

Intended for Grades: 4-12

Est. Time: 20-45 min.

Date: August, 2023

Lesson Title: STICKING TOGETHER (Helium Stick)

Lesson Purpose: Students will:

- * Experience how working together as a team can be challenging
- * Learn about effective team collaboration and communication

Materials & Preparation:

- * Wooden dowels – 3/8” by 4’ (4-6 students per stick, depending on age/size)
Option - Hula-hoops can be used instead of a dowel

Background Information:

Learning how to work together is critical, as reflected in both the Hawaii DOE General Learner objectives (Community Contributor, Effective Communicator) and the 21st Century Learning skill of collaboration.

It is of great value to create activities for students to experience positive social and peer interactions. While working in groups is appealing to many students, it is sometimes challenging for teachers to facilitate.

We recommend teachers take adequate time at the beginning of the school year to teach expectations and model how to appropriately communicate within a group. The dialogue about what was learned from this experience is valuable, as it offers a time to create concrete protocols for positive collaboration. Co-creating protocols can help students enjoy successful group work.

Steps:

1. The facilitator may introduce this activity by holding up a wooden dowel. Explain that students may think it is an ordinary stick but it is more than a wooden dowel, as this stick usually "seems" to defy gravity, thus called, "helium stick."
2. Use each index finger to hold the dowel with outstretched arms in front of your torso at waist height. Demonstrate that with one person, it is easy to lower the stick to the ground. However, it is fun having another person help bring the stick down.
3. For practice, and demonstration, have two people stand, one on each side of the dowel, balancing the stick with their index fingers. See diagram for finger placement.
4. Ask this pair to bring the stick down to the ground, with the rule that all four pointer fingers must stay in contact with the stick. If contact is broken, they must return to waist height.
5. Next, have a small group of 4-6 students stand to demonstrate lining up to try this activity. The number of students per pole depends on student size and pole length. The more students per pole, the more challenging the activity gets.
6. If using a hula hoop, all participants stand on the outside of the hoop.
7. Discuss protocols and assign places where student groups will have enough space to try this activity. (Going outside to an appropriate location may be beneficial for this activity.)
Option: Try this again, adding a challenge to complete the activity without speaking.

Note: At times, the stick may feel like it is floating in the air, and it takes a coordinated effort from all team members to bring the stick down to the ground, thus we call it a "helium stick." Informal team leaders emerge as the team tries to lower the gravity defying stick. Students will learn that everyone concentrating on the same goal will help them find success. They may begin to develop strategies to assist them to succeed.

8. After the activity: Create a poster along with the students of positive protocols that may help them work together well with future group projects or activities. You may want to start with brainstorming ideas and then narrow them down for your final poster.

Reflection Question options, depending on maturity level:

- * *How did you feel during this activity?*
- * *What did you learn from this activity?*
- * *Did a leader emerge from your group? If so, how did this person demonstrate leadership?*
- * *Why is it important to learn how to work well with others?*
- * *What values did your group demonstrate while working together?*
- * *What needs to happen to help project groups, learning teams, classes, athletic teams, student councils, or any other group, work successfully together?*
- * *What characteristics make learning communities and teams effective and collaborative?*

Video Resource:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UPojJyK3rPU>

