

ZAP!
Exploring Team Work & Communication

Overview

As a team, students must maneuver themselves across the room and over an “electrified” rope without getting “zapped” by the current. This activity is a fun way to foster teamwork, encourage communication, and build safety and trust among participants.

Grades

4-12

Activity Type

Group

Materials

A long piece of rope or yarn (approximately 20 feet)

Duration

30 minutes

Preparation

Set up a long rope, cord, or length of yarn to stretch approximately 20+ feet. Tie the rope to a sturdy item on either end of the space you are using so that it will form a line across the space. The rope should come a bit above the average participant’s knee height (making it challenging but not impossible to step over). Items (such as chairs) can also be used to pull the rope in a particular direction along the line, so that a more zigzagged pattern is formed.

Instructions

1. Ask students to brainstorm the word “teamwork” and chart their responses on the board or chart paper. Ask:
 - What is teamwork?
 - What are the benefits of working with a team?
 - What are the characteristics of a good team member? What does it take to be a positive addition to a team?
 - What might be challenging about teamwork?
2. Tell students that they will be exploring the concept of teamwork in a fun activity called “ZAP!”
3. Draw participants’ attention to the rope and explain that it is a highly dangerous piece of rope because it is electrified. Tell students that if they touch the rope with any part of their body, they will be zapped. (For fun, the teacher may want to touch the rope and pretend to get a large zap by shaking and making silly noises.) Tell students that their goal is to travel from one side of the rope to the other without touching it.

4. While that may sound challenging, tell the group that the real challenge is that they must travel en masse, meaning there must be a constant physical connection between every single participant at all times as they cross together. If any student breaks the connection at any point, or touches the rope and gets zapped, the group must restart at the beginning of the rope. Teachers should also note how many times the group is expected to cross back and forth across the rope before reaching its end (i.e. for a 20 foot rope, cross 10 times).
5. Ensure students understand that the electric force field extends from the rope to the ground and cannot be penetrated (for example, students can't just crawl underneath). Also, remind students that if one of them is zapped, they are all zapped, so they should focus on helping one another succeed in this task.

Note: Exceptionally large groups can be split into smaller teams; groups with students who struggle with group kinesthetic activities can also be split into smaller groups or partners to ensure better success.

Options for making the activity more challenging for older students include:

- Enforce a time limit for completion
 - Tell students they must complete the activity silently
 - Blindfold every other student
6. Allow students to work on making it across the space while crossing the rope, watching closely and yelling "ZAP" if any student hits the rope or loses contact. Depending on the group's success, teachers can allow students to try crossing multiple times to see if they can improve their team work and the amount of time it takes them to make it safely to the other side.
 7. Once students have completed the activity, have them give themselves a hand for their hard work and debrief:
 - What was it like participating in this exercise? What was challenging about it?
 - What assisted the group in reaching the goal?
 - What hindered the group in achieving the goal?
 - How did you react when people were zapped or lost contact?
 - Evaluate your communication as a group.
 - Did you change your approach for successfully crossing? If so, how?
 - In what way did teamwork play a part in this activity?
 - Did anyone emerge as a leader? Explain.
 - Based on this experience, is there anything you would add to our initial brainstorm?