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Best Lesson: Shape Shifter
Project Focus
Fall 2005

Age group: Kindergarteners, but the activity can be altered to accommodate first graders

Time: 15-20 minutes (mostly depends on how successfully the students can bend a pipe cleaner)

Supplies: At least one pipe cleaner for every child, and several for on-site demonstration
- A picture of a circle, a square, and a triangle in different colors
- A lot of patience

Objective: Students will be able to successfully identify three shapes: a circle, a square and a triangle. They will be able to bend a pipe cleaner into a shape of their choice and group it with similarly shaped pipe cleaners their classmates have made. They will also be able to identify the colors of their pipe cleaner and group them with similarly colored pipe cleaners. This activity can also hit on letter recognition, coordination skills, listening skills, and visual skills.

Preparation: The presenter should be familiar with all three shapes. The presenter should explain that a circle has no sides because it is curved. A triangle has three sides. A square has four equal sides. The presenter should also be familiar with the colors of the pipe cleaners his/her students will be using. The presenter should make three separate pictures for the shapes and clearly identify them.

Safety Note: Make sure to inform your students that pipe cleaners are not to be used playfully. Also try and demonstrate how to avoid the ends of the pipe cleaner when making the shapes by wrapping ends carefully around one another.

Activity: As you bring out the pictures of the aforementioned shapes, ask if anyone can identify what shapes they are. Once that is done have them identify the letters that compose each shape. Next, ask them to identify the colors that the shapes are. Next ask the children to count how many sides each of the shapes have, however an explanation of the circle might be necessary at this point.

Hand out one pipe cleaner to every child. Show them how to bend the pipe cleaner. Then demonstrate how to make the three shapes. Next, tell them they must bend their pipe cleaner to make one of the three shapes. It might be helpful to assign shapes to certain students, as it has been my experience that circles are preferred because they do not require the making of corners.

Once everyone has made their shape have each child tell you what color and shape they have. Next, tell them to put all the circles with circles, triangles with triangles, and squares with squares. Do the same with colors i.e. all the reds with reds.

Note: This activity can be used for first graders with the use of more complicated shapes and a more diverse color scheme.