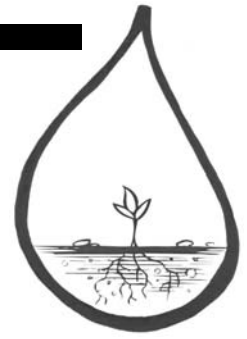


Building Environmental Youth Leadership

A High-School Service-learning Curriculum



TOPIC:
Team-building

OBJECTIVES:

- Students will get acquainted with their co-participants.
- Through small risks, students will begin to trust each other.
- Students will cooperate to solve a group problem.
- Students will discuss the problems caused by habitat fragmentation.

LENGTH:
20 to 30 minutes

ENVIRONMENT:
Indoors or Outdoors.
Need plenty of room and soft landing spots for falling students.

MATERIALS:

- A parachute or other large ground sheet.
- A timer.

Shrinking Watershed

Background:

This activity challenges team members to remain standing on an ever shrinking watershed. Students must plan a way to keep the entire group on a parachute for 15 seconds. Each time they succeed, the parachute is folded in half and the challenge renewed. The group must invent new ways of holding together. This activity facilitates cooperation, trust among members and celebration. It also provides a vivid metaphor for beginning discussions about watershed habitat fragmentation.

Activity Outline:

Beforehand:

Find a location with plenty of open space, and preferably grass or carpet to cushion minor falls. Spread the parachute in the middle of this area.

Colonizing the Watershed:

Team members gather near the tarp for instructions. Introduce the objectives of the activity. Explain that students are standing at the edge of a retreating ice age. The massive sheet has just crumbled beyond view, leaving an uninhabited watershed spread before them, full of resources, and awaiting colonization. Students represent migrating plants, fungi, bacteria, animals, etc. When the activity begins, they must move onto the parachute, seeking a spot in the watershed, staking a claim. They must be able to remain on the parachute for 15 seconds. Lest they throw elbows or push others in the effort, explain that their individual survival depends on collective success. All must reside on the watershed at the end of the migration, or the team fails the initiative. Take a moment to clarify any questions. Then the game begins.

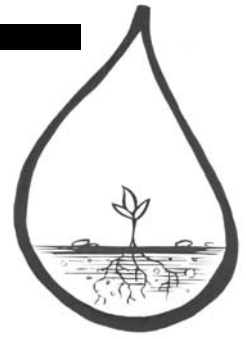
Shrinking Watershed:

Team members re-gather at the edge of the tarp after successful completion of the initial migration. Take a moment to celebrate the success. Then, explain that millennia have passed. Warmer weather, competition from other organisms, and the first waves of civilization have changed the area of the watershed. At this point the tarp is folded in half. However, the migration rules remain the same. All members must colonize the tarp to solve the problem. This time, students must remain on the tarp for 15 seconds. Begin the game.

Celebrate the success each time team members succeed the initiative. Then, repeat the process of shrinking the watershed by halving the remaining space. For extremely successful groups, make the activity even tougher by asking them to fold the tarp while standing on it.

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Debrief and Synthesis:

Fold up the tarp and move it aside. Students congregate to debrief the activity. Re-introduce the objectives of the activity. Ask students to discuss how they met each objective as a team. As the watershed continued to shrink, how did they keep everyone within? What worked? What didn't? Did they use the same process every time? How did they determine the process? Was everyone allowed to voice an opinion in planning? How many feared falling? Have students brainstorm teamwork lessons learned through this activity, applying these to their work on the service project. Finally, discuss how the activity simulates habitat fragmentation in a watershed. What happened when the habitat decreased? How is this an accurate/inaccurate representation of reality?

References:

This activity is adapted *All Aboard* in:

Sakofs, M., & Armstrong, G.P. (1996). *Into the Classroom: Outward Bound® Resources for Teachers*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.