

Teamwork Practice Activity

Objective

Students will improve descriptive writing skills as well as improve their ability to accurately follow step-by-step instructions.

Materials

plastic Zip Loc® bags
Legos®, Tinker Toys®, or other multi-piece building set
paper
pencil
20 straws and 10 straight pins for each team

Procedure

1. Before the scheduled date of this activity, build a simple model using 10 to 13 pieces of the building set. Some of these pieces may be alike. Copy this model using identical pieces and placing them in exactly the same position for each two students. If necessary, teams of four may work together.
2. Keep one extra model as a key.
3. Place the models in a plastic Zip Loc® bag.
4. On the scheduled date of the activity, one partner of the team must sit at a desk facing one wall of the room. All the “writing” desks must face this same wall. The other partner must sit on the other side of the room facing the opposite wall. These “builders” are given an activity that will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. This activity may be a manipulative or written puzzle. Some teachers like to give the teams a bundle of 20 straws and 10 straight pins to design a suspension bridge which will span the greatest distance while supporting a chalkboard eraser.
5. The “writing” partner will receive the plastic bag with the model in it and a piece of paper and pencil. The instructions are to look at the model and describe how to build it using only words. Numerical symbols may be used, but no drawings or diagrams are allowed. Such phrases as “it looks like an upside down boat” are acceptable. Fifteen minutes will be allowed for writing. The last two minutes are reserved for disconnecting all the pieces and putting them in the plastic bag. The teacher must monitor so that no “building” partners are able to see the model during this time.
6. The teacher then inspects the bags to make certain all pieces are disconnected, inspects the papers for drawing, and dismisses the “writing partners” to go to the opposite side of the room. At this transition, it is important to allow NO verbal communication between students. The partners go to their team member’s station and begin to follow the written instructions. They proceed to build the model with the pieces in the bag. Fifteen minutes are allowed to complete the model. The “writers” are not to finish the straw bridge their partners started, or work on the alternative activity.
7. When the fifteen minutes have elapsed, the teams meet to inspect their final products. It is important to allow the students time to talk about their models and instructions. After three to five minutes of open discussion, bring out the key model for the “builders” to examine.
8. Optional scoring can be done to determine the team which most accurately matched the original model. One point for each piece in the correct position is the most efficient way of scoring. Prizes may be awarded. If the alternative activity was straw bridges, the bridges can be measured and prizes awarded for the bridge that spans the greatest distance while still holding the chalkboard eraser.