

## Teamwork Communication Unit

This unit is a personal passion of mine and something I feel very strongly needs to be taught in Language Arts classes to high school students. The premise for designing and implementing this unit is that for the rest of their lives, students will be asked to work well with other people and communicate with them effectively. This unit forces them to analyze the dynamics of group communication, leadership, and individual roles. To begin the unit, I split the class into small groups (4-5 students) and large groups (one half of the class). The students will work in these groups for all of the unit. Each day the students participate in team activities and respond to them in writing, and at the end of the unit they answer ten questions in regards to their experiences. The following are the activities used:

### 1. Drawing Activity

- In their small groups, students will pick a partner. They will eventually be with each individual in the group. Each pair simply needs a piece of paper and a writing utensil. One partner is assigned as the speaker, and the other is the drawer. The speaker then comes to me, and I show them a simple picture. Without taking the picture with them, the speaker's duty is to get the drawer to recreate the image as accurately as possible. When the speaker is communicating to the drawer, the pair must be back to back. The speaker cannot look at the drawing; he or she can only answer questions the drawer has after receiving the instructions. We do this several times, switching roles and partners.

### 2. Building with Gumdrops and Spaghetti

- This activity is designed for the small groups. Each group is given an unlimited supply of gumdrops and spaghetti sticks. They are given a set amount of time (usually 15 minutes) to create the tallest self-supporting structure possible with those materials. All structures are measured upon completion to determine the most successful groups.

### 3. Balloon Line

- In their large groups, students are placed in a line and must place a blown-up balloon in between each member. These balloons must stay in place between the students without use of hands. The students must keep these balloons there while maneuvering through an obstacle course throughout the school (including the playground). The students gain points by crossing checkpoints throughout the course. They lose points for each time a balloon is dropped. Also, any time a balloon is dropped, the team must start over at the last checkpoint crossed.

### 4. Locked Arms

- For this activity the two large groups compete against each other for points. Each member of the large group must join one hand with one member of the group and one hand with another member of the group, creating a human knot of sorts. The team must communicate and work together to become untangled without releasing hands. The first team to successfully untangle wins.



#### 5. Shoe-tying instructions

- In small groups the students are given the task of creating written instructions for tying a shoe. The students are told that the person reading the instructions knows absolutely nothing about a shoe, so specific communication is a must for success. The first group to write successful directions wins. The instructor will evaluate the directions as they are turned in by physically going step-by-step through the instructions. Any unclear section means the directions are handed immediately back to the group.

#### 6. Deaf line-up

- The large groups once again compete against each other, this time to see which group can successfully line up in correct order first. The only catch is they can't speak. One order might be alphabetically by middle names, and another could be by birth date. As soon as the instructor gives the category for the order, the students begin.

#### 7. Toxic Waste Activity

- This activity is completed by the large groups. A water bottle filled to the brim has enough strings tied around it for each member of the group to be carrying one. They are approximately 3-5 feet in length from the bottle and are tied either from the top or the bottom of the bottle. The students are told that this bottle is full of toxic waste that they must successfully dump without spilling any on the way to the dump site. They then must maneuver through an obstacle course (usually including doorways and stairs) that leads them to the dump site where they must dump the "toxic waste" into a container without spilling. The lines must be held without slack at all times. The team is timed and loses seconds for each spill. After every spill the bottle is refilled.

#### 8. Land Mine

- A bed sheet is spread out on the floor and is covered sporadically with saltine crackers. In their large groups, each member must successfully walk across this sheet without stepping on a cracker (land mine). Each member is blindfolded. The group is allowed one communicator, but the communicator cannot touch the individual crossing the mine field. The group is timed to see how long it takes to get the entire team across.

#### 9. Turn Over a New Leaf

- Competing against each other, each large group is standing on a bed sheet. The goal for the team is to successfully turn over the sheet completely and stand on the other side without any member stepping off of the sheet. The first team to successfully complete this wins.