THE AMAZING MAZE ACTIVITY

Focus: Motivation, Teamwork, Cooperation

Time: 15 minutes

Objectives:

1. Recognize the importance of competition as a motivator
2. Appreciate that competition can help individuals and groups achieve goals
3. Identify advantages and disadvantages of competition

Materials needed:

- Three stopwatches or watches with second hand.
- Maze handouts or downloaded from www.flint.umich.edu/Departments/ITS/crac/maze.form.html
- Three pencils
- Piece of paper to record times

Introduction:

In 1898, psychologist Norman Triplett observed that cyclists rode faster when they had companions riding with them. His experiments demonstrated that competition generally improves performance. Of course, it must be noted that individual differences impact results and therefore must be taken into account.

Directions:

1. Appoint three participants as Mazemakers #1, #2, #3; and three Timekeepers.
2. Seat the Mazemakers so that #1 and #2 are beside or across from each other, as they will be competitors; and #3 is by themselves and will be completing the maze on his/her own.
3. Assign a Timekeeper to each Mazemaker. Give a pencil and maze to each Mazemaker.
4. Explain that the goal of the maze task is to begin the maze upon the word “GO!” Timekeepers should begin keeping track of time at the word “GO!”
5. Record the times on the paper
6. Once the first maze has been completed, rotate the Mazemakers so that #2 and #3 are competitors and #1 works alone. Repeat steps 4 and 5.
7. When the second maze has been completed, rotate the Mazemakers so that #3 and #1 are competitors and #2 works alone.
8. When the third maze is complete, lead a discussion about the effect that direct competition had on the outcomes of the maze tasks.
Discussion Questions:

1. Did the Mazemakers perform differently in the three tasks? How so? Why?
2. How does this exercise demonstrate the importance of competition?
3. Why does competition increase motivation?
4. What are some advantages of competition? What are some disadvantages?
5. How can the department benefit from healthy competition?