

Tool 54

How Teams Function

Why is teamwork important?

According to Stephanie Hirsh of the National Staff Development Council, teams

increase their productivity when they learn the skills associated with dialogue, building consensus, and addressing conflict. Teams also become stronger when they learn the skills associated with collective inquiry, group problem-solving, and evaluation. Implementing these skills will take time and practice. Participation by leaders in team meetings and follow-up support by staff developers demonstrate the school's commitment to the goal and the teams. Investing the time to build the framework and skills of team members will accelerate the school's progress toward its goals. (2002, p. 1)

How do teams develop?

According to group development language introduced by Tuckman in 1965 and described in greater detail by Johnson and Johnson in 1982 in *Joining Together: Group Theory and Group Skills*, groups working together toward a common goal will go through a predictable cycle of group development. They will form, storm, norm, and ultimately (it is hoped) perform. It's important to identify the team's stage of development and to use effective strategies as the group moves through these stages. What do these stages look like? The National Staff Development Council (2005) describes them as follows:

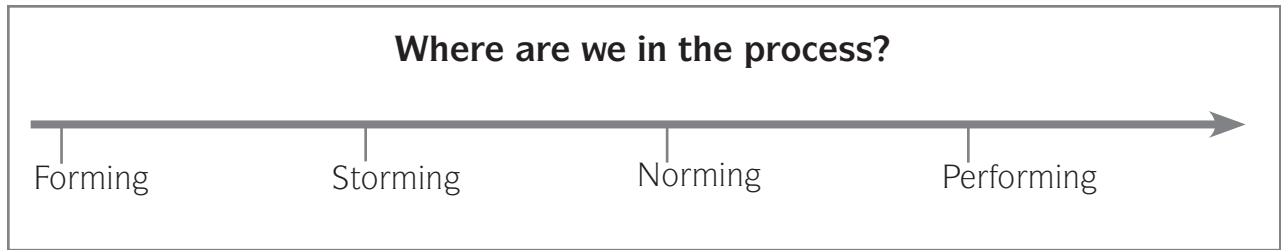
Forming: When groups are organized, a number of needs and questions arise. Group members at this stage have high expectations as well as anxiety about where they individually fit and about organizational parameters.

Storming: In this stage, group members rebel against one another and often against authority. Members may express disappointment with the lack of progress. They can feel angry about goals, tasks, and action plans.

Norming: If groups successfully resolve the storming issues, they arrive at this stage. Dissatisfaction is replaced by harmony, trust, support, and respect. Group members are more open and willing to provide feedback.

Performing: This stage describes a highly productive group. Group members work collaboratively and interdependently, show confidence in accomplishing tasks, share leadership responsibilities, and perform substantive work.

To identify the present stage of your team, contact NSDC.org for the *Tools for Schools* November/December 2005 issue (pp. 5–7) to access a brief questionnaire.



References

Hirsh, S. (2002, October). Together, you can do more. *National Staff Development Council Results*.

National Staff Development Council. (2005, November/December). Transform your group into a team. *Tools for Schools*, 9(2).