KOOSH® BALL CATCH

(30 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students play and modify a ball game to discover the power of group deliberation in a democracy.

MATERIALS

Shaggy rubber Koosh ball; four other small balls; stopwatch

GET READY

- ✔ Gather the shaggy rubber Koosh ball (easy to catch), the four other balls, and the stopwatch.
- ✔ Arrange all class members in a circle.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✔ Say: *Each person will throw the Koosh ball to another person across the circle. Once you have received the ball, raise your hand so that you will not get it twice. Add: There are only two things to remember: Who threw the ball to you? To whom did you throw the ball? Let's start with "Jill."*
- ✔ Make sure each member of the class has received the ball. The last person sends it back to "Jill." Practice the same passing pattern twice. (Hand raising is only for the first passing sequence.) The process should quicken.
- ✔ For the third practice run, warn the class that it's going to get livelier this time. After the first few passes, start a second ball with "Jill," and then a third, fourth, and fifth. The class will have no problem repeating the pattern, even when all five balls are in the air at once.
- ✔ Say, *You are getting really speedy! I am going to clock you this time.* Announce the results (probably about 30 seconds for 30 students).
- ✔ Say, *Raise your hand if you think the group can do this in less than 15 seconds.* (Pause) *Under 5 seconds?* (Few, if any, will keep their hands up.) Say, *I will give you exactly two minutes to figure out how to do it faster.*
- ✔ At this point, ask the students to confer. One may say, "Let's stand in the order we threw in and pass the balls down the line." Another may suggest that they need only touch the Koosh ball in order. Some groups may pile their hands on top of the ball, pulling each hand away swiftly. All methods will reduce the time greatly.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *Did you believe that the group could succeed when you were thinking about the task individually? What happened when you conferred?*
- ★ *When groups discuss civic problems together, they often find and attempt solutions they never would have tried alone. What are some examples of this?* (Neighborhood Watch programs; city bond issues)
- ★ *A paradigm is a pattern of thinking that is so ingrained that it limits our ability to think creatively about a subject. Which paradigms did you break at the end of the Koosh ball game?*
- ★ *What problems in our society may need paradigm breaks to be solved?*
- ★ *Is anyone working on those problems?*
- ★ *Why might young people be particularly good at breaking paradigms to solve problems?*

VOTE QUOTE

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it's the only thing that ever has."
– Margaret Mead, Anthropologist

From Igor Ovchinnikov, *Golubka* (The Dove) Center for Experiential Education for Social Change and Democracy, Moscow.

©2005 Kids Voting USA, Inc. – All rights reserved.