



EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING

Effective Collaboration Norms and Guidelines

In order to cultivate a climate where everyone is focused on ongoing, positive growth and improving student achievement, use the Seven Norms of Collaboration.

Seven Norms of Collaboration

1. Promoting a Spirit of Inquiry and Balancing Advocacy

Exploring perceptions, assumptions, beliefs, and interpretations promotes the development of understanding. Inquiring into the ideas of others before advocating for one's own ideas is important to productive dialogue and discussion. Advocacy after thoughtful inquiry moves us towards decision-making. Groups take care to balance advocacy with inquiry, so as not to rush to decision-making nor leave issues without closure.

2. Pausing

Pausing before responding or asking a question allows time for thinking and enhances dialogue, discussion, and decision-making.

3. Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is a powerful way to indicate that you are listening to others and are trying to understand them. Maintain the intention and accuracy of what the speaker said as you recast their contribution in your own words or with an example. Using a paraphrase starter that is comfortable for you – “So...” or “As you are saying...” or “You’re thinking...” – and following the starter with an efficient paraphrase assists members of the group in hearing and understanding one another as they converse and make decisions.

4. Probing

Using gentle open-ended probes or inquiries – “Please say more about...” or “I’m interested in...” or “I’d like to hear more about...” or “Then you are saying...” – increases the clarity and precision of the group’s thinking.

5. Putting Ideas on the Table

Ideas are the heart of meaningful dialogue and discussion. Label the intention of your comments. For example: “Here is one idea...” or “One thought I have is...” or “Here is a possible approach...” or “Another consideration might be...”

6. Paying Attention to Self and Others

Meaningful dialogue and discussion are facilitated when each group member is conscious of self and of others, is aware of what (s)he is saying, and how it is said as well as how others are responding. This includes paying attention to learning styles when planning, facilitating, and participating in group meetings and conversations.

7. Presuming Positive Intentions

Assuming that others’ intentions are positive promotes and facilitates meaningful dialogue and discussion, and prevents unintentional put-downs. Using positive intentions in speech is one manifestation of this norm.