

The Code for Successful Teamwork

Overview

Students will explore the qualities of a successful team and practice working as such through discussion and an interactive teambuilding exercise.

Grades

4+

Activity Type

Small Group

Materials

- Colored sticker dots (two different colors will be needed)
- 20 pieces of paper or circles, numbered 1-20; or a large piece of bulletin board paper with twenty circles drawn on, labeled 1-20
- Timer (optional)

Duration

30+ minutes

Preparation

- Prior to student arrival, create a set of numbered circles or squares of paper (1-20) and place them randomly on the floor within an approximate 6 x 6 perimeter. (The numbers can be written on separate pieces of paper and laid out, or can alternatively be written within circles drawn directly on a large piece of bulletin board paper; see attached visual.)
- The set of numbers within the perimeter will be used for a team activity and each team will need its own set of numbers, 1-20. It is recommended teachers divide their class into teams so that there are approximately 5-6 students per team. Thus, the number of students in your class will determine the amount of teams you will have - which will in turn determine how many sets of numbers you will need to produce and arrange in various places.
- Ideally, students will not be able to see their set of numbers before beginning the activity.

Instructions

1. As a warm-up, ask students to brainstorm their thoughts to the following question, noting their thoughts on chart paper:
 - When working on a team, whether in school, later in your professional career, or in life in general, what do you think are the most important attributes team members must possess to ensure team success?
 - What is the difference in working on a team and working individually? What might be easier about working with a team? What might be more challenging? (If students need a more concrete example, ask them to consider the difference in being part of a marketing team who is charged with creating a new ad campaign for selling pizza, as opposed to being one person who is responsible for the ad campaign. What would be the difference in completing the task in these two ways?)
2. As students share their thoughts, ask follow-up questions to solicit additional details or specifics as needed. Once a substantial list has been created, ask students to consider which attribute they think is most important. While students ponder this question, pass out a colored sticker dot to each student. If possible, it is preferable that all of the stickers be the same color. (These can be purchased at any office supply store.)

Tell students that once they have decided which attribute they think is most important, they are to place their sticker beside that word or phrase on the chart paper to cast their vote. After all students have voted, identify the attributes that received the most votes and further discuss:

- Why do you think this particular attribute was voted as one of the most important attributes or characteristics of successful teamwork? What exactly does this attribute/ characteristic look like on a team (encourage students to cite examples of the word or phrase in action)? How might a team be negatively impacted if this word or phrase were absent on a team?
3. Tell students they are going to explore teamwork further by participating in a team activity. First, review class expectations for working in groups, such as:
- Listen closely to instructions, then move to your group quickly and quietly when told to do so. Take the items you will need for the assignment with you.
 - Be willing to try new things and work with ANY and ALL class community members. Many times I will assign your partners and groups, but I will also allow you to choose at times if you do well following expectations.
 - Immediately review the instructions and begin working on the activity given.
 - Remain POSITIVE while working together. Smile, be friendly, and use positive body language. As you work, actively listen to each other. Use eye contact and take turns giving ideas.
 - Support each other. Be patient with group members and help one another when assistance is needed.
 - Remember, it's ok to disagree, just do so in a respectful way.
 - Everyone must participate. Each of us is intelligent and brings something unique to the table, so each group member must try their best.
 - Remember to monitor your volume and stay focused on the task.
 - If someone in your group has a question, work together to find the answer. You must support one another when help is needed. If no one in the group can provide an answer, one group member should raise their hand to signal the teacher that additional help is needed. Wait patiently and do not stop working while waiting.
 - Have fun! Not only are you learning about an important topic together when working in groups, you are practicing mature skills that you will need for college and your future career!
4. Give students the following instructions for the group activity:
- In a moment, I will divide you into groups of five students and send you to an area of the room where you will find a set of numbers within a small perimeter on the floor. (If room is not available in your classroom, teachers should arrange to use a larger space such as the hall, the gym, or an outside area.)
 - Your team's goal is to touch all the numbered spots on the floor as fast as you can in numerical order. All team members must participate, but only one team member can be within the perimeter of the numbers (or touching a number) at a time.
 - If you touch a number out of order, or if more than one team member is inside the perimeter of the numbers at one time, you will be penalized and must start over.
 - When I say go, all teams will go to your assigned set of numbers and figure out how to follow the above instructions as quickly as possible. You will have ten minutes to see how many times your team can complete the process of touching all the numbers.
 - **Optional:** Teachers can also set up this activity as a competition between the various teams. Rather than giving a time frame for students to work within, teachers can give the directive that the first team to follow all the rules and finish will win a prize. Teachers should use their discretion as to whether or not teams will compete against one another. While competition can be a good motivator, it can also increase stress levels and result in a less cohesive working situation for team members.
 - Upon arriving at your set of numbers, you might want to first spend some time discussing the fastest way to complete this challenge while following all of the rules.

- **Optional:** Teachers may want to give teams a set 5 minutes to discuss and plan then begin a ten minute count down for integrating their strategy and completing the activity. Teachers may then want to provide another five minutes for students to debrief with their team and strategize on how to improve and be more productive. Teachers can then provide another ten minutes to students to again implement their ideas, hopefully improving their performance.
5. Take student questions then number the students off and tell each student what set of numbers their group will meet at. Finally, give the signal for all teams to convene and get started. Teachers must be vigilant in rotating between students and observing various groups to ensure all rules are followed. Teachers with large groups may want to assign a student observer to each group to assist in ensuring rules/instructions are followed.

Ideally, teams will eventually realize various productive solutions for completing the activity faster, such as assigning each team member specific numbers to touch or step on within the sequence; strategically placing team members around the perimeter to maximize speed, with perhaps one team member in the perimeter; etc.)

6. Upon completing the activity, discuss:
- Evaluate your participation as a group in that activity. What did you do well with? Is there anything that you could improve?
 - What was most challenging? How did you cope with this challenge?
 - What skills did it take for your team to be successful? (If students note any new thoughts that are not on their initial brainstorm regarding teamwork, add them to the list as they are shared.)
 - Did different roles emerge at all? (i.e. one person was a leader)
 - What creative ideas did you come up with to complete the activity promptly and successfully (while following all rules)?
 - Did you learn anything about yourself as an individual based on your team participation?
 - What can this activity teach us about cooperation? Communication? Reflection and improvement?
 - Is it harder to communicate and cooperate as a team when you are in a stressful situation? Explain.
7. To conclude the activity, return student focus to their initial brainstorm regarding attributes of a successful team member and allow students to add any additional thoughts. Provide students with one more sticker dot (preferably a different color than the dot provided at the beginning of the activity) and again allow students to vote on which word/phrase they now feel is most important. Let students know they can vote for the same attribute again or change their vote if so inclined. After all votes have been cast, determine which attributes have been voted most important in the second vote and compare them to the initial tally. Further discuss:
- Did participation in that activity lead you to change your vote? Explain.
 - If you did change your vote, what led you to change your mind and why?

Example Number Perimeter

Teachers can lay out shapes/numbers in any way they choose; just ensure each numbered circle is at least the size of a student's hand/foot and ensure students have space to move about the perimeter.

