

Preschool to Grade 1 get acquainted and group building activities

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Wet Noodle Dance

Supplies: fun music like VBS CD or upbeat songs from Life Songs CD and CD player or bring your own technology

This is somewhat like musical chairs, but no one is out. It encourages new friendships,

1. Ask the children to show you how a wet noodle moves.
2. Determine a path for the children to travel during the activity. Tell the children when they hear music they are to follow your designated path (around all the chairs, tables or just move around the room, in the same direction) and wiggle and jiggle like a wet noodle.
3. Now tell them to look to their left and right at who is sitting next to them. Most likely it will be a friend they usually sit with.
4. Tell them that when the music stops they are to sit down next to two new people. Start the music (the more exciting the music the better) and enjoy the sight of 5 and 6 year olds wiggling like wet noodles. Stop the music and remind everyone to sit next to someone new to them.
5. Once they are reseated show children how to give the person next to them the wet noodle handshake. (Each child takes both hands and wiggles them touching the other person's fingers.)
6. Repeat this one to two times to help children find new friends to sit with. On the repeats you can change the type of dance, i.e. do a chicken dance, a frog hop or a duck walk if you want to offer variety.

Musical Hand Shake

Supplies: fun music like VBS CD or upbeat songs from Life Songs CD and CD player or bring your own technology

Have the kids begin by going around and shaking other children's hands while the music is playing. Have an adult leader stop the music. When the music stops all the children should be paired up. The adult will shout out a question and each pair of children will introduce themselves to each other and answer the question. "Hello my name is _____ and my favorite _____ is _____." The question could be: What is your favorite color? What is your favorite subject in school? What is your favorite TV show? Food? Etc. Ask a different question each time the music stops. Encourage the children to find someone new each time the music stops. At the end of the game ask what they found out about each other; who had the same favorite as them etc.

Make a class friendship chain

Children can work together to make the Friendship chain. Ask each child to put their name on the colored side of three paper strips. Invite each child to take their 3 paper strips and find a partner who they tell their favorite movie. Partners exchange favorite movie titles and one name strip and then move on to find different partners. With this partner a child can share their favorite Bible story and trade one paper strip. With their last partner the child can share their favorite food and their last paper strip. Once a child has paper strips with 3 different names on them, they use glue and attach the three strips together, then work as a group with those at their table to make one paper chain.

Get acquainted game

Children form a circle and the leader begins by saying, My name is _____ and my favorite food is _____. The leader then rolls the ball to a child in the circle and asks the child to tell her/his name and favorite food. That child rolls the ball to another children, etc.

When everyone has had a turn you may choose to go around again and ask a different question. Example: My name is _____ and I like to _____ .

Parachute Bounce:

Supplies: Parachute or sheet, balloon or soft nerf ball

Clear a playing area. Have the children form a circle and hold the parachute or sheet with both hands. You can do this standing or sitting. Say “We are going to work together to keep our ball/balloon on the parachute.” Practice moving the parachute up and down to keep the balloon/ball in the middle and away from the edge. The faster the children move the parachute the higher the ball/balloon will bounce and the more likely it will bounce out of your playing area. Teachers can be the retrievers. When the ball bounces off the parachute, go around the circle and ask each child to complete a sentence.

Examples: My name is...

I have a pet named...

My favorite place to talk to God is...

My favorite food is...

I am thankful for...

The Long Laugh

Supervision tip: Model different laughs and giggles for children, which often can invite even more laughter.

Materials: a feather or handkerchief

Have children spread out across the room facing the leader. Say, "We're going to play a laughing game. When I throw this feather (or handkerchief) in the air, start laughing as loudly as you can. As soon as the feather (or handkerchief) hits the floor, stop right away and do not laugh."

Play the game. Most children will have a hard time stopping when they're suppose to, which often can start more laughing fits. Do this a number of times and really cut loose. Try some outrageous laughs yourself and see what happens. (the whole point of the game is to laugh and have outrageous fun.)

End the game by saying "The Bible says it's great to be happy and laugh. It's so much fun to laugh. I love to laugh with you, and God loves it when we laugh."

From *101 Great Games for Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers*, by Jolene I. Roehlkepartain

So Much to be Thankful For Game

Have the children sit in a wide circle so there is plenty of space between each child. Say, "God gives us many great things to be thankful for. We're going to play a thank you game. We'll go around the circle. When it's your turn, jump up and say one thing you're thankful for."

Go around the circle and have each child name something while jumping up. (after they jump up, have them sit back down.)

After you go around the circle one, challenge the children to see if they can go faster, jumping and naming something they're thankful for.

If the children ever get stuck for ideas, remind them to think of animals, foods, toys, colors, and people. End the game by having the children jump up at the same time and shout, "Thank you, God, for everything!"

Adapt the game to be a get to know you activity.

Round one: When children jump up they must say their name then sit down.

Second round: this time when children jump up the group says that child's name.

You can also add other prayer starters from your prayer cube or Get acquainted sentence starters for the children to answer when they jump up.