

Teaching Train



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Activity Name: Teaching Train

Ages: All

Activity Energy: Medium

Length of time: 1 to 1.5 hours

Number of Participants: 5 – 20

Indoor/Outdoor: Either

Concept: This incredible teaching method and hands-on activity allows participants to become the students and teachers of any subject from marine life to gardening.

Materials Required: None

Introduction: Through peer to peer learning students become individually invested in the transmission of knowledge. By acting as both teachers and learners participants become 'experts' in one area and are exposed to each others 'expertise'. This is an empowering activity that encourages retention of knowledge while fostering confidence and communication skills. Students tend to form a bond with the topic of their own station which fosters connection and care.

Methods: Choose a site for your 'train' that has enough teaching stations for the size of your group. Each train should have 5 - 10 stations. Each station should have 1 or 2 students (referred to as a Group for the following explanation).

The train is created by the Leader taking the first Group to Station 1. The rest of the students shall remain behind playing a waiting game (see below) until they are called forth. At Station 1, the Leader teaches Group 1 all of the information that they need to teach about Seaweed, for example. When they feel ready to teach, they yell 'NEXT' very loud, which signals Group 2 to travel along the train to the Seaweed Station. When Group 2 is finished at the Seaweed Station, the Leader takes Group 2 to Station 2 to teach about the next subject such as barnacles. (Group 1 ALWAYS remains at Station 1 until the Caboose shows up – see below). While the leader is teaching Group 2 about barnacles, Group 3 is at Station 1 learning about seaweed. Barnacle Station (Group 2) then yells NEXT signalling that they are ready for Group 3. Once Group 3 finishes at the Barnacle station, the leader takes them to Station 3 to learn about Tide Pools.

As the train is running, the following will happen simultaneously: Group 5 will be taught by Group 1 at the Seaweed Station, Group 4 will be taught by Group 2 at the Barnacle Station, and Group 3 will be learning from the leader about what to teach at the Tide Pool Station. And so forth.

The train continues to move in the same manner until the final group is done at Station 1.

THIS NEXT STEP IS VERY IMPORTANT – The Caboose (an assigned leader that is at the end of the train) must wait until the final student group leaves Station 1. The Caboose then goes to Station 1, learns all about Seaweed, and then tells Group 1 to leave their station and go to Station 2 and then on through the train. The Caboose hangs back (they will be alone) while Group 1 is learning at the Barnacle Station 2. When Group 1 leaves the Barnacle Station, the Caboose then goes to that station. Once the Caboose has learned all about barnacles, they tell Group 2 to move on through the train. If the Caboose does not perform their task correctly, which is to hold back each group so that they do not peel off with the last station, the train will derail and all of the students will end up clumped together at the final station.

IMPORTANT:

Each group **MUST** remain at their station until the Caboose comes along and tells them to go to the next station.

Waiting Game – this can be any kind of game you choose as long as it can run any length of time and students can jump out of the game at any point to join the train. Common games we use are Charades or 20 questions.

End of the Train – Groups will finish the train one at a time. As they end the train, the first leader (that taught the stations) will need to supervise them. Set out clear boundaries before the Teaching Train begins. Ensure that students do not interfere with the train once they have completed all of the stations. Commonly, we allow free exploration that is well removed from the train area. Or have them join a game (such as tag) as they finish up.

Tips for Teachers:

- Assign a leader (teacher, parent or volunteer) to run the Waiting Game and then to become the Caboose.
- Try to avoid having 3 people at a station. If it is necessary to do so, then keep the amount of information each person teaches to a minimum.
- Modify the complexity and quantity of information at each station to the appropriate age level of your group.
- Ensure that the leader does not spend too long teaching each station. Keep the information succinct and to the point. If the leader rambles on, then the train gets held up and students become impatient.
- Please CONTACT the Galiano Conservancy Association if you have any questions about this activity.

Literature Cited:

First demonstrated by Nancy Turner as an Ethnobotany Teaching Train.

