Group naming

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Materials needed: n/a

Learning challenge addressed/predictable outcome: Increased group cohesion and more effective consensus-building, informal/fun interruption of group work

Best used for: Classes in which students work together in small (2-6?) groups on projects that are at least two weeks long.

Learning objectives/skills fostered: Practice in reaching consensus, development of collaborative creativity

What to do / how to do it: Require that students’ first step (after introducing themselves and exchanging contact info) be the creation of a group name. They must all agree on the name, and the name should be meaningful. Encouraging references to the group’s members (e.g., “the Sassy Seniors”; “BAJA Fresh” for a group consisting of Ben, Araceli, Jaslin, and Adam) or the discipline (e.g., “Action Potential” or “Pavlov’s Dogs” for a group in Psychology) is recommended.

Tips for implementing: Names should be subject to instructor approval (avoiding, for example, group names that are puns on the instructor’s name is a good idea). Announcing the groups once all names are created (“first, we have ‘Pavlov’s Dogs,’ consisting of Abe, Betty, Carlos, and Denise!”), and having the class applaud those groups, can be fun (and provides incentive to make a cool name, which in turn encourages closer bonding among group members).