Capture the Code

Mission: the thief scattered the code across the floor, and panic won't crack it. Capture the code pieces, decode the scrambled word, crack the vault cipher, whisper the password, open the box, free the mascot. Character trait today: **Self-Management**.

1 · Capture the Code Pieces (5–18 min) — grab a piece, keep your cool, run it home

Warm-up 90-second timer, wide neutral zone, no defenders. Grab and go. Coach the calm: "You have time, breathe, pick a lane."

Defenders each team leaves 2 defenders to two-finger tag raiders on their side. Tagged = drop the piece, jog back to base and restart.

Shot clock 60 seconds, hold a piece only a 5-count before it is home or dropped. Most pieces home wins. Keep the pieces for Game 2.

Diff TK–2: no defenders, gentle tap, nobody out, cheer every piece. 3–8: bigger field, more pieces, 2–3 guards, hard 60-sec shot clock, an older kid as student referee, captains assign raiders/guards. Two-finger tag only, non-contact, no grabbing.

2 · Assemble the Cipher (18–31 min) — decode the pieces, unscramble the word

Key Write on board: 1=A, 2=B, 3=C ... 26=Z. Every piece number becomes one letter.

Answer Pieces carry 3, 1, 12, 13 → C, A, L, M. Unscrambled codeword: **CALM**. Decoy pieces (17=Q, 26=Z) do not fit the word. First team to whisper it scores.

Diff TK–2: letter pieces (skip the key), just C, A, L, M, no decoys, blanks on the board. 3–8: add a +1 shift (2, 26, 11, 12 → B,Z,K,L → C,A,L,M), 3-minute timer, then each team designs a scramble for a rival and referees it. No repeats of CALM.

3 · Crack the Vault (31–45 min) — decode the box password

Cipher On the board: 22 · 1 · 21 · 12 · 20, same key (1=A ... 26=Z).

Answer V, A, U, L, T → password **VAULT**. Straight decode, no scramble. Optional 6th junk number as a red herring. First correct whisper opens the box.

Diff TK–2: 3-letter word like CAT (3, 1, 20), decode together on blanks. 3–8: mixed cipher (some plain, some +1 shift), beat-the-clock with a 30-sec wrong-guess lockout, two students verify the decode aloud before the box opens.

4 · Finale + Wristband (45–60 min)

Open Winning team announces the password (VAULT) to the room, coach turns the key, mascot lifts out, big cheer. Optional "thief's note" inside: "You captured my code and stayed cool. I surrender!"

Award the **Self-Management** trait wristband to detectives who grabbed the clue and kept their cool ("I took a breath before I ran", "I didn't panic when the letters were scrambled").

3–8 For older kids and the two middle schools, run the whole hour competitive: fixed teams, score every game on the whiteboard, visible timer each round, crown a champion here. Games bank adds **Detective Mafia** (2–3 Culprits + a Detective, 5–7 min rounds) — the one middle schoolers ask to replay.

Detective's Oath (say together, magnifiers up): I am a detective. / My brain is my best tool. / I don't guess, I reason. / I follow the clues to the truth.