20 Games every Staff should know...

1. **Simon Says Please**
   - The twist: You don't do it unless the Simon says the word 'please'.

2. **I've Gotta Hand it to You**
   - What they do: Trace a number or letter, or shape and erase.
   - This teaches leaders how to "change it up" and keep things fresh: we don't want to show all the variations in one setting.
   - What we say at the end as a springboard for conversation: "From whose point of view did you do the drawing?"
   - What they will often say about their drawing and how to responds: If they say "I can't draw," ask them to say, "I wish I could draw…" or "I want to learn how to draw…" and comment that "This is what positive people say."
   - The benefit: In addition to stretching the sense of touch and observation, it provides a chance to talk about point of view and the importance of looking at things from another person perspective.

3. **This is my Nose**
   - Introduction: "I once met a woman/man who said the most peculiar thing. She introduced herself, and then she said (pointing to her chin), 'This is my nose.' I understood, like you, that sometimes people are different and they have different ways of looking at things, which is OK, and actually interesting. So I, wanting to be respectful, said, 'Ah. And this (point to your nose) in my chin…"
   - How to play: You "accept" what the person says by showing them that you get the opposite (i.e. if this is your elbow (they pointed to eye), then this (the elbow) would be called an eye). Then you initiate one. Speed up!

4. **Rock, Paper, Scissors**
   - "Psychic Rock Paper Scissors"
     - The twist: Try to guess what signal your partner is going to show. When you match, you win!
     - The benefits: This approach makes the partners work with each other to achieve success and they get to celebrate together. It achieves a very different, positive connection compared to the traditional form of the game.
   - "Relay Rock Paper Scissors"
     - Teams race to try and match their counterparts action before the other team does.
   - "Rock Paper Scissors – minus 1"
     - Players partner up. Both players, count of 3, bring a symbol on each hand out and the administrator immediately says 'minus 1' and each player must remove 1 hand quickly. The winner is determined by the remaining hand.
   - "Team Rock Paper Scissors"
   - "Biggest Fan RPS"
     - Everyone starts out as a individual. Each person walks up to another person and challenges in a game of RPS. The loser automatically must file in behind the winner and now become their "biggest fan" by cheering them on when they meet up with the next opponent. Play continues until only 2 individual winners are left and the respective teams are cheering them on.

5. **Persnickety Penelope's Puzzling Preferences**
   - Say: "I know a woman named Penelope who is very persnickety. Do you know what that words means? She's very picky. Very particular. But also very confident. She knows exactly what she likes, and exactly what she doesn't. But she has some puzzling preferences. For example, Penelope loves books, but she really doesn't like (note: please don't use the word 'hate') movies. Oh, and she is very fond of pepper, but she doesn't like salt. And if you ask her about school, she says she loves school, but doesn't like studying. And she loves to sleep, but she will never, ever, be caught taking a nap. Doesn't like naps. No way. So: Can you tell me what Penelope would like and what she would not like?"
   - To play, the campers have to use the same framework you did. That is, they have to say, "She likes popcorn but doesn't like ice cream." You would thank him or her for trying, but say that "actually Ms. P

doesn't like popcorn. She tried it once and spit it out. Butter, however, is one of her favourites. But she can't stand peaches." And then you'd make the sort of face that shows strong dislike of something, and ask the camper to guess again.

- In the example above, the secret to what Penelope likes is that she likes anything with double letters.
- But the cool thing about this puzzling brain game is that campers can challenge each other over and over by just coming up with a different secret rule. And the rule can be very simple or very subtle, and not necessarily be based on spelling. For example, Penelope might like things that begin with a B, or things that have two syllables, or things that use electricity, or bigger than our hand.
- The key: It can be frustrating to not figure out the puzzle, which is our moment to point out that learning or doing hard things is often frustrating. And if we can get them to keep trying, we can praise them for their persistence. As some campers catch on, talk to them about how to be supportive of others who are still working on it. Speak about the value of patience. Have those "in the know" say what Penelope likes so everyone is involved. If someone calls someone 'stupid," this is a terrific opportunity for you to ask them about why this is not acceptable. How do we want other people to feel? What message does it send about the name caller if she or he puts someone else down?

6. This is Milk

- How to play: The leader holds up an imaginary glass in one hand and says, "I love to drink things that are good for me. This is milk." She puts it down. She picks up a second imaginary glass. "This is orange juice." She then repeats this with both "glasses." Now she picks up a "glass" and asks the camper, "What is this?" They have to guess whether it contains milk or orange juice as the leader continues to display and label these imaginary glasses. Sometimes the campers will guess correctly and sometimes they will be wrong. The game is to figure out the secret as to when this invisible stuff is milk, and when it's orange juice.
- The secret:

7. Bang Bang…who did I get?

- How to play: The leader holds waves his/her arm and points and shouts "Bang Bang...who did I get?"
- Players shout out who they believe is the one the leader 'got'?
- The secret: whoever talks first, is it

8. Do as I do

- How to play: The leader does a simple series of actions and invites campers to observe very closely and copy exactly everything the leader did. The actions can be easy hand motions, taping a stick on the table in a certain rhythmic sequence, or something similar.
- The secret: The leader adds an extra little thing just before or immediately after the sequence of actions. If the campers don't "catch" this happening they may not include it when they try to repeat the actions.
    - For example the leader may clear her throat slightly before beginning. If the campers don't notice and include this in their own rendition, then they haven't "got" it yet.
- Remember to be encouraging – have all the campers say very brightly and positively, "Ooooh – that was SO close."
- The leader must remember to use good judgment about when the level of frustration gets too high for learning, and when to make the clues that are given more and more obvious to enable the campers to figure out the puzzle.
- If the secret is a sound, you can (as one of your last and biggest clues) suggest that campers close their eyes as you do your sequence. Then they will be sure to notice what you're doing.
- If the secret is an extra physical action, go very, very slowly, breaking everything down into little steps. If they don't get it, keep being positive and reassuring, demonstrating confidence that they will figure it out. Say, "I want you to watch everything I do from when I say 'Begin' to when I say 'The End.'" This will usually tip them off to the extra thing you're doing.
    - Here's a second example of a secret action. Instead of clearing your throat, fold your hands on the table or your lap as soon as you seem to finish the sequence. If the campers don't notice that you are finishing that way, then they haven't caught the secret yet.

9. Numbers guessing

- How to play: The leader does some kind of gesture or movement while sitting on the ground. Participants are instructed to try and figure out what number (between 1-10) the leader is trying to convey. The leader instructs participants to wait until the whole clue is complete.
- The key is prep: The leader should, casually before the game ever starts, grab a ball and place it between his/her legs as if its just a prop he/she is playing with casually.

- The gesture of movement from the leader can be wild, obscure and constantly changed. But every single clue should end with the leader placing anywhere from 1-10 fingers on the ball in his/her lap.
- Participants will be mesmerized by the gesture and not realize the answer is simply in the number of fingers placed on the ball at the end.
- To help participants 'get it' sooner, the leader can make the finger placement more obvious or continue to reiterate 'wait for the whole clue to be

10. Silent Search

- What you do: This is great for a group of about 5 to 12. They stand in a circle. In silence, they simultaneously look around and secretly pick out and object or a place that is within view and within whatever boundaries you want to set up. Then they put their hands on each others shoulders. The challenge is to keep their hands in this position and go to every one of the places or objects the group members are thinking about. But they can't speak or make any sounds. So this becomes an opportunity to practice group problem-solving non-verbal communication. When they are done, the leader can ask the group if everyone's place was discovered. If not, they need to keep going until they reach that goal.
- For discussion:
    - This activity is an excuse to talk to young people and learn how we figure out what people need or want if they don't tell us about it. Through discussion, you can see how important it is to speak up.
    - This is also a chance to talk about what it means to be a leader. Is a leader always the person who is up in front telling everyone what to do? Or does a leader sometimes give other people an opportunity to take the lead? In this game, everyone has to take a turn being in the leadership position.
- The benefit:

11. Freeze / Graveyard

- How to play: Count down from 10 to 1. Campers have to become silent and freeze at the precise instant you call out 1. Alternatively, you can toss something in the air and when it reaches the ground, they must freeze. Keep changing objects and let the kids do the tossing. While frozen, the teacher tries to make them move or laugh.
- The benefit:

12. Telephone

- How to play: Campers sit in a circle, and the leader starts by whispering a secret positive message in the person beside them ear. This person then continues by passing the message along to the person on the other side of them, keeping the message as clear as possible. Once the message has reached the last person, that person says the message out loud to see if it matched the leader's message at the beginning of the game.

13. Finish My Sentence

- How to play: Sit players in a circle. Have each player say ONE word and the person next to them has to say the next word trying to make a funny story. It gets funny when you speed it up. Someone is eliminated if they can't think of a sensible word in time.

14. Wink

- How to play: Campers sit in a circle. The leader explains that in a minute, they will ask the campers to cover their eyes & bow their heads. The leader will walk around the outside of the circle and tap 1 or 2 people on the back. When the leader says "okay, look up", everyone uncovers their eyes and looks up. Whoever was tapped on the back is a "winker", and anyone not tapped is a "detective". Everyone is then instructed to casually look each player in the eye. Winkers can wink at anyone they make eye contact with and that person must wait 2 seconds and then lye back "asleep" for the rest of that round. If any detective sees who winked at them, they can put up their hand and take a guess. But 1 wrong guess and they too fall "asleep". Game continues until either the winkers are guessed or there are no more detectives left.

15. Picnic

- How to play: Players sit in a circle. Leader starts by saying "I'm going to a picnic and I'm going to bring _____". What they bring is predetermined with some kind of clue (eg. Anything that starts with the same letter their first name starts with, or the 1st letter of the alphabet). Each player must then take a turn and say what they are going to bring to the picnic. The leader will either say "No you can't come to my picnic" or "Yes, you can come to my picnic" depending upon whether they picked up on the clue and said something that fits.

16. Orchestra

- How to play: Campers sit in a circle, and the leader designates a “guesser” to walk to another area not looking at the group. The leader assign “maestro” from the group sitting down and tells everyone to do what they are doing and the “guesser” will have to try to find out who is the “maestro”. Instruct players not to all look at the “maestro” or the guesser will have an easy time guessing. The “maestro” must, from time to time, change the pattern up but they should do it when the guesser is not looking. The guess has 2 or 3 guesses as to who is the “maestro”.

17. Categories

- How to play: Players sit in a circle. Leader begins by tapping his/her lap twice, then clapping twice, establishing a rhythm. Next action is a snap of the right fingers & saying "Categories”, then the left fingers saying eg. "sport". Next player must enter the game at the time of the right snap & repeat a different "sport". Play continues around the circle until a player can't follow the rhythm or say one of the categories.

18. Thumper

- How to play: Campers sit in a circle. Leader, starting with themselves, instructs each player to come up with a symbol or sign they want to use (eg. Thumbs up, okay sign, stroke hair with your hand, finger on your chin…almost anything..except ones that make a sound). One by one have each player show the rest of the group what their symbol is. Once everyone has a good handle on at least 1 or 2 other players signs, you may begin a practice round. Play starts with all players tapping their knees twice and clapping twice in unison. One player (usually the leader) starts with their symbol first and “passes it on” by doing another player’s symbol. That player must now do their symbol and them someone else’s. Play continues until a player makes a mistake (either the wrong order, wrong symbol, a symbol of someone who is out already or is too slow in doing the symbol). Start out slow and forgiving and then speed it up as players get more used to it.

19. Bunnies

- How to play: Campers sit in a circle. The leader starts with the bunnies (both hands to their temple with the thumbs touching and the fingers wiggling. To pass the bunnies, a player must either 1) look another player in the eyes and “throw” the bunnies by making a forward tossing motion with their hands towards the player or 2) drop one hand off the temple thereby passing the bunnies to the player sitting beside the hand that is still on the temple. If the bunnies are passing, you must pickup the bunnies with both hands on your temple and wiggle fingers. Play continues until someone doesn’t pickup the bunnies or flinches when they were not supposed to pick up the bunnies. Once everyone gets the hang of it, make it more challenging and interesting by adding the following:
    - **Fake throw:** Players can fake throwing the bunnies and try to induce a player to flinch. Players can only fake it by still keeping the bunnies (hands) attached to their temple.
    - **Up for grabs:** Player with the bunnies can throw the bunnies straight up in the air and the quickest player can reach up and pull them back down.
    - **Increase the speed:** Speed the game up where a player is out for that round if they are too slow in picking up the bunnies. This will cause a lot more flinching.

20. Awe-Sum

- How to play: Players should partner up. Say, while demonstrating “Please put one hand behind your back, like this. In a moment, not yet, when I say “go”, you’re going to throw that hand out in front of you with a number of fingers pointing out, one through five. No zero. So, for example, now I’m doing the number two, with 2 fingers pointing. Now all five, and so on. Your partner is going to do the same thing at the same time, with any number of fingers. The object of the game is to be the first one to add up the total number of fingers on both of your hands and should out that number first. That person is the winner of that round.
- Add twists to it:
    - by adding another player
    - making it subtraction of the larger number from the smaller
    - multiplication
    - switch partners
    - make a tournament out of it