

Activities that are fun and demonstrate Joy Factor reinforce the lesson objective and draw students into the content.

Joy Factor also has the benefit of building students' sense of belonging to a unique school or classroom culture.

JOY FACTOR



Bring joy to the work of learning.

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To practice your Joy Factor,
we've shared in the following pages
an excerpt from the
Teach Like Champion Field Guide 2.0.

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF JOY FACTOR

For most teachers, it's best not to try to conceive of or pull off *Joy Factor* without some planning. The idea can be impromptu, but it's often wise to jot it down, then take it home and plan the details, rehearse a few lines, and sharpen the plan before you open on Broadway.

Beyond the fun itself, there are three main hallmarks of a great *Joy Factor* activity:

- Like a faucet, you need to be able to quickly turn it on and off.
- We whistle while we work, making the fun part of the work, not a break from it.
- The best *Joy Factor* serves the lesson objective.

OVER ON THE BLOG

Read this blog post: <http://teachlikeachampion.com/blog/teaching-and-schools/tlac-clips-eric-snider-and-the-joy-of-practice/>

See "Eric Snider's Joy Factor." In what ways does Eric Snider's activity meet the three characteristics of a strong *Joy Factor*?

Five Types of *Joy Factor*

1. Fun and Games

Games draw on young people's love of competition and play. You might take advantage of this by designing a contest or competition in which students solve math problems quickly or identify the speaker of a series of quotations from the novel you've just read. Your games could be individual (geography bee) or team activities (such as a relay race) and could require verbal or written participation.

If they are team based, they could pit groups of students against each other, against a clock, against an abstract standard, or, even as kindergarten teacher George Davis showed us, against the teacher. In fact, George uses games tacitly to teach his students how to win and lose: narrating relevant thoughts, such as, "I can't believe I lost—I'm so upset—no, I shouldn't be upset—I had fun playing, and I should be happy for my friends who won." This lets him develop future competitions in the confidence that students will know how to participate positively.

See if you can come up with two other game scenarios; think about how they might be adapted to make them true *Joy Factors* in your classroom. Be sure to jot them down.

2. Us (and Them)

There's great power in students feeling that they belong to something important, are members in a group that is distinctive and special—an "us." You can build this sense of belonging through the use of unique language, names, rituals, traditions, imaginary presences, songs, and so forth. In many cases, the more inscrutable these rituals are to outsiders, the better. Some examples:

Nicknames. Who gives you a nickname? The people who care about you and are close to you. So giving kids nicknames can show you care, notice individualities, and believe that everyone belongs. And it shows these things every time you use a nickname. If you use them, be sure to have one for every student in your class, keep them positive and fun, and make sure kids can tell you if they don't like their nickname.

Secret signals and special words. Mr. Lee's class has a "no-ly" discussion at the end of every unit when they discuss the key ideas with "No Mr. Lee." He jokes, "If I ask can I please join you, you say: No, Mr. Lee, it's a no-ly discussion." The secret code makes it a bit silly, but also makes the discussion belong to the class—which is the idea.

Class songs. Related to academics or culture, you take the popular song of the moment and give it new words to reflect your class culture, and all of a sudden everyone wants to sing it.

A shared myth or story. For example, before every test, refer back to a funny story you told them about your cousin Martha: "Remember my cousin Martha, who gives up when the going gets tough. Don't pull a Martha! Keep going."

3. Drama, Song, Chant, Movement, and Dance

"Let's all stand up and . . ." is often a good way to begin *Joy Factor*. Group song, chants, dramatic play, and movement raise spirits and also reinforce belonging. Acting things out and singing about them are great ways to remember information. On a more or less ambitious scale, students can take part in short, scripted enactment.

Songs have many applications. For example, a song (and added gestures) in a foreign language that students are learning can let them practice, enjoy, and remember vocabulary and expressions for the rest of their lives. Other songs can help students master sequences or processes, as with the "Do-Re-Mi" song from *The Sound of Music*.

As the blog post shows, chants can be elevated further academically by containing changeable elements that the student must supply.

OVER ON THE BLOG

Read this post: <http://teachlikeachampion.com/blog/joy-factor-christina-fritz-skip-counting-pep-rally/>

Watch grade 2 teacher Christina Fritz lead academic joy at "Joy Factor: Christina Fritz and the 'Skip Counting Pep Rally.'"

4. Humor

Shared laughter can strengthen and spread an environment in which happy and fulfilled students and teachers can thrive! It should always be positive. It's often especially disarming when it involves teacher stories that are slightly self-deprecating. Here are ideas for few starting points.

Math problems and sentences for editing or correction always need protagonists. They can be stock characters (for example, "Tom Foolery") who are always doing foolish things. They can be characters from the class who do triumphant (or good-naturedly silly) things. They can involve stories with stock characters. "I really, really don't like to talk about my cat," says Ms. Tolbert, "But she's very bright." Her students groan when she says this. Ms. Tolbert is always telling stories about how her cat mistook one vocabulary word for another—"hostility" for "hospitality," say—and thanked Ms. Tolbert's friends for their hostility after being a house guest.

“Special guests” are always a fun and funny surprise. Ms. Bellucci routinely showed up in Mr. Kramer’s math classes dressed as “Aunt Sally” (as in Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally, a common mnemonic for order of operations). When she came, she usually left a few things behind, such as an awkward picture of Mr. Kramer as a child taped to the whiteboard, which when Mr. Kramer raised the projection screen. “Oh, my,” Aunt Sally said. “Now how did *that* get there??”

5. Suspense and Surprise

Having strong classroom routines makes occasional variations from the usual all the more fun, surprising, and memorable. Some examples:

- Occasionally hand out material (such as vocabulary words) to individual students in sealed envelopes. Whisper, “Don’t open them yet! Not till I say.”
- Wrap something you plan to show the class (art, a map, a specimen for study) as a gift. Then build anticipation by playing at “deciding” when to open it.
- Keep referring to some future event: “Oh, man, you’re gonna love the last verse of this addition song. It’s really funny. If we keep working, we’ll be there soon.”
- One teacher we know has a “word of the week.” It’s always a bit of advanced technical vocabulary from her subject. If someone uses it unprompted in conversation, she rings a bell and the student wins a small prize.

Sharing and Managing Joy

Shared joy needs also to be managed by teachers and by students themselves so that it can end to everyone’s satisfaction rather than a chiding about coming back to order. Recognize that your job is not only to share joy but also to teach students to manage it well.

Start small. While you’re still learning what works, try for little lively moments rather than massive fun-fests.

Be sure to check out more on this invaluable technique on our blog, and in our books, *Teach Like a Champion 2.0* and the accompanying Field Guide.