

MALDEF

Parent School Partnership

Session 8: Understanding Group Process

Parts of this presentation were created with information from the materials of Rigoberto Rodríguez Consulting, Inc., 2005 and Service Planning Area 7 from the Children's Planning Council.



*Mexican American Legal Defense & Educational Fund
America, It's Home, A MALDEF Educational Campaign*



Leadership and Team Work

“Leadership is not just holding a position
but taking ACTION”

“One is not born a leader. One becomes a leader.”

“A team is not link a train that has many cars pulled
by one locomotive. A true team is like a rowboat
in which all passengers are rowing in the same
direction. A team without direction is like a boat
without a captain; it gets lost at sea and ends up
shipwrecked.”

- Leadership & Social Action,
Methodology Guidebook, 2004

Working by Yourself vs. In a Group

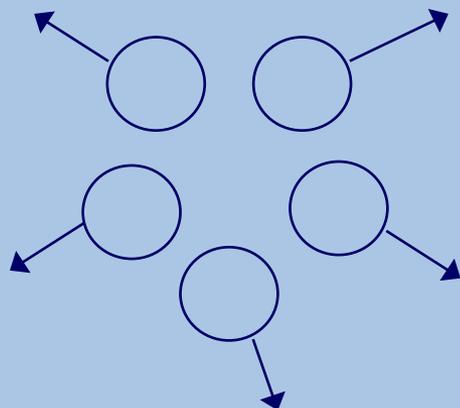
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of working in a group?
- What is the difference between a team and a group?
 - Have you ever been part of the team?
 - Have you ever been part of a group?

In essence, teams are groups with a mission or goal.

Often times, the benefits of working with a group out-weight the advantages of working by yourself.

Group Models

Unorganized/ Laissez-Faire Group



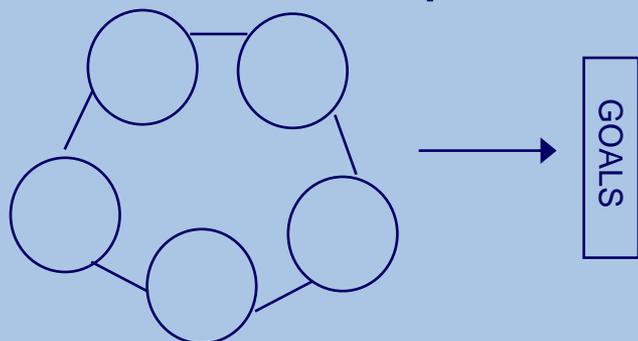
- No goals or defined leadership positions
- Easily manipulated
- Inconsistent participation- here today, gone tomorrow
- Divisions and lack of trust
- No hope for successfully reaching a goal

Pros: There is freedom for all groups to insert their particular interests.

Cons: Lack of leadership will not encourage sustainability. The group may experience inconsistent attendance.

Group Models

Circular/Democratic Group



- Functional Group
- Democratic Leadership
- Common goals among all participants
- Sharing of power, information and goals
- No competition among members
- Creative, positive environment.

Pros: Communication is open to all decision-making and project responsibilities are shared collectively.

Cons: Progress may come slowly, since decisions and directions must be agreed upon in the group.

Group Models

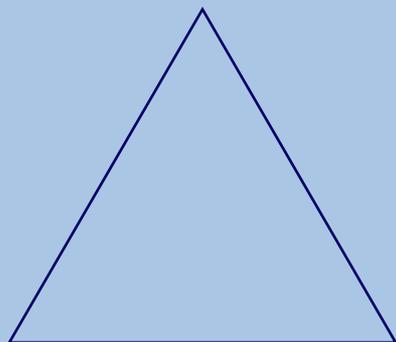
Paternalistic Group

- Characterized by a protective role of the leader, who intends to keep his followers happy.
- The group can feel safe and secure.
- But does not promote the dynamics of memberships.
- The group may lose the discipline and depend on the leader.



Group Models

Pyramid/Bureaucratic



- Authoritative Leadership
- Those few at the top control the many at the bottom
- System of dependency
- Those below cannot check up on those at the top

Pros: Likely to have more discipline and be more coordinated. The group may be able to react quicker to a situation.

Cons: Can inhibit creativity & growth, there may be tension between group members who want to lead.

Some key components when working with groups...

- Have a **common goal** all members want to achieve.
- Have everyone identify their own **strengths and weaknesses** to determine the assets of the group.
- **Trust and clear communication** is key for any group to function well.
- **Develop a strategic or action plan** so the group meets with purpose, and is focused on meeting their goal.
- Decide what group model would work for your team to function.

What issue would you like to work on?

- What are some of the areas you think need to improve in your school and community?
 - List of all the areas of concern
- Of these issues, which are the most urgent or important to take care of?
- Which are the ones that affect academic impact the most?

Narrow down the top 2 or 3 choices, depending on the size of the group-there should be about 6-8 parents per group, and have parents select which group they want to be part of.

Group Activity

- **Form groups of 5-7 people.** Assign a facilitator, secretary and recorder.
- Each group will have 30-45 minutes for the meeting.
- **Identify up to 5 problems at your school or school district.** Identify the possible causes of these problems and determine potential solutions that can become a proposed group project / plan of action.
- Prioritize which are more urgent to address. Consider the following:
 - Which problem affects the most students/families?
 - Which problem affects academic achievement the most?
 - If we only have a month to work on this project which problem is the most viable for us to make a difference in this time? Or are we willing to commit to a longer project to resolve a bigger issue?

Meet your group

- Find out what is everyone's strengths and weaknesses.
- Try out everyone's communication skills—

Have parents, pair up with someone else and do the “Artist Team” activity.



Develop a Plan of Action

Why?

- To define the mission and vision of a group
- To provide concrete direction to the group
- Ensure that the plan benefits all in the community and not just one person or a few people
- Establishes timeline, homework, and assignments for each participant
- To ensure that the talents and resources of all in the group are involved in the project
- To motivate the community-at-large

Fundamental Strategy Questions

Your group should continuously define and answer the following questions:

- What do we want to achieve?
- Why do we want to achieve this?
- How are we going to achieve this?
- How will we know we achieved our objective?

Every team needs to think about their project and complete a project proposal form.



Evaluation of Project

It is often difficult to think how you can measure your results.

The following are areas projects try to change, and you can measure them through pre and post surveys. Do you want to increase/decrease/change:

- **Knowledge** of the problem?
- **Attitude** of the community?
- **Beliefs** of the administrators?
- **Capacity** and **resources** of the school?
- **Behavior** of teachers/administrators/parents?

Examples of Group Projects

1. Technology
2. Reading Programs
3. Punctuality
4. Volunteer Involvement
5. Parent Involvement
6. School Safety



Example of Past Group Project

- **Problem:** There is a lack of effective bilingual communication (written and oral) between the Jonestown School District and the parents in the community.
- **Target Population:** The Jonestown School District and 250 parents who are not fluent in English
- **Goal:** Establish guidelines for, and improve the quality of bilingual communication within the Jonestown Schools .
- **Strategy 1:** Encourage the School District to use funding for translated printed materials and interpreters for all public meetings.
- **Specific Objective:** During the fiscal year 2007-2008, Jonestown Schools District will hire 2 translators that teachers and parents could use to communicate with each other.



Reflection

1. What are the small actions we can do to make big changes in the lives of our child?
2. Of the problems in our, what is the most urgent problem?
3. How can we use our resources, talents and abilities to make change?

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“Star of the Sea”

A young man was walking along an abandoned beach just before sunrise when in the distance he saw a fragile old man. Upon getting closer, he noticed that the old man was gathering starfish shells from the sand and throwing them back into the ocean.

The surprised young man looked intently at the old man who continued to throw the starfish back into the ocean. He asked, “Excuse me, Sir, but why are you so concerned with doing something that appears to be such a waste of time?”

The old man explained to the young man that sea stars caught on the sand will die if left exposed to the sun of the morning.

“But there are miles and miles of beaches and thousands of starfish!” Exclaimed the young man. “How will you make a difference?”

The old man paused, and contemplated the star he held in his hand. As he threw it back into the ocean, he said quietly, “I know I’ve already made a difference for that one.”

-Unknown Author

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