



Take the Lead

Lesson 3: There's No I in Team

Grade level: 6-8

Learning objectives:

Participants will learn:

- the importance of teamwork in leadership
- qualities that improve teamwork within a group

Codes for TEKS:

Mathematics
Language Arts

Codes for 40

Developmental Assets:

Planning and decision making
Responsibility
Interpersonal skills

National Education

Standards:

Mathematics
Language Arts

Life Skills Model:

Teamwork
Communication
Cooperation
Social skills
Problem solving

Time required:

60 minutes

Equipment/materials:

Jelly Bean Activity

Quart jar with a lid, filled with jelly beans (or some other small objects such as pennies, marbles, etc.)

Paper
Pencils
Chalkboard or newsprint
Chalk or marker
Calculator (optional)

It's Hip to Be Square Activity

Envelopes
Scissors

The Balancing Act Activity

Large rubber bands
Yarn or string
Tennis balls
Empty soft drink bottles (20-ounce or 2-liter)

Handouts/Support Materials:

It's Hip to Be Square

*The leaders who work most effectively, it seems to me, never say "I."
And that's not because they have trained themselves not to say "I."
They don't think "I." They think "we"; they think "team."
They understand their job to be to make the team function.
They accept responsibility and don't sidestep it, but "we" gets the
credit....This is what creates trust, what enables you to get the task done.*

– Peter Drucker

Read the quote to the group. Lead a discussion using the following questions:

Tell me what you think about this quote. Is Peter Drucker right in what he says about teamwork?

What are some examples of situations where it takes more than one person to accomplish a task or goal?

Possible answers: A sports team needs all players and the coach to play a game. A committee needs all members to complete its role. A study group needs all members to complete their parts of the assignment, etc.

As a leader, how do you get people to cooperate and use teamwork to accomplish a goal?

Allow participants to discuss the question.

Sometimes a leader must step back and let someone else with more experience in a specific area direct the group. A good leader will play to the strengths of the people in the group. A good leader will also listen to all the ideas of the group and allow the group to work together to find the best possible solution to a problem, instead of dictating what will be done.

There is a book entitled *The Wisdom of Crowds* by James Surowiecki that explains why many minds are better than one in solving problems. The author gives an example with a story about a professor who conducted an experiment with his participants using a jar of jelly beans. We're going to try his experiment right now to see if it works for our group.

Display the quart jar full of jelly beans where everyone can see it. Be sure to count the jelly beans ahead of time so you'll know the correct answer. Give each person a piece of paper and a pencil.

I would like each of you to look at the jar of jelly beans and then write down how many jelly beans you think are in the jar. You may come up and take a closer look but you cannot touch the jar. I'll give you a couple of minutes to figure out your guess.

Now that everyone has written down a guess, we are going to add all of our answers together and average them to see what our final answer will be.

For a math activity, have each person record the guesses and add up the list of numbers, then divide by the number of guesses to get the average. Or, the instructor can write the numbers on the board or newsprint and use a calculator to save time. Once the average number is found for the group, the instructor should reveal the correct answer.

The correct number of jelly beans in the jar is _____. Our average number is _____. How far off were we from the right answer?

Have participants subtract the lower number from the higher number to determine how far off the average guess was from the correct answer.

Now look at your own original answer and figure up how far off you were from the correct number. Was your own guess closer to the correct answer than our average guess?

Have participants compare their answer and the actual number to determine how far off their guess was from the correct answer.

If it is true that many minds are better than one, there will be very few of you whose guesses were closer to the correct answer than our average guess. This experiment helps us see how important it is to work together and how much more successful we can be when we use teamwork!

What are some things we need to have to be a good team?

Allow young people to discuss and list their ideas. Add the points below to the list.

Here are some qualities that improve teamwork:

- good communication—both speaking and listening
- trust in each other
- respect for one another
- commitment to the task or group
- every person participates in the group—play to the strengths of each person

- clearly defined goals for the team
- broad-minded thinking—looking at things in many different ways to come up with the best solution

Today we're going to test our teamwork skills through some games and see just how well this group can work together to accomplish the goal of the game.

Activity 1: It's Hip to Be Square

The purpose of this activity is to encourage teamwork within small groups as they try to solve the square puzzles.

Preparation:

1. Copy the handout It's Hip to Be Square on cardstock. Make one set for each small group, including the instructions and pieces for each square puzzle. Use the same color of paper for all the pieces in each set. Use a different color for each set of materials.
2. Cut apart the square puzzles on the lines and place a full set of pieces in each envelope (one envelope per group). Make sure each envelope has the pieces for five complete squares, all the same color.

Instructions:

1. Divide the group into small teams of six members. Designate one member of each team to be an observer/judge.
2. Spread out the teams in different areas of the room where they each have a surface to work on.
3. Give each observer/judge a copy of the instructions and one envelope with the pieces for the set of five puzzles. Tell them not to open the envelopes until instructed to do so. Allow a few minutes for the observers/judges to go over the objective of the game and the instructions with their groups. Remind the observers/judges to also review their own instructions.
4. Set a time limit of 20 minutes. If a team completes its task before time expires, you may either allow the other teams to continue working until time runs out or stop the game. Adjust the amount of time as needed.

Discussion questions after the activity:

- How willing were members to give away pieces of the puzzle? Were participants more interested in getting than in giving?
- Did anyone finish his or her puzzle and then withdraw from the group problem solving? If so, how did it affect the rest of the team?

- Did dominant individuals emerge, or did everyone seem to participate equally?
- Did team members become frustrated? How did it affect the group?
- What was the critical turning point(s) that affected how the team worked together?
- How did not being able to talk affect communication in the team? How did you adapt to this restriction?
- Which team was most effective in following the instructions and completing the objective? Why?
- What does this activity teach us about teamwork?

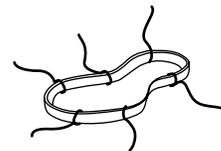
Possible answers: Listening and following instructions are important. It takes all team members participating and cooperating to complete the task. Knowing and understanding the goal is important in accomplishing it.

Activity 2: The Balancing Act

The purpose of this activity is to work as a team to achieve the goal—which is picking up a tennis ball with the supplies provided and balancing it on a bottle.

Preparation:

For each small team you will need a large rubber band, six 6-foot pieces of yarn or string, a tennis ball, and an empty soft drink bottle without a top (20-ounce or 2-liter). Tie the six pieces of string around the rubber band to resemble the drawing here. Make sure there is plenty of space for this activity so teams don't interfere with each other.



Instructions:

1. Divide the group into teams of five or six members. If a team has only five members, one string can be taken off the rubber band or the team instructed not to use the sixth string.
2. Place the soft drink bottle on the ground and lay out the rubber band with the strings fully extended on the ground beside the bottle. Place the tennis ball on the ground near the bottle and rubber band.
3. Instruct the teams to form a circle around their bottles with their backs to the bottle. They should arrange themselves so that one of the strings from the rubber band is between each person's feet.

4. Each team member will bend over and pick up the end of the string farthest from the rubber band, keeping the string between his or her legs. They may look through their legs to see the tennis ball and bottle, but they may not turn around.
5. The goal is for the team to use their rubber band and string equipment to pick up the tennis ball, balance it on top of the bottle, and remove the rubber band. The task is complete when the ball is balancing on top of the bottle.

Variations: If you have an odd number of participants, you may appoint a leader for each team to give instructions; other team members may not talk. Another option is to allow some teams to have leaders while other teams must work without one.

Discussion questions after the activity:

- What was the biggest challenge about this activity?
- How did you overcome that challenge or adapt to it?
- Who became the leader of the team during this activity?
- How effective was that person in helping the group accomplish the task?
- What skills did each team member need in order to accomplish the task?
- If a team member was having difficulty, how did the rest of the group adjust and help that member?

Teamwork lesson wrap up

If time permits, review the importance of teamwork by having the participants share with the group one thing they learned about teamwork. It could be something they need to work on themselves, a characteristic that they discovered was important, or something they observed another person doing well that helped the team succeed.

It's Hip To Be Square – page 1

Each team has been given an envelope that contains pieces of five puzzles. Review all of the instructions below with your team and wait for the instructor to tell you when you can begin the task.

Objective:

Your team will be successful when there is a perfect square, each of the same size, in front of each team member.

Instructions for team members:

- You may use only the pieces provided.
- No member may speak or gesture in any way during the activity.
- You may not ask another member for a puzzle piece, take a piece from another member, or signal in any way that another person is to give you a piece.
- You may give pieces to other members.
- You may not place your puzzle pieces in the center area for other team members to take.
- Your team will have 20 minutes to complete the task.

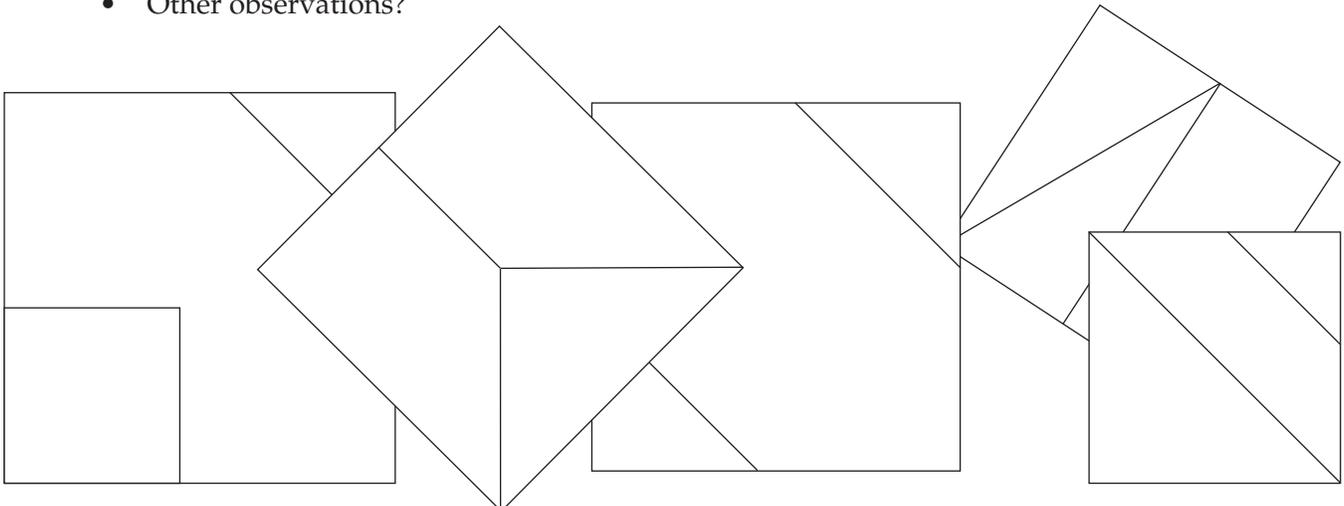
Instructions for observer/judge (do not read aloud!):

Your job is part observer and part judge. As a judge, make sure each participant observes the following rules:

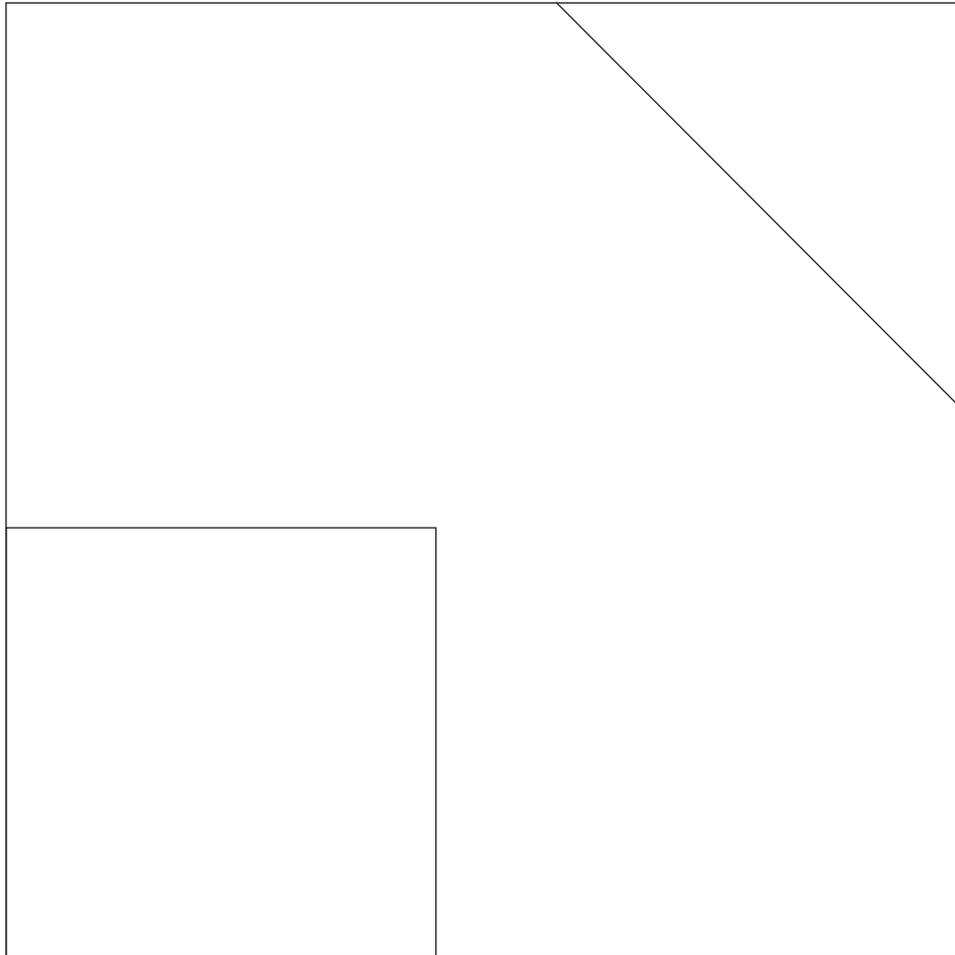
- There is no talking, pointing, or any other kind of communication.
- Participants may give pieces directly to other participants but may not take pieces from other members.
- Participants may not place their pieces in the center for others to take.
- It is okay for a member to give away all the pieces of his puzzle, even if he has already formed a square.

As an observer, look for the following:

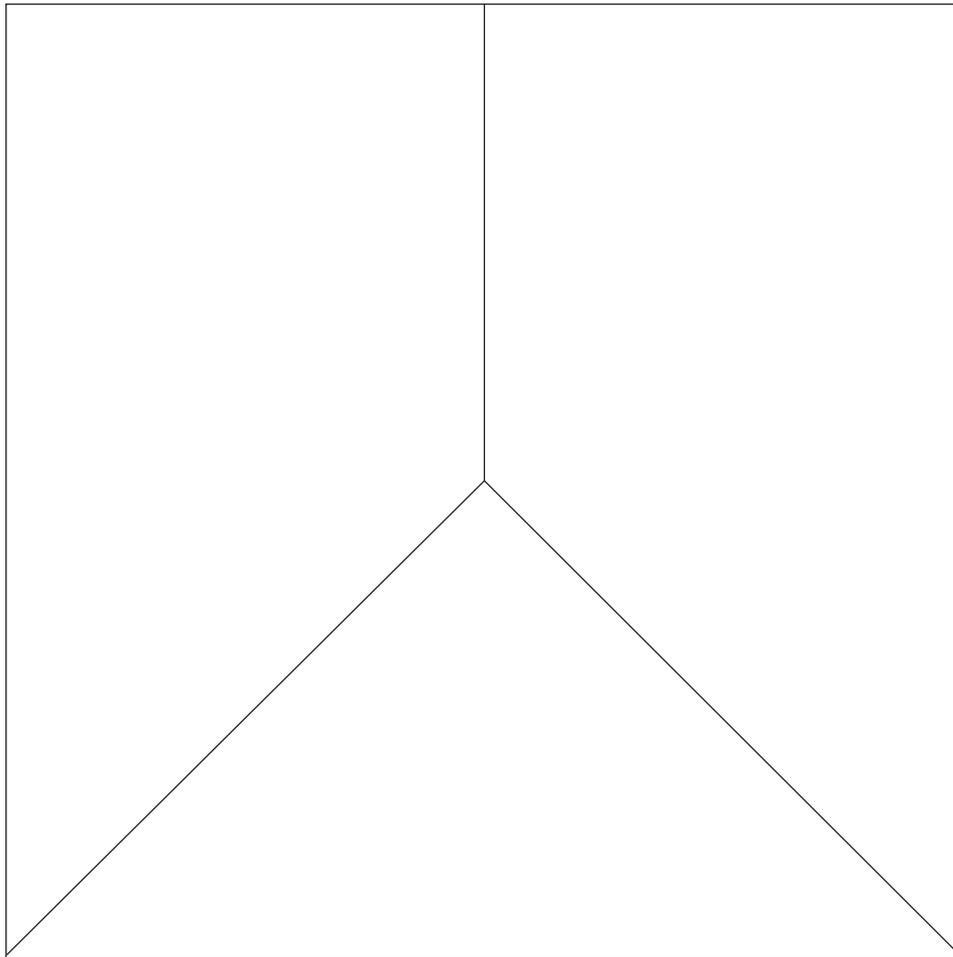
- How willing were team members to give away pieces of the puzzle? Were participants more interested in getting than in giving?
- Did anyone finish a puzzle and then withdraw from the group problem solving? If so, how did it affect the rest of the team?
- Did dominant individuals emerge, or did everyone seem to participate equally?
- Did team members become frustrated? How did it affect the group?
- What was the critical turning point(s) that affected how the members worked together?
- Other observations?



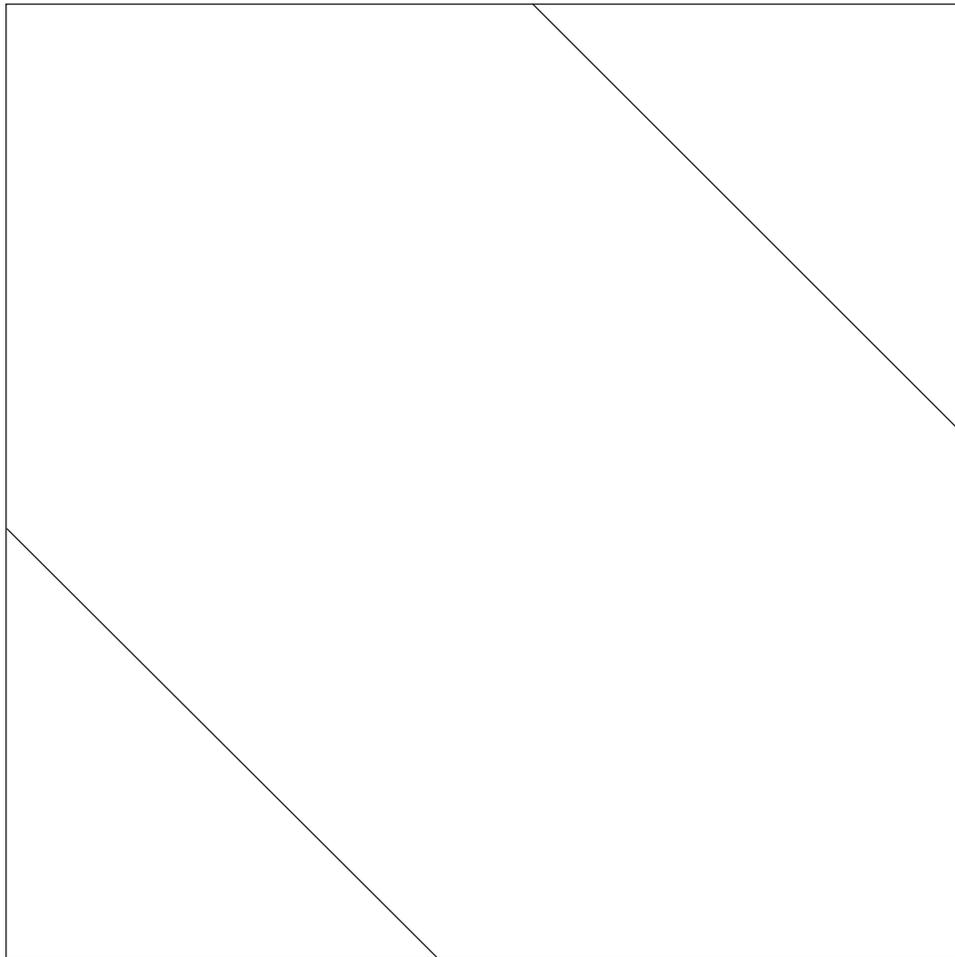
It's Hip To Be Square – page 2



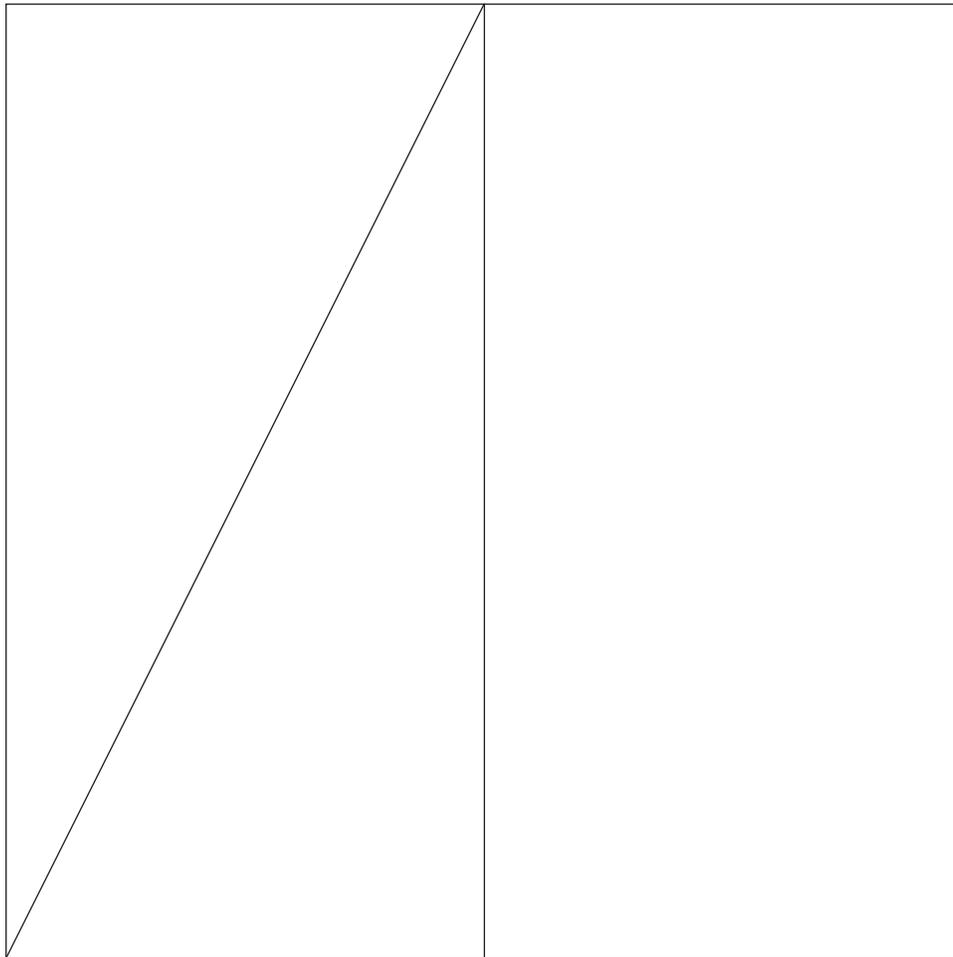
It's Hip To Be Square – page 3



It's Hip To Be Square – page 4



It's Hip To Be Square – page 5



It's Hip To Be Square – page 6

