Effective Group Practices

- Members do not ignore seriously intended ideas or contributions
- Members check to make sure they know what a speaker means by his/her contribution before making a judgment
- Each member speaks only for him/herself and lets others speak for themselves
- All contributions are viewed as belonging to the group, to be used or discarded as the group decides
- All members participate but in different, complimentary ways
- Whenever the group sense it is having difficulty getting the work done, it tries to find out why
- The group makes decisions openly rather than by default
- Though they may not always agree with the majority decision, all members accept it and work together, and they do not spread dissension among the members
- The group bring conflict into the open and deals with it
GROUP DEVELOPMENT

Through understanding the stages of group development, leaders are able to assess the needs, plan the direction, and prepare for the future of the group. Also, understanding the theory of group development aides leaders in determining realistic expectations about group behavior.

According to the Tuckman Model of Group Development, a group’s growth is

- **SEQUENTIAL** stages occur in a specifically stated order
- **DEVELOPMENTAL** issues and concerns in each stage must be resolved in order for the group to move to the next stage
- **THEMATIC** each stage is characterized by two dominant themes:
  - one reflecting the task dimension and
  - one reflecting the relationship dimension

The four stages of group development are **FORMING, STORMING, NORMING, and PERFORMING**

**FORMING**
- Task behavior is an attempt to become oriented to the goals and procedures of the group
- Having plenty of information available is critical at this stage
- Relationship issues revolve around resolving dependency issues and testing, which can be sped up by making leadership roles clear and getting the group acquainted

**STORMING**
- Involves resistance to task demands and hostility in relationships
- Members challenge the group’s leadership; the leader should provide clarification about the role
- Excessive storming leads to anxiety and tension, whereas suppressed storming leads to resentment and bitterness
- Conflict resolution is often the goal, but learning conflict management is just as important because as new situations develop, the group may briefly return to this stage

**NORMING**
- Characterized by cooperation
- Task themes include communication and expression while cohesion is just as important
- Team building efforts increase group unity and increase shared responsibility

**PERFORMING**
- Encourages cooperation
- Task theme is problem-solving and the relationship theme is interdependence
- At this stage, the group is functioning efficiently to achieve group goals
- Group members will assume roles that are necessary to achieve goals, learning independence with interdependence
- It is beneficial to encourage a continued developmental theme for the group to stimulate new problems for their problem solving

While some groups will try to jump from “Forming” to “Performing” to accomplish a task immediately, others will consistently revert to the “Storming” after once being “Norming.” The thing to remember is that the stages are sequential, and even if the group jumps around, the leader can still encourage and help the group no matter where the group may be located.

After determining what stage the group is in, it would be good to meet with the officers and advisor(s) to make plans for group growth.

*[Check out the Leading Bits on “Icebreakers” and “Team Building” for more ideas]*