

# CREATIVE CULTURE & CAN-DO COMMUNICATION: BUILDING COLLABORATION THROUGH ACTIVE LISTENING



# TODAY:

- **Brief intro into the toolkit and the why behind it**
- **Practice active listening & collaboration**
- **Reflection and sharing**

# KELSEY BENTON

**Teacher 10 years**

**Camp and outdoor Education 11 years**

**Mom- foster and adoptive parent**

**Steam Curriculum**

**Mental Illness and Child Abuse Prevention**

**Trainings: Curriculum Coach, Listen First, Capturing Kids Hearts, Modern Classroom,**

**Trauma Informed, Conscious Discipline, AI in the classroom**



THE COLLABORATIVE CREATIVITY TOOLKIT:

BUILDING A CULTURE OF  
CREATIVE CONFIDENCE AND  
COMMUNICATION IN SCHOOLS

HOW CAN WE FOSTER A “CAN DO” MINDSET, SUPPORT CREATIVE  
THINKING, AND STRENGTHEN COMMUNICATION AND INTENTIONAL  
SHARING IN BOTH CLASSROOM AND STAFF ENVIRONMENTS

LISTEN, REFLECT, GROW

# ACTIVITY ONE: WORD BOUNCE

Focus: Quick-thinking and responsive collaboration. Energizing and fun.

How it Works:

Form Groups: in pairs or a small circle of 3–4 people.

Start with a Word: One person begins by saying a word related to creativity, school, or collaboration (examples: "risk," "spark," "support," "challenge").

Instant Association: The next person must instantly respond with the first word or short phrase that comes to mind, keeping a rapid pace with no pauses or judgment.

Benefits:

Boosts creativity: Encourages participants to think outside the box and make novel connections.

Enhances collaboration: Promotes listening, building on ideas, and shared understanding.

Improves communication: Fosters clear expression and the ability to articulate connections between ideas.

Engaging and stimulating: Provides a dynamic and enjoyable way to activate the mind.

# LETS REFLECT:

What words surprised you?

How did it feel to not overthink?

What made you pause?

How can this kind of quick thinking support deeper listening or problem-solving?

Where does creative communication like this show up in your work?

# The Collaborative Creativity Toolkit

Empowering Creative Confidence and Communication

## “Can Do” Culture



- Growth mindset posters
- Daily affirmations or reflection prompts
- Student and teacher versions



## Creative Thinking Boosters



- 5-7 activity cards
- Quick-start creative games
- Collaboration mini-challenges



## Communication Tools



- Listening protocols
- Sentence starters for feedback
- Peer intent-sharing templates



## Implementation + Reflection



- Pilot in class and/or meetings
- Collect stories, quotes, feedback
- Use surveys or observation notes



# GOAL:

Design a practical, replicable toolkit aimed at fostering a culture of creative confidence, intentional sharing, and supportive communication among both students and staff. This would include structured activities, discussion protocols, and visual tools that emphasize a "Can Do" mindset, creative risk-taking, and active listening.

WHY LIMIT YOURSELF TO WHERE YOU ARE COMFORTABLE

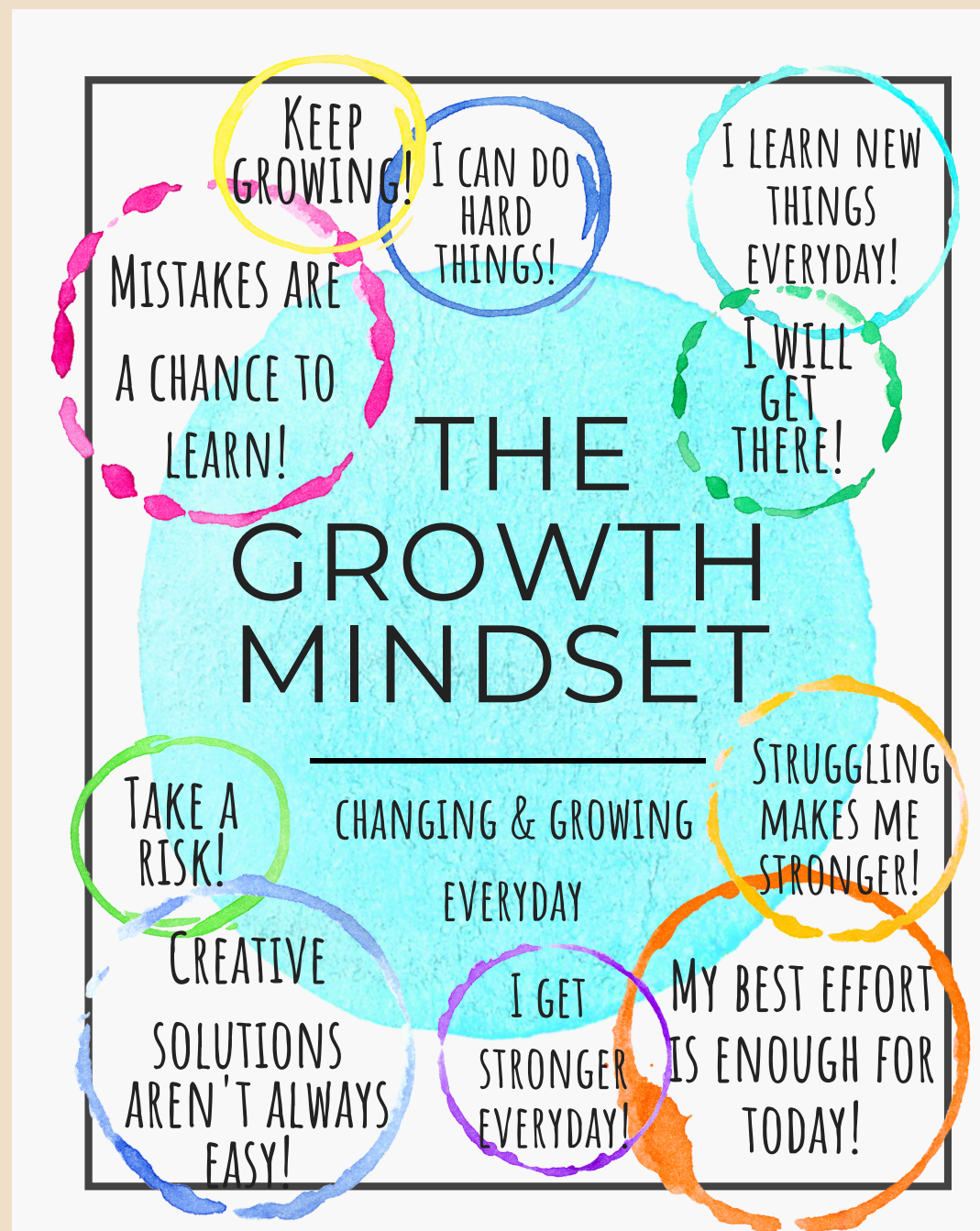
MORE THAN ONE RIGHT WAY

LISTEN, REFLECT, GROW

# CAN DO FRAMEWORK

Visual Anchors: Create posters with positive affirmations and growth mindset quotes. Use vibrant colors and engaging graphics to make them appealing.

Reflection Prompts: Develop prompts that encourage students and staff to reflect on their successes and areas for growth.

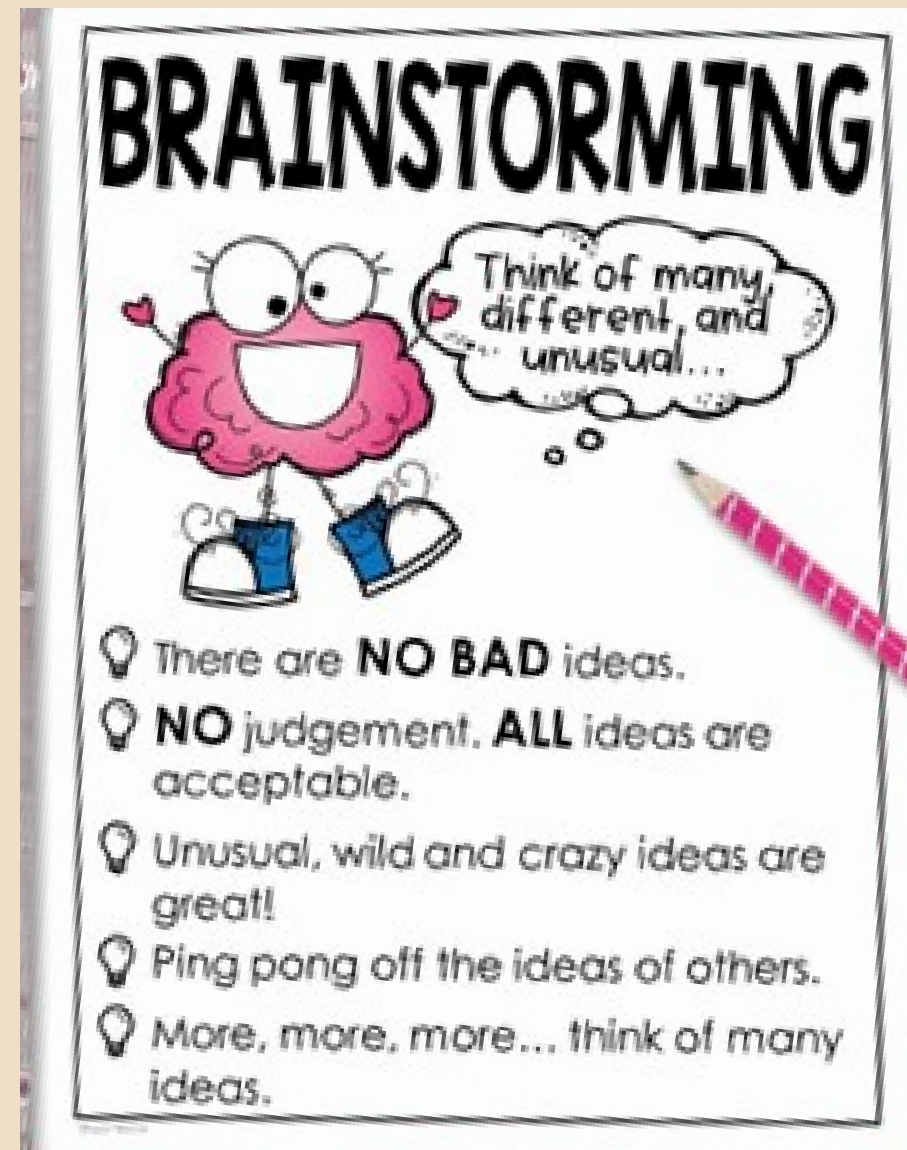
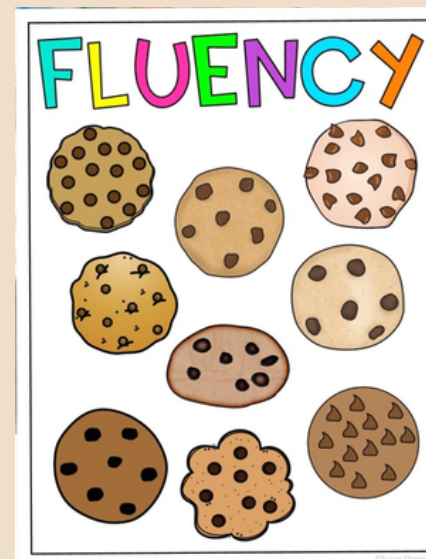
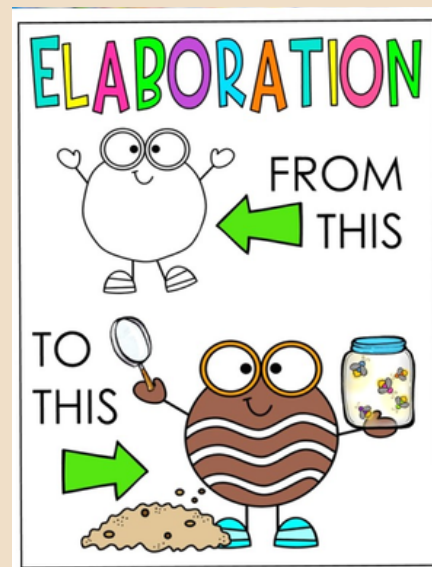


# Creative Thinking Boosters

Brainstorming: Conduct quick brainstorming sessions where students generate as many ideas as possible on a given topic. Encourage wild and out-of-the-box ideas. Flexibility, Fluency, Elaboration, Originality

Design Challenges: Set up mini design challenges where students work in teams to create something using limited materials (e.g., build the tallest tower using only paper and tape).

Story Starters: Provide creative writing prompts or story starters to spark imagination. For example, "Imagine a world where everyone can fly. What would a typical day look like?"



## CHALLENGE

### "WHAT ELSE COULD IT BE?"

Purpose: Divergent thinking and imagination

How it works:

Show a simple object (e.g., a paperclip, sock, spoon, etc.) and ask:

? "What else could this be?"

Encourage participants to brainstorm at least 5–10 alternative, imaginative uses or identities for the object.

Optional: Do it in pairs and build off each other's answers.



# LISTENING & SHARING PROTOCOLS- KIDS/PEOPLE NEED TO TALK TO LEARN

Turn-and-Talk Prompts: Use prompts like "Tell your partner one thing you learned today" or "Share an idea you have for our next project."

Peer Feedback Starters: Create sentence starters for giving constructive feedback, such as "I liked how you..." or "Next time, you might try..."

Team Check-In Templates: Develop templates for regular team check-ins, including questions like "What's going well?" and "What challenges are we facing?"

## **Sticky-Note Storm**

This activity is great for brainstorming, reviewing, and thinking outside the box. It's also a great way for students to teach and learn from one another.

It works best when kids are seated in small table groups. Have a supply of sticky notes available for each table.

-The teacher poses a question, sets a time limit, and gives students a moment to think before writing. For example, "In two minutes, how many math problems can you write down that have the solution 23?" or "In 45 seconds, write down as many adjectives as you can."

-Each student writes down as many answers as they can think of—one idea per sticky note—and sticks it to the center of the table.

\*The goal is to generate as many ideas as possible and cover the table with sticky notes!

At the end of each round, students review one another's ideas.

## **Best Practices for sharing intentionally:**

Establish Clear Expectations: Outline the purpose, process, and desired outcomes of intentional sharing activities.

Provide Scaffolding and Support: Offer guidance and tools to help students and teachers share effectively, especially when introducing new formats or activities.

Reflect and Assess: Evaluate the effectiveness of intentional sharing strategies and adjust them based on feedback and observed outcomes.

Celebrate Successes: Acknowledge and celebrate students' growth in their ability to share effectively and contribute to the learning community.

# ACTIVITY TWO: ECHO AND ADD

Purpose: Practice active listening by not only repeating back what was said, but building on it—fostering collaborative dialogue.

How It Works: Pairs or small groups of 3.

Partner A shares a short idea, teaching win, or challenge they're facing (about 1-2 min).

Partner B then responds using this structure: (about 1-2 min)

Echo: "What I hear you saying is..." (paraphrase their main point)

Add: "...and that makes me think..." (add an idea, connection, or offer support)

Switch roles after each round.

What's important about that is..."

"A question that comes up for me is..."

"One way I relate is..."

"What if we looked at it another way?"

# MORE REFLECTION!

“How did it feel to have your ideas both echoed and expanded?”

“What shifted when you focused on building rather than fixing?”

“How could this structure support teams, students, or PLC  
conversations?”

# CLOSING REFLECTION:

What might you bring back to your team or classroom from today?

Where can more intentional listening improve collaboration in your work?

LISTEN  
REFLECT  
GROW

PLEASE SHARE YOUR KEY TAKE AWAY  
FROM TODAY, SOMETHING YOU WANT  
TO TRY, OR A QUESTION YOU STILL HAVE



## "WHAT ELSE COULD IT BE?" CHALLENGE

Purpose: Divergent thinking and imagination

How it works:

Show a simple object (e.g., a paperclip, sock, spoon, etc.) and ask:

- ◆ "What else could this be?"

Encourage participants to brainstorm at least 5–10 alternative, imaginative uses or identities for the object.

🔄 Optional: Do it in pairs and build off each other's answers.

## 💡 "FIX IT WITH FLAIR"

Purpose: Encourage innovative problem-solving and reframe challenges creatively in a group setting.

How it works:

Present a common school or teaching challenge — e.g., "Students don't participate in group discussions" or "Staff meetings feel unproductive."

In small groups, ask:

- ◆ "What is the wildest, most creative (but still somewhat plausible) way we could solve this?"
- ◆ "What if money/time were no issue?"
- ◆ "How could we flip this problem into a strength?"

Each group shares their idea with the room, with bonus points for humor, originality, or boldness.

Example response:

"To make meetings engaging, every agenda item gets presented through interpretive dance... or, more realistically, as a short skit or meme challenge."

Debrief Prompt:

"Which ideas felt silly but sparked something real?"

"What patterns do you notice in our creative approaches?"

Materials Needed:

- Various listening activities (e.g., storytelling, instructions following, music interpretation)
- Timer

Instructions:

1. Set Up Stations: Create different stations with specific listening activities.
2. Rotate: Participants rotate through the stations, spending a set amount of time at each.
3. Reflect: After completing all stations, discuss what they learned about listening and how they can apply it.

"Peer Feedback Sessions":

practice giving and receiving constructive feedback.

Materials: Feedback templates or sentence starters, Reflection journals or paper and pens

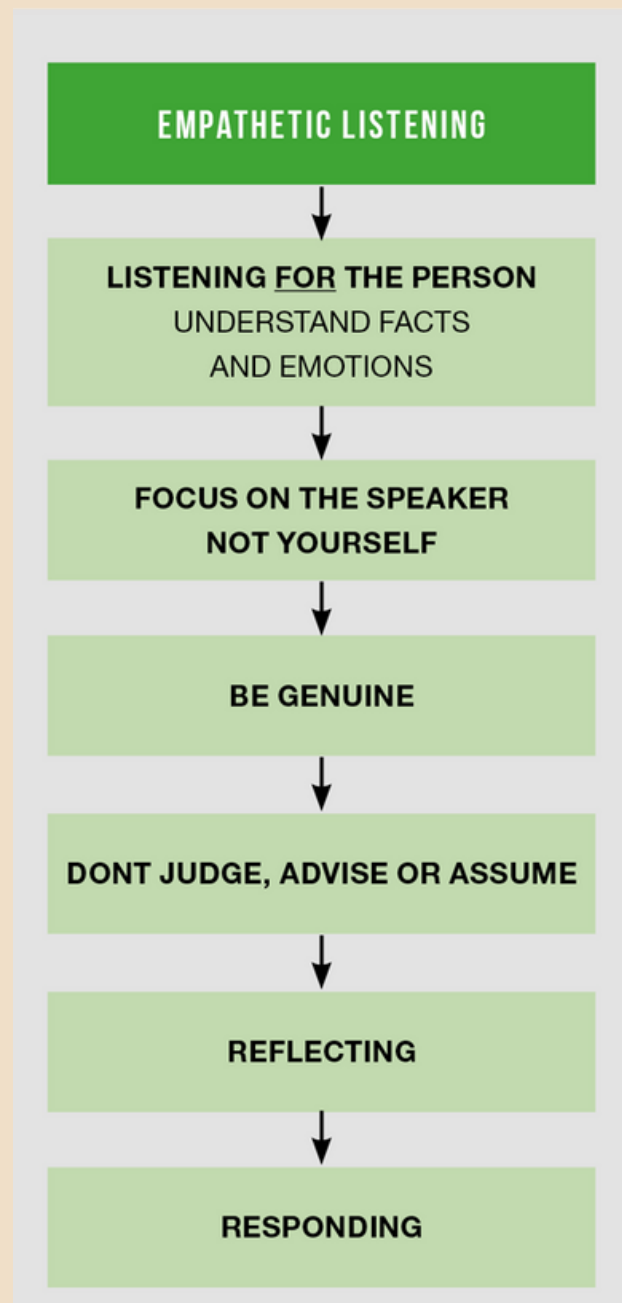
Instructions:

- Pair Up then Set the Task: Each pair works on a task or project together (e.g., a presentation, a written piece, or a lesson plan).
- Feedback Time: exchange feedback using templates or sentence starters like "I liked how you..." and "Next time, you might try..."
- Reflection: Give participants time to reflect on the feedback they received and write down their thoughts in their journals.
- Group Discussion: Conclude with a group discussion about the importance of constructive feedback and how it can improve communication and collaboration.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TIE-IN

MINI-WORKSHOP: HOST A WORKSHOP WHERE YOU INTRODUCE THE TOOLKIT TO YOUR COLLEAGUES. INCLUDE HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES TO DEMONSTRATE ITS USE.

RESOURCE SHARING: PROVIDE DIGITAL COPIES OF YOUR RESOURCES AND ANY SUPPORTING MATERIALS SO THAT OTHERS CAN EASILY IMPLEMENT IT.



## Effective Knowledge Sharing

## 10 Alternatives to Think Pair Share

## 10 ways to foster creative thinking

### Best Practices for sharing intentionally:

**Establish Clear Expectations:** Outline the purpose, process, and desired outcomes of intentional sharing activities.

**Provide Scaffolding and Support:** Offer guidance and tools to help students and teachers share effectively, especially when introducing new formats or activities.

**Reflect and Assess:** Evaluate the effectiveness of intentional sharing strategies and adjust them based on feedback and observed outcomes.

**Celebrate Successes:** Acknowledge and celebrate students' growth in their ability to share effectively and contribute to the learning community.