

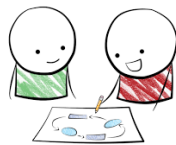
# Communication Complication

Rob Ford, St. Mary's High School, Woodstock, Ontario



## Teachers Information:

- Arrange students into pairs and have each pair of students sit at their desks back-to-back, with the writing surfaces of their desks in front of them.
- Tell students that one of them will be Student "A" and the other will be Student "B." Have students in each pair choose one of the letters.
- After students have chosen their letters, ask each student to write his or her letter in the top corner of a blank sheet of paper.
- Next, instruct all "A's" to spend two minutes drawing something on their papers. Students need not be good at drawing; even stick drawings will suffice for this activity. Partners may not look at or talk to each other during this part of the activity. While "A's" are drawing, "B's" should remain in their seats. At the end of the two-minute drawing period, instruct "A's" to put down their pens/pencils.
- Next, tell "B's" to pick up their pens/pencils. Instruct "A's" to give a clear description of their drawings to their respective partners. Instruct "B's" to *listen only* to their partners' instructions. Each "B" will use the oral instructions to try to re-create his or her partner's drawing. Allow five minutes for this next step.
  - *Remember: The only means of communication is for each "A" to provide description of the drawing to his or her partner. "B's" can only listen and draw. Partners should remain sitting back-to-back at all times during this part of the activity.*



continued on following page >



# Communication Complication

Rob Ford, St. Mary's High School, Woodstock, Ontario

- At the end of the five-minute time period, instruct "B's" to put down their pens/pencils and allow a few minutes for partners to show each other their drawings and discuss the results.
- For the next part of the activity, instruct partners to resume their back-to-back positions. Provide each student with a clean sheet of drawing paper and tell students that the second part of the activity will be different from the first part. Then have "B's" spend three minutes drawing on their papers. Students should use the entire three minutes to draw something beyond a simple shape or two. When the three minutes are up, "B's" should put down their pens/pencils.
  - *Remind all pairs to remain seated back-to-back. Instruct all "A's" to prepare to draw.*
- Tell students that this time the "A's" are going to reproduce their partners' drawings, but the only way they can obtain information about those drawings is by asking yes or no questions. Emphasize that **only** questions that can be answered yes or no are allowed! Allow students five minutes to complete this part of the activity. When time is up, have partners compare their drawings.
- Take time to discuss the difficulties or successes experienced by the pairs. Ask which exercise was more difficult and why. Discuss what they learned about the need for effective communication.

*\*Students should conclude in their discussions that effective communication requires cooperation, honest listening, clear instructions, respect for one another, clarifying questions, proper feedback, and openness to divergent opinions.*