

Artful Teamwork

Overview

In this activity, students will explore the concept of teamwork and practice functioning as an effective team.

Grades

Any

Materials

- Abstract shape handout, example attached (ideally, teachers will replicate this shape on pieces of large chart paper)
- Chart paper
- Examples of completed team artwork, attached
- Markers or colored pencils (one per student)

Duration

20-30 minutes

Instructions

1. Write “teamwork” on the board and ask students to call out what comes to mind when they consider this word. Students should consider its characteristics, benefits, examples, what teamwork looks and sounds like, etc. Note student responses on the board. After all thoughts have been exhausted, further discuss:
 - What is your definition of “teamwork?”
 - What skills do we need as individuals to be able to work as part of a successful team?
 - What do we have to gain from working as a team? Why do we need teamwork?
 - What are some specific examples you can think of that involve teamwork?
 - Do you have to be friends with someone to be able to work well on the same team with them? Explain. (Teachers should facilitate the understanding that students should be prepared to work with anyone. Whether friends or not, it is essential students discuss and understand the importance of mutual respect and being willing to work with all classmates.)
 - How can we tell when successful teamwork is taking place?
 - What difficulties might arise in teamwork?

2. Next, break students up into small groups and tell students that they are going to practice working as a team. Tell students that together, they are going to create a piece of art out of a very simple and abstract shape provided to them. Give students a large piece of paper (such as chart paper) with an abstract shape drawn on it, such as the attached example. (Teachers can alternatively provide students with a copy of the attached handout and have them work on a standard sheet of paper.) Also provide each student with a marker or colored pencil. Explain to students that they are to work together as a team to turn the abstract shape provided into a piece of art. Students should first discuss their ideas, make a group decision regarding what their final picture will look like, then work together to bring their creative idea to fruition. Students have three rules to follow as they work:
 - All students must make at least one mark on the piece of art.
 - Teamwork should be utilized, so all students must participate in the brainstorming and creation of the art.
 - Once finished, all team members should sign the art and hang it on the wall.

Teachers should determine a set amount of time groups are to work within (i.e. 5 minutes.) Remind students to consider all of the attributes of teamwork they discussed earlier and instruct them to get started.

Variations: Have students complete this same activity in total silence. Also, teachers can assign particular students to be observers. These students are responsible for monitoring particular groups and reporting back on the positive attributes of teamwork they witnessed and suggestions for improvement.

3. Once all teams are finished, allow students to view the different artistic creations. Ask a spokesperson from each group to share how their group did and discuss:
 - Was this activity difficult? Why or why not?
 - How did your group decide what picture to draw? How did you figure out who would draw what piece of the picture and in what order?
 - Evaluate yourselves in terms of your teamwork. Be honest! In what ways did your group do a good job working as a team? In what ways could you improve?
 - If you are engaged in a team activity and your team begins to have difficulty, what should you do?
 - What examples of teamwork can you note that take place outside of this classroom, in the community, in various professions, etc.?
 - Why is learning to be a good member of a team important for each of us to do? (Discuss with students how teamwork is a part of life, both in school and beyond. The better a team-player a student can be, the more successful he/she will be in college, in his/her career and life, etc.)