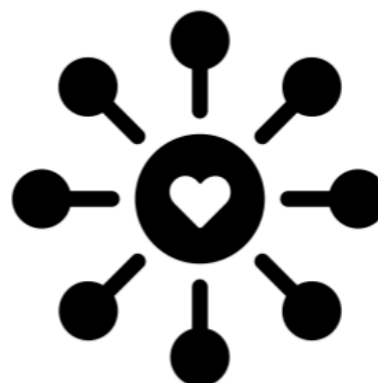


20 ways to build classroom community and relationships

 ditchthattextbook.com/community-relationships

August 22, 2022

20 ways to **build** classroom **community** and **relationships**



**DITCH THAT
TEXTBOOK**

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Building student-teacher relationships

1. Create a Google Forms database

Student details form

Just for me (the teacher). Not for the students. For all the things they tell me that I don't want to forget.

asclia@edtechteacherbook.com (not shared) Switch account

Student name

Your answer

Class period

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

Details

Your answer

Submit Clear form

Sometimes, you learn little things about your students at surprising times. Interesting things. Important things. For example, in the hallway, a student might tell you about their favorite YouTuber ... or that they have a big volleyball match in a week ... or that a family member is having surgery. If you have a spot to save those important things quickly, you won't forget them ... and they might help drive your teaching or your relationships forward.

A simple Google Form can do the trick. Just [create a Google Form](#) (or [use this template](#)) with a few simple fields:

- A short answer field with the student's name (or a dropdown if you only have one class of students)
- A dropdown field with student's class (if you have multiple classes in a day)
- A paragraph text field with what you learned about the student

Bookmark that Google Form or [put a quick shortcut on the home screen of your cell phone](#). When a student says something you want to remember, pull up that form and fill it out -- in less than 30 seconds probably.

Then, every once in a while, open up the responses to your form. It'll help you remember ...

- students' favorite things so you can use them as examples in instruction
- birthdays and important dates so you can celebrate or mention them
- things you can look up so you can follow up with students on them later

It'll make you look like you have super-human memory! But really, you just have a good quick place to store things so you don't forget.

2. Try a 2 minute relationship builder

Strategy shared by Kristin Daley

Looking for a way to connect to a student that is particularly challenging? Try the [2x10 strategy](#). For ten consecutive days spend two minutes a day getting to know that student. Make sure your questions go beyond just "how are you today?" and really spend time making a connection.

3. Get to know even more students with the 2x4 calendar

Strategy shared by Trisha Seyfert

Spend two minutes per day talking with four different students, talking to them as individuals about their lives. Use these conversations to better get to know each student and for them to better get to know you. Focus conversations around outside of school activities. After the conversations, reflect upon what was learned about each student and how that information can be used to meet that child's needs. Want to get organized with your relationship-building? Here's a [2X4 Student Relationship Building Calendar](#) shared by Trisha Seyfert, based off work in Greg Wolcott's book, *Significant 72: Unleashing the Power of Relationships in Today's Schools*.

2X4 Relationship Building Calendar

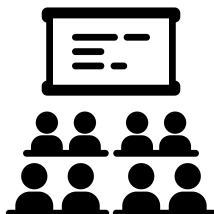
Spend two minutes per day talking with four different students - talking to them as individuals about their lives. Use these conversations to better get to know each student and for them to better get to know you. Focus conversations around outside of school activities. After the conversations, reflect upon what was learned about each student and how that information can be used to meet that child's needs.

Monthly Schedule				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Notes:				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Notes:				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Notes:				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Notes:				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Notes:				

4. Start a dialogue journal

Strategy shared by Taylor Halliday

Dialogue journals aren't just for elementary students! Journaling is one of the best ways to get to know your students and provides a safe space for them to express themselves without speaking to the entire class. Want to learn more? Jennifer Gonzalez of Cult of Pedagogy talks about [How Dialogue Journals Build Teacher-Student Relationships](#) on her podcast and blog.



Creating classroom community

5. Make positive phone calls home

Shared by Nate Ridgway, author of [Breaking the Blockbuster Model](#) and co-author of [Don't Ditch That Tech](#)

A screenshot of a Google Form titled "Ridgway's Phone Log". The form has a purple header with a pattern of circles. Below the title, it says "Complete each question below." and shows the user's email "jmattwiller1@gmail.com (not shared)" with a "Switch account" link. There are four required questions: "What date was the call?" with a date picker (mm/dd/yyyy), "What time was the call?" with a time picker (AM/PM), "Whom did you call?" with a text input field, and "What was the name of the student you called about?" with a text input field. Each question has a purple asterisk indicating it is required.

Don't wait until something negative happens to contact a student's family. Use those first few weeks of school to make a positive phone call home to each student. Check out this article by Edutopia on [The Power of the Positive Phone Call Home](#).

You can use Nate Ridgway's [simple Google Forms call log](#) to keep track of which students you've called and who you talked to. [Download the Microsoft Forms version here](#).

You can even create a bookmark icon for it on your phone for easier access . [Learn how here](#).

6. Welcome students all year long



At the beginning of the school year we have all of our welcome to class resources handy and ready to give to our students and their families. But what if a new student comes in February? We want to share all of the important information with them too!

We made it easy for you with our **Welcome to Our Class Flipbook Template**. Just fill in all of the pages with your information and have it ready to share with new students.

This resource would come in handy at the beginning of the school year too of course! Download our [color flipbook template](#) that you can edit and print the way you'd like or the [black and white flipbook template](#) for easy copying/printing.

7. Celebrate students often



Everyone loves to be appreciated and your students are no exception. You can create printable certificates with easy to use [templates from Canva](#). Students of all ages will love bringing home their certificate and showing their loved ones their achievements.

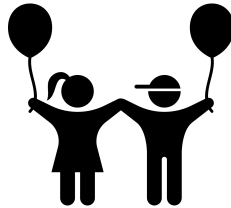
*All educators get a **FREE Canva Edu Pro account**. Learn how to get yours at canva.com/education.*

8. Create a Google Classroom banner quilt

Give each student a square blank Google Drawing and have them decorate it. Download each square and put them together to make a "quilt" or collage Google Classroom banner. Alternatively you can have each student add their name to a collaborative Google Drawing

Classroom banner by making the file "anyone with link can edit" and asking students to add their name using word art. Don't forget to revisit this activity when any new students join your class.

- **Blank digital quilt square**
- **Google Classroom banner template**
- **Custom Google Classroom Headers by Mandi Tolen**



Cultivating student-student relationships

9. Tell me something good!

From *The Teacher Toolkit* (www.theteachertoolkit.com)

In order to promote a positive, caring atmosphere in the classroom, devote a portion of class for "Tell me something good" from the teacher toolkit (You can even play this quick little clip from the classic Chaka Khan and Rufus song!) This exercise takes just a couple of minutes from a class period, but has long-lasting effects and sets an optimistic tone for working together. During this time, students can share any positive aspect of their life, from school, friends, or family. Taking time for the class to get to know each other promotes a positive environment, builds confidence, and creates a sense of community within the class.

10. Make time for Morning Meetings

Shared by Abbey Bobbett

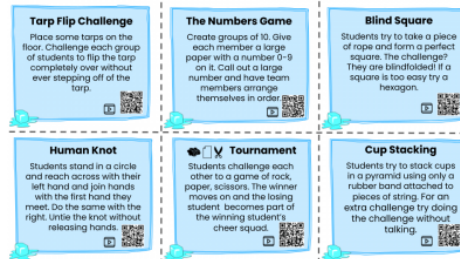
Morning Meetings are a great way to get your day started! You can even have other "important" people on campus join your meetings (principal, custodian, admin assistant, etc.) once in awhile.

11. Break the ice!

Animal Sounds Give each student a slip of paper with an animal. When you're ready to play, tell your students to start making the same sound as the animal on their paper. Students then try to find classmates making the same animal as them.	Snowball Fight Each student writes three things about themselves on a sheet of paper. Everyone crumples up their paper and throws it across the room. After a bit have everyone pick up a snowball then try to guess who's paper they found.	Would You Rather? Have students get in pairs or groups of 3-4 and answer if they would rather be/have A or B. Some ideas: Cat or Dog Thor or Iron Man Pizza or Tacos
Four Corners Give students a topic then four options. Have them go to the corner of the room that represents their answer and discuss why. Example "What season would you make it all year round?" Fall, Winter, Spring or Summer.	Toilet Paper Facts Without explaining, pass around a roll and ask students to take as much as they think they will need. Once everyone has taken some have each student share one fact about themselves for each square they took.	Silent Birthday Line Up Have students line up in order of their birthday (beginning on January 1st and ending on December 31st). The challenge! They must do it without talking.

Ice breakers CAN be fun! Really, they can. There are lots of easy, no prep ice breakers that you can use any time as an engaging way to build and cultivate classroom community. Have a snowball fight, play *Would You Rather?*, or challenge students to find each other using only animal sounds. Find ice breakers that work for you in our [EfficienTEACH Ice Breakers and Team Building Activities](#) resource.

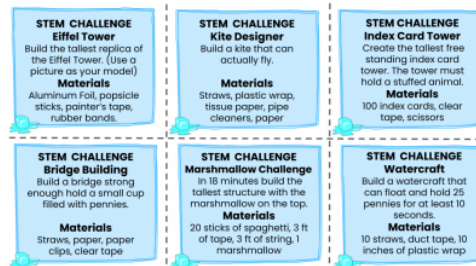
12. Try a fun team building activity



There is no wrong time of year for a team building activity. You can easily incorporate them every week to keep things fun and interesting all year long.

Need some inspiration? We have curated six fun activities for students of all ages along with a QR code to the video explanation as well in our [EfficienTEACH Ice Breakers and Team Building Activities](#) resource.

13. Incorporate STEM Challenges into your weekly plans



STEM challenges aren't just for science, technology, engineering and math teachers. The benefits of working together to solve a problem or complete a challenge are important for any group at any age and in any subject!

Need some inspiration? We have curated six simple STEM challenges in our [EfficienTEACH Ice Breakers and Team Building Activities](#) resource.

14. Have students introduce one another

Shared by Jerry Meyer

Have students interview each other about themselves at the beginning of the year, then have them “present” or introduce each other to the class. Make sure that everyone knows you are taking good notes, but don’t forget to refer to those notes often!

15. Create an appreciation board

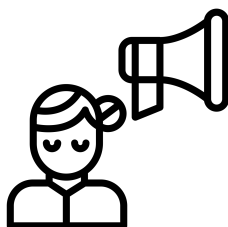
Appreciation is powerful. The more you spread it around, the more confident everyone becomes -- and the more we realize the power in appreciation! An appreciation board provides a space for students to recognize each other. It can be a physical space, like a bulletin board or a spot to put up sticky notes. It can be a digital space, like the digital white board on your interactive display or a Jamboard file. Students can share specifics of why they appreciate someone else and include their name (or not). Then, decide what happens when a student recognizes another. Is it announced in front of class? Do you notify the appreciated student individually?

16. Use "peer praise" after projects and activities

Lots of teachers use peer feedback. It's an effective strategy to get students more feedback than they can just get from the teacher. Plus, the different perspective helps students understand content and feedback better if they're giving the feedback.

Peer praise uses the same concept -- students interacting with students. But the focus is positive. After looking over something a peer has created, the student leaves a single simple statement of praise for something good that peer did in their work. Some versions of this:

- Trade papers with one classmate and leave one positive comment
- Leave student work on desks and have students circulate, leaving three positive sticky notes on each other's work
- Pass student work down a row or column of student desks, writing something nice in the margins



Building student autonomy and voice

17. Institute a system of classroom voting

From Our Class, Our Voice by Gina Ruffcorn

In her fifth grade classroom, Gina Ruffcorn's students have a BIG say in how the class runs. One way Gina amplifies the voices of her students is through classroom voting. They vote on all sorts of "non-essential items," as she puts it. They decide what the classroom lighting will be for the day. They get to help pick the class read-aloud book. Why? It helps students realize their voice has power. They get practice choosing an option and standing behind it. In the free video below -- and in her book, [Our Class, Our Voice](#) -- Gina shares concrete tips and strategies to get started.

18. Build relationships with classroom surveys

From [Our Class, Our Voice](#) by Gina Ruffcorn

How do we know what our students think and feel if we never ask them? When we know what students want in a classroom, they can be more productive learners. Plus, they get a say in creating the classroom community that they envision. When they realize their voice has the power to do that, they realize it can do even more. Fifth grade teacher Gina Ruffcorn, author of the book [Our Class, Our Voice](#), uses three types of classroom surveys to empower her students. In the free video below -- and in her book, [Our Class, Our Voice](#) -- she shares those three types of classroom surveys and how to use them.

19. Instill responsibility with classroom jobs

From [Our Class, Our Voice](#) by Gina Ruffcorn

There's only one of you, the teacher. But there are dozens of them! How can we keep up? By delegating responsibility to the students! In her fifth grade class, Gina Ruffcorn -- author of the book [Our Class, Our Voice](#) -- creates classroom jobs. Then the students choose weekly which jobs they'll assume. It gives Gina more time to do what she, the teacher, can only do. But it also helps the students feel a new value and purpose in the classroom. In the free video below -- and in her book, [Our Class, Our Voice](#) -- Gina shares a list of 20 different classroom jobs that will instill responsibility in your students -- and also lighten your teacher load so you can do what matters most.

20. High Five or Handshake?

Shared by Gabriele Hughes and Trisha Seyfert

Greet your students at the door and let them choose the greeting. Make it even more personalized by creating your own class handshake. Have your students come up with a handshake together and use it to greet one another.

You can also give out High Fives all day long. Research shows the the power of a high five goes a long way! Check out [The High Five Habit by Mel Robbins](#).

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Gamification



Google Classroom



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**Tech Like
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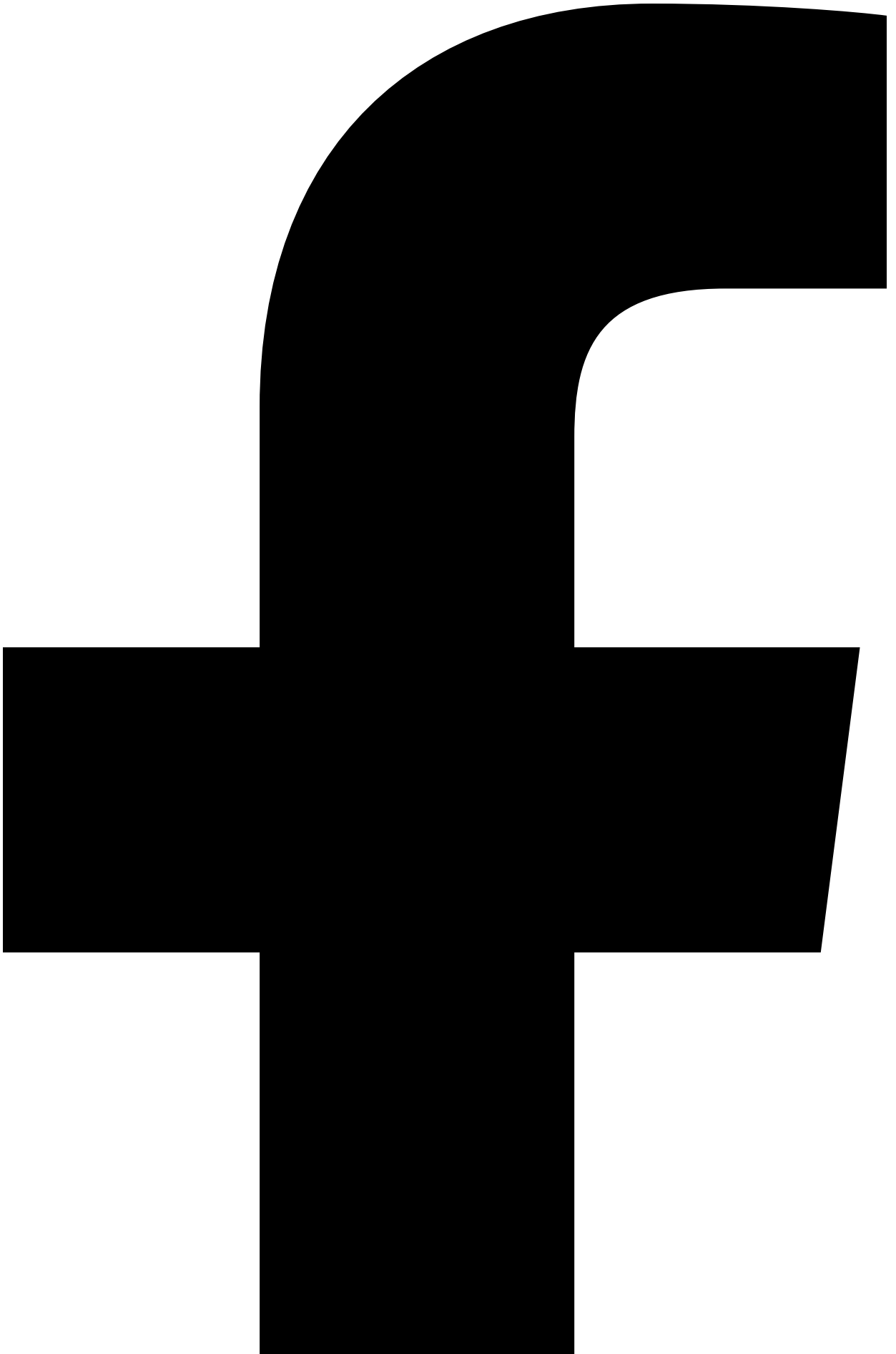


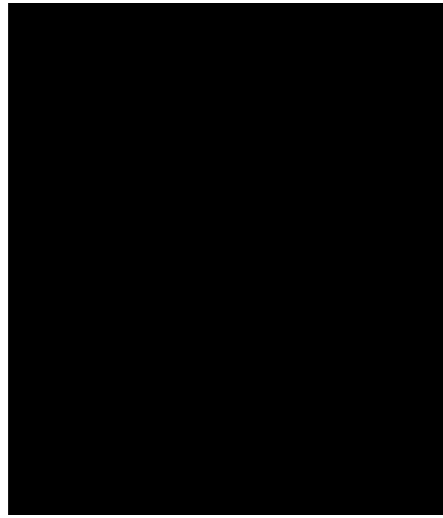
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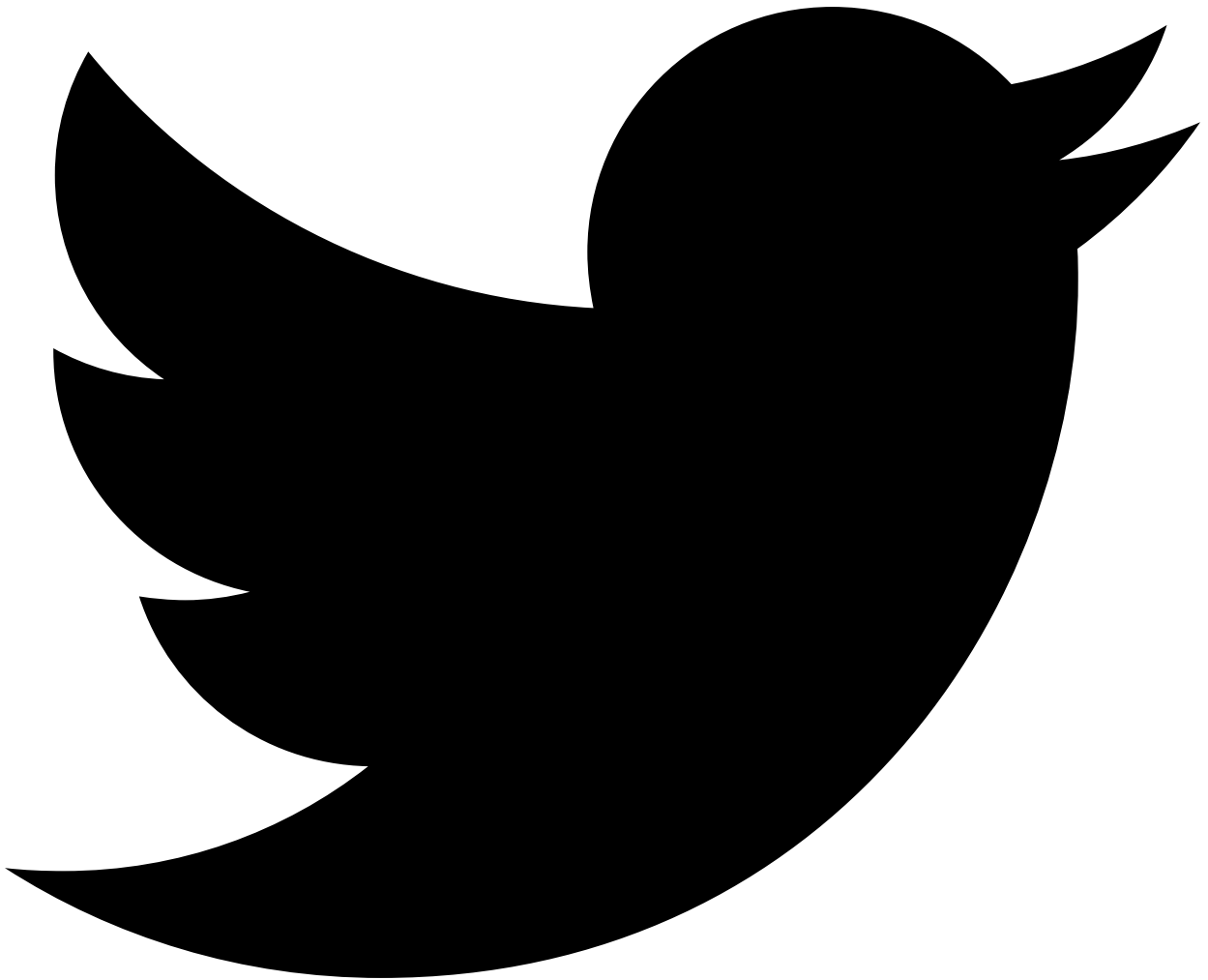


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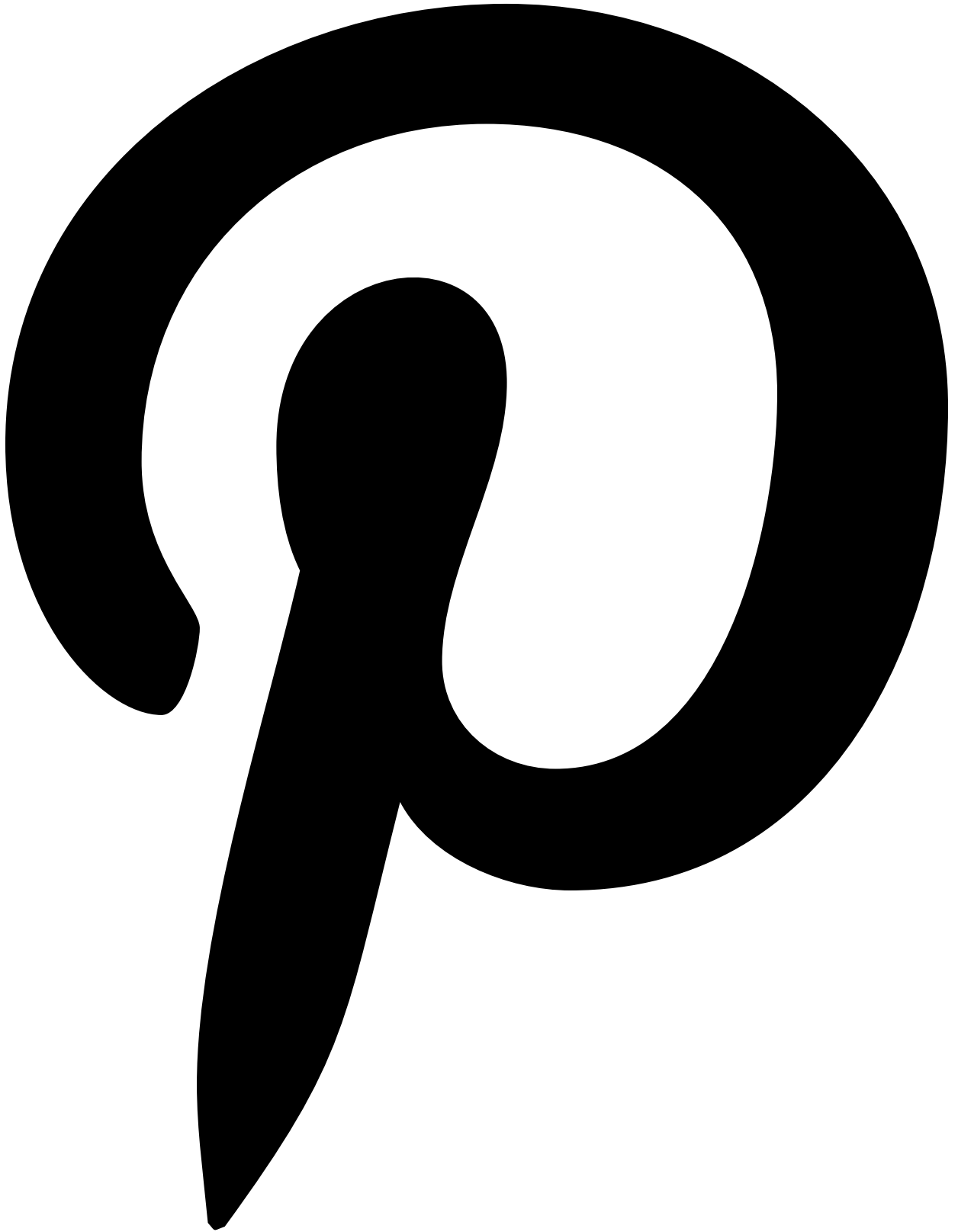




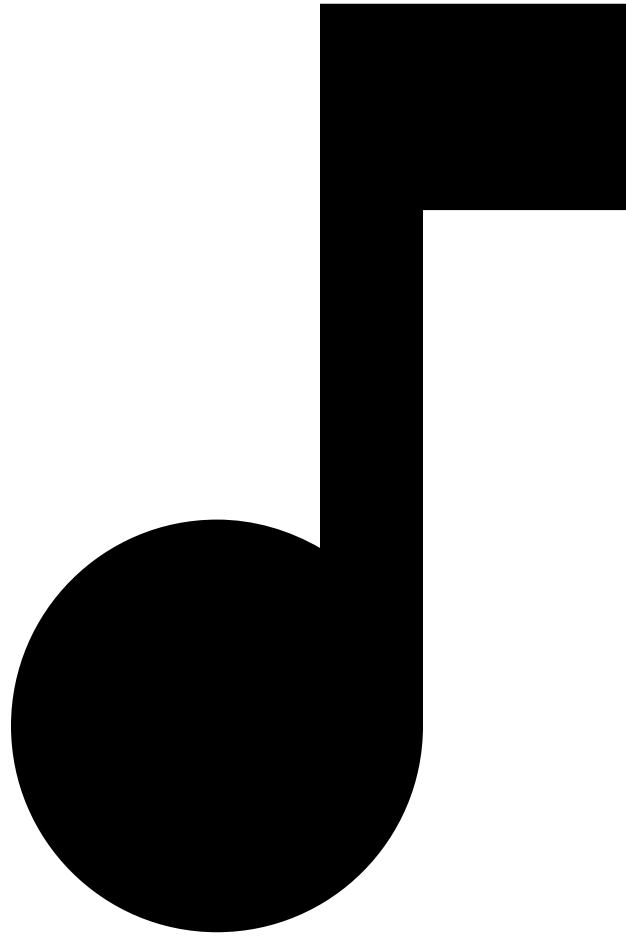
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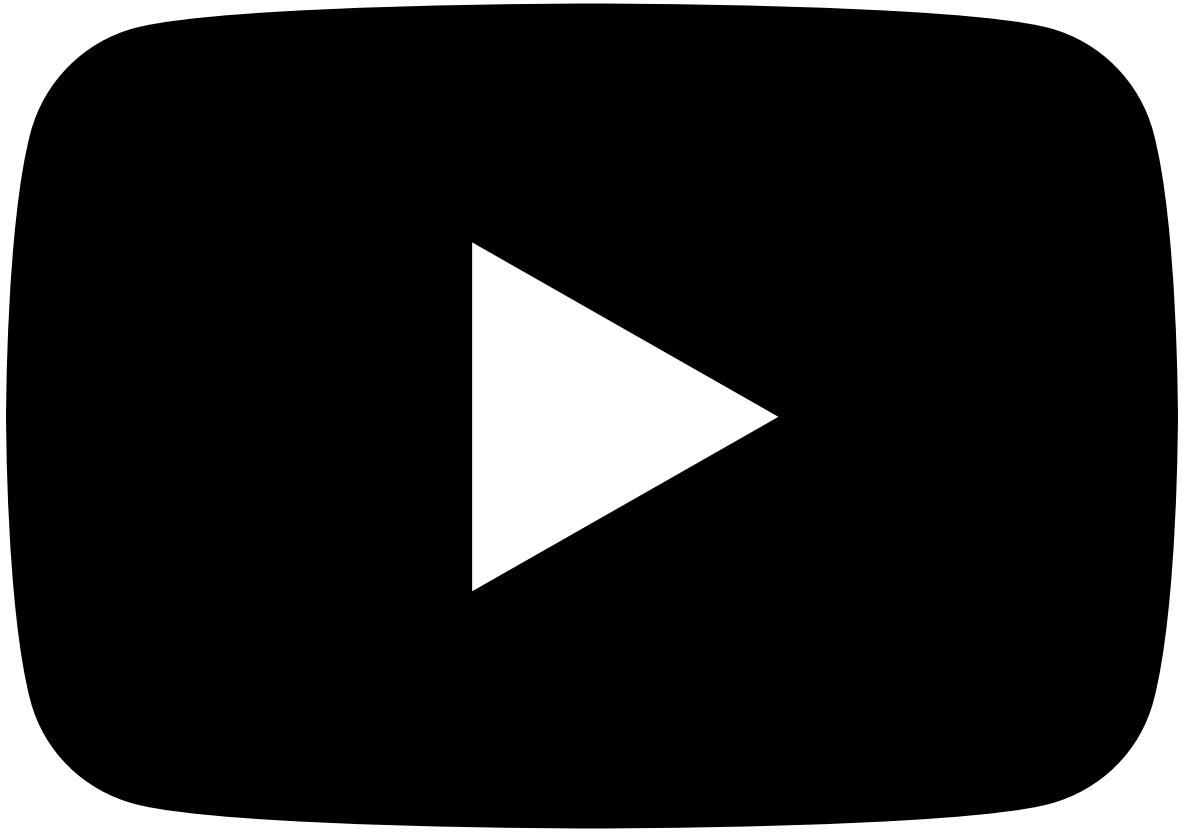
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