

Distribution Fire Drill

Purpose: This really crazy fun activity teaches the concepts of physical distribution. You can discuss getting the product to market first, loss due to damaged goods, obstacles with equipment and tools, and cost effectiveness compared to quickest/best method of transportation.

Items needed:

Salt (one box per class)
Box of plastic spoons
Box of straws
Paper towels
Paper cups (4 per team)
Brown paper lunch bags
Prizes

Steps to complete:

1. Set this up before class begins if you can. Each team should consist of equal numbers of 3 or 4 members. Extra students should serve as monitors.
2. Each team will be using 4 cups – fill one to the top with water and one half full with the salt. The two filled cups are placed at one end of the room and the two remaining cups are placed at the other end of the room.
3. Each team gets a brown paper bag which includes one plastic spoon, one straw, and one paper towel.
4. Tell the students that they are going to need to transport their products from point A (full cups side) to point B (empty cups side) as quickly as possible.
5. The students may only use what's in the bag to move products – they cannot physically move the cups. Give students five minutes to formulate a plan to move the products.
6. Get each team in position and have them transport their products as quickly as possible on your “go!” Have monitors make sure teams are following the rules. Award a prize to the team who moves their product the quickest. Any discrepancies about leaks or spills are decided by the teacher and the monitors. Teams may be “fired” for having too much loss or damage to the products.

Discussion questions:

1. Which way was the quickest to transport the salt? The water?
2. Was it also the most reliable?
3. What problems did you encounter?
4. What would you do differently to be more efficient?

Points to make:

1. A company must carefully plan how to transport its products.
2. The company who gets their product to market first will have more chances for sales.
3. There are problems that happen in real life distribution situations...i.e. spills, tools breaking, arguments, etc.
4. Some methods are better transportation and some are more cost effective.

This activity is a blast! I make sure and have my camera ready, as someone inevitably ends up with a mouth full of salt! (The cheapest and quickest way to move the water is by sucking it into one's mouth and re-depositing it into the empty cup!)