

Survival Game Lesson Plan

Overview:

Students, in the role of plane crash survivors, are given an interesting problem about prioritizing actions and equipment to ensure continued survival. They are given time to come up with an action plan, and must present as a group. However, during presentation, the teacher ignores issues of the problem, and asks students questions only about the group process. This opens the door to a conversation about what is the best way for groups to work, and can lead directly into new ideas for contract writing, and also a foundation for norms.

The idea is to use this activity as a way to get students to Need To Know how to make groups work best. If you let the students see what kind of group interaction they might naturally fall into, then the need to know will certainly arise. Hence, it is a good idea *not* to tell the students that you are going to do a “team building” exercise, or a “group work” exercise. Rather, you can pose the activity as a “critical thinking” exercise, or something like it.

This can create a rather rich conversation, and if you set it up correctly, you can have students move seamlessly into contract writing or norm-setting, depending upon your classroom needs at the time.

Expect the activity, with debrief, to take about an hour.

Below is a suggested way to carry out the activity, though it is certainly not the only use of the document. Experimentation, as always, is encouraged.

Introducing the Activity

As mentioned, we recommend introducing it as a critical thinking exercise. (Indeed, you could assign a critical thinking grade to this, if the students generate a document.)

Inform students that...

- They will have about 10-15 minutes to come up with an action plan, so they will need to work relatively quickly.
- They will need to present their plan to the rest of the class, and that they will have no more than 4 minutes to present.

During group discussion

As students are discussing, make sure to observe the conversations, and take note (to yourself) of how they are negotiating the group dynamic. Are they coming to decisions? How? Is one person dominating? Are any students “hanging back”? Is there any

negotiating going on? Is there any conflict? How are they dealing with it? This kind of observation will be helpful to share during the debrief. If you see some particularly interesting interactions during the group processing, you might want to call up that group.

During Presentations

Students will begin to present, and you might let them go through their whole presentation. At the end, you can ask them a variety of questions about process, like,

“What are the names of all the people in your group?”

“How did you come to a decision about your final list?”

“What did (name of someone in the group) contribute to the list?”

“Did anyone in the group NOT speak?”

“Was there disagreement in your group? How did you deal with it?”

“Did someone take charge right away? What was the reaction of the rest of the group?”

... and so on. You might tailor some of the questions for observations you made during the group work time.

Gap Analysis

On the board, or on a ppt, you might have three columns for recording student response. The columns might look like so:

Characteristics of an ideal group.	Characteristics of the Survival groups you were just in	Characteristics of groups in our class, during projects

Hopefully, your penetrating questions during the presentation will create some good thoughts about what an ideal group might look like.

Once you have the columns filled out, there will be differences between the ideal and actual. Send the students back to groups, and have them brainstorm some strategies for bringing the actual closer to the ideal. You might phrase this, “Describe at least ____

strategies that we might use in the class to help groups in projects to come closer to what an ideal group looks like.”

Students can work on that, and submit to a Discussion Forum, or present.

The whole list of strategies should be synthesized... and then they can become an integral part of the next group contract, OR, part of a template for contracts for the rest of the year in your class.