

Foreword

Getting work done in groups is a paradox. It should be so easy—common sense, one could say. Yet history's most fundamental blunders are a result of groups gone awry. Whether it is a world crisis or getting through the day, knowing how to behave in groups, how to lead them, and how to facilitate them is one of life's fundamental skills.

Fortunately we have Bob Garmston, who has led the cognitive coaching field for several decades. He is a writer and a practitioner—a trainer and a consultant. He has also been distilling his wisdom in regular columns in the publications of the National Staff Development Council (NSDC; now Learning Forward). Now, with Valerie von Frank, Garmston has brought together in one publication systematic and honed wisdom in the fundamentals of group work and group management.

Garmston first tackles the matter of “getting work done,” delving into understanding and building effective groups. He then takes us into developing group member skills. From there we learn how to develop a sense of community, including how to become self-directed. The final section addresses facilitation skills that will be essential for intervening and maintaining effective group work.

What makes *Unlocking Group Potential to Improve Schools* special is that it easily cycles back and forth from deep issues and skills of effective group functioning to the seemingly most mundane but nonetheless critical basics of setting up a room, organizing the agenda, conducting sessions, and so on.

What is great about this book is that it contains the complete package, ranging from operating norms to micro and macro skills, leadership, and facilitation. The reader does not have to go hunting through the literature in order to identify and sort out the skills of group work. Take this one book, master its content, practice its principles and techniques, refine your knowledge and skill base, and watch yourself and your group get better and better. This is a book that keeps on giving. Read and reread it, practice its tenets, and you and those you work with will be much better off. Unlock your potential!

Michael Fullan, Professor Emeritus
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto