

## Charrette

*The charrette is valuable to get feedback on a work in progress when a teacher, student, or group is "stuck."*

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The charrette is a term and process borrowed from the architectural community. **Its purpose is to improve a piece of work.** As described by Carol Coe at Puyallup High School (WA), charrettes are used to "kick up" the level of both student and teacher performance. In their Research and Development Class, for example, the Steering Committee might call for class charrettes on a matter of class procedure.

However, a more common occurrence is that one of the design teams within the class will call for a charrette when it is "stuck" - when the members of the team have reached a point in the process where they cannot easily move forward on their own.

Charrettes are not normally held during the final exhibition of work or at the completion of a project; they are not culminating assessments or final evaluations. Instead, they are held in a low stakes/no stakes environment, where the requesting team has **much to gain from the process and virtually nothing to lose.** In short, charrettes are used to scrutinize and improve work before it is ever placed in a high stakes environment.

1. A group or an individual from the group requests a charrette when one or more of the following conditions exist:
  - a. the group is experiencing difficulty with the work,
  - b. a stopping point has been reached,
  - c. additional minds (thinkers new to the work) could help move it forward.
2. A second group, ranging in size from three to six people, is formed to look at the work. A moderator/facilitator is designated from the newly formed group. It is the moderator's job to observe the charrette, record information that is being created, ask questions along the way, and occasionally summarize the discussion.
3. The requesting team presents its "work in progress" while the other group listens. (There are no strict time limits, but this usually takes five or ten minutes.)
4. The requesting team states what it needs or wants from the charrette, thereby accepting the responsibility of focusing the discussion. This focus is usually made in the form of a specific request, but it can be as generic as "How can we make this better?" or "What is our next step?"
5. The invited group then discusses while the requesting team listens and takes notes. There are no hard and fast rules here. Occasionally (but not usually) the requesting team joins in the discussion process. The emphasis is on improving the work, which now belongs to the entire group, both the requesting and the invited team. The atmosphere is one of "we're in this together," and our single purpose is "to make a good thing even better."
6. When the requesting group knows it has gotten what it needs from the invited group, they stop the process, briefly summarize what was gained, thank the participants and moderator and return to the drawing board.