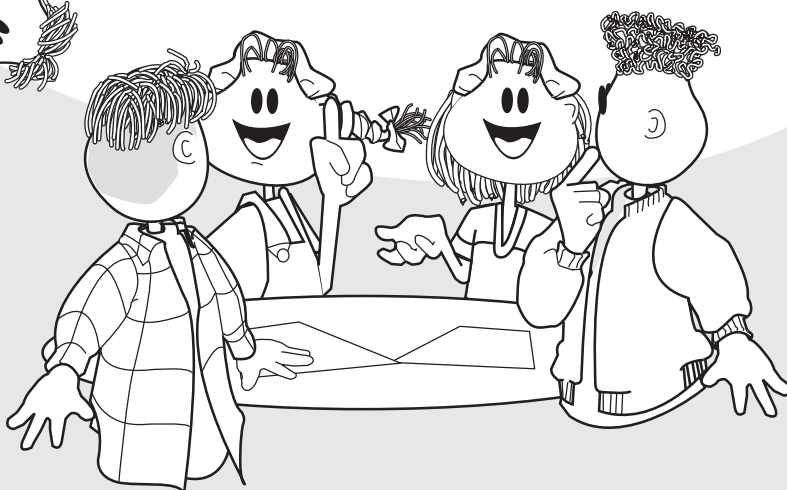
Students each receive a worksheet. The worksheet has questions like, “Find someone who knows the name of this flower.” Students mingle in the classroom until they find a partner. Partners then ask each other questions from the worksheet. If a partner knows an answer, they share and the other student writes it on the worksheet in their own words. Partners sign under the answer after checking to make sure that it was correctly written. Students can receive only one answer from a partner and then circulate to find another partner. When students finish their worksheet, they become helpers by sitting down and becoming a resource for others who can ask them any question.

One very nice feature of this structure is that students who initially knew none of the answers, after filling in one or two answers, become a resource for others because they have become “someone who knows”.



1 Students Mix & Pair

With worksheets in hand, students circulate through the room until they find a partner. “I want you to mix around the room until you find a partner. When you find a partner, you can ask each other questions until you find a partner who knows. If your partner knows an answer, fill in the box in your own words on the Find Someone Who form, and then have your partner sign your form to show they agree.”



2 Student Questions Partner

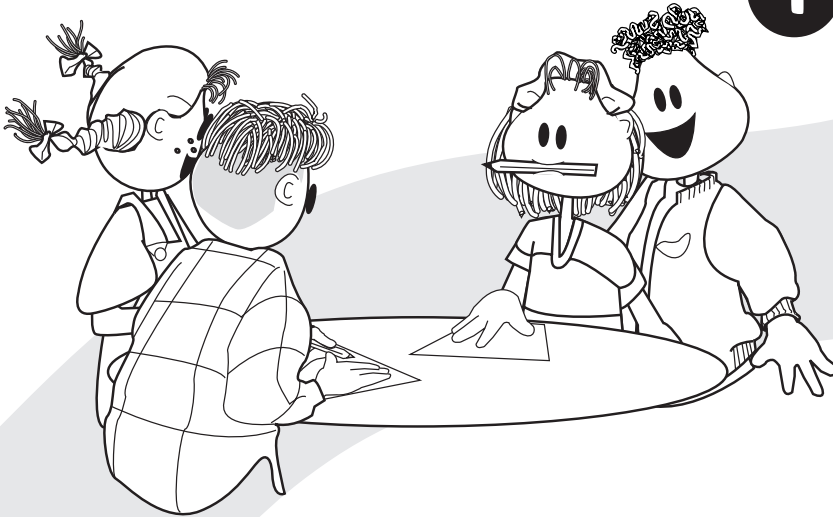
One student asks his/her partner one question on the worksheet. The partner shares the answer if he or she knows it. Then the student writes the answer in his/her own words.



4 Reverse Roles

Students switch roles. The student who asked the first question tries to answer their partner's question.

Finish the Form: Students mix and pair again, with a new partner each time until they finish the Find-Someone-Who form.



3 Partner Checks

The partner checks to see that the answer is written correctly. If the partner agrees with the written answer, they sign the form on the line under the answer.

Hints

- ★ **Hand Signals.** Have students raise one hand as they walk until they find a partner. This makes it easy to spot those still looking for a partner.
- ★ **Students Provide Content.** Prior to playing People Hunt and Fact Bingo, have students turn in one little known characteristic that they would like everyone to know to use for the form.
- ★ **One Answer Each.** Remind students they can get only one answer from a partner and then must circulate to find another partner.

Benefits

- All classmates help each other reach the class goal.
- Even students who initially knew no answers become a valuable source for others.
- Students are actively involved; the class has the tone of an exciting treasure hunt.
- Knowledgeable students are valued by peers.

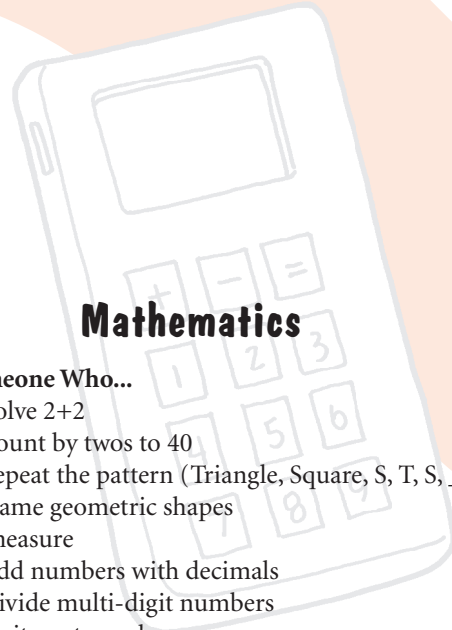
Ideas for My Class!



Classbuilding

Find Someone Who...

- Has brown hair
- Has a dog and a cat
- Likes to eat pizza
- Is the same height
- Is wearing pink
- Was born in the summer
- Isn't wearing socks
- Has four pockets today
- Has a sister
- Favourite colour is blue
- Has a striped shirt on
- Wears glasses
- Has a shirt with three buttons
- Rides a bike to school
- Can sing the ABC's
- Is wearing a digital watch
- Can answer a riddle
- Skis in the winter



Mathematics

Find Someone Who...

- Can solve $2+2$
- Can count by twos to 40
- Can repeat the pattern (Triangle, Square, S, T, S, _____)
- Can name geometric shapes
- Can measure
- Can add numbers with decimals
- Can divide multi-digit numbers
- Can write out numbers
- Can identify a computer part
- Can extend a number pattern
- Can locate a point on grid
- Can name the money value
- Can convert a decimal to per cent
- Can demonstrate the preservation of equality

Variations

3 Questions Allow students to ask a partner up to three questions, trying to find a question the partner knows.

People Hunt Students are given a People Hunt form. The form has a list of characteristics, one corresponding to each student in the class. Students "hunt" for the student that fits the characteristic listed on the People Hunt form. Students pair up and ask each other one question. "Are you the person who has bungee jumped?" When students find the person matching the listed characteristic, that student signs the form. The class continues until all students finish their People Hunt forms. People Hunt may also be played in which students get a form with questions for themselves. Then, students "hunt" for someone who is like them based on those characteristics.

Info Search Start with a topic on which all students have no information. Every student gets an Info Search form which is a worksheet with questions on it. If there are ten questions on the worksheet, ten students get an answer sheet with one answer filled in. Students then play the game just like Find-Someone-Who. Soon all students have all the answers.

Find-Those-Who This variation is played just like Find-Someone-Who except students circulate about the classroom in pairs or teams searching for another pair or team that has the answers.

Fact Bingo A bingo type card is made up. The cells each have a fact about a student. Students circulate and try to fill the card or get bingo by locating classmates who fit the description. Classmates sign the cell when they are correctly identified.

Principles

Positive Interdependence Students need information from their partner; they cannot do the task alone.

Individual Accountability Students are accountable for active listening and writing. Partners check to make sure they have written what was said before signing off on it.

Equal Participation Students take turns asking and answering questions.

Simultaneous Interaction Half the class is speaking at once as students are questioning in pairs.

Science

Find Someone Who...

- Can identify a dinosaur
- Can identify a simple machine
- Knows a part of the solar system
- Can label a part of a plant
- Can identify a cloud type
- Knows a part of the water cycle
- Knows the symbol for the chemical element
- Can explain the science vocabulary word
- Can identify the rock or mineral
- Can name the bone or muscle
- Can identify the weather condition
- Can identify the body part
- Knows the organ function

Humanities

Find Someone Who...

- Knows the National Anthem
- Can identify a land form
- Knows the capital
- Can identify the time zone
- Can identify the famous explorer
- Can explain supply and demand
- Define a geographical term
- Can identify the continent or ocean
- Can locate the coordinates
- Can distinguish between needs and wants
- Can explain the difference in political parties
- Can name which branch of government
- Can name which level of government

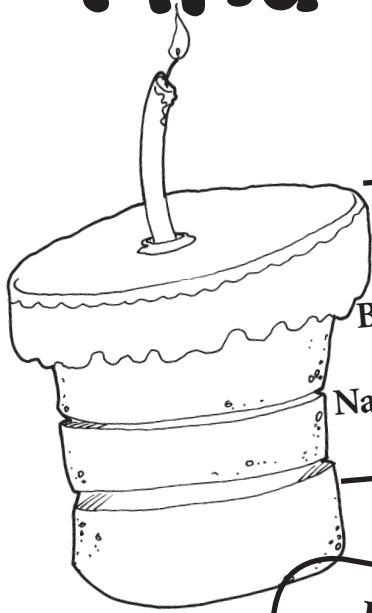
English

Find Someone Who...

- Can identify the part of a book
- Knows the the vowel sound
- Knows if it is fact or fiction
- Can identify the part of a friendly letter
- Knows the correct spelling
- Can distinguish fiction from non-fiction
- Can identify the cause and effect
- Can identify main idea
- Can differentiate fact and opinion
- Can alphabetise a set of words
- Knows the abbreviation
- Can write an adjective for the noun listed
- Can correctly place quotation marks
- Knows the word definition and part of speech
- Can distinguish suffix from prefix
- Knows a rhyming word for the listed word
- Can make the consonant sound
- Can summarise the plot
- Has read the book

Find-Someone-Who

Find Someone Who...



Is the same age as you.

Birthday _____

Name _____

Watches TV.

Favourite program

Name

Is wearing tennis shoes.

Kind _____

Name _____



Was born in the summer.

Month _____

Name _____

Eats junk food.

What type of food

Name

Is wearing earrings.

Where did you get them _____

Name _____

