



Physical Education Cooperative Games and Problem Solving Activities

Every year, we begin with cooperative and problem solving activities that foster cooperation, encouraging strategic and supportive dialogue, listening to a different opinion than your own, and having fun at the same time. The activities also develop collaboration, communication, cooperation, respect, teamwork, and problem solving skills -- all skills necessary for the success of any physical activity, game, or sport that involves more than one person. Some groups spend just a few classes on cooperative activities, while others spend a lot more time and do a wider variety of them. This depends on what each group needs and how well they are working together. We find that starting each year with cooperation activities helps to create a smooth transition into skill work, partnered activities, and small and large/whole group activities and games.

- *Titanic*: Students are told they are aboard a sinking ship (the Titanic) and they need to get everyone off and to the shore safely using only the 3-4 “life boats” (hula hoops) provided. Students may only step in the hoops and may pick up hoops, but only those that are empty. Hula hoops cannot be dragged or tossed. Teams may take any number of passengers on the lifeboats but if any passenger steps out of the hoops, everyone must return to the ship. Passengers may step out of the lifeboat only when they have reached land, but they may not throw the hoops back to the boat.
- *T-P Shuffle*: Students stand on balance beam, and have to get into the required order (by height, alphabetical order by name, by birthday, etc.) without stepping off the balance beam. If anyone steps off, they start over. Sometimes this is modified by not allowing verbal communication.
- *All aboard*: Groups have to all stand on a box for 5 seconds. First a quarter of the group, then half, and then the whole group.
- *Group Juggle*: The juggling starts with one student tossing to another student and then they toss to another student, etc. Once a pattern has been set with one object, another object is added, then three, maybe four, and even up to five objects. As groups begin to toss more objects, they will notice the importance of communication, eye contact, and discussing strategies.

After the initial Cooperation and Problem Solving unit, we move onto eye-hand coordination skills and activities that combine the eye-hand coordination skills with cooperation and problem solving. Fortunately, most activities in PE require cooperation. At least, if the group is going to be successful at any activities, they need to use the same skills in every activity that was used in the group initiative/cooperative/problem solving activities. Also, at times during the year, if a class is having difficulty with their group dynamics, we revisit a problem solving activity (usually a new one or one they have done before with a little twist).