

Bonding Thru Board Games: Developing Soft Skills

Elizabeth Brunscheen-Cartagena, Family Life and Resource Management Agent, Sedgwick County, K-State Research and Extension

Lesson Objectives

At the conclusion of this lesson about socio-emotional skills or “soft skills” development through board games, participants will be able to:

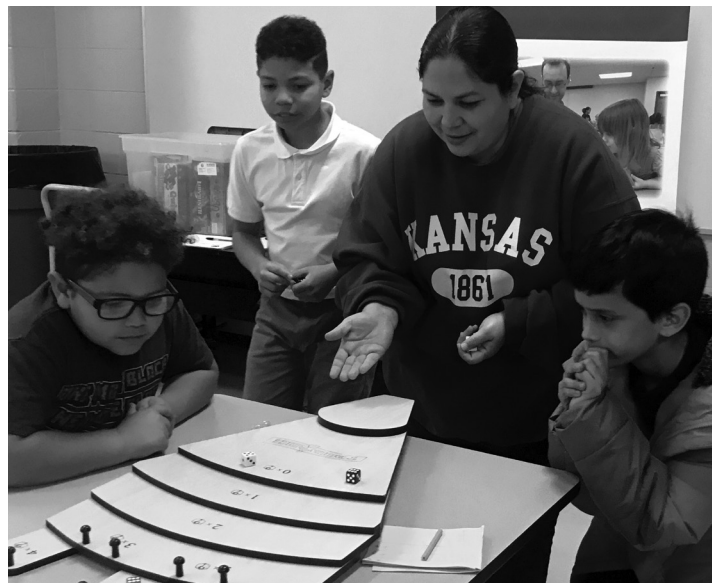
- Identify five vital school and workplace socio-emotional or “soft skills.”
- Understand the purpose of Euro-games in developing vital school/workplace “soft skills.”
- Apply social-emotional skills while playing board games.
- Build shared memories through a common, enjoyable experience.

Potential Audiences

- Intergenerational groups
- Community groups
- Veterans
- Seniors
- Churches
- Families
- Schools
- Special needs families
- Gaming groups
- Social workers

What Leaders Need to Prepare for the Lesson

- Time to read over the leader’s guide
- Pocket cards for each soft skill (MF3530 and MF3530S)
- Displays to explain and showcase the program
- Fact sheets for participants (MF3489)



A family plays a board game during a Bonding Thru Board Games event.

- Brochures to further promote the program
- Board games for participants to play
- PowerPoint presentation to promote the program

Introduction

While academic skills are often the focus of the school years, studies have found that interpersonal or “soft” skills are actually far more predictive of outcomes into adulthood. Cognitive skills are involved not only in intelligence and achievement, but also in attention, emotion regulation, attitudes, motivation, and the conduct of social relationships.

As the workplace has modernized around the world, a soft skills “gap” is noted by many employers who report that job candidates lack the soft skills needed to fill available positions.

The Bonding thru Board Games program is a tool where families can help their children practice five vital “soft skills” that could enable success in school and the

workplace: social and communication skills, executive function, self control, and positive self-concept.

Family bonding time paves the necessary path to build a solid foundation for socio-emotional growth among family members. One fun way to expose your children to those vital soft skills is through the use of Euro-style board games. A Eurogame, or Euro-style game, is a class of tabletop game that generally uses abstract pieces in a literal theme, and it is designed around the concepts of creating, developing, or nourishing. Euro-style games provide the opportunities to develop self-control and positive self-concept as foundational skills to social skills, communication skills, and executive functions.

For a game night event, set up tables around the room with four to five chairs at each table. Display the board games on this table for the participants to look at and select the ones they want to play. If desired, set up a table for non-sticky snacks on one side of the room to enjoy away from the games.

Take a few minutes at the beginning, or as participants enter, to explain the lesson for that night (pocket card) and how the event will run.

Ways to run the program:

- A. Have a lesson workshop without a game event. If one chooses, use the PowerPoint presentation to explain the program.
- B. Present the lesson for 30 minutes, then a board game event for an hour.
- C. At the event, give the palm card with the focus of the night to participants as they arrive and encourage them to apply the principles on the card to their play, then give the feedback on the evaluation.
- D. At the event, choose only one aspect of the focused palm card trait (for example: Spend time together. *Only family members and friends are invited. Make it a rule that technology be set aside until your game night is over.*) Ask for the evaluation feedback. Agents can write it as a little creative note if they want. Do not have an event without bringing an educational piece mentioned above and the evaluation feedback.

Community Activities

Mega Game Day — An extended period of time during the course of one day to play board games while connecting and communicating with family members or game mates.

Bi-Monthly Game Events — Scheduled bi-monthly game nights for participants to come and play games.

Parents/Family Events at Schools — Board game collection taken to schools for parents or family events.

Community Event Celebrations — Board game collection taken to another community event.

Holiday Event — Games incorporated into a chosen holiday (e.g. Christmas, Hanukah, Maulid al-Nabi, Diwali, Kwanza, etc.). Santa, Easter Bunny, etc. could be invited to be present at the event.

Community Displays — Display(s) set up at community settings (for example, a community center, school, religious center, etc.).

Presentations to Community Groups — Presentations on the purpose and ways to conduct a family game event.

References

- Belfield, C., Bowden, B., Klapp, A., Levin, H., Shand, R., & Zander, S. (2015). The economic value of social and emotional learning. Retrieved from the Center for Benefit-Cost Studies in Education website: <http://cbcse.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/SEL-Revised.pdf>
- Career Edge: Teens Taking Charge of Their Future! A Workforce Readiness Program. Retrieve from <https://extension.unr.edu/program.aspx?ID=37>
- Cortese, Diana, M.S., BCBA (May 25, 2018) Get on Board! Learn Social Skills through Board Games <https://www.southbaykidsconnection.com/article/get-on-board-learn-social-skills-through-board-games>
- Dartigues, Jean François, Alexandra Foubert-Samier, Mélanie Le Goff, Mélanie Viltard, Hélène Amieva, Jean Marc Orgogozo, Pascale Barberger-Gateau, and Catherine Helmer (2013 Aug 28). Playing board games, cognitive decline and dementia: a French population-based cohort study. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3758967/>.
- Fabregas, Marelisa. Board Games for Developing Thinking Abilities and Life Skills. Retrieved from Daring to Live Fully blog. <https://daringtolivefully.com/board-games-and-life-skills>.
- Greenberg, M. T., Weissberg, R. P., O'Brien, M. U., Zins, J. E., Fredericks, L., Resnik, H., & Elias, M. J. (2003). Enhancing school-based prevention and youth development through coordinated social, emotional, and academic learning. *American Psychologist*, 58(6-7), 466-474. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/5261862_Enhancing_School-Based_Prevention_and_Youth_Development_Through_Coordinated_Social_Emotional_and_Academic_Learning.

- Holt-Lunstad J, Smith TB, Layton JB (2010) Social Relationships and Mortality Risk: A Meta-analytic Review Article Source: Social Relationships and Mortality Risk: A Meta-analytic Review. *PLOS Medicine* 7(7): e1000316. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1000316>
- Hussung, Tricia. (February 10, 2017). Hard Skills vs. Soft Skills: Your Guide to Navigating the Workplace. Retrieved from <https://online.csp.edu/blog/business/hard-skills-vs-soft-skills>
- Job Outlook 2019. National Association of College and Employers. www.nacweb.org
- Jones, Damon E, PhD, Mark Greenberg, PhD, and Max Crowley, PhD (2015) Early Social-Emotional Functioning and Public Health: The Relationship between Kindergarten Social Competence and Future Wellness. *American Journal of Public Health*. Vol 105, No. 11
- Lippman, L. H., Ryberg, R., Carney, R., & Moore, K. A. (2015). Key “soft skills” that foster youth workforce success: Toward a consensus across fields (Publication #2015-24A). Retrieved from Child Trends website: <http://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/2015-24AWFCSoftSkillsExecSum.pdf>
- Luke. (2018) “On Defining Eurogames”. Retrieve from <https://boardgamegeek.com/thread/626385/what-does-euro-mean>
- Manpower Inc. Identifies Four Mega Trends. January 27, 2010. <https://workexposed.wordpress.com/tag/talent-mismatch/>.
- Malsam, William. (Jan 9, 2019). Hard Skills vs. Soft Skills: Understanding the Benefits of Both. Retrieved from <https://www.projectmanager.com/blog/hard-skills-vs-soft-skills>
- McFarland, J. (2008). Understanding Challenging Behavior and Building Positive Relationships. K-State Research and Extension publication MF2842, <https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/mf2842.pdf>
- Mounsher, Chris. (November 8, 2017). 5 Ways Board Games Are Good For Your Mental Health. <https://www.thecounsellorscafe.co.uk/single-post/2017/11/07/5-Ways-Board-Games-Are-Good-For-Your-Mental-Health>
- Pedersen, Traci. (20 Nov 2018) Mental Health May Benefit from Face-to-Face Social Contact – But Not Online <https://psychcentral.com/news/2018/11/20/mental-health-may-benefit-from-face-to-face-social-contact-but-not-online/140527.html>
- Saifer, Steffen, Ed.D (October 11, 2018). Executive Function: What is its Relationship to Higher-Order Thinking? <https://higher-order-thinking.com/category/executive-function/>
- Solomon, Bonnie, Emily Katz, Heather Steed, and Deborah Temkin. Creating Policies to Support Healthy Schools: Policymaker, Educator, and Student Perspectives. *Child Trends* October 2018. Publication #2018-47
- Symonds, William C., Robert Schwartz, and Ronald F. Ferguson. 2011. Pathways to prosperity: Meeting the challenge of preparing young Americans for the 21st century. Cambridge, MA: Pathways to Prosperity Project, Harvard University Graduate School of Education. Retrieved from https://www.gse.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/documents/Pathways_to_Prosperty_Feb2011-1.pdf
- Viviers, Herman Albertus, Jacobus Paulus Fouché, Gerda Marié Reitsma, (2016) “Developing soft skills (also known as pervasive skills): Usefulness of an educational game”, *Meditari Accountancy Research*, Vol. 24 Issue: 3, pp.368-389, <https://doi.org/10.1108/MEDAR-07-2015-0045>
- Wagenheim, Jeff. There’s Nothing Soft About These Skills. Retrieved from <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/ed/16/01/theres-nothing-soft-about-these-skills>
- Why Social and Emotional Learning and Employability Skills Should Be Prioritized in Education (2016) Committee for Children · cfchildren.org

Reviewers

Bradford Wiles, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Extension Specialist, School of Family Studies and Human Services, K-State Research and Extension

Rebecca McFarland, District Agent, Family and Child Development, Frontier Extension District, Ottawa Office, K-State Research and Extension

Chiquita Miller Ph.D, LMAC, CFLE, Family and Consumer Sciences Agent-Wyandotte County, K-State Research and Extension

Publications from Kansas State University are available at:
bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu

Brand names appearing in this publication are for product identification purposes only. No endorsement is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned.

Contents of this publication may be freely reproduced for educational purposes. All other rights reserved. In each case, credit Elizabeth Brunscheen-Cartagena, *Bonding Through Board Games: Developing Soft Skills, Leader’s Guide*, Kansas State University, June 2020.

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, as amended. Kansas State University, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts, and United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating, J. Ernest Minton, Director.

Evaluation

Bonding Through Board Games: Developing Soft Skills

Local Unit where program was offered: _____

Date _____ Instructor _____

Bonding Through Board Games Evaluation

At each event the agent will focus on one of the five soft skills. Participants will receive the palm card(s) corresponding to the chosen soft skill Agents will choose the evaluation question(s) for the same soft skill.

Evaluation

Thank you for participating in this program. To help determine the impacts of this program and improve it further, we would like you to complete this brief survey. Your participation is voluntary, and all efforts will be made to ensure your confidentiality. Thank You!

1. Are you participating in the program because you are a:
 Family Member Parent Educator, Provider, or Community Leader
2. Because of your participation in this program, did you learn anything new?
 Yes No
3. If yes, what did you learn?
4. Because of your participation in this program, do you plan on taking any action or changing anything in your life?
 Yes No
5. If yes, what?

For the following items, please indicate your level of agreement by placing a check in the appropriate box. There are no right or wrong answers.

6. Gender:
 Female Male Prefer not to respond
7. Age:
8. Race (select all that apply): American Indian or Alaska Native Asian
 Black or African American Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander White Prefer not to respond
9. Ethnicity:
 Hispanic/Latino Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino Prefer not to respond
10. Marital Status (please check only one):
 Married Single Single, living with partner Widowed
 Separated or Divorced Prefer not to respond
11. Highest Education Level (please check only one):
 Less than High School High School or GED Some College or Technical Training
 Bachelor Degree Graduate Degree Prefer not to respond
12. Are you military-connected?
 Yes No
13. If so, how?
16. May we contact you later to talk with you about this program?
 Yes No
17. If yes, please provide your contact information below (e.g., full name, address, phone, and email):

18. Is there anything else the K-State Research and Extension Family and Child Development Program Focus Team needs to know about this program or its impact?

Thank you for your participation!

Choose only the question(s) of the soft skill to be the focus of each event.

For #1, Self-Control

Do you feel what you have learned about the topic of “Self-Control” was beneficial for your own family?

- Yes/Why?
- No/Why not?

Do you plan on implementing any changes in regards to “Self-Control” after participating in this program?

- Yes No
- If yes, what changes?

For #2, Self-Concept

Do you feel what you have learned about the topic of “Self-Concept” was beneficial for your own family?

- Yes No
- If yes, what changes?

Do you plan on implementing any changes in regards to “Self-Concept” after participating in this program?

- Yes No
- If yes, what changes?

For #3, Social Skills

Do you feel what you have learned about the topic of “Social Skills” was beneficial for your own family?

- Yes / Why?
- No / Why not?

Do you plan on implementing any changes in regards to “Social Skills” after participating in this program?

- Yes No
- If yes, what changes?

For #4, Communication

Do you feel what you have learned about the topic of “Communications” was beneficial for your own family?

- Yes/Why?
- No/Why not?

Do you plan on implementing any changes in regards to “Communications” after participating in this program?

- Yes No
- If yes, what changes?

For #5, Higher Order Thinking

Do you feel what you have learned about the topic of “Higher Order Thinking” was beneficial for your own family?

- Yes/Why?
- No/Why not?

Do you plan on implementing any changes in regards to “Higher Order Thinking” after participating in this program?

- Yes No

If yes, what changes?

Please provide any additional comments you may have.

Publications from Kansas State University are available at:
bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu

Brand names appearing in this publication are for product identification purposes only. No endorsement is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned.

Contents of this publication may be freely reproduced for educational purposes. All other rights reserved. In each case, credit Elizabeth Brunscheen-Cartagena, *Bonding Through Board Games: Developing Soft Skills, Leader's Guide*, Kansas State University, June 2020.

**Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and
Cooperative Extension Service**

K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, as amended. Kansas State University, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts, and United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating, J. Ernest Minton, Director.

MF3490 June 2020