

Launching Effective Group Projects: The group resume activity
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Goal: promote a positive relational climate within groups, as well as practice effective group functioning.

Rationale: Research shows that student engagement and achievement increases in collaborative learning situations, yet many students approach group assignments or projects with little enthusiasm and even active resistance. This activity can both help to create a positive group relational climate and to demonstrate the behaviors needed for a successful group.

Approximate time: One 75 minute class session. (It can be completed in a 50 minute session with adjustments of time for each step, or steps one and two may need to be completed outside of class.)

Materials needed: paper, various colors of magic markers, poster board or large sheets of butcher paper, tape, pushpins, or stapler (for putting posters or or butcher paper up on wall.

Directions: Following individual assignments to groups (choose your own method), the groups are given the following task:

1. Each member of the group should jot down a list of his or her strengths, in relation to this assignment (in this case, in relation to preparing and giving speeches.) For example, are you a skilled researcher? Do you do your work in a timely and logical manner? Are you creative? Is your delivery style effective? Do you have a flair with language? Are you down-to-earth and friendly, so you relate well with audiences? Do you have a good sense of humor? Etc. etc. This will take about 10 minutes.
2. Next, share your list with your group members, and create a common list that your group represents each individual in the group and well as the group as a unit. Be creative in your use of language. (approximately 15 minutes)
3. Using that list, create a poster or resume that best illustrates the group strengths and personality. You may also include a group name, an image, and even a group motto or slogan that illustrates the group “personality.” (15-20 minutes.)
4. Share your group poster or resume with the rest of the class, along with an explanation of how you—as individuals and as a group—worked through the process of creating your resume or poster, and why you chose certain characteristics, images, etc. (20-30 minutes, depending on the number of groups.)

Debriefing: Ask students about their response to the activity. What did they like? What was challenging? Discuss with students what contributed to their group’s success in the completion of this project. Ask them to explain what makes an effective group.

Typical Results: Comments will include “everybody had something to contribute” “step one prepared us” “we had a clear goal” “we listened to everyone” “that was fun”, etc. The behaviors crucial for a successful group project are obvious. Groups enjoy their success and have more confidence in each other as a team. That enjoyment affects how they approach the next step, planning their group presentation. Later in the project, we follow up with a team survey. (on back).

Alternate Goals: This might be used as an ice-breaker at the beginning of a semester, or as a means to generate a more collaborative climate within an entire class.