

Lesson 1: Effective Teams

Introduction

In everyday life, whether at school, at work, or at home, we seldom work, function, or perform in isolation. At some point, individuals work within a team to accomplish an individual or team goal. To interact with others effectively, it is important to understand the characteristics of effective teams, which enable us to feel connected to others and maximize the opportunities that teams offer. Being able to function as a team member is consistently identified as a skill necessary for success in the workplace, in sports, in family units, and so on.

This lesson focuses on the characteristics that contribute to the success of effective teams and the stages they go through as they develop and evolve.



Specific Learning Outcome

12.PS.1 Demonstrate understanding of the characteristics and development of effective teams.



Key Understandings

- Well-functioning teams exhibit certain characteristics that promote and enhance both individual and team goals.
- Effective teams develop and progress through a series of recognizable stages.



Essential Questions

1. Why do some teams work well together and others do not?
2. What stages do teams go through from their creation to their disbandment?



Suggestion for Instruction / Assessment

Activating Activities

The following group activities are intended to have students work together for the purpose of activating and developing their understanding of how groups are formed and how they interact. Later in this lesson students will learn how a group proceeds to a team.

The Human Knot

This well-known icebreaker helps break down personal space and encourages group participants to communicate effectively to accomplish a task.

Directions/Description

- Form groups of six to eight students.
- Each group stands in a circle facing each other. Students stand close enough to touch members of the group on the opposite side of the circle.
- Each participant reaches into the circle with both hands and takes a hold of someone else's hand. Each participant should be holding the hand of two different people and not the hand of someone standing on the immediate left or right.
- Once everyone is holding the hand of two different people, the group members work together to “unravel the human knot” without anyone letting go of a hand.
- If the “knot” is broken (i.e., hands come apart), the group begins again.

NOTE TO TEACHER

For safety reasons, ensure that everyone understands that if someone says “Stop,” the request must be obeyed.

Participants' hands may turn and slide within each other but should not come apart completely.

Possible Variations

- Begin with smaller groups to ensure success, and then add more group members.
- Have students do the group activity without talking or with eyes closed, or a combination of both.

Group Juggle

The following can be used as an alternative group activity if some students do not want to touch other students.

Directions/Description

- Form groups of six to eight students.
- Each group requires a space where students can stand facing each other with no obstructions in the middle of the space.
- The group task is to “juggle” an item by sending and receiving an object (e.g., ball, rolled-up sock) from person to person. The group determines the pattern the object is to follow. The object cannot be sent to the person on the immediate right or left of the person in possession of the object.

- Once the pattern is established, the goal is to
 - complete as many cycles of the pattern as possible without making an error
 - complete as many cycles of the pattern as possible within a given time limit
 - complete the pattern with more than one object, and then increase the number of objects

Possible Debriefing Questions

1. What actions/strategies allowed your group to succeed?
2. What actions/strategies would you change if you were to repeat the group activity?
3. How does this group activity allow for elements of leadership to emerge?



Background Information

Teams and Teamwork Skills

Teamwork takes place when two or more people coordinate their contributions and work toward achieving a common goal. This does not mean that the individual is no longer important; however, effective and efficient teamwork goes beyond individual achievements. Team members understand the team goals, have a sense of ownership for the goals, have trust in the other members, are honest and respectful of others, are valued for their knowledge and skills, and share in the decision-making process.

Teams differ significantly from uncoordinated groups, which are assemblies of individuals who tend to operate independently in working toward meeting their own goals. In these groups, members may be cautious about what they say, mistrust others, have closed relationships with other members, be bothered or threatened by differences of opinions, and may not participate in group decision making.

Given the differences between teams and low-functioning groups, it quickly becomes apparent why organizations and businesses place a premium on teamwork skills when considering a person for employment. Well-functioning teams exhibit certain characteristics that promote and enhance both individual and team goals.

The Conference Board of Canada, in its *Employability Skills 2000+*, identifies teamwork skills as employability skills, which are needed both in the workplace and in a range of daily activities. These skills are identified in RM S1-2: *Employability Skills 2000+* in *Senior 1 and Senior 2 Physical Education/Health Education: A Foundation for Implementation* (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth).

REFERENCES



For additional information, refer to the following resources:

The Conference Board of Canada. *Employability Skills 2000**. Ottawa, ON: The Conference Board of Canada, 2000. Available online at http://sso.conferenceboard.ca/Libraries/EDUC_PUBLIC/esp2000.sflb.

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth. *Senior 1 and Senior 2 Physical Education/Health Education: A Foundation for Implementation*. Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2004. RM S1–2: *Employability Skills 2000** is available online at www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/physhlth/foundation_s1-2/blms-rms/rm_s1-2.pdf.

For website updates, please visit Websites to Support the Grades 11 and 12 Curriculum at www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/physhlth/.

Common Characteristics of Effective Teams

The following are some common characteristics of effective teams:

- **A team has a clear purpose:** Team members understand why the team exists and share in the creation and accomplishment of team goals.
- **Team members understand the team process and priorities:** The team is clear on what needs to be done next, by whom, and by when. Team members understand that the accumulation of completed tasks leads to the effective and successful achievement of their final goal.
- **Team members know their roles:** Team members know and carry out their roles for getting their tasks completed and they seek assistance from and give assistance to others, as required.
- **Team members have a collaborative and collective commitment:** Collaboration among team members, with high levels of commitment, is achieved through shared decision making in a climate of trust created by open and honest communication and by consistent and respectful behaviour. Team norms for working together are established and regarded as standards for every team member.
- **Conflicts and disagreements are openly resolved:** Conflicts and disagreements are considered important to team decision making and personal growth. Reasons for conflicts and disagreements are examined and resolutions are sought. Some disagreements cannot be resolved, resulting in the need for compromises that do not block the team's efforts.
- **Constructive criticism and encouragement are extended to team members:** Criticism is never directed at team members but is focused on ways of removing obstacles and maintaining high performance standards. All members are consistently supported and encouraged as a way of maintaining high levels of motivation.

- **Success is shared:** Team members are made aware of their successes, and the team shares equally and proudly in the accomplishments.
 - **Leadership is shared:** Leadership shifts from time to time within an effective team as team members take on certain tasks and roles. Effective leadership is evident when the actions of the leader move the team closer to the final goal without personal gain or recognition.
-



Suggestion for Instruction / Assessment

Group Versus Team

The purpose of this learning activity is to help students understand the similarities and differences between *groups* and *teams*.

Directions/Description

- Using the Think-Pair-Share learning strategy (see Appendix E), students individually write down
 - five suggestions for gatherings of people that would be considered *teams*
 - five suggestions for gatherings that are simply *groups*
- Students then share their suggestions with a partner and provide the reasons for identifying the gatherings as either groups or teams.
- Finally, the class contributes suggestions and assembles lists of gatherings of people that are representative of groups and teams.

Examples

Groups

- Theatre audience
- People on a bus
- Class of students

Teams

- Athletic team
 - School jazz band
 - Flight crew
-



Suggestion for Instruction / Assessment

Identifying Effective Teams

This group brainstorming session is intended to help students identify effective teams.

Directions/Description

- Working in a large group, students identify examples of *successful teams* and examples of *unsuccessful teams* in society. Encourage representation from various elements of society when identifying successful or unsuccessful teams (e.g., sports, businesses, arts, not-for-profit organizations).
- In small groups, each group selects one successful team and one unsuccessful team from the examples identified in the group brainstorming.
 - For the successful team, the group identifies some common characteristics of effective teams that may have contributed to the team's success.
 - For the unsuccessful team, the group identifies which characteristics of effective teams were lacking or not evident.



Background Information

Team Development

Effective teamwork has become essential in today's world. A newly formed team cannot be expected to perform exceptionally well from the very outset, however. Becoming an effective team takes time, and usually follows some easily recognizable stages. A team will journey through these stages as it progresses from being a group of strangers to becoming a united team with a common goal.

Team Development Stages

Psychologist Bruce W. Tuckman first came up with a team development model in 1965 that is still used today. The stages of this model, referred to as the *Forming*, *Storming*, *Norming*, and *Performing* stages, describe the path to high performance that most teams follow. Later, Tuckman added a fifth stage that he called *Adjourning*. Tuckman's model is one of the best-known team development theories and has formed the basis of many further ideas since its conception.

Tuckman's model focuses on the way in which a team tackles a task, from the initial formation of the team through to the completion of the project. The theory is particularly relevant to team-building challenges, as the stages are relevant to the completion of any task undertaken by a team. One of the very useful aspects of team-building challenges is that teams have an opportunity to observe and discuss their behaviour within a short period of time.

Each stage of Tuckman's team development model is briefly outlined below:

1. **Forming**

- The team is assembled and the task is determined or assigned.
- Team members are generally positive and polite.
- Team members tend to behave independently and, although friendliness may exist, they do not know each other well enough to trust one another unconditionally.
- Some members are anxious, as they are not yet clear as to what work will be involved.
- Some members are excited about the task ahead and want to get started.

2. **Storming**

- The team members begin to address the task by suggesting ideas that may compete for recognition and ultimate acceptance.
- The ways of working as a team begin to be defined, which creates discomfort for some members who may disagree with the approach being used or who feel overwhelmed with the amount of work to be done.
- Some members may react by questioning how worthwhile the goal of the team is and resist taking on a task.
- In extreme cases, the team can become stuck in the *Storming* stage.
- If a team is too focused on reaching consensus, it may decide on a plan that is less effective in completing the task for the sake of the team.
- Some members feel they are on an emotional roller coaster as they try to focus on the task without the support of established processes or relationships with their team members.

3. **Norming**

- During this stage, the team moves toward harmonious working practices, with members agreeing on the rules and values by which they operate.
- The members are developing a strong commitment to the team goal, and they begin to see good progress toward reaching it.
- In the ideal situation, team members begin to trust each other during this stage as they accept the vital contribution of each member to the team. Now that the team members know each other better, they may be socializing together, and they are able to ask each other for help and provide constructive criticism.

4. **Performing**

- Not all teams make it to this stage, which is essentially a time of high performance.
- Strong teams are identified by high levels of interdependence, independence, motivation, knowledge, and competence.
- Decision making is collaborative and dissent is expected and encouraged, as there will be a high level of respect and trust in the communication between team members.
- Team members understand that hard work leads directly to progress toward their shared vision and goal, supported by the structures and processes that have been established.
- Individual team members may join or leave the team without affecting the performing approach of the group.

5. **Adjourning**

- This is the final stage that ends the project and sees the disbanding of the team.
- This stage is also referred to as the *Mourning* stage, as it reflects the feelings experienced by team members at the conclusion of their work.

Note that a team can return to any phase within the team development model if they experience a change (e.g., a review of the project or goals, a change in members). When a member leaves or a new member joins a successful team, the team will revert to the *Forming* stage, but this stage may last for a very short time as the new member experiences the team culture.

REFERENCES



For additional information on team development, refer to the following websites:

Alleman, Glen B. *Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing and Adjourning*. 16 Dec. 2007. Niwot Ridge Resources. <www.niwotridge.com/PDFs/FormStormNormPerform.pdf>.

Chapman, Alan. *Tuckman's Forming Storming Norming Performing Model*. 2001–2008. Businessballs.com. <www.businessballs.com/tuckmanformingstormingnormingperforming.htm>.

Chimaera Consulting Limited. "Stages of Group Development." *Famous Models*. 2001. <www.chimaeraconsulting.com/tuckman.htm>.

Mind Tools Ltd. "Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing: Helping New Teams Perform Effectively, Quickly." *Leadership Skills*. 1995–2008. <www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_86.htm>.

Tuckman, Bruce W. "Developmental Sequence in Small Groups." *Psychological Bulletin* 63.6 (1965): 384–99. Available on the Ohio State University, Walter E. Dennis Learning Center website at <<http://dennislearningcenter.osu.edu/references/GROUP%20DEV%20ARTICLE.doc>>.

World Health Organization (WHO). *Team Building*. Geneva, Switzerland: WHO, 2007. 7. Available on the WHO website at <www.who.int/cancer/modules/Team%20building.pdf>.

For website updates, please visit Websites to Support the Grades 11 and 12 Curriculum at <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/physhlth/>.



Suggestion for Instruction / Assessment

Describing Stages of Effective Teams/Groups

Have students write a reflection on a team (or group) situation in which they are presently involved and describe the stages the team has gone through, based on Tuckman's team development model. If the team is not at the *Performing* stage, have students provide a hypothetical description of the team's progress through the remainder of the stages.

