

Norms of Collaboration Inventory

NORM	RARELY	OCCASIONALLY	FREQUENTLY
1. Pausing			
• Listens attentively to others' ideas with mind and body			
• Allows time for thought after asking a question or making a response (3–5 sec.)			
• Waits until others have finished before entering the conversation			
2. Paraphrasing			
• Uses paraphrases that acknowledge and clarify content and emotions: "So you're concerned about..."			
• Uses paraphrases that summarize and organize: "We all seem to be concerned about..."			
• Uses paraphrases that shift a conversation to different levels of abstraction: "So a major goal here is to..."			
• Uses nonverbal communication in paraphrasing			
3. Probing for Specificity			
• Seeks agreement on what words mean			
• Asks questions to clarify facts, ideas, stories			
• Asks questions to clarify explanations, implications, consequences			
• Asks questions to surface assumptions, points of view, beliefs, values			
4. Putting Ideas on the Table and Pulling Them Off			
• States intention of communication: "Here is an idea for consideration"			
• Reveals all relevant information			
• Considers intended communication for relevance and appropriateness before speaking			
• Provides facts, inferences, ideas, opinions, suggestions			
• Explains reasons behind statements, questions, actions: "This is not an advocacy; I am just thinking out loud"			
• Removes, or announces the modification of, own ideas, opinions, points of view: "I think this idea is blocking us; let's move on to other possibilities"			
5. Paying Attention to Self and Others			
• Maintains awareness of own thoughts and feelings while having them			
• Maintains awareness of others' voice patterns, nonverbal communications, use of physical space			
• Maintains awareness of group's tasks, mood, relevance of own and others' contributions			

NORM	RARELY	OCCASIONALLY	FREQUENTLY
6. Presuming Positive Intentions			
• Acts as if others mean well			
• Restraints impulsivity triggered by own emotional responses			
• Uses positive presuppositions when responding to others' inquiries: "I assume you might think differently. What are your ideas?"			
7. Pursuing a Balance Between Advocacy and Inquiry			
• Advocates for own ideas and inquires into the ideas of others: "Do you see any flaws in my reasoning?"			
• Acts to provide equitable opportunities for participation: "In what ways do you see it differently?"			
• Presents rationale for positions, including assumptions, facts, feelings: "This is the data I have. This is what I think it means."			
• Disagrees respectfully and openly with ideas and offers rationale for disagreement: "I am seeing this from the point of view of..."			
• Inquires of others about their reasons for reaching and occupying a position: "Can you help me understand your thinking here?"			

Source: Robert J. Garmston and Bruce M. Wellman, *The Adaptive School: A Sourcebook for Developing Collaborative Groups*. 1999. pp. 278-279. Norwood, MA: Christopher Gordon. Reprinted with permission.

Explanation of the Seven Norms of Collaboration

Pausing

Pausing slows down the “to and fro” of discussion. It provides for “wait time,” which has been shown to dramatically improve thinking. It signals to others that their ideas and comments are worth thinking about, dignifies their contributions, and implicitly encourages future participation. Pausing enhances discussion and greatly increases the quality of decision making.

Paraphrasing

To paraphrase is to recast into one’s own words, to summarize, or to provide an example of what has just been said. It helps members of a team hear and understand each other as they evaluate data and formulate decisions, and it helps to reduce group tension by communicating the attempt to understand. Signal your intention to paraphrase (“So, you’re suggesting...”), and choose a level for the paraphrase: (1) acknowledge and clarify; (2) summarize and organize; or (3) shift the focus to a higher or lower level.

Probing for Specificity

Probing seeks to clarify something that is not yet fully understood. More information may be required or a term may need to be more fully defined. Clarifying questions can be either specific or open ended, depending upon the circumstances. Ask for clarification of vague nouns and pronouns (e.g., “they”), action words (e.g., “improve”), comparators (e.g., “best”), rules (e.g., “should”), and universal quantifiers (e.g., “everyone”).

Putting Ideas on the Table and Pulling Them Off

Ideas are the heart of a meaningful discussion. Members need to feel safe to put their ideas on the table for discussion. To have an idea be received in the spirit in which you offer it, label your intentions: “This is one idea...” or “Here’s a thought...” The other half of this norm is equally important: knowing when an idea may be blocking dialogue or “derailing” the process and therefore should be taken off the table.

Paying Attention to Self and Others

Collaborative work is facilitated when each team member is explicitly conscious of self and others—not only aware of what he or she is saying, but also how it is said and how others are responding to it. We need to be curious about other people’s impressions and understandings but not judgmental. As we come to understand someone else’s way of processing information, we are better able to communicate with them.

Presuming Positive Intentions

This is the assumption that other members of the team are acting from positive and constructive intentions, even if we disagree with their ideas. Presuming positive presuppositions is not a passive state; rather, it needs to become a regular part of one’s verbal responses. The assumption of positive intentions is an aspect of the concept of a “loyal opposition,” and it allows one member of a group to play “the devil’s advocate.” It builds trust, promotes healthy disagreement, and reduces the likelihood of misunderstanding and emotional conflict.

Pursuing a Balance Between Advocacy and Inquiry

Both advocacy and inquiry are necessary components of collaborative work. The intention of advocacy is to influence others' thinking; the intention of inquiry is to understand their thinking. Highly effective teams consciously attempt to balance these two components. Inquiry provides for greater understanding. Advocacy leads to decision making. Maintaining a balance between advocating for a position and inquiring about the positions held by others helps create a genuine learning community.

Adapted from Robert J. Garmston and Bruce M. Wellman, *The Adaptive School: A Sourcebook for Developing Collaborative Groups*. 1999. pp. 37–47. Norwood, MA: Christopher Gordon. Used with permission.