Telephone Pictionary Activity

CRLA Training Topics Covered:

- Definition of tutoring and tutor responsibilities
- Communication skills
- Active listening and paraphrasing
- Study skills
- Compliance with the ethics and philosophy of the tutor program
- Cultural awareness, inter-cultural communications, diversity, and/or special needs students
- Identifying and using resources

Learning Objectives: Vary depending on topic

Description of the Activity:

Telephone Pictionary takes a familiar party game and uses it as a tool to spark discussion. Participants alternate between drawing pictures and describing what they saw. After a few rotations, you never know what you will end up with! Depending on the group and the starting point, pictures and descriptions may either remain fairly similar with few variations or change wildly between participants and from the original picture. Either way leads to meaningful discussion about why changes did or did not happen and communication in the tutoring setting. The specific discussion can be steered by the facilitator or allowed to roam wherever students take it.

The game illustrates potential breakpoints in communication, especially in the chain from instructor to student to tutor and back.

This activity is designed for 5 or more students.

Materials Needed:

- One packet of paper and writing utensil per person – the number of sheets in each packet should match the number of people participating.

Time Required:

- Explanation and setup: 5-10 min
- Play: 1-2 min per person
- Plus discussion (10-15 min recommended)
Directions:

Tell students their goal is to have the final picture or description match the starting picture.

Steps:

1) Seat students in one or more circles of at least 5 people.
2) Give each student a packet of paper and a writing utensil.
3) Instruct the group to begin by drawing a picture of anything they choose on the top page of the packet.
4) Time the group for 1-2 minutes then have each person pass their packet to the next person in the circle.
5) Students view the picture they were handed, flip to the next page in the packet, and write a description of five words or fewer before passing the packet to the next person. (This can also be timed, but the writing phases go faster than the drawing phases.)
6) Students read the words they were handed, flip to the next page in the packet, and draw a picture to represent the words before passing the packet to the next person. Previous pictures and words should never be seen.
7) Repeat the drawing and writing phases until everyone has their original packet.

Debrief:

Discussion can be trainer-prompted or student-initiated. Sample prompts:

- Was this an example of effective communication? Why or why not? Which ideas were communicated most or least successfully? Why do you think that was?
- As a tutor, what could you do to minimize misinterpretation?
- Did you notice any situations where language barriers, cultural differences, or differences in background knowledge could have affected the progression?
- Identify two consecutive steps in a progression where dramatic change occurred. What assumptions might have been made that led to such a dramatic change?
- How can you apply this experience to your tutoring?