Puzzle Panic

Mission: the thief rigged the box with a ticking timer, betting we panic and blow it. Race the games, crack the panic code on the whiteboard, whisper the password, open the box, free the mascot. Character trait today: **Self-Awareness**.

1 · Puzzle Gauntlet (5–18 min) — four stations, one running clock, solve to advance

Math TK–2: 5 + 4 = **9.** 3–8: double a number, add 6, get 20 → **7.**

Pattern TK–2: circle, square, circle, square → **circle.** 3–8: 2, 4, 8, 16 → **32.**

Word TK–2: TAC → **CAT.** 3–8: NIPCA → **PANIC.**

Logic TK–2: moo and milk → **cow.** 3–8: Ana not first, Ben not last, Cara ahead of Ben → **Cara first** (Cara, Ben, Ana).

Diff TK–2: easy puzzle each station, coach reads aloud, everyone finishes. 3–8: harder puzzles, 10-sec penalty on a wrong answer, visible countdown, older kids staff the stations as judges. Cue: "Breathe, then answer."

2 · Sixty-Second Solve (18–31 min) — rapid-fire rounds, 60 seconds each, a point per solve

Bank clock = **a clock** · half of 20 +3 = **13** · days ×2 = **14** · more you take = **footsteps** · up not down = **your age** · 7×6 = **42** · SLECU = **CLUES** · Mon/Wed/Fri = **Sunday** · 17 sheep, all but 9 = **9** · shorter with two letters = **short.**

Play Read one puzzle, count 60 seconds aloud, take answers, point per correct team, next. Keep the tempo high so they feel the clock.

Diff TK–2: friendly count, easy questions, everyone scores. 3–8: silent-write answers, no-repeat rule so no coasting, then students pose their own puzzles and judge them.

3 · The Panic Code (31–45 min) — solve to numbers, numbers to letters, read the password

Code Key A=1 … M=13. Clue 1: 9÷3 = 3 → C. Clue 2: noses = 1 → A. Clue 3: a dozen = 12 → L. Clue 4: 6+7 = 13 → M. **Password: CALM.**

Hard 3–8: shift = 20÷4 = 5, board shows H F Q R, shift each back 5 → **C A L M.** Wrong-guess lockout 30 sec; then teams design a code for a rival.

Diff TK–2: number line 1–13 on the board, coach helps, letters appear one at a time. First team to whisper CALM opens the box.

4 · Finale + Wristband (45–60 min)

Open Winning team announces the password (CALM) to the room, coach turns the key, mascot lifts out, big cheer. Optional "thief's note" inside: "I set the timer to make you panic. You stayed calm. I surrender!"

Award the **Self-Awareness** trait wristband to detectives who noticed their own panic and steadied themselves before answering ("I felt myself rushing so I took a breath").

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.