

From: [Know!](#)
To: [Kate Mogan](#)
Subject: KNOW! The Stages of Group Development
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Know! The Stages of Group Development

The Search Institute has identified **40 Developmental Assets** for Adolescents, positive qualities that influence youth development, helping them become caring, responsible and productive adults. The more developmental assets a youth reports having, the less likely he/she is to engage in risky behaviors, like drinking, smoking and using other drugs. **Social Competencies** (meaning personal choices & interpersonal skills) is one of eight asset categories that make up the 40 Developmental Assets. Research proves that the more personal skills youth have when interacting with others and making decisions, the more likely they are to grow up healthy and drug-free.

With the start of a new school year, chances are, your middle and high school students will be assigned group projects with peers they may not know, providing them excellent opportunities to practice and enhance their social skills. Sounds like fun to some, but challenges may quickly arise when bringing together students with different academic styles and personalities.

Parents wanting to encourage and support their children can benefit from knowing the stages of group development. In 1965, psychologist Bruce Tuckman, created a model on group dynamics that still applies today.

Tuckman's Stages of Group Development are: Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing. It is believed that regardless of a group's members, purpose, goal, culture, location, demographics, etc., these four stages are universal. When students are engaging in group work, parents can help by making their children aware of each stage of group development, letting them know this process is natural, normal and to be expected, and then continuing to talk with and guide them as they experience each phase.

Stage 1 - FORMING: The group first comes together; members tend to feel a bit anxious and uncertain; most everyone is polite and cautious in their behavior; focus is usually on members getting to know each other and discussing the group's purpose.

Here's how you can help in this stage: Ask your child if he/she is clear on the teacher's expectations for the group and for each individual; ask about the peers in the group and gauge your child's comfort level in sharing his/her opinions; remind your child about the importance of each member having a clearly defined role and everyone doing their part.

Stage 2 – STORMING: This second stage is when conflict and competition are most likely to arise; the members become more comfortable with one another; the more dominant personalities begin taking charge while less confrontational individuals may remain quiet (even though issues may be developing); opinions become divided and multiple 'leaders' may vie for control; arguing may become the primary form of communication. In this stage focus tends to be around leadership, authority, rules, responsibilities and structure. Some groups have a hard time moving beyond this stage.

Here's how you can help in this stage: Whether it's a differing opinion, a controlling group member, or an individual slacking in his/her efforts, your child may

Talking regularly with youth about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs reduces their risk of using in the first place.

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Drug Free Action Alliance
6155 Huntley Road, Suite H
Columbus, Ohio 43229

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come home frustrated with the whole idea of the group project. Listen carefully and allow your child to vent, then talk about ways to improve the situation. It may be boosting your child's confidence to speak up and share his/her opinion, encouraging him/her to calmly and kindly bring up an issue that seems to be hampering the group's productivity, or it may be reminding your son or daughter to be open to other's ideas. If all else fails, you may need to direct your student to the teacher to intervene.

Stage 3 – NORMING: The group begins working out their differences and comes together as a cohesive unit, they acknowledge the talents and skills each member brings to the table; members openly exchange ideas; morale increases and a sense of community develops; members are more flexible and trusting of each other. The members focus is on the group's purpose and goal.

Here's how you can help in this stage: Encourage your child to give 100% while providing ample praise for his/her commitment, positive communication and hard work for the group's benefit.

Stage 4 – PERFORMING: At the fourth stage, the group is at its peak in productivity; students have clearly defined roles and are able to work effectively as a group; they are unified, loyal and supportive of each other; group members take pride in their work and are focused on the end goal.

Here's how you can help in this stage: This stage requires less adult supervision and hand-holding and more student interdependence with their group members; at this point you should be able to sit back and watch your child strive for success; your job is to remain available for your child and to continue offering praise.

While group interaction can be challenging, it is a great tool in improving your child's social skills, especially in a world where too many faces (young and old) are constantly buried in their handheld communication devices. Teaching and improving interpersonal skills now will increase your child's chances for healthy, thoughtful decision-making throughout life.

To learn more about The 40 Developmental Assets, visit: search-institute.org.

To learn more about Tuckman's Stages of Group Development, visit: education-portal.com.

SOURCES: [Educational Portal: Stages of Group Development: Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing & Adjourning](#). [Search Institute: The 40 Developmental Assets](#). [Youth Working It: Working with Youth – Group Development](#).

Please Note: Teachers, coaches, youth group leaders and others facilitating or supporting team work can assist youth in being more productive and help to keep things running smoothly by understanding and recognizing the stages of group development. Know! encourages sharing this information with adolescents as well, so that they too may be more self-aware throughout the process.

This message was sent to kate.mogan@cvcasd.com from:

Know! | know@drugfreeactionalliance.org | info@drugfreeactionalliance.org | 6155 Huntley Rd, Suite H | Columbus, OH 43230

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