

Editorial

Welcome back to another academic year. This year should prove exciting for NIFSA with lots of new projects and organisations to work with.

Holy Family and Currie update – Shared Education Forest School Project

Dinah McManus, Principal of Holy Family retired last year. She was truly inspirational not only in the school but in the whole community of North Belfast. Dinah has been deservedly shortlisted as UK Primary School Principal of the Year. The BBC came out to film Dinah at a Forest School session in Alexandra Park where we challenged the pupils from both schools to design and build a raft only using the natural materials found in the woodland. It was a great day and cemented friendships between the two schools. The recording is scheduled to be shown on BBC on the 25th October in a programme called “Pearson Teaching Awards”. We all wish Dinah all the best in the competition and in her retirement.



Dinah helping pupils come up with the design for their raft



The BBC camera crew interviewing some of the pupils taking part in the Shared Education Forest School Project

Holy Family and Currie Primary Schools have seen the many benefits of taking part in a Shared Education Forest School Project. Both Principals now want to expand the Project and involve all of their Year Groups, not only the Year 5's. NIFSA is hoping to secure funding to work with each year group visiting Alexandra Park together at least twice a term. This would be a wonderful and sustainable example of a real Shared Education project, where the pupils have the opportunity to engage with each other in real life activities throughout their Primary School career.

Sunshine Nursery

Thanks to an Awards for All grant NIFSA will be working with Gwen and her team at the Sunshine Nursery in Ballinderry.



The dedicated Forest School site that has been built with parents of the nursery from land leased from a local farmer

Resources



http://www.landandwave.co.uk/teacher_resources.html

Free outdoor education activities to promote team building, communication, navigation and problem solving



Crossing the swamp (10-20mins)

A great activity that forces a group to work together, communicate and plan to complete a task. It can be run with the group as a whole or split in to two groups to create a friendly competition.

Focus/ Learning Objectives
Team building and communication.

Equipment
10-20 Cones, hoops, mats or anything people can stand on or in.

Brief
Bring the group together and create the scenario. Explain the lines of cones are the banks of a river/ swamp/ shark infested custard etc. The team must cross said obstacle to complete the task, however if any part of a participant's body touches the swamp then the whole team will lose a life. If the team loses all their lives then they must return to their starting position and begin the task again. This works especially well if there are two teams racing to get across the 'swamp'.

Diagram



Development

It's up to the facilitator leading the session to determine how many lives the teams are given and how strict the rules are in relation to touching the ground between the lines of cones. If it is too hard, participants will become disheartened, too easy and little or no teamwork will be required. Other factors that can be varied are the size and/or number of hoops used and the distance between the banks.

Human Chain (15-45 mins)

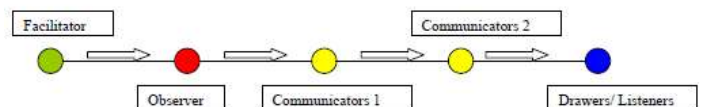
Focus/ Learning Objective
Teambuilding and communication.

Equipment
Cones, clipboards, paper and pens.

Brief
Participants are put into teams of up to eight. The activity is reliant on clear explanation and facilitator control. Each group of participants is subdivided into groups of pairs. Each pair is then given a role within the team:
1. Observers
2. Communicators (multiple pairs if necessary)
3. Drawers/ Listeners

Method
Spread the teams apart on multiple linear tracks laid out with cones. Ensure these tracks are well apart from each other and are laid out with 20m intervals clearly marked.

The facilitator draws a simple picture on the clipboard, the observers are then given a period of time to observe it before running to the first set of communicators to explain what they have seen. The first set of communicators then run to the second set of communicators and pass on the information. They in turn run to the Drawers/ Listeners who after listening carefully then attempt to recreate the picture drawn by the Facilitator.



Development

Start by drawing an easily imaginable picture e.g. a house on a hill and make the next round harder e.g. a series of unrelated geometric shapes. Discuss with the group what they found frustrating about the task, talk about different methods of effective communication. The whole aim of this task is for participants to use their communication skills as a tool to win a competition.

Fly in the wine glass (5-10mins)

Focus/ Learning objective
Initiative exercise using lateral thinking.

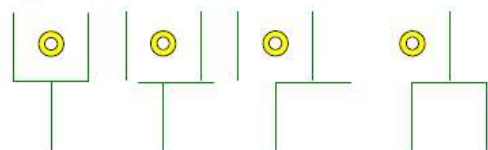
Equipment
Each team needs four sticks of equal length and one fly-like object e.g. a cone or a bean bag.

Brief
Lay the sticks out to form the shape of a wine glass with a fly in it as pictured below. The group must recreate the wineglass without the fly in it. The only rule is that only two sticks may move. The remaining the sticks and the fly must not move.

Starting position



Solution



Development

This exercise is all about teams working together to find a solution. If any member is dominating the discussion e.g. talking over all other participants, make that member participate in silence for 2 minutes. Balance the task so every participant is involved as much as possible. This can be done in small groups as a race or as a whole group with more focus on inclusion and discussion.