

TOPIC: Experiential Education

Participants will answer the following questions by the end of the session:

- What is experiential education?
- How does experiential education help make Venturing work?

Presentation Method

In planning the presentation, you should review the latest materials posted at <http://www.venturing.org/>. The most recent program updates are posted there are ready for your use.

Use the discussion outline below to help you prepare your remarks. PowerPoint presentation slides were not prepared for use during this session. If you wish to use one, the content below will be helpful in constructing your presentation.

Resources

Boy Scouts of America (2014). *Handbook for Venturers*. Irving, TX: Boy Scouts of America (BSA No. 619088)

Boy Scouts of America (2014). *Venturing Advisors Guide*. Irving, TX: Boy Scouts of America (BSA No. 618768)

Boy Scouts of America (2014). *Venturing Awards and Requirements*. Irving, TX: Boy Scouts of America (BSA No. 618767)

OVERVIEW

The Venturing program is structured around four areas of program emphasis: Adventure, Leadership, Personal Growth, and Service – ALPS. This session explores the use of leadership and mentoring as an area of program emphasis.

ENGAGEMENT

Play one of the initiative games located in the resource section of this document.

The session leader leads a reflection at the end of the game. Begin the process by establishing the ground rules for a reflection. Have the group members sit so they can see one another and ask them to agree not to interrupt or make fun of one another. Let them know they are free to keep silent if they wish.

Example using “Balooney”

Focusing Question

- What was the purpose of the game?
(possible answer: to keep the balloon in the air)

Analysis Questions

- What were some challenges?
- How did you overcome those challenges
- What did it take to get the group to work together better?

Generalization Question

- How was this game like planning a crew activity?
(possible answers: confusion at first, figuring out roles, learning how to work together)

Key for session leader: hold back from interpreting the activity *for* the participants. Use questions only, accept answers from participants, and be comfortable with wait time as participants form their thoughts and provide an answer.

WHAT IS EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION?

Venturing (and all of Scouting) is an educational approach delivered in part through a process called experiential education.

Simply put, experiential education is about challenges and outcomes. Experiential education includes cooperative games, trust-building activities, problem-solving initiatives, high-adventure activities (often through the use of ropes courses, rock climbing, whitewater rafting, kayaking, canoeing, or mountaineering), and expedition leadership (backpacking, dog sledding, sailing, etc.). By processing what was learned during an activity, we use the deeper meaning of what was learned to achieve our goal of character development. Experiential education can include a commitment to delivering service as part of a team—and learning about how one has grown and developed while leading service. For example, a group of young adults planning and implementing a day camp for disabled youth is a great setting for the experiential education process and provides an example of the pairing of challenges and outcomes.

We can often develop the skills needed to support experiential education through initiative games and reflections that help to process the deeper meaning of the games.

The practice we gain from using reflections as part of initiative games helps us to use reflections – and the meaning-making that comes from the experience – with greater skill.

HOW DOES IT MAKE VENTURING WORK?

Reflecting on an activity should take no more than 10 minutes. The more you do it, the easier it becomes for both the leader and the members of the crew. Remember that both the value and values of Venturing often lie beneath the surface. Reflection helps you ensure that these values come through to the members of the crew.

The sequence below is a helpful way to organize the questions that you pose during the reflection. You want to have your participants identify (1) the purpose of the activity, (2) the challenges they encountered while taking part in the activity and the root cause (leadership skill) of the obstacles, and (3) what they might do differently next time and how to better apply the skill for greater future success.

| QUESTIONS | RESPONSES |
|--|---|
| Focusing Questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What was the purpose of the game or activity? | What did you do? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have participants identify the specific actions they were to undertake. The answer should be as concrete and specific as possible. |
| Analysis Questions | What happened? |

- Ask questions that help the participants analyze the success or challenges that they encountered while playing the game or taking part in the activity. The questions should help frame the game or activity around the leadership skill that the game helps to explore.
- Seek to elicit answers to identify challenges in completing the task and how a particular leadership skill was explored.

Generalization Questions

- How can participants use this skill more effectively?

How will you use what you learned?

- The participants should demonstrate the ability to generalize from the challenges encountered in the game or activity to real-world applications of the skill.
- What will happen the next time the group encounters obstacles related to the application of this skill?

One of the challenges leaders who guide reflections need to overcome is the tendency to do most of the talking. The more you let the participants guide and enrich the discussion through their conversations, the more effective the process will be.

Some suggestions:

- Facilitate (but do not lead!) the discussion.
- Avoid the temptation to talk about your own experiences.
- Reserve judgment about what the Venturers say to avoid criticizing them.
- Help the discussion get going, then let the Venturers take over with limited guidance from you.
- If you describe what you saw, be sure that your comments don't stop the participants from adding their own thoughts.
- Above all, be positive. Have fun with the activity and with the processing session.

Ideally, the reflections should be led by one of the crew members. Leading a reflection during and after a crew adventure provides the youth officers feedback on what was learned and how to improve the next crew adventure.

APPLICATION

Play another initiative game selected from the examples in the resources. Have one of the participants lead the game and reflection. Debrief the reflection.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Use the discussion questions to provide advisors an opportunity to process and analyze the information presented during this session. As a general suggestion, keep the discussion positive and constructive, in keeping with the values of Scouting and of Venturing as a youth development program.

A helpful comment to use to keep the discussion moving in a positive direction might be, "how does [comment] promote a youth-designed and youth-led program?"

- How can a reflection help a game or an activity become “more” than just a game or activity?
- How does employing practices of experiential education (1) help the crew’s program and (2) help crew members grow as leaders?
- What sort of counseling is needed to help Venturers take on the opportunities that will make them more successful in leading reflections?

CLOSURE Wrap up conversation. Close by asking participants how they will use what they learned during this evening’s roundtable to support their crew’s program.

ASSESSMENT Look for participant answers to the following questions by the end of the session:

- What is experiential education?
- How does experiential education help make Venturing work?

RESOURCES **Initiative Games**

Ballooney

Materials: Balloons

Have everyone in the group form a circle and join hands. The leader will toss a balloon into the center of the circle. Using only their feet, the participants must keep the balloon in the air and cannot let it touch the ground. A different person must kick the balloon each time. To make the game more challenging, the leader may add more balloons to the center of the circle.

Synapse

Materials: Timer or stopwatch

Join hands and form a circle. Squeeze the hand of the person next to you, one time. That person then gives the same “signal” to the next person, and it goes around the circle until it reaches the one who started it. The leader will use a timer to see how fast the signal travels around the circle. Can you do it faster the next time?

Blob

Play this game like tag. Mark an area to keep everyone close together. To start, someone must be “it.” When that person tags someone, the two join hands and begin to form a “blob.” Continue until everyone has been tagged and joined hands, and the whole group has formed a blob.

Lineup

Materials: Bandannas to serve as blindfolds

Blindfold everyone and ask them to remain quiet. They must then form a line according to something specific: birthdate, age, height, first letter of their last names, etc. If two people share the same number, they should stand side by side.

All Aboard!

Materials: A carpet square or cardboard square to serve as a platform

Everyone in the group must get on the platform. A carpet square, 2 feet x 2 feet, works well for this. To finish the game, all players must have both feet off the

ground—at the same time—for five seconds.

Monster

The group joins together to “make a monster.” This monster travels using both its “hands” and its “feet,” and makes its own sound before and after it moves. The monster must walk with one more leg and one fewer arm than there are members of the group (so a group of five would form a monster that uses six legs and four arms to walk). When the monster walks, it makes its noise, moves 20 feet or so, stops, and makes its noise again.

Hog Calling

Materials: Bandannas to serve as blindfolds

Ask each person in the group to pair up with someone they do not know very well. Each pair chooses its own matching set of words. (For example, “salt and pepper” or “black and white” are good choices.)

Split the pairs, asking the two members to walk to opposite ends of the room or playing field. When they’re in place, they must put on blindfolds. Then, on a signal, they must try to find each other by shouting their matching words. Leaders will protect players from running into each other or wandering off.