The Group from Hell: Strategies for Resolving Conflicts in PBL Groups

Courtesy of Deborah Allen
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Three Styles of Resolving Conflict

**Win-Lose**
- strategies used are power, dominance, forcing

**Lose-Lose**
- common strategy used is compromise

**Win-Win**
- strategies used are integration, collaboration, problem-solving
Step 1: Conflict Case Studies

A. Read over the case study that your group has been given.

B. Consider the possible resolutions to the dilemma posed by the case.

C. List possible resolutions on the case study handout, in the blank space beneath the text.
Step 2: Conflict Case Study

A. Fold the handout so that your ideas for resolutions are covered up by the folded paper, but the case study text is still revealed.

B. Pass the folded case study on to the next group.

C. When you receive another group’s case study, keep that group’s ideas for resolutions covered up.
Step 3: Conflict Case Study

A. Read over the new case study that your group has been given.

B. What are the possible ways in which the group and/or course instructor can bring about a positive resolution?

C. List these on the handout, in the new blank space beneath the case study.
Steps 4 & 5: Conflict Case Study

A. Pass the case study on to the next group.

B. Uncover the possible resolutions “brainstormed” by the previous 2 groups.

C. Given the information that you have, which of the resolutions do you think is the best option? Why? [alternative: make your own resolution…]

D. How could the conflict that arose in the case have been prevented or significantly lessened?

Be prepared to report out on questions C & D in 10 min.
Resolving Conflicts

**Level 1 - Preventing escalation**

– Monitor groups for early signs of conflict
– Intervene on the spot
– Group evaluations - individuals plus process
– Encourage spontaneous verbal feedback
Resolving Conflicts

**Level 2 - Empowering students**

- Listen to student concerns (all viewpoints)
- Encourage students to resolve the conflict
- Coach students on possible resolution strategies
Resolving Conflicts

**Level 3 - Serve as mediator**
- Establish ground rules
- Ask each student to present point of view while others listen
- Ask each student to define ideal outcome
- Review group ground rules
- Facilitate discussion of possible outcomes
Resolving Conflicts

Level 4 - Instructor intervention
– “I reserve the right to….” statements in the syllabus

Levels 1-3 are loosely based on:
Additional Resources

Conflict Resolution Network <www.crnhq.org>

Conflict Research Consortium <www.conflict.colorado.edu>

The Conflict Resolution Information Source
<www.crinfo.org>