Collaborative Negotiation: Investing Ownership

Establishing guidelines that students believe in is essential to the success of group work. Students often have questions about how they will be graded, how they will divide labor, what happens when members of one group aren’t productive, etc.

Students who help to develop class guidelines are more likely to feel invested in them, and therefore stand by them. And members of the group who might be less productive will know, upfront, what will happen if they don’t do their fair share.

One example of Investing Ownership: Determining Grade Weights

*Divide the class into groups and have the groups sit together. Ask each group to come to agreement on the following questions:

1. What percentage of their grade should be based on individual work?
2. How much should be based on their group’s work?
3. How much should be based on peer evaluation?

*After 5-10 minutes of discussion, ask each group to send one representative to the front of the room.

*Each representative speaks to the class about their group’s answers.

*The representatives negotiate their answers with other representatives. This is an open discussion that the entire class can hear.

*The representatives must come to unanimous agreement on the questions. For example, if one group feels individual work should count for 20 percent and another group feels it should count for 40 percent, the groups must negotiate to a solution that all members accept.

*Representatives can go back to their groups for more discussion when there is disagreement, and then bring their new/revised ideas to the front of the class.

*The process isn’t complete until there is a unanimous class decision.

(Source: Michaelson)
Additional questions your groups may want to negotiate:

? How much time will groups work together outside of class?

? How will groups determine and communicate individual responsibilities?

? How will groups deal with unproductive members?

? How will they determine roles in the group?

? What kinds of roles are the different students comfortable in?

? Is it important to the group that students stick to the roles they’re comfortable with? Or work outside of them?

? Why is it important to disagree?

? How can they disagree without being disrespectful?

? How does the group make sure everyone’s voices are heard?

? What is the responsibility of an individual to speak up/ verses the group’s responsibility to ensure that quieter members are heard?