

Block Activity



- **Equipment needed:**
- One 30 piece package of Mega Blocks. (plastic multicolored blocks for children ages 1-5.)
- Two tables large enough to build two towers with the blocks.
- Six “volunteers” and a timer.

Activity:

The purpose of this activity is to illustrate the fact that we respond to what we see more often than what we hear.

Divide the blocks so you have two identical piles. The first two volunteers will stand with their backs to each other with their pile of blocks on a table in front of them. One of the volunteers will describe each step for building a tower as he builds it. At the same time the other volunteer will try to build an identical tower based only on the verbal instructions they have been given by the first volunteer. They are not allowed to ask questions for clarification. This activity is timed so the participants are led to believe speed is what we are measuring. (It usually takes 2 minutes.) After the towers are built we compare them for accuracy and congratulate the volunteers on a task well done. They can then be seated.

Break the blocks apart and set them up for the next two volunteers.

The second set of volunteers will also be timed as they attempt to build identical towers. This time they are facing each other, usually on the same table, and there is no verbal communication. One volunteer builds the tower while the other one copies, at the same time using only visual communication. This activity usually only takes 30 seconds or less. When they are finished, their towers are compared for accuracy, they are congratulated and then they are seated with the rest of the class. The instructor emphasizes how more efficient we are when we can see rather than just hear.

Break the blocks apart and set them up the last two volunteers.

One of the volunteers needs to know what to do ahead of time or the instructor can participate. For this activity, the group is told that we are going to measure the speed of communication when you add visual and verbal together. The volunteer “in on the plan” starts to build the tower but instead of saying what they are actually doing, he calls the blocks by the wrong color. For instance, if the 4-pronged red block is placed down first, the volunteer says “Place the 3 pronged black block parallel to the edge of the table.” The other volunteer is confused because what they see is in conflict as to the instructions they are hearing.

So far, every time this activity has been used, the last volunteer builds what they see, not what they hear. This activity reinforces how critical it is that our body language matches our intent.

