Education Support

American Dance

Team Building Activities

1. **Rope Shapes-** Have every dancer on the team stand in one long line. Everyone is blindfolded. A piece of one long rope is placed in each person's hand by the instructor. The objective is to make a specific shape with the rope (ex. circle). This exercise is much more difficult than it seems. When the team believes they have finished creating their shape, they remove their blindfolds to check their success. Leaders will obviously emerge. Communication is important. It will also be evident that teamwork is essential.
2. **Guess Who?-** The instructor pins 5 X 6 laminated index card upon which a famous person's name has been written to the back of each team member. Do not let the individual see the name of the person being pinned to her back. Warn the others in the class not to tell one another who their famous person is. The objective is to identify the name pinned to one's back by asking only yes or no questions of other teammates. Example questions: Am I a movie star? Am I male? Am I female? Am I dead? Am I an animated character? etc. Every person can only ask two questions of each teammate. The students will soon see that they must be clever in their problem solving, and that they need the help of their teammates to solve the identity problem.
3. **2 X 4-** Have an even numbered group of students (4 - 8) stand on a 2 X 4 piece of wood. All students are facing the same direction. The objective is to reverse the order of the line without stepping off the 2 X 4. This exercise will teach problem solving and the necessity of teamwork.
4. **Sing a Little Song-** Divide the team into smaller groups (officer groups). Each group has to make up a song about dance team to the tune of any television show theme song. They should also create movement to go along with the song. Set a time limit of five to ten minutes to complete the assignment. Have each group perform their song and dance. Obvious leaders will emerge as students participate in this activity. Creativity and teamwork will also be enhanced through this activity.
5. **Trust Lift-** Arrange the team into two parallel lines facing in towards one another shoulder to shoulder. Four of the strongest members need to be on either end and two strong members in the middle. (Depending on the size of the team, there may need to be four parallel lines.) Each person will take turns being lifted and passed down the line above the heads of their teammates. It may be necessary to have the student being lifted to start on a step stool. They need to fall backwards into the

hands of the first two to four dancers who will lift them above their heads, then pass them down the line. The dancer being lifted needs to fold their arms across their chest, keep their legs and body tight with their legs together. They need to stay as flat as possible. When they are near the end of the line, the last four dancers will lower their to the ground feet first. This will teach the necessity of trusting one's teammates, as well as the need for teamwork.

6. TRUST WALK Blind fold all members of the team. Have them line up into one long line holding hands. Tell them they must be quiet and listen carefully to all directions. The instructor will lead the class through a "trust" wall. It can be through a building with different obstacles such as a set of stairs. It can be a walk outside that involves hills, puddles of water, trees etc. The instructor (who is not blind folded) will tell the first dancer in the line exactly what to do. For example, if the first dancer needs to take a step up, the instructor tells them. The first dancer will then whisper the same directions at the appropriate time to the person behind them and so on and so forth. The students must not ever shout out directions. It's also imperative that they whisper directions to the person behind them at the appropriate time. The leader emphasizes the importance of listening to the person in front of them so that they do not injure themselves. The objective is to have the students realize the importance of effective communication as well as trust and teamwork.
7. BUILDING BRIDGES Divide the team into smaller groups (no more than 6 or 7 to a group). Each group is given the same materials: a stack of newspaper (probably the equivalency of 2 - 3 newspapers), two rolls of masking tape, and a cardboard box about the size of a paper box (approximately 17 - 18 inches wide and 9 inches deep) containing 10lbs. of weight inside in the form of books or bricks. All materials must be exactly the same for each group. The group is to build a free standing bridge that is tall and wide enough for the box to pass under without touching the bridge. The box will be passed through leading with the wide side. In other words, the bridge needs to allow for more than 16 inches in width and 9 inches in height. One more trick, the bridge must also be strong enough and wide enough to hold the 10lb. box of materials. The groups may only use the materials provided and a time limit is set. This is a great team building and problem solving exercise that will leave each group with a sense of accomplishment.
8. CIRCLE OF FRIENDS Have the team sit in a circle. Give one dancer a small stuffed animal such as a beanie baby. They says something they love about drill team then tosses the beanie baby to someone else. This person then says something they love about drill team, then throws the animal to another teammate. No teammate can hold the stuffed animal twice. Continue until everyone has had the opportunity to speak.
9. GETTING TO KNOW YOU Have the team sit in a circle. Pass around a roll of toilet paper. Tell each dancer to take as little or as much as she needs. Don't tell them the purpose for the paper. They will ask - just reply with, "Take as little or as much as you need." Once every dancer has some toilet paper, tell them to write one thing about themselves on each square of toilet paper they have. Everyone then shares with the rest of the team the information they have written about themselves.
10. BIRTHDAY REARRANGE Divide the team into smaller groups (no more than 10 to a group). Without talking or writing, each group must put themselves into birthday

order from oldest to youngest including month, date, and year. Have the groups race against one another to see who can accurately complete the activity first. Give a prize to each of the dancers in the winning group. This will teach the students problem solving skills, the importance of non verbal communication and teamwork.

11. SPIDER WEB Have the team stand in a circle. Choose one person to start the activity. This person will have a ball of yarn. The first person will take the end of the ball of yarn and hold onto it. They will choose one of their teammates to whom to throw the yarn. Before they throw the ball, they have to say something special about that person. Once the second person has caught the ball of yarn, they choose someone else to say something special about then throws the ball of yarn to them. The procedure continues until everyone has had the opportunity to speak. The ball of yarn can never be thrown to the same person twice. Everyone holds on to a piece of yarn as they throw it to the next person. When the activity is concluded a huge "spider web" has been created. This is a great concluding exercise for a team building class.
12. BOUNDARY BREAKING Team sits in a circle and asks a series of questions. Each member of the team answers each question verbally to the entire team. Begin the game with "low risk" questions. These are questions which do not require any personal response about inner feelings or emotions. The more personal questions are considered "high risk" and should be used when the squad is more familiar with each other.

    Sample questions: (Low risk questions are signified with an asterisk.)

    *If you could travel to one place in the world, where would you go?
    *What is your favorite sport?
    *What skill do you need in order to succeed?
    *What makes you most secure?
    *What is your favorite song?
    *What qualities and/or skills do you gain by being a dancer?
    *What is your team doing well right now?
    *What is the most enjoyable part of your job as a dancer?
    What word best describes your life up to now?
    What is your biggest worry?
    How are you best able to accept criticism?
    Where do you see yourself five years from now?
    What do people like best about you?
    When do you feel most lonely?
    What is your greatest fear?
    What is your greatest embarrassment?
    What do you love the most?
    If you could have any wish, what would it be?
    What would you like to be known for in your lifetime?
    Who has had the most positive influence on you and why?
    What would you like to see your squad improve?
    If three people in history could help you with decisions, who would you choose and why?
    How do you think your team is thought of by the rest of the school?
    How do you usually behave when a deadline is approaching?
    How do you usually respond when someone criticizes you?

13. COMPLETE THESE SENTENCES... Another way to improve communication between team members is for each member to complete the following:

    One important thing that I want to learn as a drill team member is...
    Cooperation is important because...

I can help other people by...
Something that I am improving is...
If I could teach everyone in the world one thing, it would be...
The one thing I enjoy doing most is...
My feelings are hurt when people...
I get angry when...
Sometimes I like to be myself and do...
I trust people who...
I feel lonely when...
I feel the warmest towards a person who...
When I am in a group of people, I am most afraid of...
If I had six more hours in the day, I would spend them by...
I handle stress by...
The happiest moment of my life was...

14. BIO CARDS Each team member receives an index card with three questions. For example, the questions could be: What is your greatest accomplishment? What is your biggest fear? What is your lifetime goal? The dancers answer each question and hand in their cards. Then the director reads the answers, and the other team members try to guess who wrote those answers.
15. M&M GAME Team sits in a circle. Pass a bag of M&M's around and tell everyone to take as many as they want, but not to eat them yet. When all of the dancers have candy, tell them to count the red ones. For each red M&M, they will share a positive quality about herself.
16. TRUST FALL One person stands on a higher object, like a bleacher step or a chair. This person falls back into the other teammates arms. Since the person falling is not looking at the others, this person must trust that the others will catch them.
17. TEAM WORD GIFT Each individual has a paper with their name at the top. The papers are passed around the team and each member writes a positive word about the person whose name is at the top of the paper. Each dancer receives their paper with all the positive words describing them.
18. SHOWER OF PRAISE The team splits in half with two lines facing each other. One team member zig zags back and forth down the line receiving whispered positive comments or memories from each person. They then join the end of the line. Another member can begin soon after the first person starts, so the line moves quickly.