



Dear Educator,

Our mission at **Creative Connections** is to prepare students for the educational and career challenges of the 21st Century.

In line with this mission, our "**The High School Connection**" program was created specifically for middle school students out of a need to help them prepare for their immediate future – high school. Our goal is for students to develop a platform for success by choosing the high school that is right for them. We believe that our program will help students and their families navigate the complexity of finding the right school out of the over 300 New York City high schools.

We know your students will find the activities challenging, engaging and fun while learning important skills in decision-making, problem-solving and personal reflection. Creative Connections has a wide variety of career and success related curriculums and programming in New York City schools. Please take time to review our other curriculum samples on the website. We look forward to working with you to guide your students towards success.



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Program Mission

Students will develop a platform for success by choosing the high school that is right for them.

Program Goals

- Students will understand the importance of aspirations in their lives.
 - Students will learn about different high school options.
 - Students will learn effective communication techniques.
 - Students will learn their strengths and challenges.
 - Students will work together effectively.

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Sample Lesson

The High School Connection

Tower Power

Grades 6 - 8

NYS Standards:

- ELA - 1
- ELA - 3
- ELA - 4
- CDOS - 3
- HPHE - 2

Skills:

- Brainstorming
- Team work
- Problem-solving
- Compare and contrast

Objective:
Students will identify the pros and cons of a school's size.

Summary:
Groups of students will create towers out of different objects and create a Pros and Cons list of school size.

Materials: (20 each)

- Newspaper & masking tape
- Raw linguini & marshmallows
- Gum drops & toothpicks
- Drinking straws & Paperclips
- Paper cups & scotch tape
- String & paper

Reference Sheets:

- SCHOOL SIZE INFO
- SAMPLE PROS AND CONS LIST

Suggested Starters:

- BACK TO BACK PASS
- CONCENTRIC CIRCLES

Introduction:

In the last few lessons you discussed travel and the importance of taking it into consideration when deciding on a high school to attend. Today you are going to explore the importance of a school's size. By size, I mean the number of students that attend the school. But first I have a project for you.

Lesson Procedure:

- 1) Divide class into pairs. Give each person 20 pieces of one of the items listed in Materials. Be sure if you give one person in the pair 20 Gumdrops that you give the other person in the pair 20 toothpicks. Explain that they cannot trade items with another pair.
- 2) Explain that the objective is for each pair to make a free-standing tower using only the materials given to them. Explain that they will be judged based upon:
 - Can the structure stand alone?
 - Creativity – How unique is it?
 - Did they finish in time?
- 3) Explain that they will have only 10 minutes to complete their towers. Remind them not to eat or trash the materials because they will not be given anymore.
- 4) After 10 minutes, have each pair name their tower.
- 5) Have the pairs present their tower to the class.
- 6) Now ask them to disassemble their towers and to hold on to their individual materials. For Example, if I received 20 gumdrops from the teacher, I should be holding 20 gumdrops now.
- 7) Divide the groups into larger groups of 8-10 students.
- 8) Now tell the groups that they have 10 minutes to create an even taller tower using each item that each person in the group has been given.
- 9) After 10 minutes, have the groups name their tower and introduce it to the class.
- 10) Ask the class the following questions:
 - *What was the difference between doing this task with one partner and doing it with a larger group?*
 - *What were the positives about working on an assignment with one person?*

- *What were the positives about working on an assignment with a lot of different people?*
- *How was the outcome different or the same?*
- *Did you learn anything about the person/people you were working with?*
- *Did you feel more comfortable one-on-one or in a big group? Why?*
- *Where else in your life do you notice that it is easier for you to work with a small close group of people or a large diverse group of people?*

11) Using the information from the SCHOOL SIZE REFERENCE SHEET, explain the different size schools in NYC.

12) Explain that there are a number of different types of schools and size varies at each school, but for the purpose of today's discussion we are going to give three general categories. Write the following categories on the board:

- Small Separate School (100- 400 students)
- Large School(1000- 3000 Students)
- Small School in a Large Campus. (100- 400 students that share some resources with other students from other schools)

13) Ask the class to imagine what it would feel like to go to schools of these different sizes. What could each one offer in terms of classes and extracurricular activities and socialization?

14) On the board create two columns underneath each category of school: Pros and Cons.

15) Explain that the Pros column will be where you will write all the positive things they can brainstorm about attending a school of that size. Explain that the Cons side will be where you will write all the negative things they can brainstorm about going to a school of that size. Since this is a group list you may have contradictory things on your lists.

16) Go through each category, asking the class for responses in each category. Use the SAMPLE PROS AND CONS LIST for help in soliciting responses from the students.

17) Explain to the class that later they will create their own Pros and Cons list for each school they are interested in and that school size should be included in one of the criteria. Explain that they can then take a Pros and Cons list and use it to help them make decisions about anything.

Reflection:

- *Why is the size of a school important to consider?*
- *What would help you to know whether you would be happier at a small school or a big school?*
- *Besides school size and travel distance, what are other things to consider when choosing a school?*

Follow-Up:

Have students research schools that are different sizes by asking their siblings, neighbors about their high schools as well as visiting schools of varying sizes.

Real Life Applications:

Size is an important thing to consider when choosing a company to work for later in one's career. Large companies can sometimes offer better benefit packages like on-site childcare, opportunities to work in many different cities while small companies offer things like the opportunity to progress quickly with promotions, a supportive creative environment to work in where everyone knows each other.

Sample Pros and Cons List

Small School

Pros	Cons
Close groups of friends	I won't like anybody in the small group of people
I'll know everybody	Everybody will be in my business
Comfortable setting	Not enough cute boys to date
I'll know the principal and all the teachers and maybe they will write my recommendation into college and help me get into one.	No good sports teams
No scanners, no line to get into the building	Not enough to do
I can get extra help if I need it from teachers	No ones heard of it.

Large School

Pros	Cons
Great football team	Won't make the football team - too competitive
I can take French and Spanish	I won't know the principal if I have a problem
Lots of cute girls to see	Too much security like scanners and school safety officers
Large library with computers to do research	I know myself and if no one is on my case about my absences then I will probably miss too much
Lots of afterschool programs	It can be scary with that many kids you don't know.

Small School in a Large Campus

Pros	Cons
It gives me a sense of security in a big place	I hate the way the floors are separated - it feels like segregation. What if it feels like rival gangs?
I could have a group of close friends and then at least know some people in the other schools.	I don't have real sense of one school pride - identity
I'll be able to use the pool and the computer lab in the library	What if I like the other schools in the building better and I can not change?