**Wrestling for Resources**

**Objective**

Students will be introduced the concept of sustainable development with a simple classroom activity that illustrates how “cooperative behavior” between people competing for a limited resource can benefit all involved.

**Materials and Supplies**

M&M candies or other small prizes, enough to award 15 to each student

**Background**

Pairs of students will thumb wrestle to represent competing for a limited resource. For each time one person traps the other person’s thumb, the “thumb trapper” earns one point. The goal for each pair is to score the most number of points. Be aware that calling the pair of students either partners or opponents when introducing the activity may influence the outcome. Some students will fight to get the most points and neither in the pair will get many. Other students will figure out if they work together, they both can easily earn lots of points. By working together, student pairs are cooperating and both benefit. This cooperative behavior is important in sustainable development.

**Activity**

* Tell your students that they are going to thumb wrestle for M&M’s.
* Pair the students up and tell them they have 30 seconds to play and to count the number of thumb trap- pings by each student. For each thumb trapping, each individual earns one M&M.
* Say go and 30 seconds later say stop.
* Pass out one M&M for each point.
* Discuss the strategies that each pair developed. Some pairs will get 5-7 and others will figure out that they can get 20 or more. How much time does it take to earn one point?
* Have students think about how people in the fishing industry compete for a single resource such as a local population of fish and how they can work together. The students with larger hands might be compared with factory ships that can sweep the ocean with nets miles long, leaving less for the small fishing boats. Students who work together and trade off winning are like those who share the common resources. If resources are shared through policies like quotas, everyone can benefit with more employment, controls on catch sizes, and higher market price. Even the fish can benefit.

**Extension**

Have your students find newspaper articles on declining fisheries and the solutions proposed. Review the results of quota that have been imposed elsewhere (See California Sea Grant’s Cooperative Extension Newsletter from November-December 1994 on the British Columbia halibut fishery quotas).

**Credit**

This activity is based on:

Haddow, A. 1998. Wrestling for Resources. Current, the Journal of Marine Education 15(1) 44