

TRB 3:4 - Investigation 4 - Roller Coaster Fun

Summary

Student will design and build a roller coaster to help them understand gravity.

Group Size

Small Groups

Materials

- sturdy chair
- one pipe insulator (split in half lengthwise) (per group of 2-4 students)
- balls of various masses (e.g. steel, glass, cork, wood, rubber) (per group of 2-4 students)
- masking tape (one roll per group of 2-4 students)

Additional Resources

Books:

- *Looking Inside Sports Aerodynamics (X-Ray Vision)*
by Ron Schultz (Larousse Kingfisher Chambers)
- *Experiments with Gravity (True Books)*
by Salvatore Tocci, Robert Gardner, Nancy R. Vargus (Scholastic Library Publishing)
- *The Science Book of Gravity*
by Neil Ardley (Gulliver Books)

Videos:

Roller Coaster!

Laser Discs:

Windows on Science, Primary Vol. 3, Force and Motion Lesson 11

Background for Teachers

Gravity is the force that pulls objects towards the Earth. Gravity pulls you down when you jump off the chair, but you're fighting gravity when you jump back up. Gravity is pulling the ball/marble down the track, but the ball/marble is fighting gravity when it goes uphill. The speed of the ball has to be great enough to get the ball down a hill and back up to the top of the next hill.

Intended Learning Outcomes

1. Use a Science Process and Thinking Skills
2. Manifest Science Interests and Attitudes
3. Understand Science Concepts and Principles
4. Communicate Effectively Using Science Language and Reasoning

Instructional Procedures

Invitation to Learn

Chair Jumping

1. Stand on the seat of the chair.
2. Jump off the chair.
3. Jump back up onto the seat of the chair.
4. Discuss which was easier: jumping off or jumping back up onto the seat of the chair.

Instructional Procedures

Preparation:

Tape the two halves of the pipe insulator together.

Activity:

Divide the class into cooperative learning groups of 2-4 students per group.

Design a roller coaster and tape the design to the wall.

Construct the roller coaster.

Place one ball at the beginning of the track.

Let go of the ball and observe what happens as the ball rolls up and down.

Repeat steps 3 and 4 with different balls and marbles.

Modify your track and repeat steps 3 through 5.

Analyze the result - Which ball worked best? Why? Which track design worked best? Why?

Extensions

Math-

Draw a line segment illustrating the shape of your roller coaster. Identify the starting and ending point. (*Standard III, Objective 1*)

Science-

Challenge the students to put two 20 ft. lengths of pipe insulator together and construct a successful roller coaster design. (*ILO 1*)

Art-

Make mazes or ramps out of cardboard tubing. (*Standard III, Objective 2*)

Homework & Family Connections

Have the students design and build OR make an illustration of a roller coaster, ramp, or maze at home. Have the students bring the roller coasters, ramps, and mazes to school and set up an amusement park.

Assessment Plan

In their journals, have the students draw a picture of the roller coaster built by their group. Have the students write about their design and why it works relating to the force of gravity.

Did the student(s) work cooperatively in their group(s)?

Were the students able to analyze any defect(s) in their design and come up with a proper solution(s)?

Were the students able to construct a successful roller coaster?

Authors

[Utah LessonPlans](#)