



INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

Published by the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD) • College of Education • The University of Texas at Austin

IT IS TIME TO MOVE IT, MOVE IT. . .ENGAGE YOUR STUDENTS WITH ACTIVE LEARNING

With more accountability measures being imposed on college classrooms, what better reinforcement to mastering objectives than student demonstration through engaging activities? Activities help students grasp ideas and concepts, and convert learning from passive to active.

Four different movement-based games offer innovative approaches to any discipline. These kinesthetic activities include Play Ball, Don't Drop the Ball, Two Minutes To Win It, and Four Corners. Each game engages students in participatory learning, making course content fun, tangible, and immediate.

From the very first day of class, our team is dedicated to breaking down barriers of communication and fostering a feeling of community within our classroom. As instructors we know that when students are a part of a learning community, they feel as though they have a place where they are expected to be, where others will miss them if they are not present. Ties that begin to develop among students within a classroom often foster a greater dedication to group-work contributions.

Play Ball!

Beach balls are the only supplies needed—one for every five to seven students. Divide the class into groups (of five to seven), and have each group stand in a circle formation. Give each group one beach ball. Instruct the groups to have a student go around the circle two times, passing the ball to the left or right, stating the name s/he wishes to be called. After going around the circle twice, each student can then throw the ball to whomever s/he wants; but prior to throwing the ball, the student must state his/her name and the person to whom s/he is throwing it. Once the group members can throw it comfortably to everyone in the circle, add questions for students to answer prior to throwing the ball—e.g., major, birth order, place of employment, favorite food, favorite movie, football team. To add to the challenge

and increase the connections, instruct two groups to take one ball away and apply the same rules followed by the smaller groups. Continue until the class is in one big circle with one ball. By the end of the activity, most students know the names of everyone in the class.

Don't Drop the Ball!

As group projects approach, faculty are often faced with the challenges that not every student evenly contributes to a group and students often fail to communicate their expectations to one another in a timely manner. This exercise stimulates great discussion about individual contributions to group activities, importance of the communication of expectations, and emergence of leadership styles.

We begin the class by stating that there is a challenge ahead that can only be completed successfully if every student contributes equally toward reaching the goal. We go outside or to an open area reserved for this activity, and students gather around for brief instructions. Holding a beach ball, we state that the challenge for each student is to hit the ball into the air consecutively without letting the ball strike the ground or another surface. Each student must hit the ball once and cannot hit it again until all others have done the same. The class is to keep count of consecutive hits and try to reach a total of no less than two times the number of students. Without delay, the instructor should say, "1, 2, 3, GO!" and serve the ball into the air. Students inevitably have a few successful strikes before the ball hits the ground. The instructor then says, "You now have 30 seconds to plan a strategy for the successful completion of the task." Students will huddle to develop a plan. Then the round of volleys begins again. Once the ball hits the ground, students are given 30 more seconds to plan. This continues for two more rounds.

As the plan develops and students contribute, they become more committed to the group goal. Students get to experience the importance of no one person letting the ball drop. Effort is appreciated, but results become very important. This activity opens the door for discussion regarding group activities. Allot time for debriefing and dialogue.



Two Minutes to Win It

This activity is based on the television show, *Minute to Win It*, where contestants are presented with a challenge they must meet successfully within a minute or be out of the game. Tissue boxes, ping pong balls, ribbon, and a clear container are required. Different types of ping pong balls may be used to represent levels of difficulty or question types, etc. Two players go to the front of the room. The class is divided into two teams so that players will have classmates cheering them on. Contestants tie the tissue boxes to their backs (opening faces outward). The boxes are loaded with ping pong balls (any number). Contestants try to shake out as many balls in two minutes as possible. Once the two minutes are up, ask the contestants (one at a time) a series of questions, one activity per ball. Each has two minutes to answer, and team members can help. However, the final answer must come directly from the contestant. The contestant answering the most questions correctly wins! This activity works great as a review game or ice breaker.

Four Corners

Students participate by moving around the room. Each corner is assigned one of the following actions: apply, identify, define, or explain a concept, vocabulary term, or theory. The instructor generates a list of questions to call out. A student chooses to respond, goes to the appropriate corner, and applies, identifies, defines, or explains the answer. If the answer is incorrect, the student is out of the game. The class continues until only one player is left.

Conclusion

All four activities afford learners opportunities to be involved and demonstrate concepts in ways that make class fun. Students quickly realize that if they miss class, they miss out on an activity that cannot be duplicated outside of class. Engaged students who are involved actively in the learning process will find they retain course content better and are more positive about the experience. These four games will help move you and your students in the right direction.

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February 18, 2011, Vol. XXXIII, No. 5

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Innovation Abstracts (ISSN 0199-106X) is published weekly following the fall and spring terms of the academic calendar, except Thanksgiving week, by the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD), Department of Educational Administration, College of Education, 1 University Station, D5600, Austin, Texas 78712-0378, (512) 471-7545, Email: abstracts@nisod.org