Sample Activities for Orientation – Inbound and Outbound

Ice Breaker Ideas

**Yes Game**: Everyone sits on a chair in a circle. You have one person read statements to the group. If you respond yes, you move one seat to the right. If you respond no, you stay seated. Yes, people do end up sitting on each other (sometimes there are three or four). Questions might be: you have more than 3 piercings, you have been to a movie theater in the United States, you speak more than 3 languages fluently, you have been to an American football game, helped an animal give birth and so on.

**What Makes a Group**: Everyone is standing and the activity leader will shout out a category. Everyone will group themselves according to their category response. Example: favorite ice cream, number of siblings, favorite genre of music

**String Game**: Cut string in different lengths. Have each person select one piece of the string or yarn. For each time they wrap it around their finger they share something about themselves that no one else in the room would know about them.

**Introduction**: Speaking sentences backward. I have used this at parent and student orientation. Discussion on how your child will feel when they go abroad for several months, the importance of not using English frequently during this time and discussion of frustration levels.

Activities:

**What would You Do Now**: AFS Activity in the educator’s toolbox - <http://www.afsusa.org/educators/teachers-toolbox/lesson-plans/cultural-influence-on-judgements/>

This activity has two handouts. The first will ask what would you do and provides different scenarios. Students complete their response. The second worksheet expands on the scenario providing more details and then asks what they would do. Activity focuses on cultural influences on judgments.

**Conflict Resolution:** Provide scenarios of situations that will arise for a student during their year (have rotex give you these scenarios). Have each partner with another and practice tips such as the following: Listen without saying anything, using I messages (you drive me crazy with your fast driving vs I feel scared when you drive fast), repeat what the other is saying to make sure that you are hearing it correctly, try to remember that someone having a different point of view is ok.

**Colors Personality**: I have used this at outbound camp to focus on personality differences that may impact as much as cultural differences. Discussion can follow on each personality on how it may impact family relationships when abroad, how to use other colors to facilitate relationships, etc.

**Signs** – can be used with any training: Place large pieces of butcher paper around the room and each piece has a different category topic on it. Depending on when you use this activity, the topics would change. Examples: How to learn a language, Problems with host family, How to make friends, school, Strangest things about Americans (say/do think), my Rotary club ignores me, homesickness, my exchange student is a picky eater, my student won’t join any clubs or get involved with students, my student is always criticizing Americans etc.. Have students/Rotarians/Host Parents rotate and write their responses. When I have rotex available, they will take a few minutes to go around the signs and highlight best responses and then share with the group. We process any questions/thoughts etc.

**Fear Factor**- outbound orientation camp: Blindfold students and have them pair up with a rotex member. They will go to each food and sample it. They will indicate the name of the food, the country of origin and if they liked it or not (I have a spit cup handy just in case). Some of the goods are wonderful and some not so much. At the end, we tally up the scores and the winner receives a fear factor button.

**Spontaneous Combustion**: There is a list of topics. Students will select one out of a hat and they must speak to this subject for one minute. The audience is not allowed to comment or show reaction to what the speaker is saying. After one minute they sit down. The topics are easy for the first round. Topic ideas may include things such as the following: Why did you become an RYE student, what are your thoughts on marriage, favorite movie, who should pay on a date, your hero etc. The second round the questions are much more difficult and questions they may hear while abroad. Why do Americans put their elderly in nursing homes, do you not like old people? Why are your schools so easy? Who do you think should be your next president? Why are Americans so fat? Explain the electoral college and why doesn’t your vote count?

**Pipecleaners/Identity Sculptures**: In this activity, each student takes four pipe cleaners. They are told to shape them into the four parts that are most central to their identity. They will then stand and share their sculpture with the group. They will say, in terms of my own identity I am: and then show their sculpture and explain each of the four central components. After everyone has shared, you will then ask them to remove the one piece that is most central to their identity and place it behind their back. Begin to process how it felt to take that piece out of their sculpture. Discuss what it may feel like to live one year without this part of yourself. What things others hide all the time that we cannot see (can tie in with culture and what cultures hide parts of their identity). Moving in to a family will there be pieces of themselves that may be hidden? How will that impact the relationships?

**House Drawing Activity**: Have students label their house. Door equals who I let in, window what others can see, window, what is important to me, foundation (my values), roof and chimney – how I blow off steam. Discussion of each and how it may impact exchange year abroad.

**Voices of RYE:** Rotex students have provided to me experiences (negative or perceived as negative) that happened to them during their year. We have these typed and then cut into separate slips of paper. They are placed in an envelope. Students and Rotex sit in a circle and pass the envelope around. You take a slip of paper out of the envelope and read it aloud. Continue this until all slips of paper are distributed and read. Begin by processing what you heard/saw and what was felt as they were being read. Then select one scenario for every student and have them partner. They will take 15 minutes or so to create a “skit” trying to problem solve the situation. The rotex will act as the parent/rotarian/etc involved in the scenario.

**Blue and Gold Game**: Outbound orientation only - see attached.

You will need at least 8 players (better with 12 to 16 – use Rotex and Rotarians if need be)

**Here I stand**: This activity provides students the opportunity to identify their own values and understand value differences, leading to greater insights into the effect of culture on individuals. This is a great activity if you have a diverse population. If not, your rotex students may opt to represent the other side. In this activity you have students place themselves on an imaginary continuum of agree/disagree. Read a statement and have students place themselves on the continuum. After students place themselves on the line, ask them to share why they are standing where they are. They are allowed to move places on the continuum. Process at the end with ORID and emphasize cultural understanding.

1. Anyone can become successful in the U.S. by working hard
2. My generation is more respectful of differences than my parents’ generation
3. Girls and boys are treated the same at my school. They are given the same amount of attention and the same discipline for the same reasons.
4. I have a racially diverse group of friends or I have a culturally diverse group of friends
5. Everyone should have the right of free speech – even organized hate groups
6. I feel comfortable when people speak in foreign languages around me, even if I don’t know what they are saying.
7. I would feel comfortable if I had a gay, lesbian or bisexual parent.
8. Men have many advantages in our society that women do not share.
9. Women have many advantages in our society that men do not share.
10. I have dated outside my race
11. English should be the official language of the U.S.
12. The United States should implement much stronger gun control laws.

\*feel free to add any for your group that would be appropriate to the community in which you come from

**Value Line** – Very similar to Here I stand. Set of values include: Money vs power; security vs Risk; conformity vs non-conformity; climbing the corporate ladder vs family coming first; individualistic vs group oriented; leadership vs following the group; control vs delegation; competition vs cooperation

Have discussion after with examples of each of these, describe in different cultures where each may be valued. Also discuss as students when each is necessary for successful exchange.

**Leaving on a Jet Plane Game** – Outbound Camp: This activity takes a few hours to complete. The purpose is to expose students to what it may be like to fly internationally by yourself. It also is a great opportunity to watch personality styles of students and how they handle stress. I set the area up as follows

1. A room for each team that contains one large suitcase and one backpack. I have brought enough clothes for multiple suitcases, but each team only gets one suitcase and one backpack. Items are dress clothes, jeans, shirts, swimsuits, gifts, passport, money, gform, winter coats, sweatshirts, sweaters, money belt, books, stuffed animal, photo album, camera, laptop, cell phone, rye blazer, business cards and so on. The team is directed that only one person can pack. The others can sit on the sidelines and give advice.
2. Room/area arrangement is as follows
   1. An area that is set up like an airport. You have the ticket counter (I use chairs and string to mimic the zigzag line) with a scale. If the student bag is too light or too heavy, I send them home and tell them they are not ready to go on exchange. If they are not wearing their blazer or do not have their ticket, passport I send them home. The third time I tell them what is missing.
   2. After the ticket window, the students must go through security. I have speed bumps (just like on the tv show ). Each team will get one speed bump for every third team member. The speed bump is that they are completely searched and everything is being dumped out of their backpack.
   3. They get on the airline to fly to their “cold weather country” and discover that the flight attendant speaks to them in another language (let’s say Japanese). They also have a customs form to complete (it’s in Russian).
   4. Upon arrival to their cold weather country, they must go through customs. There is an area for that. The person is not nice and of course speaks some other language.
   5. They must get their baggage (there is a person running in circles with the bag (they are the baggage carousal).
   6. They must then go to a taxi or train to get to their host family. Oh, but wait, they must get a token for the taxi inside the airport. This person of course speaks another language as well.
   7. They will eventually meet their host family and then tag the next member of their team. The teams are sequestered in a windowless area so they do not know what is happening. After you complete your part of the relay, you join others who have finished.

Upon completion of the game, process and award the winning team jet plane buttons.

**Packing Game** if Jet Plane is too long:

Have the students see how much they can pack in a carry on. Judge for weight and usefulness while abroad. Award a button for the winner. Se.e links below to show packing techniques

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PDn9l20NlWw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=--ZrYtRjYfs>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PlLxQzR8axM>

Dot Activity – Have all participants close their eyes. Place a colored dot (buy the sticker dots that you may use say for a yard sale) on each forehead. Use four colors total. Green will only be used on one student. Yellow, blue and red will be rotated until all participants have a dot. Once everyone has a dot, they may open their eyes. They are instructed, nonverbally, to get with the group that has the same color dot on their forehead. Yes, one student will be by him or herself. After everyone has found their group, give them a task to accomplish or conversations to have. After this, have them all sit and process the activity. Being alone is difficult yet when abroad this feeling will happen often. Have students discuss how they handle being alone and being lonely.

**Perfect Exchange Student -**  I have used this frequently with inbound orientation. I provide each group of three or so students (one one rotex to monitor) a large piece of butcher paper (as tall as a person). I then instruct them to go and draw the perfect exchange student and to label each part of the student. Examples of what might be included. Brain to think these through and make good decisions or to learn a language. A hat to not get sunburnt (I live in Arizona), a dictionary for language, RYE blazer, hands to do service, to participate in sports, feet to take me new places. Smile to make new friends, pockets to carry business cards in to hand out at rotary meetings. After drawing them, each group will introduce their student to the group. We hang these for the weekend in our meeting space and refer back to them as we discuss roles of a student, responsibilities and rules.

**Closing Activity for Outbound**:

**Paper Activity:**  Each participant gets a piece of paper. Instructions are as follows: Everyone please close their eyes and keep your eyes closed. Fold your paper in half. Fold your paper in half again. Tear off the top corner. Turn your paper over and tear off the other top right corner. Open your paper. Open your eyes. Hold your paper up so everyone can see. Ask participants who followed directions correctly. Point of the activity is there is no right or wrong, just different. This can tie in to conflict resolution, cultural diversity etc.

**Strength Bombardment**: Each outbound student receives a piece of paper with their name on top. Depending on numbers in your group, each student may need two pieces. Each person involved in your orientation camp will write positive statements about this person on the paper – encouragement for their year abroad. Focus on the person’s strengths. This way, when they are feeling down they can look back at the strengths others see in them. Giving them, hopefully, strength to carry on in difficult times.