Name/Title: People Puzzles

Purpose of Event: For students to practice using proper communication and cooperation skills.

Suggested Grade Level: 4-5

Materials Needed: Colored floor tape; jump ropes; patterns of different sizes and shapes (one large; a number of medium-sized ones)

Description of Idea

Set the gym up as follows: draw pictures of **shapes** and **patterns** on the gym floor using the floor tape or jump ropes. If possible, use logos that the students are familar with (football shape, helmet logo, a lion, circle, square, etc.)

At the beginning of the lesson, explain the importance of using **proper tones** and manners when speaking to each other, using yourself as an example. Ask students how they like to be spoken to... do you like people to bark things out?... use a loud tone of voice? Tell you what to do rather than ask? Lead the discussion to polite manners and proper tones. Discuss with students how these are important when you are the person in charge. Also, discuss how it is important to ask the leader questions in a courteous manner, rather than yelling at him or her or using a "not so nice" tone of voice.

Then let students know they will get to be the "**person in charge**", and they will need to use good communication and people skills in order to have the others follow their directions. After choosing a person (or two people) to be the leader of a group their task is to arrange the whole group of students in a pattern which you have drawn on the floor. In other words, the task is complete when the pattern that is on the floor is completely covered by this group of students.

Students cannot move without being instructed to by the leader, but they may ask questions. The students may be instructed to either stand up, sit down, or otherwise (safely) move their body parts in the pattern. All students must be involved.

Look for any "**pitfalls**" which may occur. Expect failure due to students yelling at other students (ask them to restate manners and tones); leaders not being clear as to what they are asking others to do; and "followers" not listening to the leaders (remind them everyone needs to help the group succeed). Praise leaders for their good communication skills and individual group members for their positive communication skills. If the group has trouble, discuss what the problem might be and how it can be solved.

After the whole group has successfully been manipulated into a pattern, divide students into **small groups** of six to eight students each. Ask each group to decide which one person will first be the leader (by asking, not telling). Once a leader has been chosen, let the group choose a (smaller) pattern to use. Once their puzzle has been solved, have them choose another leader

and pattern to use.

Visit each group to see how they are doing. Praise them for positive communication skills. Help them if needed to solve problems, guiding them first to see if they can solve them themselves. Allow students to complete as many puzzles as time permits. At the end of the class, ask each group to tell the others in their group how they think they did...congratulate each other for a good job, or a pact to try and do better next time. Revisit how proper communications skills help to make all activities both in and out of physical education more enjoyable!

Variations:

Use more complex patterns in future lessons.

Submitted by **Mike Golenda** who teaches at Midway School in Lumberton , NJ . Thanks for contributing to PE Central! **Posted on PEC: 3/16/2001**.

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