Activity: Creating a Safe Space

It is important for each team to create a space in which everyone feels safe to voice their opinions. Some students will be more comfortable speaking up and some will be shy, but everyone should feel that their input is welcome. The following questions will help your students create guidelines around the way they interact and make decisions as a team.

Provide students with the following personal probe questions for written reflection (as homework or in-class work). Ask students to review the questions and reflect on what they will need from each other to thrive in their teams.

Record and Reflect: Personal probes

- Are you a primary thinker (i.e. you react quickly and speak before thinking things through), or secondary thinker (i.e. you need time to think things through before you speak)? Provide an example to explain your choice.
- What would you need from a group to work well together?
- When you are in group discussions, what are some small things (if any) that bother you?
- What would you personally need from a group to feel comfortable speaking up within a group setting?

After students have finished their reflection, ask teams to meet and review the following questions. Ask students to identify one member of each team to take notes, recording everyone’s contributions. These notes may be used to form a team contract (in the Drafting a Team Contract activity).

Record and Reflect: Group probes

- Share what you feel comfortable sharing from the personal probe questions.
- What can we do to make sure everyone has the opportunity to speak at our meetings?
- What can we do to make everyone feels included in our meetings and events?
- What does active listening mean? What does it look like?
- How should the team make decisions? (E.g., should we vote on decisions? Does the vote have to be unanimous, a majority, etc.?)
- What is at least one way we can encourage members of our team to keep going when we face an obstacle?
- What would make each of us feel included and safe to voice our opinions on this team?

This teamwork will lay the foundation for students to create a team plan, focused on the question of "how." That is, from here they will plan not “what” they will do together, but "how" they will work together effectively as a team.

Look for this activity and worksheet online at WE.org/ap/safespace.