

NEGOTIATION TEACHING TOOL

Created by Julia Mor
jshnay@gmail.com

Title

Marshmallow Tower Challenge Revisited

Brief Description

The marshmallow challenge is a group building game that is usually done in business schools as a competition. Students receive different items in order to build the highest tower. In this version, students aren't competing against each other; rather they are practicing generating prototypes and discussing the different options available.

Learning Objectives

The students will learn cooperation with others, looking for different options and practicing recording these options in English.

Lead-in / Preparation

A computer and projector is needed, as the students should watch the TED Talk that describes what the Marshmallow Challenge is:

https://www.ted.com/talks/tom_wujec_build_a_tower?language=en

Also the materials for the actual project of building the marshmallow challenge. Each group of 3-5 students receives:

- 20 sticks of dry spaghetti
- one yard of string
- one yard of tape
- one marshmallow
- Lined paper to describe their attempts

Estimated Class-Time Required

55 min (10 min for explanation/video, 30 min for prototyping, 15 min for closing discussion)

Description of Activities

1. Explain what the marshmallow challenge is.
2. Show the [video](#) that describes the challenge and explains the importance of good teamwork and the value of prototyping. Explain how our challenge is a bit different - we are not competing against other groups, but rather ourselves. The goal is to make



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- 3 different prototypes and record the attempt (what it looked like, why it succeeded or did not succeed, etc., aka prototype logs).
3. Set the students up in their groups and hand out the materials as listed above. Give them 30 minutes to create their attempts and describe them on paper. During this time, walk around the room to make sure that the students are on task and are managing with the challenge (also to photograph the structures). Remind them that while it's not a competition, there is a time limit to creating the 3 structures.
 4. After the students have completed the above task, they should return to their seats for a concluding discussion/reflection. Students should reflect how the process was, their challenges/successes ("uh-oh" moment vs. "ta-da" moment) and what they learned from the exercise about themselves. The teacher should record the main ideas on the board. The students should also hand in their prototype logs.

Key Vocabulary / Phrases (if applicable)

- prototype/to prototype
- to conduct
- collaboration/to collaborate
- to jockey
- to buckle

Assessment

The students are engaged in the activity and try their best to build the structures, they write in their prototype log (even if they don't manage to create all 3), and they realize the importance of prototyping and working together in the process.

Reflection

As mentioned above, reflection of the marshmallow tower building is part of the activity. This concept of prototyping should be taken further, as part of the larger lesson of learning from mistakes and generating possibilities for other issues/solutions.

Comments

Another link to read about how to conduct the Marshmallow Challenge:
<https://tinkerlab.com/spaghetti-tower-marshmallow-challenge/>

