

Coaching Small-Group Work

In Steelworker workshops, participants spend a lot of time interacting with each other in small groups.

Whether or not it's written into the facilitator manual, small-group exercises require participants to do two things at the same time:

- 1) Work with the course content, AND
- 2) Behave in a way that contributes to the success of the group.

How can a facilitator help both of these things happen? When individuals are put into small groups, what enables them succeed?

Steelworker education develops two types of learning: facts and concepts in course material and how to reach solidarity in behaviour. Working effectively and respectfully in a small group is a form of solidarity. It also creates the conditions where good ideas and information can emerge

The chart on the next page describes the stages in developing group solidarity. Make a copy to take to each course. As small groups work, a facilitator can circulate to observe how they are interacting. What level are they at? How can the facilitator intervene and coach them to advance to the next higher level?

Coaching Small Group Development

Level 1: Receiving	Are they willing to listen to each other?
Level 2: Responding	Are all individuals in the group able to contribute? Are they willing to respond to what others are saying? Do they feel comfortable responding?
Level 3: Valuing	Do they demonstrate that they value the importance of opinions other than their own?
Level 4: Organizing	Do they successfully resolve differences of opinion and styles of communication?
Level 5: Internalizing	Do they repeatedly do all of these behaviours? i) Listen to each other? ii) Contribute equally? iii) Show willingness to respond to what others are saying? iv) Show comfort in responding? v) Value opinions other than their own? vi) Successfully resolve differences of opinion and styles of communication?