Chapter 3: Developing Collaborative Norms

THERE is no such thing as group behavior. All "group behavior" results from the decisions and actions of individuals. When individual choices align in productive patterns, the group produces positive results.

Group work would seem to be a natural condition of human life. Since the dawn of humanity on the plains of Africa, bands, clans, tribes, and teams have collaborated for defense, food gathering, and ceremonial purposes. Yet work in groups is often difficult, full of conflicts and tensions, but at the same time is absolutely necessary for producing results in modern organizations.

The tensions between part and whole are not easily resolved. Each group member must balance personal goals with collective goals, acquire resources for his or her own work, and share those resources to support the work of others.

Many organizations try to control these tensions by using facilitators to shape and mold group energy and task focus. While a person in such a role can often make a difference in group performance, a skilled facilitator is only one ingredient for group success. … Individual group members need consciousness and lenses for shaping personal decisions and behaviors in meetings. Four capabilities shape the self-monitoring system of high-performing group members. These in turn organize and drive seven norms of collaboration.

Four Group-Member Capabilities

We first realized the special power of focusing on capabilities as part of a group developing cognitive coaching with Art Costa and other colleagues[1] from the Institute for Intelligent Behavior. A *capability* names what a person is able to do. It is different than *capacity*, which refers to how much one can hold. Capabilities are the metacognitive awarenesses with which people determine when to use, how to use or not to use certain skills. Capabilities therefore organize and direct the use of skills; they influence the application and effectiveness of knowledge and skills.

The four group-member capabilities are as follows:

1. To know one's intentions and choose congruent behaviors

2. To set aside unproductive patterns of listening, responding, and inquiring

3. To know when to self-assert and when to integrate

4. To know and support the group's purposes, topics, processes, and development

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To Know One's Intentions and Choose Congruent Behaviors

Clarity of intention in the moment and over time drives attention, which in turn drives the *what* and *how* of a group member's meeting participation. This clarity precedes and influences the three other capabilities. It is the source of impulse control, patience, strategic listening, and strategic speaking.

This capability is the foundation for flexible and effective behavior. If, for example a person's intention is to positively influence the thinking of others, various behaviors can be used congruently with that intention: Under some circumstances, a paraphrase will convey an attempt to understand and open the door for reciprocal understanding; in some situations, direct advocacy will be more persuasive; in other cases, an inquiry into the thinking of another speaker may be more effective.

To Set Aside Unproductive Patterns of Listening, Responding, and Inquiring

For each meeting participant, there are two audiences. One is external, made up of the other group members. The other is internal, made up of the feelings, pictures, and talk going on inside each individual. Group members need to continually decide which audience to serve. Three major set-aside areas focus this choice and allow fuller and more nonjudgmental participation. They are as follows:

1. To set aside autobiographical listening, responding, and inquiring.
   "ME TOO!"
2. To set aside inquisitive listening, responding, and inquiring.
   "TELL ME MORE"'
3. To set aside solution listening, responding, and inquiring.
   "I KNOW WHAT TO DO!"

The autobiographical frame leads to several problems in group work. The first is the filtering process that goes on when individuals try to hear another's story through the lens of their own experiences. Although this can be a source of empathy, it can also lead to distortion and miscommunication.

This type of listening, responding, and inquiring is a major source of wasted time in meetings. It can lead to endless storytelling in which everyone around the table shares a related anecdote. This is dinner party conversation, not productive meeting talk…. The inquisitive frame is sometimes triggered by the autobiographical. People inquire to see how others' stories compare to their own. Pure curiosity also motivates inquisitive listening, responding, and inquiring. A critical question at this juncture is "How much detail do we need to move this item?" This is an example of what we call a "naive question."… Such questions can be asked by any group member. The purpose is to focus attention on critical matters and avoid unnecessary specificity.

The solution frame is deeply embedded in many of us. Status, rewards, and identity are all tied up in being a good problem solver. The pressure of time often pushes people toward action and away from reflection. The down side of this pattern is that groups and group members get

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trapped in situations and action plans before they have time to fully understand the perspectives of others.

The solution frame also stifles the generation of new possibilities. It gets in the way of developing alternative ways of framing issues and problems, and it pushes groups toward action before creating clear outcomes.

To Know When to Self-Assert and When to Integrate

In productive groups, each member must decide when to self-assert and when to integrate with the group. In one group, a member confided to us that she was concerned about the autocratic disposition of the new chairman. While she valued the directness that he brought to the group's work, she was concerned that a collective ownership would gradually be lost if he were not sometimes challenged. Her issue, and the tension for each group member, is when to challenge and when to go with the flow. Self assertion and integration are conscious choices only when group members have personal clarity about their own intentions and knowledge of and a willingness to support the group's outcomes and methods.

Self-assertion does not necessarily mean self-focus. It can mean asserting oneself into the flow of group interactions to refocus the -group on a topic or on a process. It can mean reminding others of the purpose of the meeting when the conversation strays off course. It can also mean speaking up and advocating for topics and processes.

When individual group members integrate, they align their energy with the content and processes of the meeting. During dialogue they suspend judgments and counter arguments in an attempt to understand viewpoints different from their own. During discussions, they follow the flow of logic and reasoning as it emerges. In this way, solutions satisfying to the group as a whole are more likely to emerge.

Consensus decision making is the ultimate test of this capability. This procedure assumes that participants know when and how to self-assert and when and how to integrate, both during and after the decision-making process…

To Know and Support the Group's Purposes, Topics, Processes, and Development

All ongoing groups need to balance three simultaneous agendas. The first is *task focus*, which is the ultimate expression of the group's purpose. The second agenda is *process skills development.* Without continued attention to expanded repertoire and expanded skills, the group stagnates and does not expand its capacity for handling more complex work in the future. The third agenda is *group development.* All groups exist on a continuum from novice to expert performance. Experience alone is an insufficient teacher. Many longstanding groups operate at novice levels of performance…

High-performing groups are adaptive groups. They learn from experience and improve the way they work. In supporting the group's purposes, topics, processes, and development, individual group members make a commitment to this shared learning and to personal learning.

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Seven Norms of Collaboration

The paradoxes of work in groups establish the essential tensions that groups and their individuals must continually resolve. The four group-member capabilities supply metacognitive and emotional filters for decisions, choices, and behaviors. All of this requires a tool kit for productive group work.

Several years ago our friend and colleague Bill Baker commented that organizations have been training the wrong people. Instead of spending time and energy developing more skilled facilitators, he said, they should develop group members' skills as the way to improve practice and success. Our experience bears out the wisdom of this approach. When group members are knowledgeable and skilled, anyone with simple knowledge of facilitation principles and moves can facilitate constructive group work.

Drawing from the cognitive coaching model[2] and from the work of Peter Senge[3], Baker and his colleagues enumerated a set of norms of collaboration as the tools or productive communication between group members. These are as follows:

1. Pausing
2. Paraphrasing
3. Probing for specificity
4. Putting ideas on the table (and taking them off)
5. Paying attention to self and others
6. Presuming positive intentions
7. Pursuing a balance between advocacy and inquiry

There is a marked difference between skills and norms. A skill is something that someone knows how to do. A skill becomes a norm when it is "normal" behavior in the group. When this occurs, the behavior becomes "normative" for new group members, who model their own behavior on the standards tacitly set by the veterans.

When the seven norms of collaborative work become an established part of group life and group work, cohesion, energy, and commitment to shared work and to the group increase dramatically. In our follow-up work with clients, this is reported time and again. One client recently shared with us that when one or two people in a meeting practice the norms, the behaviors of other group members becomes more effective.

A major tension is that all groups have more tasks to accomplish than time in which to do them. Yet any group that is too busy to reflect on process is too busy to improve. The seven norms become goals for collective growth. In adaptive organizations, individuals and groups select goals from among the seven norms. They practice, monitor, and reflect upon the impact of the norms for themselves and for the group.

Each norm is deceptively simple. Most are skills that people regularly apply in one-to-one communications. The irony is that these seemingly simple behaviors are rare in many meetings. Pausing and paraphrasing are often missing, especially when things get tense. Probing for details is forgotten when members presume to understand others' meanings. This can lead to later confusion and complication. Presuming positive intentions prevents members from judging

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others. Interpersonal judgments spawn blocked thinking and negative presuppositions. Advocating and inquiring into the ideas of others increases the capacity for group members to influence each other.

We offer the following explanation of each of the norms as a rationale for their importance.

Pausing

In education there is a vast research base on the positive effects of teacher pausing and silence on student thinking. The "wait time" research of Mary Budd Rowe has been replicated around the world[5]. Thinking takes time. Higher level thinking takes even longer. The research indicates that it takes from 3 to 5 seconds for most human brains to process higher level thoughts.

Not all brains work the same way. This is especially evident in meetings and group work. Some people prefer to think out loud and construct their ideas externally; others prefer to process ideas internally and reflect and analyze before speaking. The external processors often get in the way of the internal processors. This can be an alienating experience for deliberate, internal thinkers. The meeting topics move by before they have a chance to contribute.

One team with whom we worked began to laugh at themselves after completing the Norms of Collaboration Inventory . When we inquired, they said they'd been working together for more than 2 years and had yet to make a decision. In their group, if you stopped to breathe while speaking, you lost the floor. Consequently, they all had tremendous lung power and claimed they could each talk for hours on a single inhalation. What they recognized was that without a norm of pausing, meetings became a competition for air space. They soon learned to monitor several types of pauses to increase their productivity and satisfaction.

Groups become skilled at four types of pauses. The first type occurs after a question is asked. This allows initial processing time for those being asked the question. The second type occurs after someone speaks. Human beings think and speak in bursts. With additional processing time, more thoughts are organized into coherent speech.

The first two types of pauses require the questioner and other group members to monitor and control their own behavior. These are pauses to give other people time to think. A third type is under the control of each individual who is asked a question. This is personal reflection time in which that person waits before answering. Sometimes they say, “Give me a moment to think about that before answering.” At other times they acknowledge the question nonverbally, go inside themselves to think, and then respond to the question. This is also a nice way to model thoughtfulness for others and can be an important normative behavior in groups.

A fourth type of pause in meetings is a collective pause. This can be formally structured or can occur spontaneously. These shared pauses allow ideas and questions to settle in and allow time for note taking and reflection. The intent of these breaks in the action is to create shared cognitive space for the group and its members.

Pausing begins a pattern that is followed by paraphrasing and questioning. Groups give themselves a powerful gift when they establish this pattern as a norm; pause, paraphrase, and probe for details; pause, paraphrase, and inquire for a wider range of thoughts; and pause, paraphrase, and inquire about feelings.

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Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is one of the most valuable and least used communication tools in meetings. Even people who naturally and skillfully paraphrase in one-to-one settings often neglect this vital behavior in group settings. Groups that develop consciousness about paraphrasing and give themselves permission to use this reflected tool become clearer and more cohesive about their work.

Try this experiment. Paraphrase, then ask a question. Do this several times. Now ask questions without preceding them with paraphrases. Since a well-crafted paraphrase communicates "I am trying to understand you--and therefore I value what you have to say" and establishes a relationship between people and ideas. Questions preceded by paraphrases will be perceived similarly. Questions by themselves, no matter how artfully constructed, put a degree of psychological distance between the asker and the asked. Paraphrasing aligns the parties and creates a safe environment for thinking.[6]

Mediational paraphrases reflect the speaker's content and the speaker's emotions about the content and frame a logical level for holding the content. The paraphrase reflects content back to the speaker for further consideration and connects that response to the flow of discourse emerging within the group. Such paraphrasing creates permission to probe for details and elaboration. Without the paraphrase, probing may be perceived as interrogation.

The Structure and Flow of Effective Paraphrasing

Listen and observe carefully to calibrate the content and emotions of the speaker. *Signal your intention* to paraphrase. This is done by modulating intonation with the use of an approachable voice and by opening with a reflective stem. Such stems put the focus and emphasis on the speaker's ideas, not on the paraphraser's interpretation of those ideas.

For example, reflective paraphrases should not use the pronoun "I" The phrase "What I think I hear you saying . . ." signals to many speakers that their thoughts no longer matter and that the paraphraser is now going to insert his or her own ideas into the conversation.

The following paraphrase stems signal that a paraphrase is coming:

You're suggesting ...
You're proposing…
So, what you're wondering is ...
So, you are thinking that…
Um, you're pondering on the effects of …
So, your hunch is that…

Choose a logical level with which to respond. There are three broad categories of logical levels.[7]

1. Acknowledge and clarify content and emotion. If the paraphrase is not completely accurate, the speaker will offer corrections: "So, you're concerned about the budgeting process and ways to get input early on."
2. Summarize and organize by offering themes and containers to organize several statements or separate jumbled issues. This is an especially important type of paraphrase to use when

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multiple speakers contribute to a topic: "We all seem to be concerned about two issues here. One is resource allocation and the other is the quality of programming. "

3. Shift focus to a higher or lower logical level. Paraphrasing within a flow of discourse often moves through a sequence of acknowledging, summarizing, and shifting focus to a higher or lower logical level. Paraphrases move to a higher logical level when they name concepts, goals, values, and assumptions: "So a major goal here is to define fairness in the budgeting processes and compare those criteria to our operating values." Paraphrases move to a lower logical level when abstractions and concepts need grounding in details: "So 'fair' might mean that we construct a needs assessment form for each department to fill out and submit for consideration in the budgeting process."

Learning Styles and Paraphrasing

Paraphrases that summarize or shift the logical level of discourse support and stretch the thinking styles of different group members. Global thinkers appreciate paraphrases that separate and organize "thinking in progress." At other times the shift down in logical levels grounds global thinkers in specific examples and concrete details.

Concrete, highly sequential thinkers learn from the shift up to higher logical levels. This helps them to explore a bigger picture and creates a wider context for thinking.

Probing for Specificity

Human brains are not designed for specificity. In a world swimming in details, brains form quick generalizations from fragments of information. Brains delete particulars from streams of data and distort incoming and outgoing messages to fit deeply embedded models of reality.[8] These are all natural processes; they do not willfully occur. Generalizations, deletions, and distortions are survival patterns hardwired into the human brain. They are adaptations for the challenges faced by our hunting and gathering ancestors who needed to make quick decisions for survival.

In more modern times these same traits cause difficulties in human communication. Conversations go haywire when the various parties make different assumptions about the meaning of words and concepts and neglect to verify or correct those assumptions. Problem definition, problem solving, and solution generation all rely on specificity for success.

Five categories of vagueness inhabit human speech:

1. Vague nouns and pronouns
2. Vague action words
3. Comparators
4. Rule words
5. Universal quantifiers

Vague Nouns and Pronouns

Someone named "they" makes most of the decisions in organization "They" are joined by "the administrators," "the union," and a host of others as the source of mysterious messages, concerns, and directives. Unless group members know who "they" are, communication takes longer and people do not always know how to treat the information.

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When a speaker in a meeting says our programs do not meet the needs of our clients, someone in the group needs to probe for specificity by paraphrasing and asking for details. It might sound like this: "So, you're concerned that our programs are not meeting specified needs. What's your sense of the needs that are not being met?"

After the speaker answers, the logical follow-up question would be about which areas are of most concern and probing for detail. Without the details, the group does not know which problem to solve.

Vague Action Words

Planning and problem-solving sessions require specificity for targeted action. The verb plan itself means very different things to different people. Some think it means scratching ideas on a napkin; others imagine timelines and flowcharts with names and dates attached. Groups need to define their action words. Words like *improve, enhance, design, modify,* and *understand* are all examples of vague action words used by working groups. Someone should serve the group by probing for specificity in order for the team to agree upon concepts, plan for change, and act in concert.

Vague nouns and pronouns and vague action words often go hand in hand. "We want our programs to reflect the state of the art in our field." This simple statement easily produces surface agreement in most groups. It is only when we probe for what state of the art content and what it means to "reflect" that the issue can even be discussed rationally.

Comparators

"This meeting was much better than last month's session." Unless the group discovers the speaker's criteria for "better," members do not know how to repeat the improvement or, for that matter, whether the speaker's "better" is desirable. Words like *best, larger, slower, more,* and *least* leave out the point of comparison and the standard for the comparison.

When undefined comparators are used, a group member should probe for criteria. "So you've enjoyed this meeting. What were some of the ways this was better for you?" The respondent has been careful here to ask the speaker for his or her criteria ("better for you"), which might not be important criteria to other group members. The intention is to draw the speaker out and expand the meaning of the statement.

Rule Words

People operate with conscious and unconscious rules about how the world works and how they are supposed to operate in it. These rules appear in language when people say things like, "We have to," "We must," "You shouldn't," and "I can't."

To clarify these rules and the ways that they govern behavior, other group members should probe for the rules behind the statements. "What would happen if we didn't?" "Who or what says we must?" "Shouldn't? Who made up that rule" "What stops you?" Intonation is important here. The voice carrying the response needs to be well modulated, friendly and non threatening.

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Universal Quantifiers

"Everyone knows that this program is great." Words and phrases like *everyone, all, no one, never,* and *always* are examples of universal quantifiers. Linguists use the term *deity voice* to describe this type of language. It is spoken as if the statement contains a universal truth of which "everyone" must be aware.

As most parents and middle-school teachers know, universal quantifiers are the lingua franca of teenagers. "I need to go to the mall; all my friends will be there." The typical response pattern is, "All your friends? I can't imagine that all your friends' parents would permit them to go."

By qualifying and clarifying a universal quantifier, group members ground their conversations in data and measurable details. When someone makes the statement that "These students never understand the assignments the first time," another participant can probe for "never": "Has there ever been a time when students understood the first time around." This can be followed up with an inquiry into the qualities and conditions of the assignments that are an exception to the initial statement.

Putting Ideas on the Table

Ideas are the heart of group work. In order to be effective, they must be released to the group. "Here is an idea for consideration. One possible approach to this issue might be . . ." When ideas are owned by individuals, other group members tend to interact with the speaker out of their feelings for and relationship to the speaker rather than with the ideas presented. This is especially true when the speakers have role or knowledge authority related to the topic at hand. To have an idea be received in the spirit in which you tell it, label your intentions, "This is one idea…" or "Here is a thought…" or "This is not an advocacy, I am just thinking out loud."

Knowing when to pull ideas off the table is equally important. "I think this idea is blocking us; let's set it aside and move on to other possibilities." In this case, continued advocacy for the idea is not influencing other group members' thinking. This is a signal to pull back and reconsider approaches.

Productive group work is driven by data, both qualitative and quantitative. Data about client satisfaction, program quality, outcomes, and the like are important grounded "ideas" to put on the table. Collaborative work in requires data as well as impressions. In fact, important learning is possible when the data does and does not align with the impressions of group members.

Paying Attention to Self and Others

Meaningful dialogue and discussion is facilitated when each group member is conscious of oneself and of others. Skilled group members are aware of what they are saying, how they are saying it, and how others are receiving and responding to their ideas. This includes paying attention to both physical and verbal cues in oneself and others. Since the greatest part of communication occurs nonverbally, group members need consciousness about their total communication package.[9] This includes posture, gesture, proximity, muscle tension, facial expression, and the pitch, pace, volume, and inflection in their voices.

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One important skill to develop is paying attention to and responding to the learning styles of others. The earlier section on Paraphrasing offers some tips for communicating with global and concrete thinkers. In addition to using those ideas, skilled group members should try to match the language forms of others. This occurs when the respondent joins in a metaphor offered by another. It also occurs when the respondent matches the representation system of the speaker by using visual kinesthetic or auditory words in response to hearing the speaker operate within one or more of those categories.[10]

> **Speaker:** "I'd like to *see* us develop a workable action plan."
> **Respondent:** "So, you have an *image* of practical process that we can apply to our work. What are some of the features you'd like to *have on view* before us?"

Presuming Positive Intentions

Assuming that others' intentions are positive encourages honest conversations about important matters. This is both an operating stance that group members need to take if dialogue and discussion are to flourish and a linguistic act as speakers frame their paraphrases and inquiries within positive presuppositions.

Positive presuppositions reduce the possibility of the listener receiving threats or challenges in a paraphrase or question. Instead of asking, "Does anybody here know why these programs aren't popular?", the skilled group member might say, "Given our shared interest in promoting access to these programs, I'd like to surface our assumptions about what might be causing a lack of interest."

The first question is likely to trigger defensiveness. The second approach will most likely lead to speculation, exploration, and collective understanding. This is especially true when a speaker has strong emotions about a topic and even more important when the respondent initially disagrees with the speaker. For example:

> **Speaker:** "I'm really ticked off about out lack of communication.. We never find out about the important things until everyone else knows about them."
> **Respondent:** "So, as a committed professional, you'd like useful information about our organization in a timely fashion and in a means convenient for you. As you think about such a system, what might be some important components?"

In the example above, the respondent presumes that the speaker is a committed professional who wants to solve a real problem. People tend to act as if such presuppositions are true. The emotional processors in the brain hear the positive intention and open up access to higher level thinking.[11]

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Pursuing a Balance Between Advocacy and Inquiry

This last norm of collaboration is based on the work of Peter Senge and his colleagues at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Center for Organizational Learning.[12] We have extended the concept and refined specific language patterns for operating within this norm.

The balance of advocacy and inquiry requires both emotional and cognitive resources. The balance is most necessary at the exact point when many group members are least likely to want to inquire into the ideas of others. It is at the moment of greatest disagreement and discomfort that this norm makes the biggest difference.

To balance means to spend equal amounts of time and energy advocating for one's own ideas and inquiring into the ideas of others. To do both equally requires the resources of the other six norms of collaboration. Advocacy and inquiry are built on the linguistic and perceptual foundation described earlier in this chapter.

The power of this norm became apparent to us in an experience related to us by our friend and colleague Diane Zimmerman, who was enrolled in a doctoral program in organizational development. At the time she was also a principal in Davis, California. Diane and her staff had taken on the norms of collaboration as a shared learning goal As a skilled and congruent leader, Diane knew that she needed to apply the norms in her interactions with adults and students. To support her own learning, she continually sought opportunities to master and integrate these communication skills.

At an early stage in her graduate program, the professors organized a small-group learning experience. The students were placed in small groups and given a controversial topic to discuss. Most of the groups were soon at each other's throats with rising emotions, much heated talk and little listening, Diane's group took a much different course. After a time, the professors gathered around in surprise, since the activity normally evoked the responses present in the other groups. Unable to resist their curiosity, they asked her group what was going on. At this point Diane confessed that she had been practicing the norm of balancing advocacy for her ideas with pausing, paraphrasing, and inquiring into the ideas of others. Her behavior established this norm, solely by example, within her group.

The intention of advocacy is to influence the thinking of others. Group members sometimes attempt to influence with volume and passion. Advocacy works through revealing logic and the chain of reasoning that supports assumptions and conclusions.

The power of advocacy increases when it is structured to influence multiple audiences. Global reasoners increase their impact when they learn to frame issues for concrete and sequential thinkers. Those driven by logic and facts increase their influence when they learn to frame their ideas within feelings and emotions. It is this ability to stretch one's own thinking preferences that often makes the difference in group members being able to hear one another and be persuaded by the positions and stances of others (Table 3-1).

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Developing Groups

Ballet dancers practice in mirrored studios to monitor posture and the subtleties of their movements. Groups also improve by reflection. The Norms of Collaboration Inventory serves this purpose.

With groups in the early stages of development, the inventory can be filled out by individuals. Once completed, the form becomes the basis for dialogue about skills development and baseline data for goal setting for individuals and groups. We encourage groups to master one or two of the norms at a time rather than attempt to take them all on at once.

For intact groups with some history of working together, the form is best completed by subsets of the group. In twos and threes, they can work through the form rating the full group's use of each norm. Each subset then compares its assessments with the other subgroups. Most groups discover that all members do not perceive meeting behaviors in the same way. This conversation leads to goal setting for individuals and groups.

The Likert scale provides a useful vehicle for ongoing self- and group assessment. Regular monitoring with reflective processing keeps the norms alive and motivates steady improvementThe four group-member capabilities and the seven norms of collaboration are essential capacities and skills for high-performing groups. They operate within several practical frameworks that help groups to develop shared meaning and gracefully reach decisions. In the next chapter we describe two ways of talking among adults that make a difference for student learning. Both ways, dialogue and discussion, draw on the group-member capabilities and norms.

Table 3-1. Balancing Advocacy and Inquiry

The Structure of Advocacy
Make your thinking and reasoning visible.
State your assumptions. "Here is what I assume are the causes of . . ."
Describe your reasoning. "I came to this conclusion because . . ."
Describe your feelings. "I feel_____about this because . . ."
Distinguish data from interpretation. "This is the data I have. I'll share it as objectively as possible. Now here is what I think the data means . . ."
Reveal your perspective. "I'm seeing this from the viewpoint of_____."
Frame the wider context that surrounds this issue. "Several groups would be affected by what I propose."
Give concrete examples. "To get a clear picture, imagine that you are in a new school and. . ."
Test your assumptions and conclusions.

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Encourage others to explore your model, assumptions, and data. "What do you think about what I have just said? Do you see any flaws in my reasoning? What might you add?"

Reveal where you are least clear. "Here's one area that you might help me think through . . ."

Stay open. Encourage others to provide different points of view. "In what ways do you see it differently?"

Search for generalizations, deletions, and distortions. "In what I've presented, do any of you believe that I might have overgeneralized, left out data, or reported data incorrectly?"

The Structure of Inquiry

Ask others to make their thinking visible.

Use nonaggressive language and an approachable voice. "Can you help me understand your thinking here?"

Use a pattern of pause, paraphrase, and probe or inquire.

Use tentative language. "What are some of ... How might you ... What are your hunches about . . .?"

Inquire for values, beliefs, goals, assumptions, examples, or significance. "How does this relate to your (values, beliefs, goals or assumptions)?" "What are some examples of what you think might happen if we act on your proposal?" "In what ways does this relate to your other concerns?"

Explain your reasons for inquiring. "I'm asking about your assumptions here because. . ."

Invite introspection. "What questions do you have about your own thinking?"

Compare your assumptions to theirs.

Investigate other assumptions. "Would you be willing to have each of us list our assumptions, compare them, and explore if there might be other assumptions surrounding this issue?"

Check your understanding of what is being said by pausing, paraphrasing, and inquiring. "So, your main concern is the way our team is interacting and you'd like to see more cohesion and focused energy. What are some of your thoughts about how this might look and sound in action?"

Test what others say by asking for broader contexts and examples. "How might your proposal affect ... In what ways is this similar to . . . Please share a typical example of . . ."

Reveal your listening processes. "I have been listening for themes. So far I've heard two. Are there others?"

Adapted from: Garmston, R.J. & Wellman, B.M. (1999) *The Adaptive School: A Sourcebook for Developing Collaborative Groups.* Norwood, MA: Christopher Gordon. Used with permission.

End Notes

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