



# **Engaging Icebreakers & Brain Breaks to Build Community**

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# HELLO!

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## **Abstract**

*More than ever, building community in online, hybrid, and in-person classes is essential. Icebreakers and brain break activities build relationships, reduce fatigue, and create engaging learning environments. The presenter will share four interactive and adaptable techniques. Since these activities require low-to-no preparation, they can be implemented immediately.*



# Overview

- Introduction
- Technique 1: Icebreakers
- Technique 2: Popcorn Method
- Technique 3: Show & Tell
- Technique 4: Scavenger Hunts
- Q&A and Idea Share





# Introduction

The Nerdy Stuff



“

*For students to learn at their highest potential, their brains need to send signals efficiently from the sensory receptors (what they hear, see, touch, read, imagine, and experience) to memory storage regions in the brain. The most detrimental disruptions to traffic along these information pathways are stress and overload. Brain breaks are planned learning activity shifts that mobilize different networks of the brain. These shifts allow those regions that are blocked by stress and high-intensity work revitalize. Brain breaks, by switching the activity to different brain networks, all the resting pathways to restore their calm focus and foster optimal mood, attention, and memory.*

*(Willis, 2016)*

# The Importance of Recess

1. Brain Health
2. Emotional Health
3. Academics

(Edutopia, 2018)



# Building Community

A black and white photograph of a diverse group of students in a classroom. In the foreground, three students are smiling at the camera: a young woman with short blonde hair on the left, a young woman with long dark hair in the center, and a young man with dark hair on the right. Behind them, other students are visible, some looking down at papers or books. The text 'Building Community' is overlaid in a large, bold, orange font across the upper middle of the image.







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**Refugee** [w  
people who  
forced to leave  
their country  
what is th





# Sense of Belonging to Become Engaged





# 1. **Icebreakers**

Getting to Know Each Other

&

Not Just on the First Day

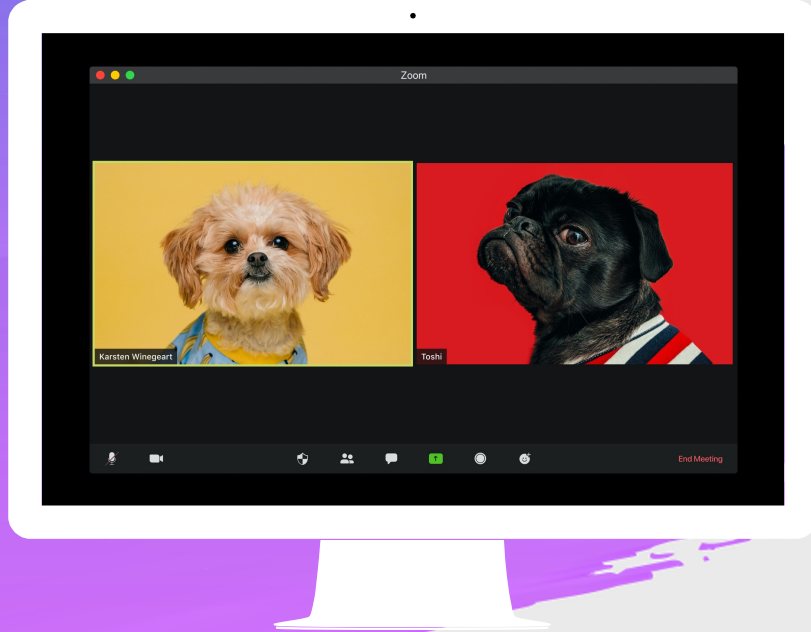
# Benefits:

**“They [Ice breakers] can...**

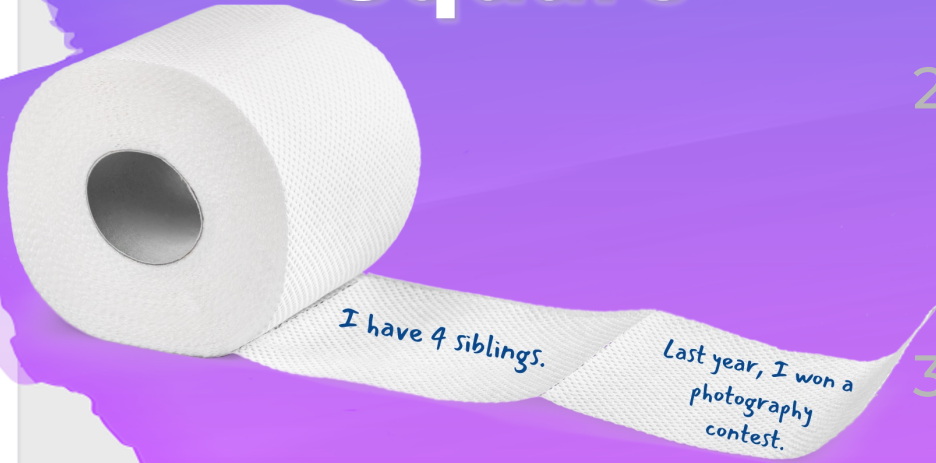
1. help create a relaxed environment where students share ideas and participate more fully in class
2. encourage students to share ownership for the learning environment
3. build rapport among students and foster a productive learning environment
4. prepare students for collaborative group work”

# Where is ...?

1. "Where is [student] on your screen?"
2. Everyone points in the direction that student appears on their screen.
3. That student introduces self, shares a fun fact, and repeats step 1.



# Spare a Square



1. Ask students to take as many pieces of TP they would like or give 3 squares to each.
2. For each square, have students write a personal fact they are comfortable sharing.
3. Redistribute and find the owner.



# 2 Truths & a Lie with a Twist

## Present

- What are some of your hobbies?
- Describe a person or animal that is important to you.
- What do you usually do after class?

## Present Perfect

- Where have you traveled?
- What sports have you played?
- What interesting foods have you eaten?

## Present Progressive

- What TV shows are you currently watching?
- What projects or tasks are you working on this week?

## Future

- What will you do during your next vacation?
- What are you going to do this weekend?

## Past

- What did you do last weekend?
- How did you celebrate your last birthday?

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Conditional:

- If you had a superpower, what would it be?
- If you could go anywhere, where would you go?
- *Reductions: woulda, coulda, shoulda!*



## 2. **Popcorn Method**

Rapid Sharing





# Benefits:

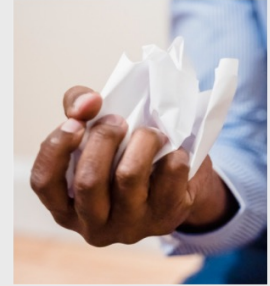


- Student Centered – Get other students engaged by calling on
- Quick Activities
- Tactile/Kinesthetic Learners

# Mindfulness with Wads of Paper

## Scrap #1

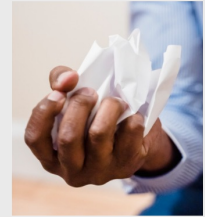
- Have students write something that is causing them stress or frustration.
- Crumple it up.
- Throw it away.



# Mindfulness with Wads of Paper

## Scrap #2

- Have students write something positive.
- Crumple it up.
- Use it to throw at the device's camera when calling on another student.
- Other student throws their ball in the air and catches it when they hear their name.



# Toss It!

## Recommendations

- Small and Soft Toys (inexpensive & cleanable!!)
- Paper (scraps!!)
- 2 Slightly Different
- Fun(class can give them names!!)



# Toss It!

## Uses

- Share Info: personal details, plans, favorites, etc. with explanation
- Use for building a story
- Use for idea or vocabulary building through Memory Recall (repeating previous and adding new)
- Use for Q&A
- Use for rapid vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation, or grammar practice
- Answer Questions: HW, textbook, class lecture, etc.



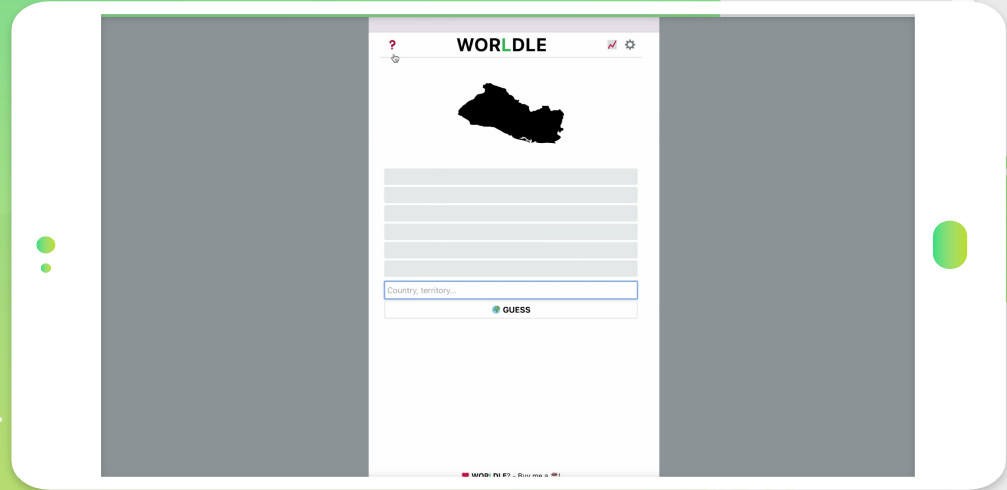
# What did you do over the weekend?





# Worldle

- Like Wordle but Geography
- Class or small groups
- Students share fun facts or personal information
- View on Google Maps or Google Earth





**ROCK. PAPER. SCISSORS. SHOOT!**



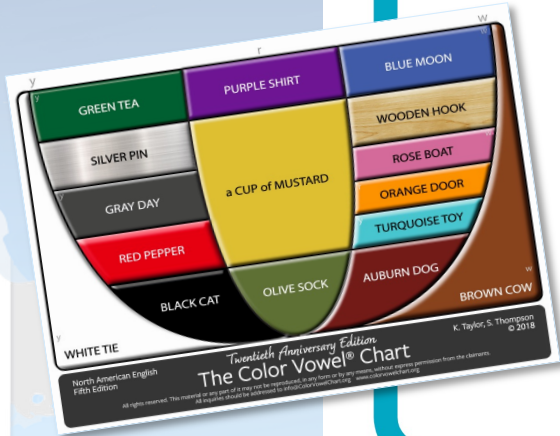
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**1  
Minute**

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# 3. **Show & Tell**

Mindful Connections



# Benefits:

- Builds Confidence
- Fosters Public Speaking Skills
- Encourages Friend Making
- Can Boost Self-Esteem when Others Show Interest

# Tips

- ✓ Comfortable Sharing
- ✓ Students Share Pictures
  - ✓ Practice Using LMS
  - ✓ Practice Email/Texting
- ✓ If Interactive – Make COPIES!
- ✓ Have folders



Brain Break  
Pictures



Brain Break  
Pictures Used

# Suggestions

- Favorites: Places, Restaurants, Book, Room, Toy, etc.
- Special: People, Animals, Holidays, Objects, etc.
- New Experiences: Food, Community, Customs, Vocabulary, etc.
- Their World: Desk Space, Hobbies, Interests, etc.





# Irregular Verbs & Past Tense

**Irregular Verb Forms**

Directions: Say the simple past and past participle forms of the verb. Remove sticky for answers. Delete answers to reveal a picture.

cut	go	have	make	let
eat	ride	run	to be	sing
sleep	write	do	teach	become
think	bring	put	drive	ring






# 4. Scavenger Hunts

Team Building



# Benefits:

- Promotes Team Work & Socialization Skills
- Strengthens Critical Thinking & Problem Solving Skills
- Encourages Creativity
- Fun = Reduces Affective Filter



# Think Outside the Box!

- ✓ **Make Connections**
  - ✓ Use with Fiction & Non-Fiction
    - ✓ Place/Setting/Time
    - ✓ Themes , Characters, Plot
- ✓ **Vocabulary**
  - ✓ Recycle Words
  - ✓ Context
  - ✓ Apply & Use



# Meaningful & Engaging

- ✓ **Activities**
  - ✓ Worksheets
  - ✓ Interviews
  - ✓ Reflections
  - ✓ Selfies
  - ✓ Gamify – Points or Prizes
  - ✓ Project, Videos, Presentations, Posters

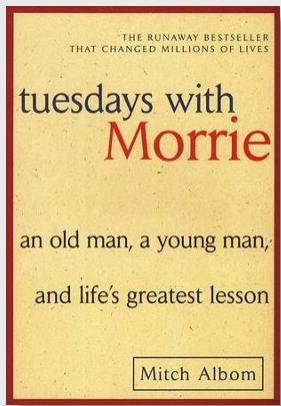


## Field Trips that Connect

- ✓ Real World
  - ✓ Places in the Community
  - ✓ Free Days!
  - ✓ Natural Context of Target
  - ✓ Permission
- ✓ Virtual Spaces
  - ✓ Google Apps
    - ✓ Expedition
    - ✓ Arts & Culture
    - ✓ Maps & Earth
  - ✓ Museums
  - ✓ Webquests

# Life Skills Class

- Cross-Culture Exploration
- Authentic Self

[illegible]



# American Art & Pop Culture

- Community
- Artistic Expression
- Perceptions



## Denver Art Museum Scavenger Hunt American Art & Pop Culture

**Directions:** While we are at the Denver Art Museum, we'll explore some of the different collections. Look at the list below and be creative to find pieces to match the descriptions and take a picture of it! Try to think outside of the box! Also, make sure to write down (or take a picture) of identifying information – for example, the name of the piece, artist, year, medium, interesting description. We'll compare pictures for most creative finds! (This will also help you write this week's Journal.)  
**See if You Can Find...**

1. A piece that would make Freud say, hmmm...
2. A bizarre selfie...
3. An animal wishing to be unleashed...
4. A super colorful piece...
5. Something so rare that it belongs in a museum...
6. Where you would sleep if you were secretly living in the Denver Art Museum...
7. A plate of food that makes you say "yuck" or "yum!"
8. A creepy statue...
9. A piece of art you would place in your home...
10. Something that looks like one of your kids (or someone else's kids) created...
11. The most original piece of art...
12. An outfit you would not be caught dead in!



# Vocabulary & Idioms Elective

- In Context
- Gamified
- Pictures

**Vocabulary & Idioms**  
Valentine Vocabulary Scavenger Hunt

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Part 1:** Using the list of vocabulary words and idioms that we have covered, complete the following story with the correct vocabulary word(s) or idiom. (There are no repeat answers and some words in the list below will not be used.)

assist	date	master
butterflies in my	debt	present
stomach	exhibit	propose
concentrate	bug	reflect
conclude	insure	regime
convenient	intensions	ring
couple	kits	romantic gestures
criticize	logical	Valentine's
crystal clear	love	

February 14<sup>th</sup> is \_\_\_\_\_ Day! It is a day to celebrate \_\_\_\_\_.

Oh, no! I almost forgot to buy my partner a special \_\_\_\_\_ and plan a romantic \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_ it is important that I do not spend too much money and go into \_\_\_\_\_.

So, I must make \_\_\_\_\_ decisions. Hmmm. What should I do, \_\_\_\_\_?

what should I buy? If I pick the wrong gift, my love will \_\_\_\_\_ me for \_\_\_\_\_.

buying things that were \_\_\_\_\_ My \_\_\_\_\_ should \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_ real \_\_\_\_\_ Since I am a \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.

finding the perfect gift, I do not need to \_\_\_\_\_ a friend. I just need to sit \_\_\_\_\_.

down and \_\_\_\_\_ the perfect plan will become \_\_\_\_\_ I am \_\_\_\_\_.

confident that I will devise a plan to \_\_\_\_\_ that my date will give me a big \_\_\_\_\_.

and \_\_\_\_\_ Although we make a perfect \_\_\_\_\_ I am not \_\_\_\_\_.

going to buy a \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ Here are some of my thoughts...

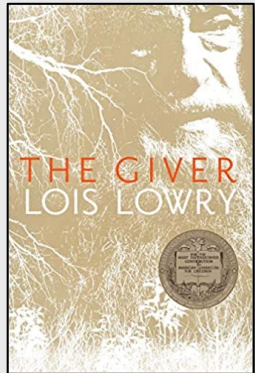
**Part 2:** In the store, we must be very respectful. No running. No yelling. You and your partner will use the clue (hints) below to find items in the store that best illustrate the clue. You must write down your answer and take a picture of an item(s) that you find to help you answer each clue. Your answers should be related to vocabulary and idioms from our list. Be sure not to share answers with other teams! The team to return with the most correct answers are the winners! Good luck and have fun!

1. I want to write a **love letter**. But if I buy one of these, I just have to sign my name!
2. If I don't want to cook, this could be a possible **location** for our **date**.
3. **Ohh**, I could give the presents while sitting in front of a nice **fireplace** with a cup of **hot chocolate**.
4. I could always buy something for my date to wear.
5. If my date has a headache, I could always buy something to **lessen** the pain.
6. **Roses** are red, violets are blue...
7. I could buy just one **flower**, but I think it would be better to buy a large **bouquet**.
8. A **classic** example of a typical **Valentine's** day gift is \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Another **obvious Valentine** gift is \_\_\_\_\_.
10. I could always buy a food item that is difficult for me to **pronounce**.
11. I will need to read the **labels** carefully to make sure that I do not buy a food item with **gluten**.
12. If my date has an **issue** with seafood, I better not buy that.
13. If I buy this, I will really **be going the extra mile**.
14. Coming up with the perfect plan was **easy**!



# Literature

- Interpretation of Concepts & Themes
- Vocabulary



**The Giver**

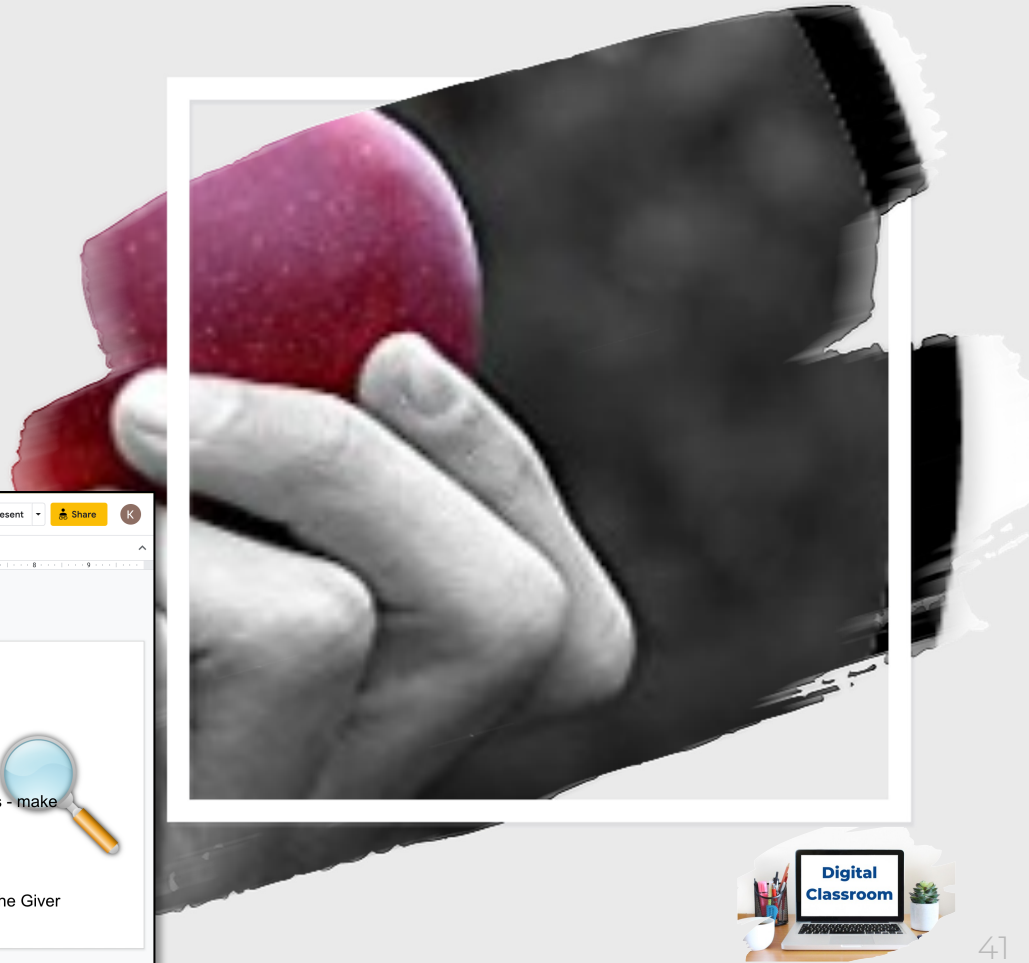
File Edit View Insert Format Slide Arrange Tools Add-ons Help Last...

Slides home

**Team Scavenger Hunt**

*The List - must be related to the story!*

1. Something that represents love
2. Something that represents an Assignment
3. Something that is the first color Jonas saw
4. Something that represents one of the characters - make sure to say which character
5. Something that represents the Community
6. Something that represents sameness
7. Something that represents something Jonas saw/experienced in one of the memories from The Giver
8. Something that represents The Giver



# Professional Bonding

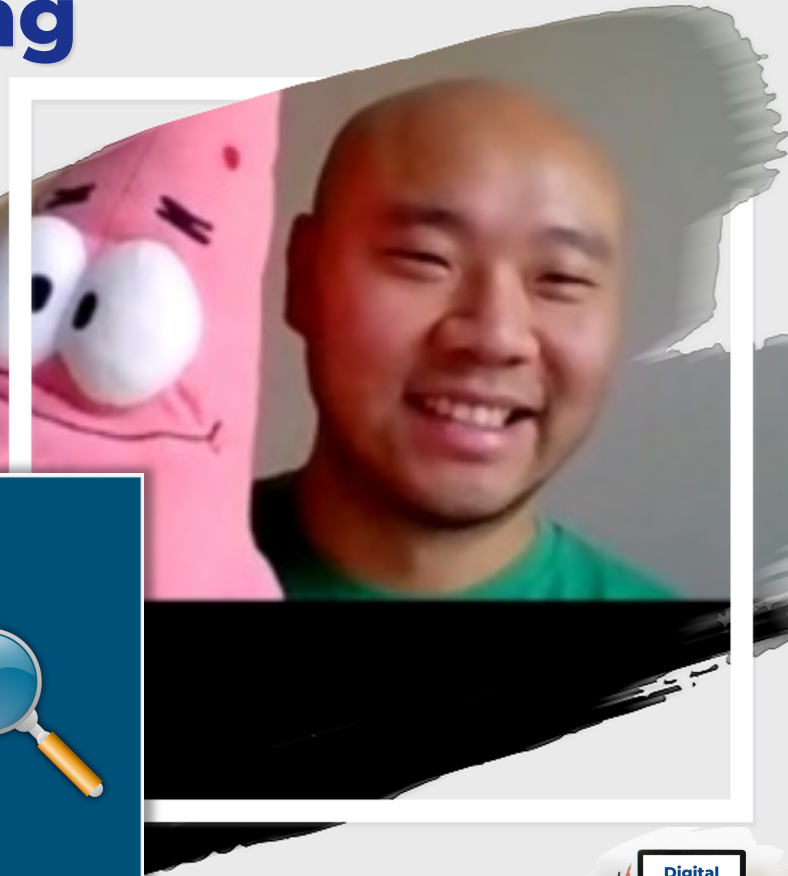
- Fun
- Learning Something New

The List	Learned Listeners	Grammar Guardians	TESOL Tik Tokers	Rapid Readers	Whimsical Writers
Most Random Kitchen Gadget	2	1	1		
Oldest electronic device that still works	1	1	2		
Cutest stuffed animal	1				
Best ESL Textbook	2				
Most exotic foreign currency	1				
Weirdest birthday present	1				
Tiniest house plant	1				
Most unusual bottle of alcohol	1				
Coollest homemade item	2				
Most unique coffee mug	2				
Total	14				

## Team Scavenger Hunt

### *The Rules*

- 15 Minutes with your team
  - Look at the list & strategize
  - Items must be visible on Zoom screen
  - Get **creative** & collect items
  - Select the best item for each category
  - Take screenshots during your time together
  - Goal: Find any 8 of the 10 items (you can go for all 10)







# **Q&A and Idea Share**

Let's hear your thoughts!

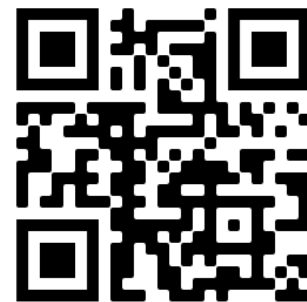


**THANKS!**

Any questions?

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