

## Communication Activity Guide

It's always helpful to have resources and ideas to spark communication among staff members. Below are activities that you can use to help staff members reflect on their communication skills and strategies. All ideas are adapted from the Head Start National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning Practice-Based Coaching Leadership Academy Facilitator Materials.

### Activity 1: Human Machine

The purpose of this activity is for teams to communicate effectively to achieve a goal. This activity is best for multiple groups of five to eight people, but it can be adapted for smaller groups.

To prepare the activity, write the names of common items or machines on index cards. You should choose objects that are relatively complex: sewing machine, dishwasher, car wash, food processor, toaster, etc.

Provide each team with one card. Teams should not share their card with other teams.

Tell teams that they will work together to make a plan about how to accurately demonstrate the function of their assigned machines. At the end of the activity, the other teams will try to guess what machine each team described.

Provide five minutes for teams to make a plan and one minute for each team to demonstrate.

Encourage teams to be creative.

Reflection questions:

- How did you begin?
- Did roles emerge? Was there a leader?
- How were decisions made?
- How efficient were you?
- What connections did you make between this activity and how you work together as a team in the classroom?

## Activity 2: Car Salesperson

The purpose of this activity is for staff members to reflect on the importance of communication and the importance of nonverbal communication.

Staff members should work in teams of three. Assign each team member a letter, A, B, or C.

Team Member A is the customer. He or she is buying her first new car and is very excited. Send Team Member A out of the room while you prep Team Members B and C for their roles.

Team Member B is a car salesperson. He or she is going to try to persuade Member A to buy a car. Team Member B should match the mood of Team Member A: be energetic, excited, funny, talkative, etc. Tell Team Member B to mirror Team Member A's body language, repeat what Member A says when possible, etc.

Team Member C is also a car salesperson. He or she is also going to try to persuade Member A to buy a car, but Team Member C is not going to match mood or body language. Team Member C should just go through the motions.

Bring Team Member A back in and let the two salespeople try to help her or him buy a car.

Reflection Questions:

- What did you notice about how different people communicated?
- Who was easier to talk to? Why? Who would you buy a car from?
- How does this connect to your work with families or coworkers?

**Activity 3: Zoom**

This activity can allow teams to explore roles, leadership, and precise verbal communication.

*To complete this activity, you must have 2 copies of the children's book Zoom by Istvan Banyai. It is also possible to complete the activity using a similar children's book called Re-Zoom by Istvan Banyai. Both books are available in paperback form from online retailers or local bookstores.*

You may use either book or both. To prepare the activity, remove all the pages from one copy of the book and laminate each page. Make sure you also have an original copy of the book, so teams can check their work after the activity. Remind teams this is about collaboration not competition.

Directions (for a large group of approximately 30 people in a relatively large open space):

- Introduce the group to the book by showing them the cover, the first page, and the last page. Tell them the title is “Zoom” and they need to use the information they have to put the pages back in the right order.
- Give each individual a page from the book.
- Tell participants not to show their page to anyone. They can only use verbal communication to describe their picture to other group members.
- Provide at least 15 minutes for the group to try putting the pictures in the correct order.

There are 32 pictures in Zoom. Each individual must have one page to hold. For smaller groups, you can adapt this activity by removing pages that do not affect the sequence. Expect a small amount of confusion and frustration at the beginning of the activity. Eventually, a leader will emerge who begins to see patterns.

*\*\*If you have fewer than 30 participants, you can use an alternate activity that explores nonverbal communication: Provide a small group of 3-8 people with the complete set of laminated pages. Ask them to put the pages in the correct order without speaking to one another. They can use gestures, nods, or other nonverbal strategies.*

Reflection questions for the group:

- How did you begin?
- Did roles emerge? Was there a leader?
- How were decisions made?
- How efficient were you? What was the moment you “got it”?
- For Option 1, were there moments when you were talking about the same things but didn't know it? Does that ever happen in our programs? How did it feel to each be holding an important piece of information and not know how to describe it to someone else?