



BEIJING 2022

MIKAËL KINGSBURY
CANADIAN OLYMPIC SCHOOL PROGRAM AMBASSADOR

EXPLORING TEAMWORK WITH MIKAËL KINGSBURY



Photo by Vaughn Ridley / COC

Whether it's in sports, family, school, or later on at your work, teamwork is important. It's all about contributing to a goal, working together, and playing your part. This week we will examine the value of teamwork by looking at how five Olympians contribute to a team and benefit from a supporting team around them.

You have probably been on at least one team, and have likely noticed that some people understand teams and others just don't. The goals for this week are to help you become a better teammate, and to start to view the people who support you as part of your personal team.

Today, we will start by exploring the value of teamwork with the help of our Canadian Olympic School Program Ambassador, Mikaël Kingsbury. He is an Olympic gold medalist at freestyle skiing.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1

As a class, brainstorm the qualities of a good teammate. Discuss why each of these qualities is important.

Show the Mikaël Kingsbury respect video to the class.

Mikaël shares the leadership role he plays on the Canadian Freestyle Skiing team and also discusses how he benefits from having his support team around him. Both of these examples show that working as a team gets results.



<https://vimeo.com/624818673/362ef69a5c>

2

Use the list of qualities of a good teammate that your class developed to help with this journaling activity. Write about examples of when you demonstrated two of the qualities of a good teammate. Next write about one of the qualities that you want to work on improving this week.





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VALERIE MALTAIS
SPEED SKATING - SHORT TRACK



Photo by Vincent Ethier / COC

TEAMWORK IS PLAYING YOUR PART

Already an Olympic silver medalist in short track speed skating, Valerie Maltais needed a new challenge. She had been racing around a hockey rink sized track for 22 years. She needed something different. That's when her boyfriend, Olympian Jordan Belchos, started chatting about long track speed skating.

Though the two sports sound the same, they are quite different. In short track, the athletes jostle for position as they race around a 111m lap. It is fast and falls are frequent. In long track speed skating, the skaters race a 400m track. The long track athletes wear clap skates with long blades that help them build speed on the straightaways. The heel of the clap skate lifts from the blade to give the skater a longer stride. It is a sport of rhythm.

Valerie decided to make the switch to long track. The change of sports took humility. Valerie had been a key part of Canada's success at the short track relay. She was used to making a big contribution to the team. But in moving to long track speed skating, she had to learn how to skate on much different skates and with a whole new technique. It would be a long time until she felt that she was able to make an impact.

"The transition to long track has been more difficult than I thought," explains Valerie. *"Although I was one of the oldest skaters, I told the team that they needed to teach me from a beginner level."*

In her new event, the Team Pursuit, two teams of three skaters start on opposite sides of the track. The teams must work together over six laps to get their third skater across the finish faster than the other team. If one athlete slows, their teammates can give them a push from behind. It's all about helping each other to reach the finish as fast as possible.

“**EVEN SMALL JOBS ARE IMPORTANT TO THE TEAM.**”

"I love the feeling of being on a team. I feel so much more courageous. You never want to be the one who races slow."

Although she was new to long track speed skating, she was a seasoned relay racer in a sport that required constant communications. Soon Valerie could see how this strength could benefit the team.

"Long track is such an individual sport and short track is more team. I can skate close and push well. I do a good start for the team."

Valerie might only lead one of the six laps, but she helps the team by pushing the other skaters as they tire and getting the team a good start. That's how teams work. Everyone has a job that contributes to the team's success.

As the Canadian team prepares for the 2022 Olympics, Valerie confidence is growing. She is more comfortable racing in clap skates around the bigger oval, and more appreciative of the role she plays on the team.

"Once you understand your job, you need to see its importance to your team's success."



LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1 READ. WRITE. DISCUSS.

Great teams have both higher profile roles and lower profile roles. Often the higher profile roles get all the attention. But that doesn't mean that the people with smaller jobs to play aren't making as big a contribution to the team's success. As a class, brainstorm some examples of jobs on a team that might not get much attention, but that are really important. This could include roles on a sports team, parts in a school or community theatre production, chores in your household, or task for a group project.

Journal about a time when you played a small but important role. What did it feel like? Did you feel appreciated? Can you see how your work contributed to the task?

As a class discuss how you can recognize and appreciate those that do the smaller and lower profile jobs on a team.

2 PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

STRAIGHTAWAYS TRAIN LIKE A LONG TRACK SPEED SKATER

Speed skaters move down the straightaways transferring their weight by pushing side to side. To the best of their ability, skaters assume an aerodynamic tucked body position. This position allows for long, strong pushes allowing skaters to be as fast as possible. This activity will strengthen your legs (quadriceps, hamstrings and gluteal muscles).



PARTICIPANTS: Groups of 4-6



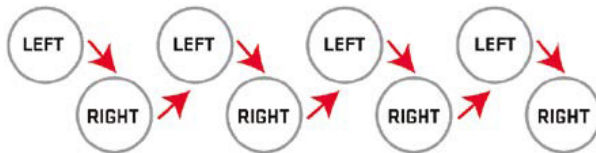
SPACE: Classroom or hallway



EQUIPMENT: 6-8 Hula Hoops per group, 1 Agility ladder or 6-8 hockey sticks per group



SETUP: Place 6-8 hula hoops in a zig-zag pattern for each speed skating straightaway like in the diagram.



ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

STRAIGHTAWAY STRIDE ON STRAIGHTS

- Line up behind the start of the hula hoops, and stand on your right foot.
- Hop diagonally into the first hoop, landing on their left foot.
- Repeat the sequence back and forth alternating feet through the hoops.
- Upon completion, proceed to end of line and repeat the activity.

S.T.E.M.

3

Engineering is the science of finding practical solutions to problems. Problems like how to design a skate to maximize the power a long track speed skater gets from every stride.

In traditional speed skating skates, the athlete had to lift their toe at the end of each stride to thrust their foot forward. This used up a lot of energy and left them tired at the end of the race. So Dutch engineers developed clap skates with a blade that have a spring-loaded hinge at the toe. The heel rises and falls each stride, and the blade is in constant contact with the ice. The result is that the skater goes much faster because their stride is longer.

Most people learn to skate using a fixed heel like in hockey skates. They learn not to use their ankles, but the clap skate requires you to use your ankles to separate the blade from the back of the boot.

Our ankles are quite strong and provide power to our stride. Try bouncing up and down, landing flat on your feet. Next try bouncing up and down landing on your toes. See how much more height you can get by using the strength in your ankles?

4 OLYMPIC TRIVIA

Which speed skating sport was first included in the Olympic Winter Games, short track or long track?

Answer: Long track speed skating was first included in the Olympic Winter Games in 1924 for men and 1936 for women. Short track wasn't included in the Olympic Games until 1992.





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TRISTAN WALKER AND JUSTIN SMITH LUGE



Photo by David Jackson / COC

TEAMWORK IS SHARING THE DREAM

Blink your eyes as fast as you can. That took six times longer than it took for Tristan Walker and Justin Smith to lose an Olympic medal in the doubles luge. In the Sochi 2014 Olympics, they crossed the finish a mere 5/100ths of a seconds out of bronze.

It happened again in the luge relay. Canada's team was ranked second as they headed to the final, yet were beaten into fourth. It was devastating.

"What made it so difficult for us was that there was nothing we did terribly wrong," Tristan explains. *"We were almost perfect, but it just wasn't enough."*

Both Justin and Tristan had started luge as kids while attending a Discover Luge camp. The thrill of sliding down an icy track at breakneck speeds got them hooked on the sport. Before long they were succeeding as a team and dreaming of winning an Olympic medal. It became their shared goal and a dream that united them in purpose.

As they started sliding again in preparation for the next season, they realized how discouraged they were. It would be two years before they could put the disappointment behind them and focus on the 2018 Olympics.

The harder they tried to recover from the disappointment, the more things would keep them from getting back in form. Justin suffered a series of injuries including a broken ankle. Still, they continued to work together to chase the dream of an Olympic medal.

They devoted themselves to training like never before. Everything was aimed at finding those 5/100ths of a second. They hit the gym with a new enthusiasm, and spent hours working making their sled faster. The focus became on controlling what was within their control. Surely things would go better at the PyeongChang 2018 Olympics.

“
**IT IS UNSPOKEN THAT WE HAVE
UNFINISHED BUSINESS. WE DON'T HAVE
A DOUBLES MEDAL YET.**
”

Justin and Tristan raced to fifth place in the double luge. It was not the medal performance that they hoped for, but there was still the luge relay. The relay starts with the women's singles sled, and she tags an overhead touchpad to signal the start of the next run. The men's singles is next, followed by the men's doubles.

Alex Gough got Canada off to a great start, pulling ahead of the US team. Next, Sam Edney kept the momentum going. Heading into the final leg, Tristan and Justin got an amazing start. Their speed built as the race continued and they sled across the finish in a time that would win them a silver medal. The dream of Olympic glory was complete...well, not quite. For Justin and Tristan, the dream was not just any Olympic medal. They wanted a medal in the double luge.

Successful teams share a dream. They find a goal that inspires them to become the best they can be. This dream is what motivated Tristan and Justin to keep going for the 2022 Olympics. Has their time come to medal in the doubles? Watch them as they race for the podium!



LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1 READ.
WRITE.
DISCUSS.

Great teams share a common goal, and each member of the team has a deep commitment to that shared goal. As a class, discuss what a goal is and how helpful it is to have S.M.A.R.T. goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant or Realistic, and Time-Bound).

Journal a S.M.A.R.T. goal that you might have. Can you also include a goal that your team, class, family, or friends might share? What actions can you do to share a goal with others?

2 PHYSICAL
ACTIVITYBENCH START
TRAIN LIKE A LUGER

The luge is timed to the 1/1000th of a second, and winners can be determined by the smallest of margins. The luger has to make the most of the start and gain as much momentum from pulling themselves past the start handles at the sides of the start ramp. This activity allows the students to practice a luge race start technique.



PARTICIPANTS: Individuals



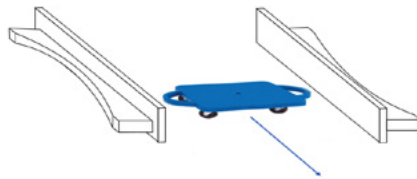
SPACE: Gym or hallway



EQUIPMENT: Two benches and a scooter



SETUP: The benches are placed parallel to each other. The width between the benches should be slightly larger than the width of the scooter.

**ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:**

- Have students start by sitting on the scooter at the end of the benches. Students should extend their legs out in front of them.
- The student grips the end of the two benches with their hands.
- They roll forward and back three times to create some momentum.
- On the third and final rock, they pull back and release the benches, rolling forward as far as they can with the momentum they have generated.
- Use some masking tape to mark on the gym floor the record for distance achieved using this starting technique.

S.T.E.M.

3

Like Tristan, you also might have broken a bone during sports or while playing outside. Shortly after the break, your body will try to protect the area around the break. A hematoma or blood clot is formed to deliver the nutrients needed for bone repair. In about a week, a soft callus is formed around the fracture, and this replaces the blood clot. Over the next month, new bone starts to replace the callus. Gradually, the new bone hardens and slowly reshapes. Most fractures take a few months to heal.

Often a doctor will apply a cast when a bone is broken to keep the bone from moving as it heals.

Bones can be made stronger through activities that require impact like running, jumping, skipping, or hopping. Take a moment to strengthen your bones by bouncing up and down for 20 seconds. Repeat this activity before recess every day this week.

4 OLYMPIC TRIVIA

In luge doubles, two athletes lie on the same sled, one on top of the other. Which of the athletes steers sled?

Answer: Both play a role in steering. The top luger can see where they are going, so signals with his head the direction that the bottom luger should move the sled. The bottom driver is in contact with the sled, so is more effective at steering.





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ERIC RADFORD
FIGURE SKATING



Photo by Vincent Ethier / COC

TEAMWORK IS BUILDING TRUST

It came as a surprise when their coach pulled Eric Radford and Meagan Duhamel aside to suggest that they might be a good team for pairs figure skating. They were young, and had never even considered skating together.

The first practice was terrible. They were both ready to call the experiment a failure, but their coach insisted that they give it a week. Sure enough, by the end of the week, they were beginning to skate like a team.

Building a successful team is not easy. It's like starting a new relationship and getting to know a new person. Both Eric and Meagan had a lot in common. They were both from small towns and they both were national junior champions. However, that didn't always make things easy.

For a while they struggled. They would have great practices, and then make mistakes in competitions. At their first World Championships, Meagan swung her elbow wide coming out of a spin, hitting Eric in the nose. His nose was broken. As the blood dripped down his face, she asked him if they should stop. He told her to continue, and they placed seventh.

"When mistakes happen," explains Eric, *"communication can shut down. But we never accused or blamed one another. It was always that "we" missed the jump, even if it was only one of us. The first barrier to clear communications is feeling unsafe."*

Eric and Meagan went on to win gold, silver, and bronze medals at the Olympics. Twice they were World Champions. So much of their success was based on being able to trust each other. This trust came from being able to practice and compete without the fear of being judged, blamed, or accused.



TRUST BUILDS CONFIDENCE AND CONFIDENCE BUILDS SUCCESS.



Through the years, that trust deepened. Eric was one of the first Canadian Olympians to come out and announce that he was gay. While Meagan always knew that Eric was gay, the public announcement let them be who they were as people, and that helped them become better skaters.

They retired from competition after the 2018 Olympics as Canada's most successful pairs figure skaters. The two remained busy skating in ice shows until COVID-19 hit. Then shows were cancelled.

In the spring of 2021, Eric announced that he would come out of retirement to compete again. This time, he would be skating with a new partner, Vanessa James. He had competed against her when she was skating for France, but she became eligible to skate for Canada.

The task of learning how to communicate and building trust began again. For Eric, clear communication is so important.

"Your partner or your team cannot read your mind. You need to say how you are feeling so that everyone can always understand you."

Vanessa has different strengths than Meagan, and Eric is excited to see how they can skate together at the 2022 Olympic Winter Games.



LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1

READ. WRITE. DISCUSS.

Building trust is a critical for any team. As a class, make two lists on the white board: the things that build trust and the things that destroy trust. Discuss each as you create the list.

Journal about one of the items on the list where your actions either created trust or destroyed trust.

2 PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

In figure skating, skaters must perform jumps in the air with multiple rotations. This exercise will introduce students to rotational axis, stability, and body awareness.



PARTICIPANTS: 1 group



SPACE: Gymnasium or other wide space

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

- Have students space themselves on the gym floor. With their arms spread wide, they should not be able to touch another student.
- With arms extended to start, have students jump into the air, by pushing downward through their knees, ankles, and toes, and bring arms into the body (elbows down and at sides, with hands close to the chest, hand holding fist, if possible)
- In the air, legs and body should be straight
- To land, have students attempt place their feet in the exact spot of take off, easing their body weight gently over the balls of their feet, and returning to the exact take off position (knees slightly bent, and core slightly forward)
- Repeat exercise 5 times.

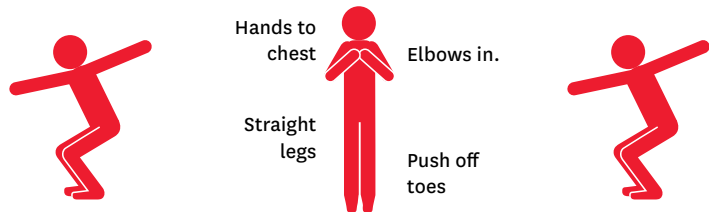
ACTIVITY EXTENSIONS:

- Add ½ rotation in the air
- Add 2 rotations in the air
- Add 1 full rotation in the air
- Add speed between landing and take off of next jump

JUMP CHALLENGE TRAIN LIKE A FIGURE SKATER

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW: JUMP POSITIONS

JUMP CHALLENGE



ACTUAL AIR POSITION

S.T.E.M.

3

Try this out. Have a student sit in a spinning desk chair with their arms out wide. They are experiencing inertia. That means that they are at rest. Next spin the student. The spin speed depends on your moment of inertia. This means how spread out your mass is. When your mass is spread out, your moment of inertia is large, and you spin slow. As they are spinning, tell them to tuck their arms in tight. Notice how they spin faster.

These are the same principals of physics that are at work when figure skaters spin. A skater speeds up going into a spin with their arms wide, this means that their moment of inertia is large. Angular velocity is the measure of how fast they will spin, and it will stay the same unless it is acted upon by another force. When the arms move in, the mass moves close to the body and the moment of inertia is smaller. This speeds up the spin.

When they want to come out of the spin, they open their arms and slow to a stop.

How fast can they spin? Figure skaters can go more than 300 revolutions per minute. That's five spins every second.

4 OLYMPIC TRIVIA

Which Canadian won Canada's first Olympic gold medal at figure skating?

Answer: The first Canadian figure skater to win Olympic gold was Barbara Ann Scott at St. Moritz 1948. After winning the European Championships in 1947, the City of Ottawa gave her a car. She had to return it to retain her amateur status. They gave it back to her when she won the Olympic gold and turned pro.





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CYNTHIA APPIAH
CANADIAN OLYMPIC SCHOOL PROGRAM AMBASSADOR

EXPLORING TEAMWORK WITH CYNTHIA APPIAH



Photo by Bobsleigh Canada Skeleton

Over the past four days, we have discussed teamwork. Mikaël, Valerie, Tristan and Justin, and Eric each described an important part of teamwork. Mikaël, spoke about how a leader shares information and helps everyone do their best. Valerie shared how everyone on a team has a job to do and that these are all important for the team's performance. We read about how Tristan and Justin have shared the same goal for close to 14 years, and learned that good teams work towards the same shared dream. Eric taught us how trust and communications strengthen a team. In all of these stories, our Olympians appreciate that being a good teammate will contribute to the team's success.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1

As a class, discuss some of the things that you have learned about teamwork this week. What stood out from what the Olympians had to say about teams? Of all of the athletes profiled, which would you like to have as a teammate and why?

Canadian Olympic School Program Ambassador, Cynthia Appiah, is an Olympic bobsled athlete. In women's bobsled, there are two athletes in each sled: the pilot and the brakeman. As the names suggest, the pilot steers the sled. It is a high profile position, and the sled is referred to by their last name. The brakeman is the person who controls the brakes. It is a critical role, but not one to get the limelight. Listen to how Cynthia describes the type of support that she gets from her teammate.

Show the Cynthia Appiah teamwork video to the class.



2

Everyone on a team likes to be appreciated for their contribution. Notice how Cynthia is appreciative of her teammate and the contribution that she makes to their success. There are people in your life that are on your "team". They support you and help you to succeed. Maybe it's a coach, a parent, teacher, or friend that is there for you when you need them the most. Their encouragement and assistance not only leads to your success, but also brings joy to your life.

Design a card to say thanks to one of those people. Write how their actions demonstrate the qualities of a good teammate and friend. Explain one thing that they have taught you that you are trying to include in your life.

