

Triangle Shirt Waste Factory Experiential Exercise

Two Days Before The Activity...

1. Have students create their own design of a man's shirt or women's blouse.
2. Tell them you will choose the top 10 designs from all of your classes.

One Day Before The Activity...

1. Make a copy of the top 10.
2. Post the top 10 in the room (chalkboard, bulletin board...)
3. Have students sign their name on the best design.-also an opportunity for a voting lesson. (Maybe only have the boys vote!!)
4. Make an overhead transparency of the winning design and then break the pieces of the design into 10-12 steps (depending on class size). Example; left portion of collar, right portion of collar, left sleeve, right sleeve, right cuff, left cuff...you decide on the breakdown.
5. Teacher Prep: LOTS of blank copy paper (recommend a ream), crayon stubs from the art teacher, sharpened #2 pencils, CD player for Factory Sounds, Overhead Projector, Tri Company sign, Angle Company sign, Triangle Company sign, multiple copies (10) of facts over the Triangle Shirt Waste Factory Fire, 3-4 highlighters.

Day of the Activity

1. Arrange desks in two 'assembly line' rows. Make sure the rows are short 3 or 4 seats total -not per row(late students become immigrants). Leave space in the middle of the rows for you to walk through.
2. Greet students at the door and assign them seats in every other row as they come in. (Middle Schoolers travel in friend 'packs')
3. Late or tardy students are banned from the activity for now because they are immigrants. Put them in the extra 3 or 4 desks. Have multiple copies of the Triangle Shirt Waste Factory Fire article available.
4. Place the overhead projector at the head of the assembly line with the winning design.
5. Place the Tri Factory and Angle Factory signs at the front or end of each line. I put chairs with boxes to collect the 'shirts' from the production line and tape the sign to the front of the box.

The Process

1. Rules
 - a. No talking, laughing, or horseplay during production-stress safety
 - b. Hard workers will earn 10 points for following guidelines
 - c. Employees of the factory that produces the highest number of quality shirts will get 5 extra credit points.
2. Pass out stubby crayons to all workers. Give the first person in each row a stack of about 100 sheets of blank paper.
3. Show the students via the overhead what part of the shirt they are responsible for drawing.
4. Take on the role of production supervisor. Have the workers begin production on your command. Start the factory sounds music.
5. As the workers get started visit with the immigrants momentarily, tell them they need to read the excerpt about the Triangle Shirt Waste Factory Fire and highlight important info

- in the document. Tell them if they do a good job they can pick up the 10 points everyone else is getting plus the extra credit if they do an especially good job.
6. Now refocus on your workers and BECOME A LINE BOSS... shout things like 'keep working'!, 'don't slow down'!, criticize some of their drawings in progress and throw them on the floor-complain that they are costing you money because they are so slow.!!
 7. After 5 minutes of production decide which side is doing the best job and stop all production momentarily. Announce that the _____ company is more profitable because of the quality of it's workers and tell them that you are upgrading the 'machines' of the production line. Give the winning team sharpened #2 pencils. This can lead to more complications because pencils break but don't give them a new one if this happens. Restart production.
 8. By this time your 'immigrants' may be done with their reading assignments. Find reasons to fire your laborers (too slow, broken pencil, talking, laughing). Ask the immigrants if they are willing to do the job for less points.
 9. Continue to yell at your productions workers.
 10. After 5 more minutes or so merge the tri and angle company into the Triangle Company and give all productions workers pencils.
 11. Continue to yell at the workers, switch out some more immigrants.
 12. Stop production. Explain that the cost of land in the city is getting too expensive because of all of the immigrants moving to the city. Have them push all of the desks closer together so they are touching on the sides and the front.
 13. At this time have your fired workers begin to go through the shirts made and determine which ones most accurately represent the original design.
 14. Now at this time you can begin to end the activity in a couple of ways...this is a very exhausting task for both students and teachers. In some classes I ring a bell and tell them it's quitting time, other classes can handle the bell ringing and a quick desk evacuation to recreate the 'fire' aspect of this particular factory.

Debriefing

1. Have the 'immigrants' explain the significance of the name you chose for the factory.
2. Ask students:
 - a. Did you enjoy the activity?
 - b. What feelings did you experience?
 - c. What irritated you the most?
 - d. How did it feel to be left out (immigrants)?
 - e. Is factory work still a part of American Society?
 - f. Do any of you know people who work in a factory setting?
 - g. What impact does immigration have on the factory labor system?
 - h. Did this activity help you realize the importance of a quality education?