

Sampler Sessions have been used to help kids and parents “try before they buy” – try DI for one afternoon before signing up for the season. They are designed for those with no DI experience, and between 2nd and 5th grade (although we find siblings of current team members catch on more quickly than others). If you hold them in the spring to recruit for the next year, you can combine it with showing a performance or two from this season, a videotape, or end with a strong suggestion for them to attend the state tournament and watch (or cheer on the local teams). In the fall, they can be held before the information session, to help publicize the whole program, or after the information session for those who are unfamiliar with the program. This document contains instructions to facilitators and helpers, and lists all the materials needed.

Sampler Sessions can be for any number of kids, which are formed into groups of 4 or 5 after the first half hour. You need one helper per group if the kids are young or completely unfamiliar with DI (otherwise you can use one helper per every two groups). It is best to have at least one room large enough to hold the whole group, and then at least one more room for every two groups of kids (one room per group is better).

The facilitator should be familiar with DI (the helpers need not be familiar, and can even be older team members or parents, although TMs are perfect for the role). The facilitator puts together the bags of materials ahead of time, creating one bag for each group for each challenge. You can substitute materials as you wish (with whatever you can find in your house), but it is best if all the groups have the same set of materials (emphasizes the different solutions possible from the same set of materials). It usually takes me about 3 hours to assemble all the materials needed for 10 groups. I also have a facilitator’s box, which contains nametags, handouts, pens, scissors (one for each group), staplers (one for each group), duct tape, electrical tape – all the non-consumable materials needed.

General timeframes for each activity are included, but flexibility is key – you want this to be successful for everyone, and ending some of these activities too soon creates frustration, yet keeping at them too long creates boredom. The facilitator’s job is to keep everything running fairly smoothly, moving between groups to gauge the progress. The whole group meets in the middle of the time for a snack and some improv, and then again at the end to view each group’s final presentation.

I ran this once with a parallel session for the parents. Not all the parents stayed, but those who did are now good candidates to be TMs – I reviewed the overall program, the program in our district, explained the challenges, and took one challenge and picked it apart in detail with their help, and then explained the solution our team did to that challenge. Also, they helped provide feedback and ask questions of the various groups as they demonstrated various aspects of their solution during the day.

These instructions were written to also help the facilitator through the sequence, as well as the helpers:

One Day Sampler Session: Suggested sequence:

Notes to facilitators:

- There are nametags in the facilitator's box.
- You need to make sure the kids have pencils / pens, or maybe bring some.
- Please bring your own stash of household objects for the warm-ups.
- Read the problems ahead of time – some add duct tape or electrical tape. Rolls of each have been provided in the facilitator's box.
- General sequence which leads up to something demonstratable by the end of the session: Make a Statue, Create a Story, Make a Costume, Make a Set, Make a Prop, Practice the Play.

Begin with a brief discussion about the value of team-based creative problem solving. World leaders have had to do a bit of this lately, as do many people in everyday life – teachers, engineers, doctors, people who build things in factories, gardeners, everyone. Maybe go around the room and have everyone say their name, and the most creative or unusual thing they have every done or seen.

Start with a few word games (10 minutes total?)_Divide into two groups if there is more than 8 participants. Have one adult lead each group. We ended up just going around the circle, and a child could pass if they wanted.

Example: Phrases that use the word “gold”. Common responses get 1 point, Creative get 3 points. Example: gold coins. (common response). Silence is golden (creative response).

Word game 1: Create phrases that use the word “blue” (2 minutes)
Recap the most creative responses.

Word game 2: Create phrases that use the word “rain” (2 minutes)
Recap the most creative responses.

Move on to games with objects (20 minutes total?):

Object game 1: Give a use for this object (pick one out of the bag of objects supplied). Have them go around the circle just once. Then ask them what it could be if you were an ant, and then keep them going. Then ask them what it could be if you were a giant, and then keep them going. Similarly, interject “if you were “ in the ocean, on a spaceship, in a grocery store, wearing this item, etc.

Object game 2: Divide into pairs and give each pair (or trio if you need) some household object. Have them plan for a few minutes, then take turns showing the others what it could be (like on Who's line is it anyway...) Hints to give them – what could it be that is outside (in nature), inside (in a building), related to sports, etc.

Recap the general principles of brainstorming: No ideas are rejected, unusual ideas are good, let everyone have a chance, the more ideas, the better, importance of listening.

So far, we have concentrated on talking about ideas. Now let's move to building things from our ideas. Divide into groups of, ideally, four people. If needed, create groups of 3 or 5, since none of the challenges require a certain number of people). These will be the groups they will use for all challenges that lead up to their final solution (Animal statue, Animal Invasion, Create-a-prop, Costume-making, and Build-a-set. Leaders can mix up the groups for the other activities, if you want or need to create different group dynamics. We start with two task-based ICs because we find that kids like to get their hands on materials.

Support Structure

Your task is to build a structure to hold up either your pair of scissors or stapler as high off the table as possible. You will receive a bag of supplies, including cardboard, straws, paper clips, rubber bands, and mailing labels. A separate 6 inch piece of duct tape will also be measured off for you to use.

If you use the scissors as your weight, then you will receive one point per full inch off the table that the scissors is supported. If you choose the stapler, then you will receive two points per inch. For example, if your structure holds the stapler four and a half inches off the table you would get $4 \times 2 = 8$ points. If your structure holds the scissors 5 and _ inches off the table you will get $5 \times 1 = 5$ points.

Your structure must be free standing when it is holding up the weight. It cannot be leaning against a wall or supported by a team member. The structure must hold the weight long enough to be measured by the judge.

Your team will have 8 minutes to build the tower for judging.

***Animal Statue** (10 minutes for actual challenge, and then another 10 as they present their statues to the other groups) (may want to split between two rooms so that they don't watch each other. The materials for this challenge are in separate paper bags – one per group, plus give them scissors and one foot of electrical tape (might need more time– watch how it goes).*

Challenge: Create a statue with the materials provided that represents an animal that is a hero. Your statue must be at least 12 inches high. To be a hero, it must have some characteristic that gives it special powers. You will be asked to describe your statue to the other groups. You will have 2 minutes to talk about what you want to make and how you want to make it, and 6 minutes to build your statue (give more time if you wish).

Materials: Assorted things in one bag per group.

Scoring: 5 points for using each item, 10 points for minimum height, 20 points for creativity / presentation, and 20 points for teamwork.

(We did not actually keep score, but explained to them as they worked how they would be scored if it were an actual competition. We reminded them of the requirements of the challenge if they had clearly forgotten them. After all, this is one of the first ones they have done....).

Maybe do an improv game here: Suggestions – Create a story one word at a time, going down a row. (use half the group as audience, half as participants). Or start a story with one line, and each person has to add something by starting their sentence with “Yes, and..” , use something the last person said, and build on it. Or just plain charades.

***Animal Hero to the Rescue (20 minutes):** (probably divide into two different rooms, since there will be a lot of talking).*

Problem: Three different animals have taken up residence in your backyard. Each of them creates an interesting, unusual problem for you. You must find creative ways to get rid of two of them without harming them. One of them will become a hero, and it is decided to create a statue in its honor. Your presentation will include telling which 3 animals are in the yard, showing why they are a problem & showing the unique ways you will get 2 of them out of the yard.

Materials: pencil & paper for planning

Time: Plan, and rehearse until time is up.

Scoring: up to 10 points for creativity of each way of getting an animal to leave; up to 30 pts. for creativity of presentation; up to 20 pts. for humor; up to 20 pts. for teamwork

Notes to facilitators: we had them give their plays to each other and made the audience explain what the animals were, the problems they created, and how they were removed, which brought up interesting issues to the presenters – they realized they had to add text if the actions alone were not enough for the audience to understand what was going on. Unfortunately, when they gave their skits to the parents, the groups had changed their skits some to incorporate the parts of other groups’ presentations that they had liked (it was hard for them to not use ideas they saw and liked). So, if there is some way for the facilitators to provide the same kind of feedback, it would be great.

Break for snack

Costume Creation: *start with whole group brainstorming different techniques of attaching fabric together, attaching things to fabric, etc.*

(Let them use scissors, electrical tape, stapler, glue, scotch tape (there are four sets of these in the facilitator's box). Costume materials are in plastic grocery store bags in large bag marked "costumes and props".)

Challenge: Make one costume that creates an animal character for one of the animals in your story. The costume must be self-contained (pieces attached to each other, not just draped over someone as individual items). Your costume must help the audience learn about your animal. You will be asked to describe your costume to the other groups, and how it was constructed. You will have 10 minutes to build your costume (give more time if you wish).

Materials: Assorted things in one bag per group.

Scoring: 2 points for each item attached to the costume, 10 points for creativity of construction, 20 points for how much it helps a person look like an animal, and 20 points for teamwork.

Set a Scene:

(Start with whole group brainstorming different techniques for making cardboard stand up. Give each group 2 pieces of cardboard, a pack colored paper, duct tape for taping the cardboard together (let each group borrow the roll of duct tape for a while), and all their scraps from their costume making and other problems (plus give them scissors, scotch tape, glue, stapler from the last challenge).)

Challenge *(take as long as you wish- they can take a long time at this):* Make a set that creates a backdrop that portrays an outdoors scene – it may include the outside of a house if you wish, but that is not required. You may use materials left over from previous challenges, as well as this pack of colored paper. Your set must help the audience learn about where your skit is located. You will have 10 minutes to build your set (give more time if you wish).

Materials: Construction paper (3 pieces of each color), and assorted leftovers; 2 pieces of large cardboard.

Scoring: 10 points for creativity of construction, 10 points for artistic beauty, 10 points for creating a distinct scene, 10 points for teamwork.

Prop it Up: (15 minutes)

Challenge: Create a prop to enhance your Animal Invasion plot. The prop must be self-contained (pieces attached to each other, not just pieces held together by someone as individual items). Your prop must help the audience learn understand your story.

Materials: in small paper bags in large bag marked "costumes and props". Also provide one foot of electrical tape.

Scoring: 2 points for each item attached to the prop, 10 points for creativity of construction, 20 points for integration into the story, and 20 points for teamwork.

Practice the play some more – tie together statue, play, set, costume, prop.

During last half hour:

Welcome the parents. Briefly describe the DI program. I talked with the parents about what it is like to participate for a season – handed out this year’s extended previews, talked about what it is like to be a TM while the kids were still rehearsing.

Present the plays to the parents. (I had the parents rotate to each area the kids were working in, rather than risk moving the statues, sets, etc.)

End by handing out information on upcoming events, TM guides for likely prospects, brochures, whatever you have.

HAVE FUN !!!!!!!!!!!!!

Extra IC, in case we have extra time.

Ant’s Picnic (have the different groups give their presentations to each other).

Challenge: Your picnic is disturbed by ants who want to steal your food. You must creatively use the materials given to fend off the ants by showing how 3 different characters react to the ants.

Materials: 2 plastic forks and 2 spoons, 5 paper napkins, some paper plates, one paper cup, part of a plastic picnic tablecloth.

Timing: 4 min. to plan; 2 min. to present (more time for planning / building, if you wish)

Scoring: creativity of solution/presentation- up to 30 pts.; creativity of characters- up to 10 pts. each; humor- up to 20 pts.; teamwork- up to 20 pts.