

**Sierra**

## **Community Level Challenge**

Like many Latino families, mine is a massive one. My grandparents' home was a grand central terminal of sorts. Ever-welcoming aunts, neighbors, cousins, comadres, and compadres. Sunday cookouts were and still are a time to come together, dance, watch a Sunday soccer match, and eat! And wow! The amount of food made was a sight to behold! Most food was prepped on Saturdays. All seasoned and simmered to perfection by family members. Everyone had a role. My tia is in charge of desserts. Always. Dad is in charge of all things grilling. Definitive! Cousins contribute their own unique dishes. To name a few. Anyone who didn't have something to do would be assigned a role by my grandmother. I often thought she did this randomly. And undoubtedly, she sometimes did. But looking back, before assigning someone to a specific role, she really did take our strengths, interests, ages, and skills into consideration. Indeed, in doing so, she was engineering. And oh! Being the daughter of an engineer, would she have loved knowing that!

I now find myself in her position. I am in charge of my children's school culture night. Each year, I am tasked with cooking copious amounts of food for ravenous teenagers, their families, and staff. Thankfully, I have a volunteer team. Assigning each of them a role is necessary to keep our food tent running efficiently. Much like the layers in a helmet. I know, what does a helmet have to do with any of this? Recently, I visited the exhibit *Creatividad silvestre/Wild Creativity* with my kids. We had a go at the helmet design challenge first. In which we stacked layers of foam to simulate the layers in a helmet. Did you know that helmets usually have three layers? A hard outer, a middle impact-absorbing layer, and a comfort liner on the inside. Each layer is essential to the overall success of the design. And crucial to keeping the wearer safe. That is to say, each layer plays an important role.

As parents, we are no strangers to assigning roles, putting this engineering practice to good use! Especially, for example, when tasking our kids with chores. I know my daughter is careful with my beloved tableware, so she's on dish duty. My boy is orderly, and so he's in charge of tidying up. You see, when assigning roles, it is useful to consider what individuals have to offer. What are their skills? What experience do they have that can be beneficial to achieving goals and getting jobs (whatever they may be) done efficiently?

Each person plays a fundamental role on Culture Night. Assigning Jesus as our lead cook is a good idea since he was head chef at a restaurant, and Linda, with her warm and welcoming disposition, is fully bilingual. So assigning her the greeter role will ensure that all feel included and welcome. It is important.

that others feel comfortable in the roles you assign them to. Being open to having conversations to distinguish each person's level of comfort in that role is worth taking time for. Overall, assigning roles can sound overwhelming when you're the one tasked with doing it. But in doing so, you are creating a collaborative effort and a supportive structure. Roles can mitigate the challenge of whatever job you have ahead. It really is a valuable tool!

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Have you ever wanted to get away? Escape to another city, or country? To a cultural landmark like Chichen Itza, in the middle of the lush, Mexican jungle. Or to witness the magnificent mosques of Istanbul? Each their own unique, splendid structure. Perhaps you've felt like time traveling, to the Mesozoic, or the height of the Roman Empire. Or another galaxy altogether. Maybe, you don't want to escape. It's possible you're fine in the time, and place you're in here, and now.

What if what you're really craving is to learn something new? Sketching in the anime style, spotting that elusive planet at just the right time and place, perfecting your flan recipe, how to embroidery? A new language perhaps? All of this wealth of knowledge, and extensively more is found nestled in a library. A great place to pass the time browsing the bookshelves subject by subject, genre, by genre in search of the next great read, or award winning movie, audiobooks. If you are anything like my family, the Reyes-Martinez family, you could you could easily spend an entire day at the library, or a museum for that matter. In many ways a library is like a museum. With vast variety, museum exhibits can offer a little something for everyone. Bringing learning to life. These are welcoming places for inquiring minds. Places to wander and wonder, places to be curious, places for learning.

In fact, at our city's museum, OMSI there is an activity that focuses on libraries. It is part of an upcoming exhibit. The idea is simple yet thought provoking; design a system that gives everyone a fair chance at checking out materials. Sure, library materials belong to the library, but really, they belong to everyone in the community. So a well-designed lending system is essential. The functionality of these systems ensure that everyone gets a proper turn at borrowing items.

You begin the activity by [reading the information provided](#). By reading one of these library studio cards, you begin to get an idea of what the [challenge goal is: design a way to decide who gets items first](#). Now, you can begin to [brainstorm](#) how you would customize your own approach to lending out library materials. Brainstorming. What exactly is it? Simply put, brainstorming is a unique process of thinking. There is no right or wrong in brainstorming. It allows you to be as creative, and imaginative as you like creating a dynamic element to the process of thought. You can of course, go about this process on your own, but an interesting thing happens when brainstorming in a group; you gain perspective! Diverse ideas from others you may not have thought of yourself. In brainstorming collectively as a team, group, or yes, even family. You are diversifying the way you think, and adding a sense of inclusion as everyone has a turn at sharing their thoughts, and ideas. You don't need to be a librarian creating a lending system to brainstorm, you don't have to be a student, or someone working within a company that attends focus groups, or meetings! So, my question to you \_\_\_\_\_ is... what are some ways you brainstorm in your life? Family outings? Dinner menus? Who gets the pick on movie night?

I'd say a brainstorming session is in order!