Developing Norms

This activity will enable a group to develop a set of operating norms or ground rules. In existing groups, anonymity will help ensure that everyone is able to express their ideas freely. For this reason, it is essential to provide pens or pencils or to ask that everyone use the same type of writing implement.

Time: Two hours

Directions-

1. Explain to the group that effective groups generally have a set of norms that govern individual behavior, facilitate the work of the group, and enable the group to accomplish its task.

2. Provide examples of norms by posting the list of norms that appears at end of this activity.

3. Recommend to the group that it establish a set of norms:
   - To ensure that all individuals have the opportunity to contribute in the meeting;
   - To increase productivity and effectiveness; and
   - To facilitate the achievement of its goals.

4. Give five index cards and the same kind of writing tool to each person in the group.

5. Ask each person to reflect on and record behaviors they consider ideal behaviors for a group. Ask them to write one idea on each of their cards. Time: 10 minutes.

6. Shuffle all the cards together. Every effort should be made to provide anonymity for individuals, especially if the group has worked together before.

7. Turn cards face up and read each card aloud. Allow time for the group members to discuss each idea. Tape or tack each card to a display board so that all group members can see it. As each card is read aloud, ask the group to determine if it is similar to another idea that already has been expressed. Cards with similar ideas should be grouped together.

8. When all of the cards have been sorted, ask the group to write the norm suggested by each group of cards. Have one group member record these new norms on a large sheet of paper.

9. Review the proposed norms with the group. Determine whether the group can support the norms before the group adopts them.

Adapted from Dufour, Dufour, Eaker & Many (2006) *Learning by Doing*

WHEN ESTABLISHING NORMS, CONSIDER:

Time
- When do we meet?
- Will we set a beginning and ending time?
- Will we start and end on time?

Listening
- How will we encourage listening?
- How will we discourage interrupting?

Confidentiality
- Will the meetings be open?
- Will what we say in the meeting be held in confidence?
- What can be said after the meeting?

Decision Making
- How will we make decisions?
- Are we an advisory or a decision-making body?
- Will we reach decisions by consensus?
- How will we deal with conflicts?

Participation
- How will we encourage everyone's participation?
- Will we have an attendance policy?

Expectations
- What do we expect from members?
- Are there requirements for participation?

Norms of the National Staff Development Council

We will work together as a community that values consensus rather than majority rule.

We will be fully "present" at the meeting by becoming familiar with materials before we arrive and by being attentive to behaviors which affect physical and mental engagement.

We will invite and welcome the contributions of every member and listen to each other.

We will be involved to our individual level of comfort. Each of us is responsible for airing disagreements during the meeting rather than carrying those disagreements outside the board meeting.

We will operate in a collegial and friendly atmosphere.

We will use humor as appropriate to help us work better together.

We will keep confidential our discussions, comments, and deliberations.

We will be responsible for examining all points of view before a consensus is accepted.

We will be guided by our mission statement, which focuses on organization and professional development to enhance success for all students.