

Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing Your Way to Success!

by Stephanie Hirsh

SCHOOL TEAM INNOVATOR - November 1996

We can't ignore the fact that teams must go through predictable stages of development if they are going to achieve their goals. We know these stages and we have interventions to facilitate a team's movement through the stages.

All groups will form, storm, norm, and, ultimately and hopefully, perform. These stages are outlined in the NSDC Standard for Staff Development: Group Development. Teams tell me they appreciate knowing in advance that they will naturally form, storm, norm, and, ultimately and hopefully, perform.

So this month let's review these four stages; learn a strategy for determining a team's stage; and consider interventions for moving your team along.

Read the following descriptions of the group development stages identified on the diagram. Create an overhead or handout of the wheel and ask group members to "plot" where they think the group is. On the wheel, indicate where individuals have placed the team. Consider the interventions that follow each description for furthering your team's movement on the wheel.

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

- Plan icebreakers for all group gatherings.
- Clarify expectations and desired group outcomes.
- Invite a "ranking official" to provide the "charge" to the team.
- Assign roles or procedures for designating chair, facilitator, recorder, and process observer

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

- Consider a retreat to address the feelings and concerns in the group.
- Implement selective abandonment to refocus the group.
- Clarify expectations of behavior among group members in and out of meetings.
- Provide training on consensus building and conflict resolution

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.

- Invite a critical friend to work with the group.
- Monitor and regularly update group norms.
- Plan appropriate celebrations for work accomplished
- Provide additional training on meeting and group effectiveness

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.

- Ensure the group continues to learn together.
- Share leadership and task responsibilities.
- Consider strategies for increasing time efficiency.
- Find ways to recognize and promote risk takers.

Successful teams go through each stage to become a performing team. When new members are added, teams often have to cycle back to review issues previously resolved. And when your team successfully arrives at the performing stage, there is truly a great sense of accomplishment. I hope during your course of service to your school's children, you will experience it.