

## Tips to Connect with Students

Depending on what grade you're teaching, connecting with the kids could look different.

### What to expect:



#### Kindergarten

Students are eager to participate and can easily get off topic. They learn well through stories and cooperative games.

I love you!  
When are you coming back?

Did you know  
that I have a dog?

I'll raise my hand to  
answer your question  
even if I have no idea  
what you asked.

**Third Grade**  
Students value responsibility and independence, but they need plenty of time to process. Students need clear, specific instructions before working on independent or small group activities.



Wait, what are we  
doing again?

Can I pass that out?



#### Fifth Grade

Social structures become increasingly important to students at this age, and they learn to appreciate humor and sarcasm. They become self-conscious and may be unwilling to take risks in the classroom.

Please don't make  
me share with the  
whole class.

Can I work with a  
partner?

### Middle School

This age group (11–14 yrs old) can vary widely in emotional and physical maturity, and students may exhibit a wide range of behaviors. Students make connections based on personal interests and one-on-one conversations. Students respond well to authenticity and real world examples.



I know more than you think I might about this—ask me about it!

Don't single me out; I embarrass easily.

Have me explain my reasoning before you tell me I'm wrong.



### High School

This age group (15–18) can feel pressure to make big choices about their future. They can flip between confident and concerned as they sort through all of the scenarios they might face. Many high school students are forming their work and consumer experience and can draw from these examples when they engage with Junior Achievement. They respond well to respect and coaching.

I have a job. I have a plan. How does my experience fit with this?

I wonder what I'll be doing in the future?

How do I find my way?

1

## **Introduce yourself.**

Plan an introduction or ice-breaker game to introduce yourself. It helps build a connection and makes students want to engage.

2

## **Set a positive tone.**

Say, "I'm excited that I get to spend the day with you."

Share a story about your time in middle school. Be quirky!

3

## **State learning objectives.**

Remember: Students need to know why the content is relevant and how they will use it in real life. Relating the content to your own life makes it more relatable for students.

4

## **Determine prior knowledge.**

Say, "We are going to talk about entrepreneurship. What do you already know?"

5

## **Use students' names.**

Try your best to learn as many names as quickly as possible.

6

## **Geek out!**

Do not be afraid to go down the rabbit trail with a kid by discussing a topic that interests them.

7

## **Use positive reinforcement.**

Say, "Wow, team 3 is working really hard together, and they have a great plan in place for their presentation." You have praised the high-performing group and reminded the less engaged teams what you expect.

8

## **Try fun attention-getters.**

- "If you can hear me, clap once." Students clap once
- "Marco!"  
Students say "Polo!"
- "I need your voices off and your eyes on me in 5, 4, 3, 2, 1"





1

## **Preparation is key.**

Make sure that you know the content inside and out before you begin presenting.

2

## **Expect respect.**

Try not to talk over students, and students should not interrupt you. If things are off: stop, wait, and reset.

3

## **When giving directions, remind students how the activity pertains to the learning objective.**

Say, “Next, we will explore some jobs so that you can see how they play an important role in supporting the community.”

4

## **Give immediate and clear feedback.**

Encourage positive behavior through clear and direct feedback. This helps to keep students on task and can also highlight negative behavior.

5

## **Group your instructions into three steps.**

Say, “First, do A. Then, do B. Finally, do C. Then, look to me for the next instructions.”

6

## **Ask a student to repeat the instructions.**

Say, “OK, now who can remind everyone what the three steps are?”

7

## **If students seem unsure, try rephrasing your instructions.**

8

## **Use modeling to ensure instructions are understood.**

Give instructions, and follow them up with a demonstration to the class.

9

## **Press reset.**

If things do not quite go as planned, it is OK to stop and start over. Reset groups and games so that everyone is clear on what needs to be done.



# Facilitating Discussions

To ensure positive and productive discussions, utilize these strategies:

## 1 Group discussion with reporter.

Have a table of students discuss a question and designate a “reporter” to share their ideas with the class.

## 2 Sentence Stems:

Ask the class a question and then write two to three sentence stems on the board that they could use to frame their answers. For example, “What is your favorite color?” might be answered using the sentence stems, “My favorite color...” or “I really like...”

## 3 Revisit the learning objective.

Say, “In this activity, our goal is to learn about jobs in the community. Who can tell me something they learned about jobs?”

## 4 Ask open-ended questions.

Use these instead of Yes/No questions.

## 5 Ask and share.

Ask a question and give students a moment to consider their answer (you may ask them to write down an answer). Then, have them turn to a partner and discuss. Finally, ask students if anyone would like to share with the class.

## 6 Feel free to cold call on students, but keep in mind.

- Keep in mind: Some educators have tools like a cup of popsicle sticks with students’ names on them that you can draw from.
- Discuss student abilities and comfort levels with your educator.

## 7 Count to 10.

After you have asked a question, pause and count to ten. It may feel like a long pause, but students need time to process their ideas before they can respond thoughtfully.



## 1 Diversity

### **Diversify examples.**

Plan examples that connect with students of different backgrounds. For example, use the names of stores, restaurants, and shops in the school's neighborhood or examples that might appeal to students of a particular cultural background.

### **Encourage colleagues of diverse backgrounds to volunteer.**

Since students need diversity in their role models, help out with recruitment.

## 2 Equity

### **Notice your patterns.**

Make sure you call on students of all backgrounds. For example, are boys and girls both participating at similar rates? If you keep a student roster handy you can make note of who responds and then engage students you haven't heard from yet.

### **Encourage big dreams for ALL kids.**

People from all backgrounds can be entrepreneurs, CEOs, and community leaders. Be careful not to typecast some kids into particular kinds of roles or positions in your examples and simulations.

### **Incorporate different learning styles.**

Some learners need to move, others need to read, others need to hear, and many need to talk and practice the ideas they're learning. Be sure you balance your style with the needs of different types of learners.

### **Support all students.**

Check in with your classroom educator for closed captioning options.

## 3 Inclusion

### **Encourage students to support each other.**

Have students assist others with an activity or with interpreting an assignment. The buddy system works well in many classes.

### **Be flexible.**

If needed, modify an activity so everyone can participate.

### **Set your expectations aside.**

Keep in mind that students may not sit still, listen attentively, or answer questions in the way you expect. It can help to put expectations aside and accept different behaviors.



## Safety Guidelines

To create a safe environment for the students, follow these safety guidelines:

- 1 Remember: The educator must stay in the classroom.
- 2 Do not use photos of the students' faces.
- 3 If there's an emergency, take direction and follow the lead of your classroom educator, who will know the school policies and best way to keep you and the students safe.
- 4 Be sure the classroom educator discusses food allergies/acceptable treats with you.
- 5 Defer to the educator to handle disciplinary issues if/when they arise.
- 6 Avoid topics that are not appropriate for school (e.g., alcohol, gambling).