

Challenge Course Safety Training – Notes from 5/21/15

(as compiled and “remembered” by Karel and Carolann)

The session started with Concentric Circles (an inner and outer circle with participants facing each other). Mary W asked various questions to generate discussion. Examples: What is your favorite starting activity? What factors do you look for in assessing the group to determine a plan of activities? The use of this activity was highly recommended as a tool for group processing.

We contribute to students’ sense of both physical and emotional safety: 2 Rules: Safety and Respect

- When setting up: assess the area, look for course damage, dead limbs which may have come down overnight, insect issues (bee nests); frayed cables; tripping hazards, etc.
- Processing helps to keeps kids focused on the task; on their job
- SPOTTING! The group agreed it is hard to keep kids attentive throughout:
 - Be explicit with your expectations
 - Set a contract with agreed upon behaviors for group to proceed
 - Use of commands – especially for climbing/balance types of activities
 - Attention to the details
- Put things in terms of a positive behavior: “don’t say don’t”
- Challenge in assessing the group when you need to start in Low CC first; use warm-up activities in-transit or off to the side of a more challenging element.
- Re-think and re-evaluate your group prior to an element that may involve height or lifting:
 - The Wall
 - Vertical Spider Web
 - Cable Bridge
 - Under Over
- Specifically spotting:
 - Cable Bridge: Upper arms should be close to your torso to minimize fatigue. Students will ask how can they possibly spot? Their attention and support to the student walking across can help prevent slips and falls
 - Mohawk Walk – naturalist should spot from the “outside” of the elements and most likely the Tension Traverse so that you can see all the other components. If no other adult, ask kids to decide on what two elements they want to work on.

Have different levels in mind for determining what “completion” of an element might mean for your group: in a group where you may have extreme height or weight differences, saying to the group – we have to get 5 people over the wall may still create problem solving scenario while minimizing the physical aspect

Processing - helps students focus so safety is heightened and challenging behaviors are minimized:

- Students exhibiting “bad” behaviors are really demonstrating unfilled needs.
- Student learn skills that will help them in school and later in life:
 - Self-Regulation: After playing “Sleeping Rabbit”: “notice how you were able to quiet yourself when you chose to. But I am not seeing that now on the Whale Watch”
 - Mindfulness – listening to their body – breathing, stillness
 - Good Pre K- 3 “mantra”: Eyes are watching...ears are listening...voices not talking...bodies are still

- Dealing with Frustration: getting kids to the “edge” allows them to learn positive ways to deal:
 - Some need to persist; some need to walk away; to calm themselves and come back again. The activity is still a success if we can learn from it.
 - To diffuse frustration (which can often lead to kids blaming others; acting out), Anne C suggested: “I have never done anything the first time” Even in sports , we need to practice. What would you do differently to do it better next time? What can we apply to the next activity?

Use of Chaperones: when parents don't know what to do, they may act inappropriately (or not at all!). Help the chaperone (parent OR teacher) know what is needed to succeed in their role.