

## GROUP WORK NORMS

We often assume teenagers, and even adults, know how to work cooperatively in groups without explicitly making our expectations clear or teaching them these skills. Developing group work norms with students that can be posted on the walls and referred to frequently throughout the school year can make a huge difference in creating a cooperative classroom environment. The norms should be revisited when you prepare students for a new group work activity or when you debrief at the end of an activity. If students are utilizing the norms during an activity, make sure to acknowledge and reinforce the behavior with positive affirmation (either with the group or the whole class). This can be especially effective for recognizing students that are perceived to have low status within the group.

### Examples of group work norms:

- *no one person should dominate the group*
- *give other people a chance to talk*
- *everyone should contribute equally to the group*
- *ask for other people's opinions*
- *no one of us is as smart as all of us together*
- *no one is done until all of us is done*
- *you have the right to ask anyone in their group for help*
- *you have the responsibility to assist anyone who asks for help*
- *help other members without doing their work for them*
- *play your role in the group*
- *encourage group members to find different ways to solve the same problem*
- *be open to other people's ideas and willing to compromise*
- *give reasons for your ideas and discuss many different ideas before reaching a conclusion*
- *be an active listener by paraphrasing and building on other group members ideas*
- *understand the issues and develop a plan or strategy first before creating your group product*
- *it is healthy to disagree, as long as different ideas are valued and respected*
- *take time to build consensus with the group before moving forward with a plan*
- *if a conflict occurs, use "I feel" statements rather than blaming statements (i.e. rather than saying "you're such a ....!", say "When you told me that my ideas was stupid, I felt like no one in the group cared about my ideas")*
- *make positive requests for change (i.e. rather than saying "you're so rude -stop interrupting me!", say "please wait until I finish before you start talking")*
- *challenge the idea, rather than the person (i.e. rather than saying "you don't make any sense!", say "can you explain the reasoning or evidence behind that idea?")*

Group work norms can be developed through skill builders in the beginning of the year. Skill builders introduce students to the idea of group work in a low stakes way, meaning that the activities are fun, engaging, and do not require certain academic abilities to be successful (Complex Instruction Skill Builders: <http://www.stanford.edu/class/ed284/csb/>).