

Team Quest - The Ultimate Academic Challenge has been created to help students develop their ability to work cooperatively in groups. The ability to work face to face with other people to solve a problem or come up with a creative solution is one of the most important life skills that a child has the opportunity to acquire during their formal education. Hopefully, students will leave the education system with this great skill.

This program requires students to use their knowledge, skills, and talents in real-life, real-world applications. These challenges incorporate higher level thinking skills and creative/critical thinking. The process of working together in groups is a skill students must practice in order to become proficient. In today's classroom environment, where standardized testing can become the focus of a curriculum, teachers cannot forget to have their students explore other real-world applications to broaden the child's learning spectrum.

In the *Team Quest in a Box* program teachers will be able to expose their students to an academic competition where the participants will have the opportunity to explore group learning situations in a fun and motivating way.

As you present the competition please remember the "**Top 10 Team Quest Commandments**".

1) **There are four "I"s in TEAM.** We have all heard the old adage, "There is no 'I' in team." This statement does not emphasize the fact that a team is made up of people that have individual knowledge, strengths, and talents. All successful teams must take into consideration the skills of each team member. Those strengths must be utilized when the teams need them. If ego, pride, or a controlling attitude takes over, it severely hinders a team's ability to use everyone's talents to their maximum potential.

2) **ALL TEAMS MUST HAVE A GOAL.** A team without a goal is just a group of people socializing. It is very difficult to think of a "team" that does not have a specific or overall goal. When the goal has not been stated or clarified, team members often feel lost, confused, and out of place.

3) **A team without a leader may pass the starting point but will rarely make it across the finish line.** Leaders come in many forms. In some teams a leader emerges out of necessity and in others a leader is appointed or elected. Sometimes a leader steps in and takes power. In any case, all successful teams have to have leadership. Leadership styles may differ, but in order for a team to reach its final goal team members must have a leader they can look up to, respect, and count on at all costs.

4) **Disagreements are part of being on a team.** Healthy disagreements happen in every team. Teachers should remember that if team members disagree, this is a healthy process towards their goal and the students are still on task. Teachers should not tell students that they cannot disagree. Students have to be taught how to handle and settle disagreements in a team situation. Of course, arguments, fighting, and overbearing opinions are not acceptable; but a team should be allowed to work out their differences in a productive way.

5) **Communication is key.** One of the biggest reasons that teams fail is because of a lack of communication. Students need to practice this skill just as they would math problems or reading. Communication comes in many forms. Although in a team situation, students need to practice face

to face communication. In today's tech savvy world our society is practicing less and less of face to face communication.

6) **Creativity is part of life.** A team must think creatively. Without creativity new inventions would never be discovered, new books would never be written, and problems would never be solved. Often times creativity is thought of as being "artistic." Students must be taught to break away from this way of thinking. Creativity is simply changing what has been done in the past and apply it to something new. In order for a team to discover a "creative" solution to a problem, the members must be allowed to express their opinions openly and freely.

7) **Motivation is the lifeblood of a successful team.** A team must be motivated. Forms of motivation include money, grades, praise, fun, learning, acceptance, power, achievement, competition, reward, fulfillment, fear, and anger. Some of these forms of motivation are positive and some are negative. Some types of motivation allow teams to be enthusiastic and thrive while others cause teams to become dysfunctional and fall apart. The one thing that can be said about motivation, that holds true almost every time, is for it to be successful it must be varied. All forms of motivation wear off eventually if a new and different type is not introduced.

8) **Flexibility is more than for your muscles.** All teams need a goal, a strategy, and a plan. But what happens if that doesn't work? What should a team do if what they planned on doing wasn't the right thing? Many teams give up. Many teams struggle to make a plan work in spite of failure. Successful teams are willing and able to change the idea into a strategy that works. Groups have to be flexible in their thinking in order to succeed.

9) **Practice, Practice, Practice!** As with any skill, team work takes practice. The more a person does it... the better they get. This holds true of anyone of any age. The benefit for students practicing team work at an early age is that they will be better prepared when they enter the "real world".

10) **Team work is the skill of today and tomorrow.** Society has changed drastically over the past 50 years. There is no doubt that, in today's world, technology has made life faster and easier. But, it has also replaced many jobs, trades, and skills that were necessary in the last century. The thing that technology, automation, and the internet have not replaced is the need for human beings to sit down together and fix the world's problems. Team learning is the one skill that all students in school today will need when they become tomorrow's workforce. Gone are the days of manufacturing jobs that allow a person to go to work and do the same task day in and day out without ever having to interact with another person. Group problem solving, team collaboration and collective creativity will be the forces that will move the 21st century. Are your students prepared, are they ready, and *will* they be ready for these situations? If not, it is not too late. All they need is the chance to practice and succeed as a team.