Breakouts

Breakouts are based on the same premise as an escape room with one difference: instead of trying to get out, you are trying to get in. Both require the "unlocking" of "locks" and require creativity to solve problems through puzzles, games, code-breaking and riddles. To complete a breakout, students use tenacity, focus and persistence- just as they would if they were exiting an escape room. Physical breakouts require locks, lock boxes, physical clues and cues, as well as a lot of space. Digital Breakouts are an adaptation of the physical breakout. In a digital breakout everything is online and requires very little equipment*. (Google Suites is currently one of the easiest platforms to use for digital breakouts.)*

Uses of storyboards:

- Engage and excite students about complex content
- Provides feedback – Observing students as they perform and work together to figure out the clues will give you some indication of their problem-solving abilities and personalities.
- Builds collaborative classroom culture – students must work together to complete the breakouts in the time provided – unsuccessful groups usually cite this as a reason they were unsuccessful, "we didn't work together".
- Engage students in complex problem solving.

Computational Thinking:

- Abstraction – Students determine information or steps that might be unnecessary to complete a task, learn a skill or master a concept - breakouts require students to determine which clues/answers are not needed.
- Algorithmic Design – Developing or creating the steps for a process, procedure or task. Creating an algorithm is the process of creating parts/steps and placing them in a logical order. Breakouts require students to determine the correct order of the clues and cues they are given.
- Decomposition – Break up a given task, procedure or process into steps. Most breakouts require students to break down the answers to the puzzles, clues, riddles, and problems to determine how to unlock the locks.
- Pattern Recognition – Students find patterns in the clues, cues and locks themselves.

Tips for breakouts:

1. Be sure to use a complex concept or idea/ or a real-world problem that connects to the content. *As students develop the ability to use this tool they may need less and less structure. Scaffolding the level of support and structure provided, not only increases the rigor of the task but also allows for some amazing products.*

   a. Make it a fun and engaging story – the story provides the context, the urgency and purpose for the Breakout – Choose your content then create or choose the story!
   b. Provide clear instructions – if students know there might be no order to the locks and that the clues might be useful or useless, all is fair.
   c. Provide enough time – time will depend on the complexity of the story/content AS WELL AS students comfort/experience with breakouts (*scaffolded*).
   d. Include reflection questions – about the processes (e.g. *improvements*) as well as the content (e.g. *application in a new context*)
2. For Physical:
   a. Map out your space – ensure the area where clues/cues are located have enough space for ALL the students you plan to have per group. Ensure there are multiple ways to get to clues (not everyone moving in clockwise direction going in order from clue to clue – let the students decide where to go and where to go next).
   b. Provide support ONLY when needed – Answer questions with questions that will help students find their own answers.
   c. Have a prize at the end – Even if its just "bragging rights" provide a sticker or a card that shows they "BROKE OUT"
3. For Digital:
   a. Limit the number of printed items
   b. Put everything in one online folder (IF using Google one drive folder)
   c. Run through the breakout at least once IN YOUR CLASSROOM to ensure all the sites work and locks work as you intend.

References:

- breakout.edu
- Tom Mullaney's How to Breakout with Google Sites: https://tommullaney.com/toms-digital-breakouts/

Resources:

- Free Template: https://sites.google.com/view/digitalbreakouttemplate/home?authuser=0 (Tom Mullaney's Template) (*You must have a gmail account – free from Google*)
- Free Breakouts: https://sites.google.com/site/digitalbreakoutjb/sandbox
- Free Game Creator: https://deck.toys/ (*This site is a great way to upload and retool your handouts)*
- Free Crossword Creator: https://www.puzzle-maker.com/CW
- Free 3-D Word Finder: https://snotes.com/snotes/login.php (*You must create an account – also this site is often blocked by schools and districts so if you want to use it be sure to get your IT department to unlick it*)

