Jumping Your Hurdles
16. What Do You Make of This?

Spatial Requirements: Regular classroom setup: little or no space required
Activity Type: Movement/group
Grades: 2-12
Group Size: 6 or more
Time: 15-20 minutes

Introduction: The ability to brainstorm and think creatively is crucial in effective problem solving. This activity will help students "think outside the box," further developing their creative thinking skills.

Materials:
- Odd objects that can be used for a variety of things (staple remover, wire whisk, kitchen tongs, strainer, paper clip, etc.) – 1 per team
- 1 paper sack per team
- 1 piece of paper per team
- 1 pen or pencil per team

Activity:
Place one object into each bag, and number the bags. Divide the class into groups or teams, and give each team a piece of paper, pen or pencil, and one bag with a mystery object inside. Have each team choose a scribe who will write down group answers. Explain to the class that when you say to start, they are to open the bag and take out the object. Then, as a group, they are to brainstorm all the ways their object could be used. The scribe is to list as many ideas as the group can think of, writing the object's number on the top of the list. Encourage the teams to be creative. At the end of the time limit (3-5 minutes), have the groups put the object back into the bag and pass the bag to the next group. The groups can then complete the same process with their new object. You can continue rotating, giving groups as many turns as you have time for. When the activity is completed, invite a representative from each group to come and share his/her team's list. You can compare the lists, giving points either for creative and original responses or for the number of responses each team listed.

Processing the Experience:
- How hard was it to come up with ideas at the beginning of the activity?
- Did hearing other people's ideas spark any new ideas for you?
- Did other groups come up with similar or different things than your group?
- Did thinking creatively become easier as time went on?
- How can "thinking outside the box" help us solve our problems or jump our hurdles?