Collaborative Writing Group Meeting Strategies

Three types of collaborative tasks:
1. High-order thinking -- define, discuss, and debate to solve complex problems
2. Division of labor -- very large jobs that cannot be completed by an individual within a limited time frame
3. Specialist or expertise-based -- each collaborator has a different area of expertise to contribute (Lunsford, 1991, p.6)

Writing Roles to play during meetings (everyone should alternate, so that each person reads the whole text):
1. Brainstormer – Everyone plays this at all times.
2. Drafter – This person sits at the computer or with the paper and pen and does the primary writing.
3. Reviewer – This person will read what the other person has written to identify and examine paragraph focus, idea arrangement, development. This is best done when the reviewer reads out loud to the group!
4. Editor – This person will do grammar check, review source integration, check formatting.

For all group meetings, do the following:
- Have an agenda – some writing goal(s) to accomplish by the end of the meeting.
- Assign specific writing roles – for each group member to play – in meetings and/or beyond. Do not assign parts to write – assign roles to play!
- Be sure people understand their writing tasks to be completed by the next meeting. Good, realistic planning and timely execution often lead to success.
- Be aware of time constraints – make sure everyone understands the deadlines

Use your technologies.
- Chats and instant messaging allows you to share when you are separated and can be used to preserve the discussion transcript for later reflection or integration.
- E-mail drafts to each other, and use the comments feature in MS Word to insert your own responses to the ideas, arguments, and support provided in the text.
- If you can’t attend, call in, or e-mail your comments ahead of time.

Group Invention (Brainstorming) Strategies
- Every time you meet, discuss the topic in depth with your group. For each meeting, have two or more note-takers who keep track of what is said and who can compare notes after the fact. These notes will be used to draft, revise, and edit the paper.
- Write your thesis together and develop an organization or outline for the whole paper together.

Group Drafting Strategy
- Select your best typist or two to be the primary drafters. Everyone else sits around the drafter and “feeds” the person sentences – write the document together, so that it doesn’t adopt one person’s voice, or multiple voices.

Group Revision and Editing Strategies
- Read the paper out loud together and discuss whether or not each idea, sentence, and paragraph connects to the ones around it.
- If the paper has been cooperatively written, group members should trade sections and read them as if the topic is entirely new. Ask open-ended questions, especially “how?” “why?” and “what is the connection?” This will help you see how to tie sections together.

References