



Spaghetti Anyone? Building With Pasta

DESCRIPTION

Use the engineering design process to build a structure to handle the greatest load. Gain first-hand experience with compression and tension forces.

OBJECTIVES

Students will

- Test factors affecting the strength and stability of a structure
- Use the design process to identify the problem and brainstorm, design, build, test, redesign, and share their solutions
- Measure and record strength and Amount of weight the structure will hold

NASA SUMMER OF INNOVATION

UNIT
Engineering – Design Process

GRADE LEVELS
5 – 8

CONNECTION TO CURRICULUM
Physical Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Technology

TEACHER PREPARATION TIME
15 minutes

LESSON TIME NEEDED
90 minutes *Complexity: Basic*

The graphic features a collage of images related to engineering and science, including a person working with a microscope, a person in a lab coat, and a person in a space suit.

NATIONAL STANDARDS

National Science Education Standards (NSTA)

Science as Inquiry

- Understanding of scientific concepts
- An appreciation of “how we know” what we know in science
- Skills necessary to become independent inquirers about the natural world
- Dispositions to use the skills, abilities, and attitudes associated with science

Common Core State Standards for Mathematics (NCTM)

Ratios and Proportional Relationships

- Analyze proportional relationships and use them to solve real-world and mathematical problems
- Geometry
- Solve real-life and mathematical problems involving angle measure, area, surface area, and volume

ISTE NETS and Performance Indicators for Students

Creativity and Innovation

- Create original works as a means of personal or group expression
- Use models and simulations to explore complex systems and issues

Communication and Collaboration

- Contribute to project teams to produce original works or solve problems

MANAGEMENT

Prepare materials ahead of time. Organize students into small groups. Introduce the materials and the challenge. Introduce the Design Process to the students and answer questions about the process.

CONTENT RESEARCH

Many forces are at work on towers. Gravity and the dead load of the tower push down, the ground pushes back up, and small air movements push from the side. A foundation distributes the load into the surrounding ground material and can help balance the sideways wind force. The size of the foundation depends on the strength of the supporting ground. A foundation placed in rock can be smaller than a foundation placed in sand or mud.

Encourage the kids to brainstorm all of the ways they can alter the structure. Encourage them to think about shapes and stability. Squares are weak and triangles are strong. Let the kids discover triangular trusses. Reinforce that looking at what other groups are doing is okay; this is a competition and a chance to learn from others students' discoveries.

Watch this first! This is an explanation of the activity on the video. It shows kindergarteners and business men performing this activity.

http://www.ted.com/talks/tom_wujec_build_a_tower.html

Grades 4 – 6: Read this first: Technology for Children: Building Big Contains the Building Big video series and resources (hands-on activities and Web site).

<http://www.iteaconnect.org/Publications/TandC/Sep07.pdf>

Key Concepts

Bending: Combination of forces that causes one part of a material to be in compression and another part to be in tension.

Compression: Force that squeezes material together.

Design Process: Identify the problem and brainstorm, design, build, test, evaluate, share, redesign, and rebuild.

Load-Bearing Members: To support or strengthen a roof, bridge, or other elevated structure with a network of beams and bars.

Neutral Axis: An imaginary plane that runs through the middle of a material under bending at which zero stress is experienced.

Tension: Force that pulls material apart.

Truss: Support something with a structure.

LESSON ACTIVITIES

http://scifiles.larc.nasa.gov/docs/guides/guide2c_01.pdf

1. Create a design for your spaghetti structure.
2. Build the tower.
3. Redesign to correct for any structural flaws.
4. Draw the final design at the bottom of this page.
6. Measure and record the height of your structure.
7. Share your model with the class and compare heights to other models.

MATERIALS

- Uncooked thick spaghetti
- Marshmallows
- 100 cm (1 m) of masking tape
- Scissors (to cut spaghetti)
- Science journal
- Pencil
- Metric ruler or meter stick

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Web site <http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/13400346> explains how building strength is important in earthquakes.

Earthquake video, includes additional resources, including wall sheets, videos, lithographs, podcasts, Web sites, etc., that can be used to enhance the lesson.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What did you contribute to your team? *Answers will vary.*
2. What do you think engineers have to consider when they suggest which materials would be best for a certain structure? *The strength of the materials, the types of forces acting on the structure, etc.*
3. What forces cause the tower to tip over? *Buildings fail when engineers do not use designs and materials that are strong enough to resist compressive and tensile forces.*
4. What features of the design helped your tower to reach new heights? *Answers will vary.*
5. After testing, what changes did you make to your tower? *Answers will vary.*
6. Engineers early ideas rarely work out perfectly, How does testing help improve your design?
Testing helps you see what works and what doesn't. Knowing this lets you improve a design by fixing the things that are not working well or could work better
7. What did you learn from watching others? *Answers will vary.*

ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

Ask the students to demonstrate their towers structural strength and talk about how they solved their problems that came up during the design process.

Ask about compression and tension forces as they relate to the strength of their structures.

Videos and pictures of the students working on their towers would be helpful tools for their presentations.

Journals and data sheets should present measurements and mathematical calculations.

ENRICHMENT

The Physics of Sandcastles:

http://science.nasa.gov/science-news/science-at-nasa/2002/11jul_mgm/

Building a Solar Tower To Withstand Wind:

<http://www.challenger.org/students/fun/brainteasers/solartower.pdf>