

Warp Speed

“Warp Speed” is a fun way to work on understanding goal setting and on group problem solving or working together as a group.

Have the group stand in a circle. Have all group members raise a hand to show they have not received the ball yet. I like to use Kush Balls for this activity, because they are easy to catch. Use one ball initially hiding two others in your pocket. Tell the group that they are to get the ball to someone else in the group and they are to remember who they got it to, because we are going to do it again and keep the same order. It is important to use the words, “get the ball to someone else in the group,” rather than throw or toss the ball to someone.

Begin by throwing the ball to a person across the circle from you. Instruct that person to get the ball to someone else who has a hand up. After receiving the ball your hand goes down. This way all group members receive the ball once. The last person returns the ball to you. Start the process again, only hands will not need to be raised because group members should be able to remember who they got the ball to in the previous round and they are to get it to the same person from now on. Try it again until you have a round or two where everyone got the ball in the correct order. Do another round. Once the ball is one or two people into the process, get the attention of the person you tossed the ball to and toss a second ball (that had been hiding in your pocket the whole time) to that person. After that person sends the second ball on, add a third. Chaos often ensues.

When the round is done, talk with the group about what it was like when balls were added. How did that affect them?

Get a stopwatch out. Tell the group that you are going to time how long it takes to get three balls through the process. I like to use a stopwatch which times to the hundredth of a second. After all you may be going for a world record and those are always measured to the hundredth of a second. Get a volunteer to run the watch for you. It is very difficult to be the first to start the balls and last to receive them and work a stopwatch at the same time.

Start a timed round. When complete, have the time announced. Ask the group if they think that they can do it faster. Sometimes I provide a little motivation by sharing that I had a group of 24 fourth graders do this in two tenths of a second (It’s really true. It was Miss Dobias’ class at Shaw Road Elementary in Puyallup, WA in 1992.).

As the group brainstorms strategies for speeding up their time, you may need to have someone repeat your original instructions. (You never did say “throw” the ball, and you said they must get the ball to people in the correct order, but you never said where they must stand...)

Framing/Processing:

- Is throwing the ball hard and fast the fastest method?
- I have students set time goals for the group and explain their reasoning behind the goals. This gets them thinking about what factors go into appropriate goal setting. As the activity is repeated there are opportunities to talk about assessing and adjusting goals. There are

also opportunities to talk about how we can help each other with our individual goals and how that in turn can be helpful to the entire group. In the end I ask the kids how this relates to or is similar to choosing an academic goal (like number of AR points for the year). This activity provides opportunities to address the many aspects of working together in a group, but there is not enough space to go into that here.