

# Entertainers

Activities in the entertainers discovery groups seek to develop positive and meaningful relationships between classmates and encourage creative thinking, cooperation and idea-development in individuals.

Everyone likes a good story. Throughout history, communities have refined methods and traditions for telling their stories. Whether told on stage or screen, in the woods or opera house, by individuals or entire dance troupe, through music or words, the purpose of communication has universal themes. Caves in France tell us about buffalo hunting by hunter-gatherer societies through primitive pictures. The Peking Opera in China uses masks and costumes, dance, music and dialogue to tell its stories. Today, documentary film brings us into the story with high technology. The creative endeavor of using different mediums for the expression of ideas through story is a unique human trait. How do you tell your story?

The ideas of our students will propel the human race into the future. Students in the entertainers discovery group will build their confidence in verbal and nonverbal communication. This discovery group revolves around individual self expression and the enjoyment of a common, fun experience by the group. Creative thought could not exist without memory. Though creativity is usually thought of as a spontaneous original response, the ability to remember one's past experience and use it as a springboard for new potentials is necessary. Your experience here at high trails will serve as a springboard for future creative ideas...have fun!

# Entertainers Contents

What students learn...	Activities we do...
Purpose and fun of Entertainers	Acting Games Role Playing Warm-ups
Building trust	Pass the person Cooperation games Active listening activities
Nonverbal communication	Body language and facial expressions Charades, slideshow, sculptors
Verbal communication	Speech and listening activities
How to be spontaneous and creative	Barney, storytime, jump into a scene enviromental brainstorm, talk radio
Performance acting	Bag skits, Using Props
Using sound and music to entertain	Circle of instruments, sound in a story
Animal communication in nature	Animal adaptations simulation
Writing as communication	Journal writing
Closing Discussion	Real-world application of communication skills

**Materials:** costumes, musical instruments, props for bag skits and performance activities

**Appendix:** see Appendix for supplementary materials including state standards.

## Facilitator Notes...

Entertainers take risks within their peer necesitating a need to be debriefed after activities they participate in. Good communcation comes with self-confidence and trust in others. Strive to build those character traits in all students!

# Setting the Role

Greet the students at the stake as your favorite movie star or character from history and let them know how you used your imagination to get into character for your famous movies. We will be using our imaginations alot today to express ideas. Quickly review today's plan with students and start the warm up activities.

## Opening 'Warm Up' Activities:

### *Group Stretch -*

Get the students warmed up first by stretching...imagine you are the underdog Brazilian National soccer team in a group stretch, anxiously awaiting the game against the undefeated Croatians. Be sure to give directions in spanish as captain of the team and have studetns count in spanish as they complete stretches.

### *Imaginary Door -*

Pantomine your way to the first destination by creating an imaginary door to an alternative world. Once students walk through the door they enter a 'safari' (or whatever setting you choose) where they carry machetes and must be careful not to wake the giant hippo in the aspen grove...maybe they need to wade through a deep river as a group, run up a steep hill, slide on ice... take a suggestion from students as they notice changes in the surrounding landscape (or moonscape!)

### *Ball -*

This game can be played individually or in groups. When played solo, each player creates a ball of any size, shape, or weight. The player throws it against an imaginary wall and catches it. As the game progresses, the caller modifies the player's activity by calling out phrases like, "The ball is growing heavier, much heavier, so heavy you can hardly lift it," or "throw the ball faster, faster, faster, as hard as you can," or lighter, or slower, etc.. In a group, players form a circle and play a game of catch.

### *Persona Poem -*

Using the template (below), students can work alone and write about themselves, or work in pairs and write about their partners. Sample Analysis of a Persona-Poem:

Line 1: Kate = first name/nickname of the person in the poem

Line 2: tall, energetic, happy, intelligent = 4 adjectives which describe the person

Line 3: sister of Danny = X of Y formula, describing an important relationship to the person

Line 4: who loves music, books and soccer = 3 things s/he loves

Line 5: who is afraid of wind, spiders and heights = 3 things that scare her/him

Line 6: who wants to see Mt. Everest, my bed and summer = 3 things he wants to see

Line 7: resident of this moment = resident of...+ place/time/concept

Line 8: Thompson. = last name of the person in the poem

### **Questions to ask:**

*How many forms of entertainment can you think of?*

*What is the purpose of different kinds of entertainment?*

*Why is accurate communication so important?*

*What happens when communication is not efficient?*

*How does entertainment differ across the world? Across time?*

*What type of events in your community bring everyone together?*

*Do you have any ideas to help the idea of community building in your hometown along?*

# Building Trust

People who are confident usually express themselves better and more clearly. When we trust those around us, our confidence grows. Some groups may need time to work with each other in these activities to build trust. This is a good time for students to be divided into smaller cooperative learning groups and paired with a high school leader.

## Activities:

### *Pass the Person -*

In small groups, have everyone stand in a circle shoulder to shoulder with one person in the center. The one in the center stands with his/her feet together and arms folded across the chest. With eyes closed and body stiff, the center person falls back on the outside circle and is passed around and around.

### *You're a kitchen/power tool -*

In pairs, students decide (or are given) a tool from the kitchen or garage they must mimick using sound and movement. Cooperation between students builds trust!

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## Nonverbal Communication

### Facial Expression Activities:

#### *Emotion Cards -*

Students are given a notecard with an emotion. Students can simply express the emotion on the card non-verbally and see if the group can guess.

#### *Mirror Actions -*

Divide the group into pairs. Students face each other as one person leads the action and the other person follows, doing exactly the same thing but reversed, as an image in the mirror would be. The students display different emotions with their faces and then try some more active situations: making funny faces, brushing teeth, shaving, or washing windows. These activities work on peripheral vision, body control, and give and take. Students should use slow, fluid, full body movements, and look in each other's eyes. While the leader announces changes in leaders, the objective here is to have smooth transitions between leading and following.

#### Questions to ask:

*How mobile is your face? What can it do?*

*What can it tell you?*

*Look at other faces in the group.*

*Can you tell what a person is thinking about from his/her facial expressions?*

Have the students express these basic emotions with their faces: happy, sad, curious, fearful, confused, concentrating. Once an emotion is achieved, have them freeze their faces. Have the students feel their faces and others in the group.

*What similarities are there? What happens to their faces when laughing? Eyes? Neck? Nose? How does this differ from one emotional expression to another?*

One study suggests the ability to trust others and to take risks are character traits that are inherited. *What other character traits do you think are important in being a productive part of a community?*

# Body Language Activities:

## *Sculptors* -

In pairs, students take the role of either the sculptor or the statue. Students are given an emotion card and can choose an animal. The sculptor must position the 'animal' into the correct position and the statue must create a facial expression that expresses the emotion on the card. First do this activity without speaking then let students talk.

## *Charades* -

Charades can be played in a variety of ways...here are two fun ways to facilitate an exciting round of this classic pantomiming game with 20 or more students.

**Clue Charades** - choose 3 people ('outsiders') to leave the room. The group then decides on a person (ie. Fred Flintstone), a place (ie. in a treehouse), and a weapon (ie. wooden spoon). Once the group decides, one student is chosen to act out the charade to one of the students who left the room. A counselor brings in the first outsider and the group observes the chosen 'actor' act first the person, then place, then weapon to the 'outsider'. The 'outsiders' will not know exactly what the group chose (Fred, treehouse, spoon), but may have a different idea (Madonna, skyscraper, rock) in their head. They then will act out the charade (using different nonverbal clues) to the second 'outsider', who will then act it out to the third 'outsider'. When acting is done, 'outsiders' will guess what they thought the scenario was starting with the third 'outsider'. The group can then acknowledge the correct scenario.

**Nature Charades** - with a one-minute time limit set on each performance, have students 'charade' each of the following dramatic situations that must have a beginning, middle and an end. Some possibilities include:

- Aspen leaf falling from a tree
- Rabbit hiding from a hawk
- Coyote stalks a rabbit
- Turtle coming out of its shell
- Frog about to eat an insect
- Pasque flower coming through the snow
- Porcupine climbing a tree and eating bark
- Mosquito looking for a place to bite
- Butterfly hatching
- Mountain struck by lightning

## *Slideshow* -

In small groups with a high school leader, students can take 5 minutes to come up with a 5-slide show that describes a family vacation or some other exciting event. All students must participate as characters and are not allowed to move once in the slide position. When the projector switches slides students make a new picture. Other groups watching will guess the theme of the slideshow. A slide projector as a prop makes this activity more authentic. As a variation, one student may be the narrator.

### **Useful Knowledge...**

Our brains react to stimuli sent by our senses. Without realizing it, we make judgements based on others body language. The human brain innately 'reads' other people's postures and facial expressions. Even the 1 year old brain can detect such emotions as anger, happiness and sadness. Our brains are preparing us to react physically, priming us for action. What examples of this can you think of from your own life?

The great artists of the Renaissance and other great periods of creative physical art were sculptors who used rock, wood and metals...earthly mediums to tell their stories. *What is the coolest statue or work of art you have ever seen? What made it so neat?*

# Verbal Communication: Speech and Listening

## Questions to ask...

### **What do we mean by listening?**

- \* *It is more than just HEARING, the physical part when your ears sense sound-waves.*
- \* *There is the INTERPRETATION of what was heard that leads to understanding or misunderstanding.*
- \* *Then comes the EVALUATION stage when you weigh the information and decide how you will use it.*
- \* *Finally, based on what you heard and how you evaluated it, you REACTION.*

### **Why do people talk to each other?**

- \* *Phatic communication - getting to know people and building relationships.*
- \* *Cathartic communication - emotional communication*
- \* *Informative communication - ideas, data, or information is shared.*
- \* *Persuasive communication - purpose is to produce action or change attitudes.*

### **What are some of the benefits of good listening?**

- \* *Encourages the speaker*
- \* *Enables listener to gain information*
- \* *Makes resolution of problems more likely*
- \* *Promotes better understanding of people*
- \* *Promotes trust and respect*
- \* *Improves relationships*
- \* *Gains cooperation*

## **Activities:** (students should switch partners for each activity)

### ***Describe a Tree -***

Divide students into pairs and have them sit in the middle of an Aspen grove or in an area surrounded by evergreen trees. Ask one student in each pair to pick out one tree and describe it verbally to his/her partner until the partner can determine exactly which tree it is. Then switch roles, and allow the partner to describe another tree. Following this exercise, ask the students if they think the ability to communicate clearly and precisely is important. *Can they think of any situations in which a misunderstanding created hard feelings?*

### ***Lego Activity -***

In pairs, students have a bag of identical lego parts and sit back to back. One student is the creator and must describe verbally what he/she is building. The other student should build the exact same thing and can ask questions but neither is allowed to look at each others work. This also works with a paper airplane making materials. *Why was it hard to give directions for such a simple task? How important is face-face interaction on a daily basis?*

## Verbal communication activities continued....

### *The One-minute Listening Activity -*

In pairs, one student is the storyteller and the other a listener. The storyteller is to talk about a recent event, vacation, fun time they had for three full minutes. The listener is to stand facing the storyteller quietly but without any active listening cues...no eye contact, no nodding, nothing. Students trade jobs the second time around. *How did it make you feel to be the storyteller? How did it feel to be the listener? What active listening skills are important?*

### Useful Knowledge...

Although it is believed that such mammals as porpoises, elephants, dogs and others make noises that have specific meanings for one another, humans are the only animals who seem to have a wide enough vocabulary to express ideas and philosophies. An exceptionally large portion of the human brain is devoted to the tongue and lips - primary organs of speech. It is commonly believed that the ability to communicate through speech enabled humans to gather together and create “communities” which were vital to their survival as a species.

#### Studies show...

...We spend about 80% of our waking hours communicating. And, according to research, at least 45% of that time is spent listening. In schools, students spend 60-70% of their classroom time engaged in listening. And, in business, listening has often been cited as being the most critical managerial skill.

...That immediately after listening to a ten-minute oral presentation, the average listener has heard, understood, properly evaluated, and retained approximately half of what was said. And, within 48 hours, that drops off another 50% to a final 25% level of effectiveness. In other words, we quite often comprehend and retain only one-quarter of what is said.

**Albert Einstein** is recognized as one of the smartest men who has ever lived. A little known fact about Einstein is that when he was young he did extremely poor in school. His grade school teachers told his parents to take him out of school because he was “too stupid to learn”. His mother did not think that Albert was “stupid”. She bought him a violin and Albert became very good. Music was the key that helped Albert Einstein become one of the smartest men who has ever lived. Einstein himself says that the reason he was so smart is because he played the violin.

# Being creative and spontaneous...

## Activities:

### **Barney** - (small groups)

This is a silly warm-up game. Everyone in a circle in their small groups with a high school leader, one person as a 'caller' in the middle. Caller yells out a letter to one of the players; that player must come up with a name of a person, an object or service that can be sold and a location, all with the letter given. For example, if the letter is 'B' may lead to the phrase "Barney sells Bread in Bulgaria". Anything goes as long as it comes. High school leaders can 'fishbowl' this activ-

### **Story Time** - (whole group)

1. The facilitator starts a story by saying a sentence.
2. It then goes in a circle, each person adding a sentence onto the story-after repeating each sentence that's already been added.

### **Join into a scene** - (whole group or two groups)

This improv game starts with an idea from a student about a situation/environment...boarding an airplane, gas station, beach scene...That first student starts as the first person in that scene and the scene ends when all students are in with an active role.

*Other situational scenes include:*

*a bank hold up, abandoned railroad station in a ghost town, prison cell in a small town, cemetery on a clear, moonlit night, major airport at 10am, inside a submarine, an old-fashioned candy store, a busy beach in the summer, city street, baseball game, ski slope, a fancy restaurant, the high trails lodge, a poorly lit alley in the middle of the night, a high school classroom at 7:30 am, a rock concert, a fishing boat out at sea, a large walk-in refrigerator, a large zoo*

An alternative is to do this in two groups having each group guess what the other is doing.

### **Environmental Brainstorm** - (pairs)

Two players stand facing each other. They are given an environment (use the ones listed above if you want). They then name things that would be found in that environment, going back and forth as quickly as possible. If a player pauses too long, repeats something that has already been said, or says something totally ridiculous, he or she must perform a short solo performance in that same environment. This game focuses players' attention on the infinite possibilities of the environment.

### **Talk Radio**- (focus on the high school leaders)

Two players play DJ's on a talk radio show while the other players play callers. The audience should suggest a topic or name for the show. High School counselors can play the radio hosts as students ask them questions. Can be performed in small or large groups.

## Useful Knowledge...

Focused intent and being in the present moment with whatever you are experiencing helps memory retention and retrieval. So when you do something, do it wholeheartedly and you will learn better! A relaxed state of mind is the greatest vehicle for creative thought. Letting go of life stressors and focusing on task helps develop ideas.

# Performance Acting

Acting is a pure form of entertainment for the participants and observers. Challenge students to step out of their comfort zones, to take in step in someone else's shoes and to have fun!

## Questions to ask:

*Have you ever been to a big time show?*

*What are the key components of a great performance?*

*How do different cultures use performance acting?*

*When do we 'act' in real life without realizing it?*

*What are the best ways to work as a team?*

## Activities:

**Using Props** - Tell students that they must use the prop given to them as something other than what it actually is. This will force the students to stretch their imaginations. As individuals, give each student a prop and 2 minutes to come up with a short skit. Students in the audience can guess what the prop is being used as. For example, a pencil may be used as a conductor's baton, a knitting kneedle, a dart or anything else it's size and shape might suggest.

Use the following questions during your discussion:

Was the prop truly a central element of the improvisation?

Did the players make creative use of their props?

Would you have used the props differently?

Here are some easy ideas for props: aluminum foil, artificial flowers, anything from nature!!!, balloons, baseball cap, belt, book, buttons, cassette tape, coffee can, coins, jewelry, credit card, cup, crayons, earmuffs, eyeglasses, fork, frying pan, hairbrush, keys, marbles, magazine, playing cards, shoes, spoon, ticket stub, etc...

**Bag Skits** - Bag skits are the culminating performance for the Entertainers discovery group. Review components of listening, communication skills, verbal and non-verbal communication, importance of music and anything you have discussed today to lead into this fun performance activity. Use the stage and costumes!

### Preparation, Planning, Performance, Debrief

-Organize groups and hand out bags filled with random items.

-Explain that each group must come up with a skit that uses all of the items in the bag.

-Encourage the groups to be creative with the items in their bag. Objects can be whatever they imagine them to be (i.e. a hairbrush can be a microphone, a roller skate can be a time traveling device..)

-As a facilitator you can create pre-made skit topics for each group, or you can give all of the groups a vague topic relating to your organization/ company/ conference.

-Give groups 5-7 minutes to create a three minute skit.

-Have each group perform their skit in front of all the other groups.

# Sound and Music

Music is a wonderful medium for creative expression. Not only a personal experience, music is important to communities.

## Activities:

### *Circle of instruments -*

In a large circle, each student should have some implement for creating a sound. This implement can be an actual musical instrument, something found in nature, their own voice, whatever. All students need to participate. The 'drum circle' starts with the facilitator beating a large drum in one rhythmic pattern. It is then up to the participants in the circle to add sounds/beats to the rhythm. You can have students join in randomly or around the circle in order. By the end you will have a cool beat to dance to! Remember there is no audience, just participants creating improvised music in the moment.

### *Add sound to a story -*

Have the high school leaders read a story once through. The students will then take 2 minutes to plan how to add sound effects to enhance the story as it is told the second time around. Students can perform the play for the group if interested. Nursery rhymes like The Three Bears and Jack and Jill are fun, familiar stories for students to work with.

## Questions to ask...

*If you had a soundtrack for your life, what song would be on it?*

*Where is there sound that we don't often hear?*

## Useful Knowledge...

Activities which engage both sides of the brain at the same time, such as playing an instrument or singing, causes the brain to be more capable of processing information.

Tests on the effects of music on living organisms besides humans have shown some cool results:

- special pieces of music aid hens in laying more eggs.
- music can also help cows to yield more milk.
- Wheat will grow faster when exposed to special ultrasonic and musical sounds.

Rats were tested by psychologists to see how they would react to Bach's music and rock music. The rats were placed into two different boxes. Rock music was played in one of the boxes while Bach's music was played in the other box. The rats could choose to switch boxes through a tunnel that connected both boxes. Almost all of the rats chose to go into the box with the Bach music even after the type of music was switched from one box to the other.

# Communication in Nature

Animals and plants survive in a hostile and chaotic natural environment by developing highly refined sensory systems used to communicate within and between species. As humans, we can wonder at the variety of communication skills in the natural world and study the adaptations animals and plants have evolved to live in their respective ecosystems. Teachers can use this fact sheet to enhance any of the communication activities or develop your own activity based on the content.

## *Questions to ask...*

*Why do animals communicate?* - defense, territoriality, greeting, determine friendship/foe, show emotion, warning, attract mates, maintain coordination in groups, show displays of strength.

*How do animals communicate?* - through sound, visually, behaviorally, smell, tactile senses

*Can you think of a specific type animal communication you have observed?*

*What is an adaptation?* - a modification in the structure or function of an organism, making it better fitted to survive and multiply in its environment.

*Do plants communicate?* - some researchers have found plants can communicate chemically through the air or grafted tree roots. When a plant is damaged, it will produce volatile chemicals to defend itself, accidentally communicating to neighboring trees about the threat.

## Animals

One way to use this information is to cut out each example of animal communication, hand them out to pairs of students, ask the students to act out the communication and students in the audience can guess what animal they are, what type of communication they are using and why those animals would communicate.

**Octopus** - part of the Cephalopod family, they are the most intelligent of the invertebrates, partly because of their ability to communicate with their skin using special skin cells called chromatophores. The Octopi use their skin to communicate with other Octopi as well as camouflage to avoid or scare predators. They have the ability to change skin color/pattern in a fraction of a second.

**Kangaroo** - thump their hind legs to ward off danger or send a signal.

**Snakes** - have the Jacobson's Organ on the roof of their mouth that allows them to sense using their tongue to smell.

**Marine Species** - use sound to communicate. Some use echolocation or ultrasound. Sharks have terrible eyesight but use electric fields and a super sensitive snout to track prey.

**Elephants** - show affection by intertwining trunks.

**Antelope** - can signal danger across 5 miles of plains by straightening the white hair on their rump to reflect the light of the sun, essentially creating a 'disk' of danger.

**Gorillas** - use their tongues to show anger and greet each other by touching hands.

**Whales** - breach (or jump out of the water) and use the sound of the impact of their huge bodies on the water as a form of communication.

**Honey Bees** - do a waggle dance to communicate the direction and distance of resources, such as water, flower patches or a new home.

**Prairie Dogs** - bear their teeth to determine friendship and have a system of chirping in the case of danger.

**Skunks** - use airborne chemicals (pheromones) as a defense against predators.

# Writing as entertainment...

Using your *High Trails Journals*, ask students to respond to the creative writing prompts within the journal text.

Students can share their responses by sitting with one or two other students they don't know well or they can present to the entire group...

## Activity:

### *Nature Writing -*

Ask each student to pick out one object in nature and 'become' that object (a blade of grass, pine needle, tree, rock, flower, etc...) How does this object 'feel'? What things has it seen during its lifetime? Imagine your object in different situations. What happens to it when it snows? When the wind blows? When the sun comes out? When something steps on it or eats it? After explaining this item, write a story, poem or description from this item's perspective or viewpoint...

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## Useful Knowledge...

The Sumerians, the first civilized agricultural peoples of the fertile crescent on the western edge of Asia, developed the first known written language, what we call Cuneiform. The Sumerians developed this ideographic language (characters based on pictures that represented ideas) in response to a need to organize the system of trade by creating societal standards. Students can try to create their own language by developing characters that represent ideas instead of sounds (like English) to communicate with a partner or group. Try it!

# Closing Discussion

*Why is it important to communicate clearly?*

*From what we've done today, what are some skills about effective communication?*

Know your audience, listen, think before you react, there are non-verbal cues.

*Are there ever times when you feel like you can't communicate with someone - teachers, parents or friends?*

*How do you think you could resolve those communication issues?*

*How can we use the communication skills we learned today to resolve problems?*

*Can you think of a specific time someone misconstrued your actions or something you said?*

*What could you have done to make yourself more clear?*

*What communities are you a part of?*

*What role do you play within each of those communities?*

*How can you change your communication to develop a new, different role within one of those communities?*