



SUPERSTAR

"We all have much more in common than we have difference. I would say that about people all over the world. They don't know how much in common that they have."

— Ernest Gaines

OVERVIEW

To build trust and inclusion, students play a game in which they learn more about each other and celebrate what they have in common.

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- As an icebreaker at the start of the school year to promote positive relationships and a sense of belonging among students
- Any time during the school year

TIME REQUIRED

- 10–15 minutes

LEVEL

- Lower Elementary
- Upper Elementary
- Middle School

MATERIALS

- None

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Find commonalities they share with each other
- Build positive relationships and cultivate empathy
- Practice teamwork and experience belonging

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Management
- Social Awareness
- Relationship Skills

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

Take a moment to reflect on what you might have in common with one or more of your students. Does this make you feel more connected to them?

INSTRUCTIONS

SETUP

- Gather the whole group into a circle and then have players form pairs.

HOW TO PLAY

- Each pair will have 1–2 minutes to find out things they have in common that...
 - they didn't already know, and
 - are not visible.
- Before starting, use a volunteer to demonstrate examples of commonalities that meet the criteria:
 - *I wouldn't tell my partner that I have brown hair because they can see that. I wouldn't say that I am in elementary school because my partner already knows that. I might say, "My favorite food is pizza. What's yours?" or I might ask, "What do you like to do in your free time?"*
- When the time is up, have players get back into the large circle.
- One by one, each pair will share one thing they have in common.
- After sharing their commonality, if others in the group also share that commonality, all students should put their hands up, lunge forward, and yell, "SUPERSTAR!"
- The next pair then shares their commonality with the same process, which continues until all pairs have shared.
- *Note: Encourage positive relationships by noticing aloud the discoveries that were made and the group support demonstrated by students.*

VARIATIONS

- Have players switch partners and do a round where they have to find something they have in common about a specific topic -- for example, sports, school, or hobbies.
- Have players do a round where they can't speak and can only act out ideas.

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

Were social bonds between students formed or strengthened during this game, especially among students who did not know each other well?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

Human beings “categorize” each other into identity groups based on many different features, such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and economic status; however, this process can easily lead to stereotyping and other forms of discrimination.

Numerous studies have found that when we [re-categorize people](#) who are not part of our identity group based on things that we have in common, we increase our acceptance of others and see them as part of “us.”

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

In our diverse schools, society, and world, getting along with people who appear different from us is imperative to creating safe and equitable communities in which all people thrive.

According to [research](#), one of the most effective ways to break down barriers of prejudice, racism, and “othering” is the [cultivation of cross-group friendships](#). By teaching students to look beyond their peers’ outward-facing identities and to get to know each other on a more personal, human level, teachers can make great strides in creating a world where everyone is valued.

SOURCE

Playworks’ new [SEL Game Guide](#) contains more than 150 games that you can use to reinforce social and emotional skills. Inside, you will find brain breaks, recess favorites, variations on classic games, and facilitation tips that make playtime fun, safe, and inclusive for all kids. Visit www.playworks.org to learn more about Playworks and how play can help kids stay active and learn valuable life skills.