**LENS Project**  
**Box Full of Stories**

**Ages**  
All Ages!

**LENS Skill**  
Negotiation

**Why?**  
Incorporating others’ ideas into a group project creates a diverse and rich product, something that can be difficult to achieve alone.

**Materials**  
Small hand props, one item per participant  
Paper and writing utensils

**Summary**

In this creative writing and theatre activity, participants will utilize props and Negotiation skills to develop a unique story. Although this story will incorporate props, each participant will determine a new function for the prop they’ve selected (i.e. a pencil becomes a magic wand, a bowl is a hat, etc.). Fellow group members will explore the newly identified prop and contribute their own ideas to the group story.

**Directions**

1.) **Gather Props**  
Each participant will gather a prop of their choice from around the house. The item should be something all participants can comfortably hold in their hands and safely use in some way. Each person should have some ideas for “other functions” for their chosen prop. For example, a pencil might be used as a magic wand, a bowl as a hat, a cell phone as a time traveling device, etc.

2.) **Put on your Thinking Cap**  
Once all the props have been gathered, pass them around one at a time. When each person holds the prop, they should suggest an alternate use for it before passing it on to the next person.

After everyone has contributed an idea, the participant who brought the prop will take one of the suggestions from the group, or one of their own, and tell everyone the props “new” identity and function. Each participant should agree to use that prop for its new purpose, as determined by the person who chose it.

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3.) **Scene Creation**

The group will now write a story together, incorporating all of the objects. Think about ways to connect the items, what characters and situations might involve the objects, and what sort of storyline or conflict might occur with all the pieces put together.

Example:

- *Pencil = magic wand*
- *Bowl = hat*
- *Cell phone = time traveling device*

*A team of scientists discovers a new device and suspect it enables time travel. One scientist unlocks the secret to making the device work, but only if the operator is wearing a special hat. Each person takes turns wearing the hat and they all travel to the past. Once there, they discover they over-used the time traveling device and cannot return home! After searching for many days, they discover a wizard who uses his magic wand to send them back home safely. The scientists vow to focus their work on studying abnormally large vegetables instead and leave their time traveling research….in the past.*

4.) **Optional Extension: Scene Creation**

For some acting practice, take the story and turn it into a dramatized scene using all the props in their new way. Each member of the group can portray a character in the scene and utilize all the props in their new way. Consider writing an outline for the scene, a basic script, and a character list so everyone is on the same page.

Scenes should:

- Identify characters and their relationship to one another
- Sequence with a beginning/middle/end
- Incorporate all props
- Involve all participants acting and speaking

5.) **Reflect**

Discuss or write your thoughts about the following reflection questions.

- Did all the props become things you expected? How did that impact your story?
- How did it feel to share control of the decisions with your group members?
- What did your group do to ensure everyone was included?
- What was challenging and/or easy about this process?

**Other ways to play:**

1. This can also be used as a game to practice improvisation and creative thinking skills. Find several objects and pass them around continuously, so participants must think of many different ways to use each item.

2. Consider the scene creation option and enhancing the scene with costumes, sets, and additional props.

3. Consider performing the scene virtually or recording it to share with family or friends.

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