

Building Connections with Group Home & Runaway Teens  
 “Anytime” Activities List by Hanna Duff

Activity	Description
Movie night	Let your student choose the movie and make some popcorn! <b>Hint: You can check out DVDs at your local library for FREE.</b>
Memory books	This is a scrapbook project I did with my group home girls over summer. A family friend donated a \$50 Michael's gift card for scrapbook materials and a few disposable Kodak cameras so they could take photos of their friends. This project took a few weeks to complete and we loved working on it together! <b>Hint: Don't be shy about reaching out when you need funds for a project. Sometimes, School on Wheels has Target gift cards to give away for this purpose. Ask your R/C.</b>
Game night	I loved bringing board games to the group home. Once you have one or two students playing, the rest usually want to join the fun. Some of our favorite games were Catch Phrase, Apples to Apples, and Bananagrams. <b>Hint: Garage sales are great places to buy cheap board games.</b>
Invent a new type of pizza	The girls were always coming up with crazy concoctions in the kitchen. One day, I bought over a pre-made pizza crust and we got creative with whatever we had in the cupboards! <b>Hint: Be sure to ask facility staff's permission before this activity.</b>
Make a music video	My girls loved singing and dancing along to their favorite songs. If you have the technology, this could be a really fun summer project for creative teenagers. <b>Hint: If you have access to a Mac, you have the resources to do this entire project for FREE.</b>
Make cards for friends & family	I noticed that many of my girls loved to write letters to their friends. I brought left over craft supplies and we made cards for our friends and family. <b>Hint: Check the School on Wheels office for special supplies, like construction paper and glitter. 99 Cent Store is also a great resource.</b>
Play water balloon games	This is something I always wanted to do during the summer to get the girls outside. All you need is some water balloons and a hose. <b>Hint: Buy cheap water balloons at the 99 Cent Store. Check this website for game ideas: <a href="http://sports.yahoo.com/top/news?slug=ycn-8585839">http://sports.yahoo.com/top/news?slug=ycn-8585839</a></b>
Create a sidewalk chalk mural	Surprisingly, most teenagers will go wild with sidewalk chalk. A bucket of chalk is pretty cheap, and it's another way to get outside and do something together without leaving the site. <b>Hint: Try the 99 Cent Store for chalk. Rite Aid may also have it during the summer.</b>
BUS Program Activities	During the summer (and really any time), BUS activities are great to do with teenage students. To teenagers, college may seem like a far off dream, so BUS activities are a good way to help teenagers stay motivated through high school. Take a look at the School on Wheels website for BUS activities: <a href="http://www.schoolonwheels.org/programs-services/bus-program">http://www.schoolonwheels.org/programs-services/bus-program</a> <b>Hint: If you've been to college, be sure to share your experience with your student. Bring photos, tell stories, etc.</b>
Plan a college tour together	When I asked around the group home, most of the girls were interested in visiting UC Santa Barbara. I was familiar with the campus, so I asked my regional coordinator and the group home staff for permission to plan a trip. Usually, school admissions directors are happy to help you plan a tour. It's a great experience for high school kids to spend time on a college campus, and also learn about the financial aid opportunities available to them. <b>Hint: Need help? Check out the School on Wheels College Month tips on our website.</b>

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Bracelets/beading for themselves & friends	Yet another crafty idea that teenage girls enjoy doing (surprisingly). <b>Hint: Use your resources on this one. Do you know anyone who makes jewelry? Do you know anyone who would be willing to donate to this project?</b>
Bake cupcakes for friends & family	This is a fun and delicious way to spend time together! You need to get staff permission for this activity. <b>Hint: Communicate with the staff about this activity ahead of time. They have a weekly budget for food, and they may be able to include cupcake ingredients on their shopping list.</b>
Make a collage	The girls loved using scrapbook supplies and old magazine cutouts to make collages to hang on their doors. Because the girls transition so often, this was a good way for them to personalize their space. <b>Hint: Start collecting old magazines early for this activity. You can also check your local library and ask to take old magazines when new issues come in.</b>
Read a book together based on a movie	<u>Twilight</u> anyone? The great thing about this activity is that there are so many young adult books that fit into this category, and these are books that fall into almost every genre. Choose a book and enjoy! <b>Hint: As a special treat, get permission to take your student to see the movie when you finish (if it's in theaters).</b>
Draw self-portraits	Hanging self-portraits can be another way to personalize your student's space. If you are unsure about drawing, check out drawing books from the library. <b>Hint: If drawing is something your student is into, ask your R/C for a Target gift card to buy your student a sketchbook and drawing pencils.</b>
Do a science experiment	Science experiments are fun and educational, especially if you can find a science experiment related to what your student is actually learning about in school (i.e. weather patterns= tornado in a jar). <b>Hint: There are tons of great teacher websites for free/cheap science experiments.</b>
Keep a dialogue journal	In a composition book, keep a journal with your student. Fold the page in half vertically. On one side, your student writes about a set topic or whatever is on his/her mind. Later, you will respond with questions or thoughts on the other side. <b>Hint: For journal topic ideas, check out teacher websites.</b>
Make a comic strip	First, bring in some examples of comic strips from the newspaper. With your student, create a 3-panel comic strip with illustrations and speech bubbles about their day. This can also be a fun way to journal and check in with each other at the beginning of your session. <b>Hint: If your student enjoys this, create a comic book with pre-made panels and a decorative cover.</b>
Play games online	There are lots of great educational and "just for fun" games on the computer. Ask your student to show you! <b>Hint: Check out the reviews online before playing a game to make sure it is appropriate and safe.</b>
Do drama activities together	Drama activities are great for teenagers because they build self-esteem and help kids express themselves creatively. Once you and your student start an activity, more residents will most likely join you. <b>Hint: As a special treat, take your student to a play (school plays are usually free for students or very inexpensive).</b>
Plan a garage sale for a cause of their choosing	After getting staff permission, choose a Saturday to have a garage sales, Make signs and post an ad on Craigslist ahead of time. Ask the residents to clean out their closet and be sure to ask friends & family for donations. Let your student choose a cause that is important to him/her and put the funds toward an organization. <b>Hint: Bring baked goods to sell. Your customers will love it!</b>
Whatever your special skill is!	Photography, music, telling jokes, whatever. Be yourself and your student will be drawn to you.