

Sports Team Analogy

Purpose:

The purpose of this activity is to enable a group to come to a consensus on how interdependent team members are when working to accomplish team goals.

Materials:

Description of each sports team analogy for each group (attached).

Directions:

- Divide the class into smaller groups that will allow for discussion. Each group is given the descriptions of each sports team and asked to come to a consensus on which team best describes how their group is functioning and a rationale for why.
- Each group is to come up with one answer and explanation- group consensus is mandatory. Give the groups 10-15 minutes in order to accomplish this.
- The full class is then assembled and one individual is randomly selected from each group to report on the group's conclusions. The facilitator then leads a discussion until all groups can agree on which sports team fits the entire class.
- Once this task is complete, then the information obtained can be used either organizationally ("knowing what we now know about our interdependence, how do we want to organize?") or diagnostically ("knowing what we now know about our interdependence, what insights does this give us to understand why we are having trouble functioning as a team?")
 - Golf Team (Coach, Caddy, Golfer): members all function for the benefit of their golfer, working to promote as low a score as possible. They help the golfer perform, focus and make decisions. The team exists entirely to support one person (golfer).
 - Baseball Team (on the field): Members are physically independent of one another. There is very little communication between the whole team in between plays. Once a play begins, they must coordinate quickly to insure success. It is never 100% clear to the team where the play will happen and therefore they must be ready for anything.
 - Football Team: Members are divided into three sub-teams—offense, defense, and special teams. When the sub-team is on the field, every player is involved in every play, but each has a set of specialized skills required by their individual position. But the teamwork required is centered in the sub-team, not the total team.
 - Basketball Team: All members play on the team as a whole. Every player is involved in all aspects of the game, offense and defence, and all must pass, run, guard, and shoot. When a substitute comes in, all must play with the new person. True teamwork is like a basketball team where division of effort is meshed into a single coordinated result: where the whole is more than, and different from, the sum of its individual parts.