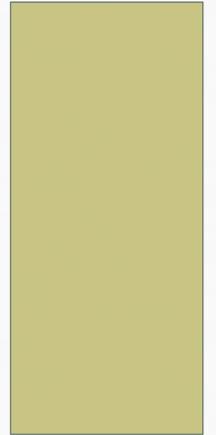# ESTABLISHING POSITIVE GROUP CULTURES

DARREN GROSCH & LINDSEY LUDWIG

OBJECTIVES

- Learn how to establish & maintain a productive student group culture while abroad
- Learn how to facilitate group processes allowing students to get the most of being abroad
- Build leadership development as a facilitator
- Review the four stages of group development
  1. Forming
  2. Storming
  3. Norming
  4. Performing
  5. Adjourning

ACTIVITY

FIVE STAGES OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT

1. Forming
2. Storming
3. Norming
4. Performing
5. Adjourning

STAGE ONE: FORMING

- **Definition:** Groups are generally new teams that are learning how to work together

- **Characteristics**: Members tend to be tentative and polite and have minimal conflict

- **Critical Skills and Activities:** Groups need to identify their purpose, develop group norms, identify group processes, define roles, build relationships and trust

- **Role of Facilitator/leader:** Groups need a strong leader who can help the team go through its forming activities, build safety and trust, provide safe space and be honest

STAGE TWO: STORMING

- **Definition:** Group is now experiencing conflict and disagreements. This is natural, but groups need to find effective ways to handle conflict before they move on.

- **Group Characteristics:** Groups tend to have less conformity, apathy, homesickness, increased conflict and individuals 'jockey' for displays of power.

- **Critical Skills and Activities**: Groups need to learn how to resolve conflict; clarify their roles, power, and structure; and develop consensus building.

- **Role of Facilitator/Leader:** Leader needs to know the boundaries: keep in mind safety, positive individual and group growth, promote effective communication (and communicate!), facilitate group decisions making processes

STAGE THREE: NORMING

- **Definition:** Groups have successfully moved out of the storming stage and are ready to move to a higher level of communication and problem-solving.

- **Group characteristics:** Members of stage 3 teams have expanded comfort zone, demonstrate an improved ability to complete tasks, solve problems, resolve conflict

- **Critical skills and activities:** Groups need to learn to engage in more sophisticated problem-solving and decision-making, continue the use of effective strategies for conflict resolution and take greater levels of responsibility for their roles

- **Role of leader(s):** Leaders become less directive, team members feel empowered, and multiple leaders emerge, with the increased comfort, leaders must watch for complacency

STAGE FOUR: PERFORMING

- **Definition:** Groups are at their highest performance level and process their strengths and weaknesses while accomplishing their goals.

- **Group characteristics:** Stage 4 groups have taken responsibility for their experience and are proactively engaging in their environment. The group is able to evaluate its effectiveness and conflict is viewed as an opportunity. Groups tend to be energetic, creative, and fun!

- **Critical skills and activities:** Groups hold high expectations for their performance. They often use sub-groups as well as the large group for decision-making and task completion. Teams also recognize the need to ensure that all members are in agreement with the role and purpose of sub-groups.

- **Role of Leader:.** There is less need for facilitators to lead the group. Leaders can push individuals to raise the bar and new goal setting, leader can ask difficult questions, provide feedback for support, listen

STAGE FIVE: ADJOURNING

- Just as essential as setting the tone at the program start is steering your students to reflect and assess upon their experiences at its end. For many students, the program end is really the beginning of an extensive journey of personal transformation.

- It is essential to be available to students during this stage. Slow down, facilitate a one-on-one meeting with students, gather for a closing celebration

CHALLENGES & ADAPTATIONS

- What problems can you see arise from this process?
- Adapted group development discussion
- Case studies

ACTIVITIES

- Forming: Fears, Goals, etc…In a Hat
- Storming: VOMPing, Meditation
- Forming: Stirring the Pot
- Performing: New goal setting sessions
- Adjourning: Closing ceremonies

REFERENCES

- Friend, M., & Cook, L. (2003). *Interactions: Collaboration skills for school professionals (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.*

- Thousand, J., & Villa, R. (1992). Collaborative teams: A powerful tool in restructuring. In R.Villa, J. Thousand, W. Stainback, & S. Stainback (Eds.) *Restructuring for caring and effective education: An administrative guide to creating heterogeneous schools.* Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes*.*