Breakout Room 101 – Animals (Flexible for Grades K-5)

Locks:

1.   Key Lock – Key is taped to the back of the panda information sheet (solves the code sheets "Slower than a car" and "Lighter than a piano")
2.   3 Digit Lock – 105 (Solves the invisible ink on the animals cut in half "How long can a blue whale grow to be?")
3.   Word Lock – Foal (Solves the half-sheet animal pictures – all animals have an adult and a young example, except the horse)
4.   4 Digit Lock (Only use for 3-5 grade) – 1300 (Solves the invisible ink on the back of the half sheets "What is the largest that a trichechus manatus grows to be by weight?")

Other Supplies:

-       Invisible ink markers that respond to UV light
-       UV flashlights – several of these, to avoid fighting between clue groups
-       Toolbox with padlock hole
-       Hasp with at least 4 holes
-       Stickers, tattoos, or other small prize – feel free to attach these to a promotional flyer if you'd like

Prep:

1.   Set the locks to the code for this breakout room. See "Locks" above.
2.   Print everything in the ["Print Folder" on Google Drive.](#) Create the Shape Code for Kindergarten, if applicable.
3.   Cut out the half-animals and the animal pictures.
4.   Match the half-animals together, and on the front (so that it is partially on each piece) write one word on each animal. The Clue is "How long can a blue whale grow to be ?" with the ? on a separate card.
5.   On the back of the animal pictures, write one word on each picture. The Clue is "How heavy does the animal with the scientific name *trichechus manatus* get ?" (The awkward phrasing is to get exactly the right number of words, and once again the ? is on its own card.)
6.   If you plan to run this escape room more than once, laminate your pieces! This will especially save your Giant Panda information sheet, after much taping and un-taping.
7.   After you have finished with this breakout room, please reset the locks: All 0s for the number locks, and WORDS for the word lock.

Before Each Class: 5-15 minutes

Hide the clues around the room. Make sure they are all at easy-to-access heights, and note any off-limits areas such as the teacher's desk. They should not need to open books to find the clue!

Tape the key to the back of the panda information sheet, and hang those up around the room as fits the space. Put all the locks back on the hasp and close the toolbox, making sure the locks are spun to numbers that aren't the code (I've forgotten this).

During Class: Minute 0-5

Introduce the game, explain that they will all work as a team. If there is time, ask them what "teamwork" means and what behaviors they should demonstrate. Important things to note:
-        There are 33 clues hidden. They should make sure everyone has found at least one clue before they find a second one. You may also want to designate a place for each type of clue to be gathered so that everyone can see what has been found.
-        Show them an example of the half-sheet and half-animal clues as the only things they can pick up. Let them know that the animal information sheets need to stay taped where they are so other classes can use them too.
-        They must follow library rules, and one minute will be removed from their time for every time the teacher or the librarian has to remind them.
-        They must have an idea to try the lock – no one is allowed to stand next to the lock without a code to try, and they can only try once before going to the back of the line.
-        There is a small prize – emphasis on small. They will have 30 minutes.

During Class: Minute 5-35

This will be mild to total chaos, depending on your group. During this time, find a student or two that is having trouble self-regulating and let them work on the codes for the key lock. Give small clues as needed, depending on age.

Note for Kindergarteners:
It may be easiest, depending on the number of adults in the room, to allow students to self-select into groups – that is, whoever finds half an animal first is in one group, whoever finds a larger animal first in another. I also tend to create shape-based codes for this group, e.g. circle for A, square for B, star for C.

During Class: Minute 35-45

Debrief here. Let the students tell you how they felt about the room, or if they learned anything. Ask them about the teamwork aspects you had talked about before the Breakout Room, and whether they successfully displayed those behaviors in order for everyone to have fun. Get both the good and the bad here. You can also introduce the idea of stress, noting that it gets harder to act like a team when they felt pressure to finish on time, and briefly talk about ways to self-calm when feeling stressed. After debrief, have everyone help to clean up and gather items back to you for easier repeat setup or movement to another classroom.
Give them the prizes as they line up for the door.

Note on timing:

Some classes finish INCREDIBLY quickly. Others will not finish at all. It is up to you whether you want to reward those classes that don't actually break into the box – feel free to look to the teacher for guidance on this. For classes that finish quickly, have a brief read aloud, book talk, or promotion ready to go. I have had classes finish in as few as 15 minutes (though this is far from the norm), so be prepared to improvise.

Learning Objectives:

Math Practices
-        Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
-        Reason abstractly and quantitatively.
-        Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.
-        Use appropriate tools strategically.
-        Look for and make use of structure.
-        Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.

Social Emotional Learning

-        All five CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) Core Competencies: Self-awareness, Self-management, Responsible Decision-Making, Relationship Skills and Social Awareness.
-        By engaging in the game, students build self management and responsible decision-making skills as they must problem solve in real time and make critical choices to succeed in the task of interpreting the clues to unlock the game's ultimate goal.
-        They work in teams, so their relationship skills and social awareness must also be engaged throughout the session.
-        Finally, in the post-game debrief, students build self-awareness by engaging in metacognitive discussions about why they made certain decisions, how their actions affected the overall success of the team, and how their role could be improved in future iterations of gameplay.

Note:

This Breakout Room is an introduction to this type of learning exercise for both the teacher/librarian and the students. Other Breakouts can be designed with specific learning standards in mind, and tailored to the age group. Many are already available online.