



Teamwork and Problem Solving Lessons

Lesson #7: Tower Building Competition

Lesson Purpose	Students use communication skills, problem solving skills, and take on leadership roles.
Lesson Materials	Marshmallows and spaghetti (or pipe cleaners and tape) (or spaghetti and tape) Any other combination of a flimsy material and a binding material will also work.
Engage (5 min):	“A good leader takes a little more than his share of the blame, and a little less than his share of the credit.” --Arnold Gaslow
Explore (20 min):	<p>Divide class into groups of 3-4 (5 at the most). Keep groups small so all students play an active role.</p> <p>Explain the challenge is to build the tallest tower possible that can stand on its own. They may ONLY use the materials provided and nothing else. They have 15 minutes to complete their tower.</p> <p>While they are building, you are circulating the room and taking note of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who made a plan ahead of time? • How was the plan for building decided? • Who stepped up into leadership roles? • What teams had balanced roles for each member of the team? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Who used effective and ineffective communication? Write down examples of each to debrief.
Explain (10 min):	<p>Your debrief questions will depend on the areas of need for your class. If communication was a major issue, focus on that. If no one made a plan prior to building, debrief mostly on that. Suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did your group decide how they were going to build their tower? • Did everyone in your group actively participate? • Were everyone’s ideas heard in the group? • How did it feel when your idea was not acknowledged? • I noticed some communication throughout the activity that I recorded. How would you feel if a teammate said to you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Positive quote you heard such as: “Building the base is a great idea! Let’s do that” ○ Negative quote you heard such as: “That’s a dumb idea. We are doing...”



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some things that made your group successful or unsuccessful? • If you could do the activity again, what would you do differently?
Extend (5 min):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does making a plan prior to solving a problem help? • How does the way someone communicates to you impact your willingness to participate? • What are some ways to make sure everyone is involved in the group?