# MEASURING **collaborative norms**

Purpose: To surface staff or team members' awareness of the group's use of collaborative norms and to assist staff and team to identify areas in which the staff or team wants to focus.

Time: 20 minutes to take the inventory; 30 minutes to discuss findings.

Directions:

1. Make enough copies of the inventory (pp. 8 and 9) to allow each member to have his or her own copy.

2. Organize a large group into smaller groups of three persons each. Ask each group of three to rate the larger group's adherence to each norm from low to high. *Time: 20 minutes.*

3. At the conclusion, reassemble the larger group and invite one person from each small group to report out the responses. *Time: 30 minutes.*

4. Using the same scale, mark each group's response on a poster-size piece of paper.

5. Identify norms where the groups scored the lowest.

6. Invite the group to develop a plan to improve its abilities in those areas.

1. Pausing

← LOW   HIGH →
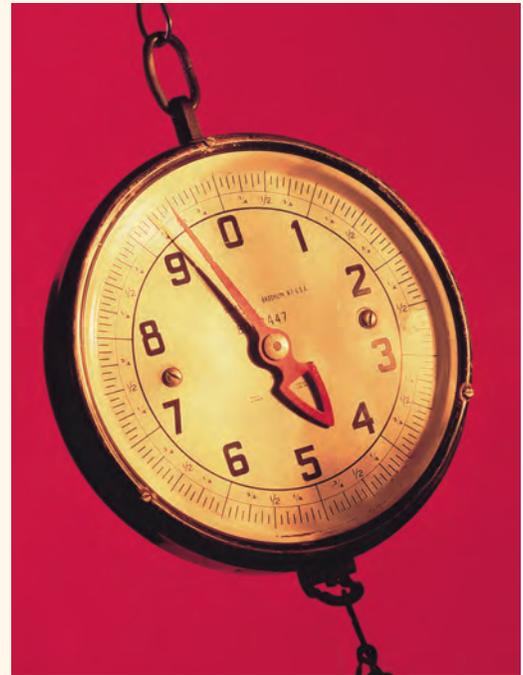
THE NORM: Pausing before responding or asking a question allows time for thinking and enhances dialogue, discussion, and decision making.
- Listens attentively to others' ideas with mind and body.
- Allows time for thought after asking question or making a response.
- Rewords in own mind what others are saying to further understand their communication.
- Waits until others have finished before entering the conversation.

2. Paraphrasing

← LOW   HIGH →

THE NORM: Using a paraphrase starter that is comfortable for you such as "So ... ." Or "As you are ..." or "You're thinking ..." and following the starter with a paraphrase assists members of a group to hear and understand each other as they formulate decisions.
- Uses paraphrases that acknowledge and clarify content and emotions.
- Uses paraphrases that summarize and organize.
- Uses paraphrases that shift a conversation to different levels of abstraction.
- Uses nonverbal communication in paraphrasing.

3. Probing

← LOW   HIGH →

THE NORM: Using gentle open-ended probes or inquiries such as "Please say more ..." or "I'm curious about ... ." or "I'd like to hear more about ... ." or "Then you are saying ..." increases the clarity and precision of the group's thinking.
- 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

← LOW   HIGH →

THE NORM: Ideas are the heart of a meaningful dialogue. Label the intention of your comments. For example, you might say, "Here is one idea ..." or "One thought I have is ..." or "Here is a possible approach."
- States intention of communication.
- Reveals all relevant information.
- Considers intended communication for relevance and appropriateness before speaking.
- Provides facts, inferences, ideas, opinions, suggestions.
- Explains reasons behind statements, questions, and actions.
- Removes or announces the modification of own ideas, opinions, points of view.

5. Paying attention to self and others

← LOW   HIGH →

THE NORM: Meaningful dialogue is facilitated when each group member is conscious of self and of others and is aware of not only what s/he is saying but also how it is said and how others are responding. This includes paying attention to learning style when planning for, facilitating, and participating in group meetings. Responding to others in their own language forms is one manifestation of this norm.
- Maintains awareness of own thoughts and feelings while having them.
- Maintains awareness of others' voice patterns, nonverbal communications, and use of physical space.
- Maintains awareness of group's task, mood, and relevance of own and others' contributions.

6. Presuming positive presuppositions

← LOW   HIGH →

THE NORM: Assuming that others' intentions are positive promotes and facilitates meaningful dialogue and eliminates unintentional put-downs. Using positive presuppositions in your speech is one manifestation of this norm.
- Acts as if others mean well.
- Restrains impulsivity triggered by own emotional responses.
- Uses positive presuppositions when responding to and inquiring of others.

7. Pursuing a balance between advocacy and inquiry

← LOW   HIGH →

THE NORM: Pursuing and maintaining a balance between advocating a position and inquiring about one's own and others' positions assists the group to become a learning organization.
- Advocates for own ideas and inquires into the ideas of others.
- Acts to provide equitable opportunities for participation.
- Presents rationale for positions, including assumptions, facts, and feelings.
- Disagrees respectfully and openly with ideas and offers rationale for disagreement.
- Inquires of others about their reasons for reaching and occupying a position.

The group is invited to develop a plan to improve its abilities in the areas with low scores.

Source: *The Adaptive School: A Sourcebook for Developing Collaborative Groups,* by Robert Garmston and Bruce Wellman. Christopher-Gordon, 1999.