

Session Two

Group Functioning Case Studies *Scenario D*

It is August. The members of the local Parent Teacher Association (PTA) have come together to help kick off a new school year. Many of them know each other well, both because they all live in the same community and because they were part of the PTA the previous year. Robin, the PTA president is proud of the fact that the members seem to get along personally, work well together on their group projects, and are dedicated to the organization.

Robin is concerned, however, that some of the members who joined the PTA this year do not seem to be having a positive experience. Andrew, a father who is new to the group, asked to meet with Robin so that he could talk about some of his concerns.

“I am excited about being part of the PTA,” Andrew told her, “because I believe in supporting our kids and our schools. I really want to be involved and share my ideas. The members who have been in PTA for a long time don’t seem to listen to the newer members. They shoot down our ideas and tell us that they already have a system in place for all their projects.”

Robin is glad that Andrew came to her, but she is unsure of how to handle the situation. Things with the PTA projects are going smoothly. The members who are returning to the group have a clear idea of what they expect from one another, and they are very familiar with the work they have to do. Clearly, Robin needs to figure out a way to help the new members mesh with the group and keep the PTA running smoothly at the same time. Otherwise, some of the newer members may choose not to be involved.

- Which stage(s) of group functioning can be identified in this situation?
- What is/are the challenge(s) being faced by the group in this situation?
- Are these challenges normal parts of group functioning? Explain.
- What are some strategies the group could use to address and overcome the challenges they are facing?

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Group responses to the questions in this case study may vary. Use this opportunity to discuss the different perspectives of the situation.

Which stage(s) of group functioning can be identified in this situation?

Performing (and potentially all other stages as well)

What is/are the challenge(s) being faced by the group in this situation?

The existing group seems to work very well together. They have a clear idea of their goals, roles, and responsibilities. Unfortunately, this does not easily facilitate the acceptance of new members into the group.

Are these challenges normal parts of group functioning? Explain.

Yes. If the group was not in flux, there would most likely be few challenges in the performing stage. If new members are to be successfully incorporated into the group, it means that the performing stage will not be as smooth.

What are some strategies the group could use to address and overcome the challenges they are facing?

Robin may need to work at guiding her group through the earlier stages of group development in order to help incorporate the new members and give them a sense of ownership. This may be difficult for some of the veteran members to accept, so Robin should consider giving those members a leadership role in helping to “initiate” the new members and re-visit the forming, storming, and norming stages.