



Activity #2

***Appropriate for 3rd grade and above- can be adapted for younger audiences.**

Building Miniature Houses¹

Description:

Participants are divided into small groups of 2-4 and given envelopes with simple materials to construct a 3-dimensional, miniature "house". What the groups don't initially realize is that each group has different materials. Some have an abundance of supplies and others don't.

Objective:

- Experience the impact of limited and unequal resources
- To stimulate discussion about the different ways we can respond to the needs and challenges faced within our own communities

Materials:

You can be flexible and creative with the materials you use.

The following is a good starting point:

- 3-5 Large manila envelopes
- 6-10 Sharpened pencils
- 6-11 Pieces of construction paper
- 6-15 Colorful markers
- 1-2 Manila folders (or cardstock)
- 2-4 Pairs of scissors
- 1-3 Rolls of scotch tape
- 1 Stapler

Example for distributing materials:

Envelope #1: 1 piece of construction paper and 2 pencils

¹ Adapted from an activity in *Rethinking Globalization, Teaching for Justice in an Unjust World*, 2002. Edited by Bill Bigelow and Bob Peterson.

Envelope #2: 2 pieces of construction paper, 2 pencils and 2 markers

Envelope #3: 2 pieces of construction paper, 2 pencils, 4 markers and a pair of scissors

Envelope #4: 3 pieces of construction paper, 1 manila folder (or cardstock), 2 pencils, 4 markers, scissors and scotch tape, and a stapler

Envelope #5: 3 pieces of construction paper, 2 manila folders, 2 pencils, 5 markers, 2 pairs of scissors, scotch tape, masking tape, paper clips and a stapler

Time:

30 minutes

Activity Directions:

- Divide the group into 3-5 smaller groups.
- Explain that each group will have 10 minutes to build a 3-dimensional house with the materials inside their envelope.
- Explain that their houses will be judged on three criteria:
 - Beauty and style
 - Form and function
 - Stability
- Explain that there is only one rule: they cannot use the large envelope in their house “construction”.
- Keep an eye on the time and continually alert the groups to how much time they have.
- Encourage groups to be creative.
- Do not tell the groups that they can share or collaborate. If they ask you if they can, tell them it’s up to each group to decide.

Facilitators should be prepared for groups to have strong reactions to the unequal distribution of materials. Some groups may want to share, some may steal materials from others, etc. All responses should be addressed in the discussion following the activity.

Discussion Questions

- How did it feel to be in a group that had lots of (or some, or few) materials?
- Was there anything beyond the materials that had an impact on your group’s ability to build something?
- Did the amount of materials affect the size of the house or the stability?

- Did anyone ask to borrow or offer to share any of your extra materials? What was the outcome?
- If you didn't share or borrow, why didn't you?
- What materials had the most impact on the ability of your group to build a stable and secure house?
- Did you feel a sense of pride in the house you built?
- Which house would you rather live in and why?
- What did you feel was most important – beauty and style, form and function, or stability? Why?
- Is it possible to judge the houses fairly since the resources were so different?
- How could each team have helped other teams to increase the stability of the houses they built?
- What parallels can you draw between this activity and our community at large? Or between this activity and the unequal division of food resources that results in hunger?