Criteria for Effective Group Assignments

Prior to Group Discussions:

- Are group members required to use newly acquired concepts to make a specific choice, individually and in writing? (Note: This individual accountability is especially important in newly formed groups.)

During Discussions within Groups:

- Are groups required to share members’ individual choices and agree (i.e., reach a group consensus) on a specific choice?
- Will the discussion focus on “Why?” (and/or “How?”)
- Will the groups’ choice(s) be represented in a form that enables immediate and direct comparisons with other groups?*

During Discussions between Groups:

- Are group decisions reported simultaneously?*
- Do group “reports” focus attention on the absolutely key issues?*
- Are groups given the opportunity to digest and reflect on the entire set of “reports”** before total class discussion begins?
- Will the discussion focus on “Why?” (and/or “How?”)

The more “Yes” answers, the better. If the answer to all eight questions is “Yes”, the assignment will effectively promote both learning and group development.

* The form in which individual and group choices are represented largely determines the dynamics of the discussions that follow. Both individual reports to groups and group reports to the class should be as absolutely succinct as possible. In many cases, one-word reports are the very best (e.g., yes/no, best/worst, up/down/no change, etc.) because they invariably stimulate a discussion of why one choice is better than another.