

**Adding the GEAR UP “Sizzle”:
Exploring strategies to further engage parents and
students in college and career readiness activities
through adventure education**

**2013 NCCEP/GEAR UP Annual Conference
San Francisco, California**



**Langston Maynor, Teambuilding Specialist
Chicago Teachers' Center/Northeastern Illinois University
Contact info: ltmaynor@neiu.edu**

**Jenny Coulter Zuluaga, Senior Program Manager
Chicago Teachers' Center/Northeastern Illinois University
Contact info: j-coulter@neiu.edu**

HOOP PASS/CIRCLE WITHIN A CIRCLE

Materials: Hula hoop, bike inner-tube or rope/webbing circle...

Instructions: Begin with the whole team in a circle, holding hands. Insert the hula hoop into the circle and reconnect the hands through the middle of the hoop. The group must pass the hula hoop from one person to another without letting go of hands. Have the whole team pass through the hula hoop one individual at a time, then try going through it 2 people at a time, then 3.

***Variation #1:** Speed Pass: Have two hoops start at the same end of the circle but move in opposite directions around the circle. Encourage the crowd to cheer the hoops on and make the game more intense.

***Variation #2:** Using a stop watch, time the group on the initial trial. Challenge group to beat the initial time. (Can be repeated 2-3 times **MAX** groups eventually lose interest after that)

(REMEMBER ALL ACTIVITIES HAVE DIFFERENT VARIATIONS TO THEM. ADD YOUR OWN VARIATION AND MAKE IT YOURS)

Processing questions: What made this activity challenging? How were you feeling as the hoop was getting closer to you? As the clock ticked on, were you stressed? What strategies did you consider to be more successful? To move faster?

NOTES:



Warp Speed

Materials: Small to medium sized throwable and stop-watch

Instructions: Begin with the whole team in a circle. Give the group the rules and objective of the game. State it plainly, do not emphasize on any part of the instructions. Tell the group “Everyone needs to touch the object and say their own individual name; the objective is to see how fast it can be done”. Once the group has gone around the first time have them try to beat their last time. After maybe 1 or 2 more tries, give them time to think about a fastest way to reach the objective. This allows the group to strategize and come up with a plan. At some point they should realize that they don’t actually have to pass the object around the circle, someone can hold the object and they all touch it while saying their name, which is the fastest time.

Processing questions: What made this activity challenging? Where is your attention during this activity? Were the directions clear? How do you think this Warp Speed activity relates to taking tests?

*When asked questions about the objective or strategies **ONLY** repeat the objective. **Do not** make it easier for them. Allow the group the time to process mentally. Which makes obtaining the objective for them that much more exciting and memorable.

NOTES:



Lava Crossing

Materials: One spot per person, red paper

Instructions: Start by telling the class that they are being transported to a volcanic mountain. They are surrounded by hot situations/lava and only the spots in their hands and their classmates keep them safe. Explain to the students that they are going to be challenged with the task of crossing the hot lava. Hand out paper plates or spots to each member of your group. Have students write down a conflict reducer on one side of the plate. Put conflict triggers around the room. Establish a start and a finish line (point A, point B). The group must cross to the other side via the “lava” river. They must use the paper plates to safely move across the lava. Students must have physical contact with the paper plate at all times or the plate is taken away by the facilitator. All students must journey to the other side and back by stepping on the paper plates, no sliding. Every student must cross over and back. Remind the group of the Five-Finger contract and begin. Once they have all crossed, then come back or if time runs out move to discuss the following questions.

***Variation:** individuals can win back lost mats by answering questions posed by facilitator.

***Processing questions:** What were the challenges in getting across the river and back? Who stepped up to lead? Was anytime taken to get a plan together? What skills/talents did you use to assist the group effort? Did your actions take away from the group goal? What conflict did you experience? How did you handle it? How can you take lessons learned from the past into future experiences? What have you learned in elementary/middle school that will help you in high school? What do you think high school will be like? Do you feel prepared for high school?

NOTES:

Human Continuum

Materials: One long line of tape on the floor, or rope.

Instructions: Designate a straight line (a continuum) through the room. Designate the center and the two ends of the line. Facilitator shares the following: *I am going to read two opposite statements. Decide which statement best describes you. Take your place on the line.* As you read each set of opposite statements, designate an opposing end of the line to represent each statement. For example, “I’ve planned my course,” and “I’m exploring my options” are two opposite statements. Designate one end of the line for “I’ve planned my course” and designate the opposite end of the line for “I’m exploring my options.” If “I’ve planned my course” describes you, stand on THIS end of the line. If “I’m exploring my options” describe you, stand on THIS (the opposite) end of the line. If your response falls somewhere in the middle, put yourself on the middle of the line. If you are somewhere in the middle but closer to one statement than the other, then put yourself there on the line. Read about five or six opposite statements (or as many as time will allow).

[This activity can be geared towards whatever direction/topic you the facilitator chooses for particular group.]

Processing questions: In between statements, at the end of the game, or anywhere that you sense is a good place to encourage students to think about what’s happening, ask questions. Encourage students to tell short instances, stories, in response to your questions. Ask: Where do you find yourself on the continuum? Why? Notice where someone else is standing...any surprises? Why? Tell an instance, or tell about one time when you had an experience, overcame an obstacle, solved a problem, observed, or acted in such a way that would explain why you are standing in this spot on the continuum.

NOTES:



Up, down, stop, go

Materials: Open space

Instructions: This is a “wake me up” activity, to get the blood-flowing, ears listening and brain activated.

Give and show the group these actions:

UP: Holding their arms up in the air and stretching towards the sky.

DOWN: Bending over and reaching for their toes.

STOP: Holding arms out in front of them with palms facing away.

GO: Jogging in-place.

After going over actions, you the facilitator should say the actions randomly, while making sure the groups keeps up while performing the actions. After about 1-2 minutes, then the fun begins. Now all actions are backwards; when facilitator says “Up”, the group should go down and vice versa. When facilitator says “stop”, the group should “go” and vice versa.

***Variation:** If you want to add a little competition; make game an elimination activity. Any person not performing the correct action at the correct moment must sit out until a winner is declared.

Processing questions: Was there a point where your mind and body were disconnected? How did that feel? Is your mind activated and ready to go?

NOTES:

Clap on go

Materials: Open space.

Instructions: This is a “listening activity”. Have the group stand in a circle, this way everyone can see you and your moments (very important). Have the group place their hands horizontally in front of their chest palms facing each other. Tell the group to clap “once” every time you say “GO” and only go. (Just to make sure they got it). Then you say aloud “GO” a couple times then quickly switch to another word, but you the facilitator still clap on the “Not so magical word”. Pay attention to see who claps with you. Remind the group of the “Magic word”. Once the group is in-sync with their claps, then switch the magic word. Once you have obtained laughter and the full attention of the group, GREAT! (Move on to next activity, if you play this activity too long you can lose people attention very quickly).

2-4-8 Shake

Materials: Open space

Instructions: This activity is another “wake me up” activity.

Explain that you are going to shake out your body. Model 1 round of shakes starting with your left arm, shake your right arm, shake your left foot, shake your right foot. Now, tell them "We will start with 8 shakes and go through the routine (the sequence keeps gaining speed) counting down to 1 with a jump at the end and yelling GEAR UP" Start with 8 (arm, arm, foot, foot) then 7 shakes arm-arm-foot-foot, and 6 shakes....then to 2 and finally to 1". Jump up at the end and clap it out-GEAR UP!

NOTES:



Channels

Materials:

- *Channels. (PVC piping cut in half. You can get this at your local “Home depot” or “Lowes”)
- *Marble or ball (Depends on the size of your channels)
- *Small Cup or Bucket (which serves as marble destination)

Instructions:

Step 1: Introduce activity and rules: The goal of this activity is to get the marble from point A to point B by moving it through the channels of all the members of the group. Each member of the group will have a channel. Group members will move the marble through their channels without touching or walking with it. The marble must move to its destination by passing through all the channels of the group. If the marble hits the ground, touches a finger, thumb, or other body part, the group must begin again.

Step 2: Organize the students: Depending on the nature and size of the group, the room, and the time allotment, participants can a) stay in one large group or b) work in two groups. The size of the group depends on the level of team focus.

Step 3: Review the rules again.

Step 4: Variations: Consider variations such as a) blindfolding some or all of the students, b) doing the activity in silence, c) not allowing the channels to touch.

Processing questions: This step enhances the activity so that it is more than just recreational. You can do this orally by simply asking some lead questions: Who or what could the marble represent? Who or what could the channels represent? Who or what are you a channel for? What did you think about this activity? Reactions. Responses What does this experience teach us about success? What does this experience remind you of in terms of school?

NOTES:

