Group Dynamics and Conflict Management

Institute for Transforming Undergraduate Education

Yuan Ze University, Taiwan

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Dr. Deborah Allen’s contribution to this presentation is acknowledged and appreciated.
Why Use Groups?

- Simulates the “real world” use of teams
- High motivation when actively involved
- Learn more fully and with less effort
- Learn in context
- Allows exploration of more complex problems
- Can allow students to self-select their major areas of interest.
Trust and Teams

• Trust is “a willingness to put oneself at risk within a specific context.”
  – Trusting behavior: delegation of tasks to a team member
  – Distrusting behavior: Completing all tasks on your own.

• To be “trustworthy,” indicates one has characteristics that merit another’s trust:
  – Competence—one has the capacity to complete the desired task.
  – Benevolence—one cares about my needs and will act in my best interests.
  – Integrity—the person is honest and keeps his or her commitments.
List five actions that inhibit the formation of team trust. Use competence, benevolence, and integrity as a guide.

*Report out in 5 minutes*
Phases of Group Development

**Group Task**
- Define purpose
- Determine objectives
  - “Best Behavior” / Inwardly focused
- Competition for ideas
  - “What are we supposed to do?”
- Determine & accept roles
- Ease into roles and ground rules
- Development of trust & consequences
- Agenda setting
- Comfort in assigned roles
- Autonomous
- Dissent expected and encouraged
# Phases of Group Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forming</th>
<th>Storming</th>
<th>Norming</th>
<th>Performing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Task</strong></td>
<td><strong>Evidence of Failure</strong></td>
<td><strong>Group Task</strong></td>
<td><strong>Evidence of Failure</strong></td>
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| Define purpose  
Determine objectives  
“Best Behavior” | Group lacks focus  
Attends to wrong things  
Conflict over objectives | Competition for ideas  
“What are we supposed to do?”  
Determine & accept roles | Not completing tasks  
Conflict within group  
Confusion over roles |
| Ease into roles and ground rules  
Development of trust  
Agenda setting | Poor standards  
Conflict within group & w/instructor  
Late assignments | Comfort in assigned roles  
Autonomous  
Dissent expected and encouraged | Poor performance continues  
Conflicts go unresolved  
Sense that grades unfair |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name, Phone, and Email Address</th>
<th>Things I Love to Talk About</th>
<th>Why I Am Taking This Class</th>
<th>Personal or Professional Achievement for 2007</th>
<th>On Teams, I tend to be a…</th>
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**Code of Conduct: How should we handle poor performance on this team?**
Purposes of “Completing the Grid”?

• Forming:
  – What does everyone expect to get out of this class?
  – Do we have 5 leaders? Entertainers?
  – How do I contact you?
• Storming
  – What role do I want to play? (Leader vs. Entertainer)
• Norming
  – How do we handle poor performance?
• Encourages the movement through the phases and the formation of trust
My Group from Hell

Take 5 minutes to trade stories with your neighbor about your “group from hell.”

*How was the conflict resolved?*
Resolving Conflicts

**Level 1 - Preventing escalation**
- Monitor groups for early signs of conflict
- Intervene on the spot
- Group evaluations
- 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/review code of conduct
- 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:
Final Suggestions for Using Groups

- Set expectations early
- Form heterogeneous groups
- Use permanent groups
- Rotate roles of responsibility
- Rely on group-selected ground rules
- Conduct peer evaluations