Common Waters

TOPIC:
Team-building

OBJECTIVES:
- Students will get acquainted with their co-participants.
- Through small risks, students will begin to trust each other.
- Students will explore their common ties to water.

LENGTH:
20 to 30 minutes

ENVIRONMENT:
Indoors or Outdoors. Need a place for students to pair-off for short discussions.

MATERIALS:
- Small radio with tape or CD player.
- Tape or CD of festive or dance music.
- A clipboard for each student.
- A question form for each student.
- A chalkboard or other large display and chalk or markers for recording group answers.

Background:
Environmental Youth Leadership participants come to the group with many individual and different experiences and attitudes related to water. This activity provides a safe forum for expressing these backgrounds and divining common experiences among group members. For the educator, it provides a foundational assessment of participants' existing water education. This activity also begins to bring group members together, allowing them to slowly get-to-know and trust each other.

Activity Outline:
Beforehand:
Make enough copies of the *Question Form* for each participant to have one. Place these on clipboards with pencils or pens. Make sure that there is a power source for the small radio. Cue the CD or tape to appropriately festive music. Set the volume, etc.

Introduction:
Students gather around for instructions. Begin by stating the objectives of the activity. Then, describe the process. Ask students if they remember playing musical chairs. Explain that this activity is similar—a sort of musical discussion game. When the music is playing, students walk around the room shaking hands with their cohorts. Demonstrate a proper handshake—firm with a nice smile. When it stops, they introduce themselves and discuss a question with the person(s) with whom they were last shaking hands.

- Students will have 2 minutes to discuss each question.
- Discussion questions are listed on the *question form*. When the music stops, a question number will be announced. This is the question that should be discussed. Students may record names and discussion comments on their forms to share with the group later.
- Students who are between handshakes when the music stops should return to the person who last shook their hand, join in discussion with that group, and introduce themselves.
- Students may also create trios: three people in a group, all shaking two hands at once. This creates a more challenging discussion.

Musical Discussion:
Ask students to stand and spread out. It may be useful to mix them up, splitting groups of close friends, and challenge them to branch out and meet others. Then begin the music, allowing it to play for 20 to 30 seconds. Stop the music and announce a question midway through the list. Provide 2 minutes for discussion, warning 30-seconds before the time lapses to record answers. Start the music again, continuing the progression. 3 to 4 questions is usually sufficient for this activity.

Common Waters:
Students congregate for review. Acknowledge that they each got to know 4 to 6 people better than they did before. Encourage them to continue discussions with these and others as the group develops. Then, introduce the concept of *common waters*. Although students likely provided many different answers to questions, common threads may appear when they are listed together. Ask students to call out answers to their first discussion question. List these on the chalk or display board. Then, ask students to seek and point out relationships between them. For instance, students discussing the question—*What is your favorite thing about water?*—may list many different ways of getting wet. Continue this process for each of the discussion questions. Finally, press students to apply this to their emerging *Environmental Youth Leadership Team*. Why is it important for this group to find common waters?

References:
This lesson is adapted from “Slow Disclosure” in *Instant Icebreakers*, Sandy Stewart Christian, MSW, and Nancy Loving Tubesing, EdD, editors. © 1997 Whole Person Associates Inc., 210 West Michigan, Duluth, MN 55802.

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Discussion Questions

1. **What is your favorite thing about water?**

2. **What is your first water-related memory?**

3. **Do you have any fear(s) of water? If so, what are these?**

4. **What different things pollute your local water?**

5. **What is the worst kind of pollution that threatens your local water?**

6. **If you had the power to clean water worldwide, how would you start?**

7. **What is strength(s) can you contribute to this group?**

8. **What is one useful skill that you can teach to other group members?**