

## Sequencing Activities for Greatest Effectiveness

As with anything we teach, activities used to develop classroom community must be presented in the correct sequence in order for effective learning to take place. Gotta learn how to count before you can multiply. Students are not ready to work together and solve complex group problems without a series of activities preparing them to do so. Here is how you get them to that point:

Activities should be sequenced in this order \*:

1. Warm-ups and get-to-know-you activities
2. Deinhbitizer activities
3. Trust building activities
4. Group problem-solving activities

### Sequence Stages Defined

- **Warm-up, Ground Rules, Get to Know You Activities** - designed to break the ice and help students get to know each other including:
  - Full Value Contract - behavioral agreement among the group
  - Challenge By Choice - all are expected to participate, but none are forced
- **Deinhbitizer** - activities designed to help students become less self-conscience and willing to try things in front of classmates.
- **Trust** - activities designed to create trust in and among the students so that they will support each other's academic efforts and to encourage academic risk-taking.
- **Group Problem-Solving** - opportunities for students to work together to solve problems and achieve tasks that they cannot solve or achieve on their own. In this step students learn to work effectively with others and hopefully generalize those skills to situations outside the classroom.

*\* Knowing when to move from one step to the next within a sequence is important, and can be tricky. The basic formula is above, but moving the group along in an effective way won't really fit a formula, it is really an art. The sequence pace and types of activities are continually framed, debriefed and adjusted using the "Do, Reflect, Apply" and "GRABBS" methods as well as understanding Group Stages.*

It is important to note that every group will move through stages at a different rate. Trying to speed up the process will often result in group dysfunction. I have to remind myself (especially when time seems to be short) to trust the process. If you follow the process it always works out. It can be better to stop at a particular stage, and make sure it is properly debriefed than to try to artificially push the group to the point where you were hoping to get. The challenge lies in knowing how to read the group and knowing how to change the rules of activities to change the pace and outcome, how to frame the activities, and how to debrief them. For example: I have found that with younger elementary groups sometimes cannot be pushed through all four sequence stages to problem-solving in one day without falling apart. I find that getting into trust activities is often as far as we will get and that is a good thing. Trusting classmates creates an environment where students take academic risks. That is a very worthy goal in itself!

For ideas regarding how to navigate stages, see the documents entitled:

- **GRABBS**
- **Group Stages**
- **Handicaps**
- **Processing Methods**
- **And you thought tag was just a game**