



ACTIVITY

TOGETHER WE THRIVE: TEAM-BUILDING FOR NEW & VETERAN STAFF

8 Ready-to-Use Activities to Build Trust, Connection, and Belonging

Help new hires feel welcomed and supported with engaging, low-lift activities that bring your whole team together — all year long.

Brought to you by your pals at

alpaca

INTRODUCTION PAGE



What's in Here:

8 ready-to-use team-building activities designed to foster meaningful staff connections and help new hires bond with veteran colleagues—perfect for school leaders looking to build a strong, connected team!

When to Use It:

Kick off the school year, energize professional development days, or strengthen connections during staff meetings throughout the year.

Positive Outcomes:

- Stronger relationships and belonging
- Better communication and informal mentorship
- Boosted engagement and improved staff retention



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STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTION FOR THE SCHOOL LEADER

Preparation

- Prior to the start of the school year, partner new teachers with veteran staff
- Schedule mentor/mentee meetings for the entire school year and present to staff at the beginning of the school during professional development days.

Timeframe:

- About 15 minutes during staff meetings scheduled throughout the school year.



8 TEAM-BUILDING ACTIVITIES TO WELCOME NEW STAFF

1. Partner Interviews + Staff Showcase

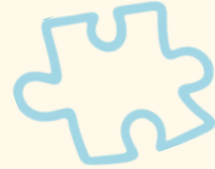
What to Do: Have your staff line up from most to least years in the education field. Find the middle of the line, then pair up newer staff with veteran staff for a fun partner interview (guided questions included!). Each person will introduce their partner to the group using a few of their responses—it's a great way for everyone to connect and learn something new about one another!

- **Why:** Builds personal connections quickly and reduces anxiety. New staff feel seen, while veteran staff model belonging and school culture.
- **Items Needed:** partner question printable

2. "This or That" Walk

What to Do: Read fun or school-related "this or that" questions (e.g., early bird or night owl, Google or paper planner). Staff move to sides of the room to show their choice.

- **Why:** A low-pressure, movement-based activity that shows how people are similar or different. It encourages laughter and light connections.
- **Items Needed:** "This or that questions" projected or printed off for you to read or share with paired staff.



3. Shared Experience Map

What to Do: Create a large wall chart where staff place sticky notes marking where they started teaching, where they were born, how many siblings they have, first job, where they went to High School, or favorite teaching memories.

- **Why:** Highlights shared backgrounds and interesting paths into education. Encourages storytelling and finding common ground.
- **Items Needed:** chart paper, sticky notes, sharpies, and tape.

4. "Ask Me About" Name Tags

What to Do: Alongside names, staff write something they love (e.g., "Ask me about classroom transformations" or "Ask me about coaching volleyball")

- **Why:** Creates natural conversation starters, helping new staff discover mutual interests and strengths in the group!
- **Items Needed:** Name tags (note cards, labels) and Sharpies

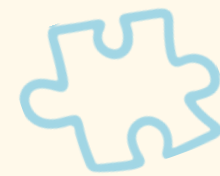


5. Collaborative Puzzle or Art Mural

What to Do: Give each team a blank puzzle piece or canvas square to write name and decorate with something meaningful to them. Assemble the final piece and put puzzle together to display it. [Check out our ready to go resource!](#)

- **Why:** It creates a visual reminder that everyone contributes to the school community. New staff see their place in the "big picture."
- **Items needed:** poster board cut into pieces, scissors, and sharpies.





6. School Survival Tips Wall

What to Do: Veteran staff anonymously post one practical tip for new staff on sticky notes (e.g., best copier to use, how to schedule a tech request).

- **Why:** Offers real, helpful insight while showing new staff that their colleagues have their backs.
- **Items needed:** Bulletin board, wall, or poster board in teacher's lounge, sticky notes, and Sharpies.

7. The "Appreciation Circle"

What to Do: Veteran staff write one thing they appreciate about joining new colleagues ("I appreciate your energy," "Loved your questions at PD").

- **Why:** Positive affirmations increases morale, creates a sense of value, and models a supportive school culture.
- **Items needed:** Notecard and sticky notes

8. Team Challenge: "Design the Dream Classroom"

What to Do: Mixed teams of new and veteran staff design a dream classroom setup on poster paper or digitally, then present.

- **Why:** Encourages collaboration, creativity, and discussion of teaching philosophies in a fun, low-stakes way.
- **Items Needed:** Poster boards and markers



BONUS

Use this easy, yearlong guide to partner staff and connect once a month!



Buddy Match-Up: Yearlong Connection Quest



August/September: Take a tour of the building and share your top "survival tip" or favorite spot on campus.

October: Decorate a door, classroom space, or pumpkin together with a fall theme—collaborative creativity builds camaraderie.

November: Share one strategy that's made a positive impact on your students this year (behavior, motivation, or organization).

December: Swap a small winter care package (think: tea bag, sticky notes, favorite quote, or a candy cane)—small acts of kindness go far.

January: Kick off the new semester with a 15-minute walk-and-talk break or plan goals for the new year together.

February: Write a short note of appreciation for your buddy and sneak it into their mailbox—modeling gratitude spreads joy.

March: Observe each other's classrooms or routines for 10 minutes and leave a positive note with one thing you admired.

April: Take a spring "brain break" together—lunch outside, a walk, or sharing your favorite energizer activity with each other.

May: Take a selfie or buddy photo together and write down your biggest lesson learned from each other this year.



Activity One **Printables**



All About My Buddy



Use this worksheet to get to know your buddy! Interview your partner using the questions below and jot down notes in the spaces provided. Then, introduce your buddy to the group using what you learned.

Professional Questions

1. What inspired you to become an educator?

2. What's your current role or position at the school?

3. How long have you worked in education?

4. What's your favorite subject, grade, or topic to teach—and why?

5. What is one piece of advice you'd give to someone new to the field?

Use this space to prepare your introduction. Write 3–5 things you learned about your partner to share with the group:



School-Specific Questions

6. What do you love most about working at this school?

7. What's one "hidden gem" tip you'd give about the school (ex: best lunch hack, quiet corner, tech help)?

8. What tradition or event here do you look forward to most each year?



Personal/Fun Questions

9. What's your go-to coffee order or favorite snack?

10. What's a hobby or interest you have outside of work?

11. What's one thing most people might not know about you?

12. If you could visit any place in the world, where would you go and why?

STAFF SNAPSHOT

THE BASICS

Name _____

DOB _____ Shirt Size _____

Allergies _____

Hobbies

Classroom Theme _____

TELL ME MORE

I really need

I like to relax by

I like to relax by

I like to relax by

MY FAVORITES

Favorite Color: _____

Favorite Teacher Supply: _____

Favorite Sweet Snack: _____

Favorite Salty Snack: _____

Favorite Drink: _____

Favorite Restaurant: _____

Favorite Place to Shop: _____

Favorite Scents: _____

Favorite Gift Cards: _____

Favorite Sports team: _____

Favorite Saying: _____



Activity Two **Printables**



This or That?



Choose Your Favorites: Circle the option that's most "you" for each pair, then compare with your partner to find what you share—and what makes you unique!

1. Morning Person or Night Owl
2. Planner or Digital Calendar
3. Snack Time or Meal Time
4. Read a Book or Watch a Movie
5. Group Work or Independent Time
6. Art Project or Science Experiment
7. Silent Classroom or Chatty Buzz
8. Recess Duty or Hallway Monitor
9. Math or Writing
10. Sticky Notes or Highlighters
11. Lunch in the Lounge or In Your Room
12. Music Playing or Peaceful Silence
13. Google Docs or Paper & Pencil
14. Jeans Day or Fun Dress-Up Day
15. Sweet Treat or Salty Snack
16. New Ideas or Tried and True
17. Outdoor Recess or Indoor Games
18. Early Dismissal or Late Start

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13. Google Docs or Paper & Pencil
14. Jeans Day or Fun Dress-Up Day
15. Sweet Treat or Salty Snack
16. New Ideas or Tried and True
17. Outdoor Recess or Indoor Games
18. Early Dismissal or Late Start



Activity Three

Printables



Shared Experience Map

Use the questions below to guide your sticky notes for the Shared Experience Map.

- Where were you born?
- Where did you go to high school?
- Where did you start your teaching career?
- How many siblings do you have?
- What was your first job?
- What's a favorite teaching memory?
- What subject or grade have you taught the longest?
- What's one place you've lived outside this town/city?
- What was your favorite subject in school?
- Who or what inspired you to become an educator



Activity Six **Printables**





Our Best School Survival Tips



Share Your Best Tip! Write your go-to survival tip for the school year on a sticky note and post it on the board.

COLLABORATION

BUILT BY EDUCATORS, FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

This resource was created in collaboration with dedicated educators and school leaders who brought their experience, ideas, and insight to every step of the process. We're grateful for their partnership in building tools that truly make a difference in schools.



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WE'RE SO GLAD YOU'RE HERE!

Thanks for downloading this resource—at [Alpaca](#), we're on a mission to **make school the happiest place to work**.



Tried an activity?

Send a photo or a staff testimonial to [our team](#), and we'll send you a coffee on us!



Got an idea brewing?

We love co-creating with school leaders—[drop us a line](#) with any resource ideas you'd love to see next.



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