

EYES, MOUTH, BODY, GO!

Target Grade: 2nd - 8th

Overview:

EYES, MOUTH, BODY is a teambuilding activity where students have lots of fun without realizing how much they are really learning about themselves and their classmates! Students practice not only using all their senses, but also practice the communication (both verbal and nonverbal) skills necessary to work effectively in a group to accomplish the challenging task of guiding a blindfolded classmate using a student created nonverbal/verbal communication system to retrieve an object. EYES, MOUTH, BODY can be effective in assisting students at developing empathy for those who may have different abilities or strengths, for example disabilities and/or language barriers. This activity will certainly challenge even the most highly functioning groups, and give students an insight into how to communicate even better with their classmates.

Objectives:

- Students will practice how to interact, communicate and cooperate with other students and group members to achieve an objective
- Students will explore barriers to communication when one's senses are inhibited
- Students will use their imagination to creatively formulate a nonverbal and verbal communication strategy to achieve an objective
- Students will evaluate communication strategies and behaviors for effectiveness and suggest more effective strategies for communication
- Students will develop a greater sense of empathy for those in our society with different abilities or strengths, for example disabilities and/or language barriers

Background:

Everyone communicates differently whether it is interpersonally, inter-culturally, or inter-generationally. Learning to communicate effectively with others is something most people struggle with throughout their entire lives. We are constantly using our senses to evaluate the messages we give, and receive, to and from the world around us, and improving the skills we use to evaluate those messages takes ingenuity and practice. The underlying goal of EYES, MOUTH, BODY, GO! is to have students step outside of their comfort zones forcing them to use alternative methods of communication to work as a team to accomplish a challenging goal.

As an instructor of this activity, one can tailor it to meet the strengths of, and address the needs of, one's individual students, or class. For example, if one has a particularly vocal student with strong leadership skills one could assign that student the role of "the body", or "the eyes" forcing her to interact with her other group members without using her voice. The opposite situation is also applicable, as a quiet and timid student could be assigned the role of "the mouth".

This activity could also be effectively coupled with units involving the study of the senses or of the brain. Connections can be made between how our own bodies work, and how the student group of three would function in this activity. For example EYES, MOUTH, BODY, GO! can help



illustrate how first our eyes observe then messages are passed to our brain, then from our brain to our mouth to express thoughts about what we observe; or are passed from our brain to our bodies to move properly within our environment. Students can then imagine how difficult it would be to function in the world if the observations we make with our eyes and the messages passed to our mouth, or to our body, from our brain did not compute properly. The successes and challenges faced by each student "the body" during this activity directly results from the effectiveness of the communication system they create and their execution of that system. Interestingly most student groups learn by the end of this activity that very clear and deliberate communication (not loud screaming and yelling, or complicated codes) is required to be successful at this activity; as is true of communicating in life as well and therein lies the true lesson and message of EYES, MOUTH, BODY, GO!

RISK MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS:

The instructor must choose the location for this activity carefully, a large soccer field, open playground, or even a multi-purpose room, works best. Obstacles such as thorny bushes, trees, desks, tables, etc. should be noted by instructor and student spotters or adult assistants should be positioned near these hazards to avoid any student walking into them accidentally. **Also it is important to stress that the blindfolded student acting as "the body" must move no faster than a walk. There should be NO RUNNING/SKIPPING/JOGGING whatsoever at any time; of course any group that cannot follow this safety direction should sit out of the activity.**

Materials:

- Blindfolds (enough for every two out of three students, torn pillowcases/sheets/towels make great blindfolds!)
- Assortment of random objects (enough for every group of three students to have one)
- Open space (playing field/gym/classroom with the desks moved)

Prep Time: 10 minutes; **Activity Time:** 20-60 minutes

Nevada State Educational Standards:

- **Physical Education**

1.2.1 Understand the vocabulary of simple movement patterns.

1.3.1 Utilize a movement vocabulary for manipulative, locomotor, and non-locomotor movement activities.

1.2.2 Identify the basic elements (i.e. opposition) of movement forms

1.3.2A Apply basic elements to improve personal performance.

1.3.2B Apply the basic elements of a movement form in a dynamic environment.

1.5.2A Identify and apply the intermediate elements (i.e. force and accuracy) of movement forms.

1.5.2B Apply simple strategies to game like situations.

1.2.3 Identify and respond to cues that enhance skill performance (i.e., when catching, "look, reach and give").

1.3.3 Identify simple cues in the performance of peers.

2.3.2B Perform a variety of manipulative skills in an uncomplicated yet changing environment.



- 2.5.2 Execute a combination of skills in a new and dynamic environment.
- 5.2.1 Apply class rules, procedures and safe practices with teacher reinforcement.
- 5.3.1 Apply class rules, procedures, safe practices, and etiquette with limited or no teacher reinforcement.
- 5.5.1 Make proper decisions about applying rules, procedures, and etiquette.
- 5.8.1 Analyze potential consequences when confronted with a behavior choice.
- 5.12.1 Anticipate and avoid potentially dangerous outcomes and consequences during participation in physical activity.
- 5.2.2 Engage in physical activity involving cooperation and sharing to complete assigned task.
- 5.3.2 Identify positive responses to challenges, successes and failures in physical activity (i.e. sportsmanship).
- 5.5.2 Demonstrate positive responses to challenges, successes and failures in physical activity.
- 5.8.2 Work cooperatively within a group to achieve goals in cooperative or competitive situations.
- 5.12.2 Accept leadership responsibility in a group setting.
- 5.2.3 Demonstrate components of respect during activities regardless of personal differences (i.e. skill level, gender, race and disability).
- 5.3.3 Understand and accept purpose for modifying activities with regard to diversity and physical ability.
- 5.5.3 Manage conflict positively and demonstrate teamwork and sportsmanship while interacting with others regardless of differences.
- 5.8.3 Demonstrate behavior which is supportive and inclusive in physical activity settings.
- 5.12.3 Evaluate the role of physical activity in a diverse society (i.e. skill level, gender, race and disability).

- **Health**

- 4.2.1 List healthy ways of communication/listening to express needs, wants, and feelings.
- 4.5.1 Model effective verbal and non-verbal communication skills.
- 7.2.5 Identify basic safety measures (i.e. sun safety, helmet use, pedestrian safety, seatbelts, gun safety, 911 procedures, fire safety, universal safety precautions).
- 7.12.5 Demonstrate a variety of practices and behaviors that will avoid injury and reduce risks of injury to self and others. (i.e. Impaired driving, seatbelt usage, fighting, self-harming behaviors).
- 7.5.6 Assess safe/unsafe situations and practices.

- **School Counseling Standards**

- 1.1.6 Students demonstrate the ability to communicate and work cooperatively with others.

Activity:

1. The instructor breaks student groups into teams of three, either by choice or dictated by instructor. Each group is given two blindfolds and a unique object (such as a ball or rubber chicken). The groups are lined up along the border of a large playing field (or any open area, even a gym if indoors), as if on a starting line.

HINT: As students will be walking around blindfolded it is best to make sure there are no obstacles that could pose an injury risk to the students on the playing field, and/or the instructor could assign an extra student(s) to be a spotter for those blindfolded.



2. Within each group of three, one student will represent a single function either "the eyes", "the mouth", or "the body". **"The eyes" can see but not speak or move; "the mouth" can speak but cannot move or see; and "the body" can move but cannot see or speak. Therefore, both the body and mouth are blindfolded prior to the start of each round.**
3. The instructor then gives the student groups a limited amount of time (one-three minutes for example) to create a system of communication between the eyes and mouth, and between the mouth and the body. **Remember "the eyes" CANNOT speak to "the mouth" so those two students, who will remain on the starting line because they CANNOT move, must create a touch based communication system. The mouth must then verbally communicate those touch instructions to "the body" who is the only student in the group of three that is allowed to move off the starting line.**
4. After the student groups have been given sufficient time to create a communication system, "the mouth" and "the body" can be blindfolded. The instructor can assist the student groups in their blindfolding, and can also assist in facing "the body" in the correct direction, toward the open area, before beginning.
5. The instructor then takes the objects from each group and scatters them randomly around the open field. The instructor should use their own judgment on the difficulty of placing the objects. *HINT: You can start with very easy object placement, in a straight line from each group for example, and then get progressively more difficult with subsequent rounds if time permits. If the class is highly functioning the instructor can even move the objects as "the body" is looking for them forcing each student group to adjust their pathway in the middle of the round, making this activity quite difficult.*
6. When the groups' "mouth" and "body" are properly blindfolded, it is prudent to remind the students that the only one allowed to speak is "the mouth" and then the instructor can say "Go!". "The eyes" and "mouth" must then guide "the body" to their team's object, "the body" must retrieve the object, then "the eyes" and "mouth" must return "the body" to the starting line. **Again, neither "the eyes" nor "the body" can speak, and the neither "the eyes" nor "the mouth" can move.** *HINT: It is important to remind the students that "the body" must always walk, that NO RUNNING is allowed ever with a blindfold on. This is especially true after "the body" retrieves the object and is attempting to make it back to the starting line first to win.*
7. The first group to get their "body" back over the starting line is the winner! HOWEVER, it is best for the instructor to have groups remain quiet until all groups have finished, the students who have succeeded can remove their blindfolds and observe the remaining groups. " *HINT: This activity does not have to be framed as a race, it works just as effectively if the goal is simply just to get "the body" back to "the eyes" and "the mouth" on the starting line, or even just back across the starting line.*
8. Play again! Students tend to really like this game and want to experience all the possible roles; also they tend to want another chance at winning.



9. When all rounds are done be sure to debrief the game. Stress the nonverbal communication successes/difficulties, and how did the group improve/worsen through the rounds, what role did the students' like best, and what did they find easy/frustrating about certain roles, and of course what did they like/not like about the game.

Review Questions:

1. Have each group explain the communication system they invented. Was it effective? Why or why not? Did they make any changes to it between rounds? Did your adjustments help your group become more effective at guiding the body?
2. What were some of the challenges in this activity? What were some of the successes?
3. If they got to play more than one role... Which role did they like best? What were some of the successes/challenges of each different role? What senses was it important to use in this activity? In each different role? How does this activity compare to challenges we face working in groups in real life?
4. How did it feel to be blindfolded?

Assessment/Evaluation:

- Describe what it felt like to be blindfolded, and/or how it felt to try to communicate without being able to use your voice.

Constructed Response:

1. During this activity your group was required to invent a communication system and strategy to achieve your objective.
 - Describe the communication system your group came up with.
 - Give your opinion on whether you thought the system worked well.
2. Imagine your life if you were not able to speak or see.
 - Use complete sentences to describe how you would communicate with the world. Use the lessons and discoveries you made during this activity.

Cross-Curricular Extension:

- **Reading:**
 - Helen Keller (Scholastic Biography) by Margaret Davidson and Wendy Watson
 - The Story of My Life: The Restored Classic, Complete and Unabridged, Centennial Edition by Helen Keller, Roger Shattuck, Dorothy Herrmann, and Anne Sullivan
- **Math:**
 - "The Eyes" of each group could use a stopwatch to time how long it takes "the body" to retrieve their object. The group could record the times as subsequent rounds take place, and then students could graph their improvement or decline over the rounds played.
- **Phys.-Ed.:**



- EYES, MOUTH, BODY, GO! is effective at addressing many Nevada State Curriculum Standards for Physical Education. However, the following may be effective extensions:

A fun and perhaps more physically strenuous version of EYES, MOUTH, BODY, GO! is called SHERMAN TANKS! The instructor has students form partnerships, and one student is blindfolded, the other is not, and together they form a single "tank". The instructor spreads numerous stuffed animals (or other soft object such as knotted blindfolds/bandannas) across a playing field with boundaries that they communicate to the students. When the instructor says "Go!" the student "tanks" move around the playing field, with the blindfolded student being guided verbally by their partner who is following close behind, they are not allowed to touch. The tanks then maneuver first to pick up an object, then to "fire" the object at another "tank". Instructor should only use objects that would not injure, and should be clear that a gentle toss should suffice if the tank is properly maneuvered. Tanks that are hit with objects must then sit down on the outside of the playing field, and play continues until there is a winner. The instructor can set guidelines to make the game longer such as it takes three hits to be out, or hits above the waist do not count etc.

Differentiation:

Learning Intelligences Addressed

- Verbal/Linguistic; Bodily/Kinesthetic; *Intrapersonal and Interpersonal*; Visual/Spatial

Gifted and Talented

- The instructor can impose stricter rules upon gifted and talented students when playing EYES, MOUTH, BODY, GO! Such as no directional words (forward, backward, right, left) may be used when playing.
- Research common brain disabilities that would inhibit communication between a person's eyes, mouth and body. Learn about how people overcome these disabilities to live a normal life. Think about, and create, some new ways that would help someone with such a disability to overcome it. Write a report on your findings, and present them to your classmates.

Resources:

- If you are interested in learning more group building initiatives and/or games for your class that helps them to work together, contact Sierra Nevada Journeys today; or visit us on the web at www.SierraNevadaJourneys.org.
 - Laurie Gray - Director of Professional Development - laurie@sierranevadajourneys.org
 - Joanna Furguele - Director of Outreach Programs - joanna@sierranevadajourneys.org

