

# The Group from Hell: Strategies for Resolving Conflicts in PBL Groups



Courtesy of  
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# Three Styles of Resolving Conflict

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## *Win-Lose*

- strategies used are power, dominance, forcing

## *Lose-Lose*

- common strategy used is compromise

## *Win-Win*

- strategies used are integration, collaboration, problem-solving



# Step 1: Conflict Case Studies

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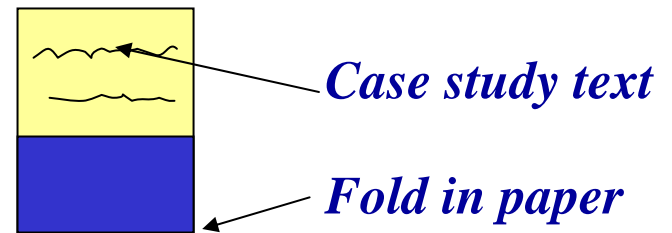
- A. Read over the case study that your group has been given.**
- B. Consider the possible resolutions to the dilemma posed by the case.**
- C. List possible resolutions on the case study handout, in the blank space beneath the text.**



## Step 2: Conflict Case Study

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**A. Fold the handout so that your ideas for resolutions are covered up by the folded paper, but the case study text is still revealed.**



**B. Pass the folded case study on to the next group.**

**C. When you receive another group's case study, keep that group's ideas for resolutions covered up.**



## **Step 3: Conflict Case Study**

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- A. Read over the new case study that your group has been given.**
- B. What are the possible ways in which the group and/or course instructor can bring about a positive resolution?**
- C. List these on the handout, in the new blank space beneath the case study.**



## Steps 4 & 5: Conflict Case Study

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- A. Pass the case study on to the next group.**
- B. Uncover the possible resolutions “brainstormed” by the previous 2 groups.**
- C. Given the information that you have, which of the resolutions do you think is the best option? Why? [alternative: make your own resolution...]**
- D. How could the conflict that arose in the case have been prevented or significantly lessened?**

*Be prepared to report out on questions C & D in 10 min.*

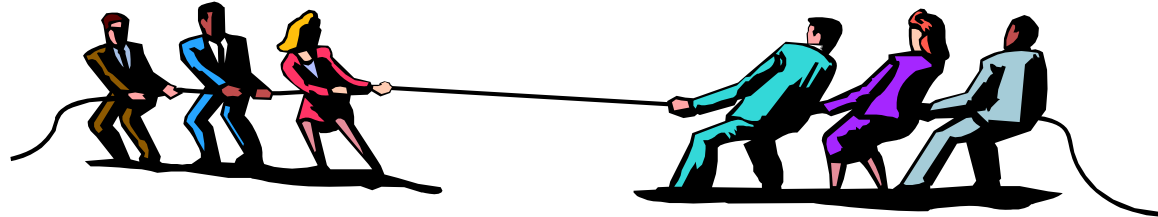


# Resolving Conflicts

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## *Level 1 - Preventing escalation*

- Monitor groups for early signs of conflict
- Intervene on the spot
- Group evaluations - individuals plus process
- Encourage spontaneous verbal feedback



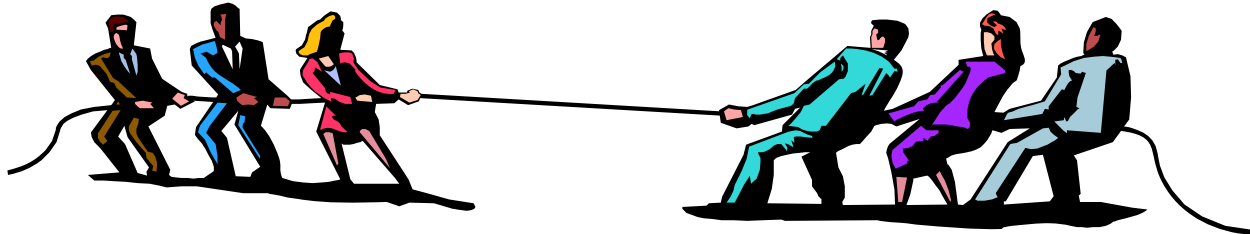


# Resolving Conflicts

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## *Level 2 - Empowering students*

- **Listen to student concerns (all viewpoints)**
- **Encourage students to resolve the conflict**
- **Coach students on possible resolution strategies**



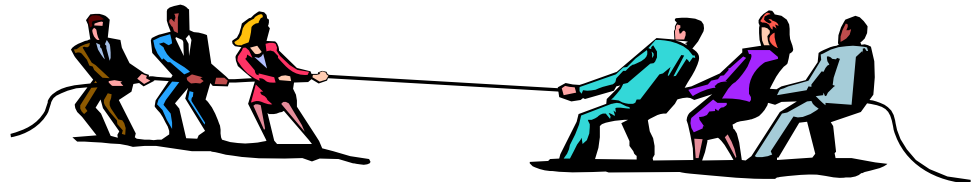


# Resolving Conflicts

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## *Level 3 - Serve as mediator*

- Establish ground rules
- Ask each student to present point of view while others listen
- Ask each student to define ideal outcome
- Review group ground rules
- Facilitate discussion of possible outcomes





# Resolving Conflicts

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## *Level 4 - Instructor intervention*

- “I reserve the right to....” statements in the syllabus

**Levels 1-3 are loosely based on:**

Weider-Hatfield (1981) A unit in conflict management skills. *Communication Education* 30: 265-273.

Adler, Rosenfeld, and Towne (1983) *Interplay: The Process of Interpersonal Communication*. New York: Rinehart & Winston.



## Additional Resources

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*Conflict Resolution Network* <[www.crnhq.org](http://www.crnhq.org)>

*Conflict Research Consortium* <[www.conflict.colorado.edu](http://www.conflict.colorado.edu)>

*The Conflict Resolution Information Source*  
<[www.crinfo.org](http://www.crinfo.org)>

Burgess, G. & H. Burgess. “Group projects: A conflict resolution guide for students.” *Beyond Intractability*, G. Burgess & H. Burgess, eds. Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado.  
<[www.beyondintractability.org/user\\_guides/students/](http://www.beyondintractability.org/user_guides/students/)>