

LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

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| Purpose | The purpose of this activity is to help staff create a leadership structure to implement the school's shared vision. Usually, this is done by partitioning staff into teams that have specific functions. These teams are most often called Leadership Teams, Data Teams, Grade Level Teams, Subject Area Teams, or Professional Learning Communities. One team can serve multiple functions. |
| Target Audience | School staff. |
| Time | Approximately two hours. |
| Materials | Chart pad paper, material for posting paper on walls, markers, copies of the purpose, mission, vision, and the plan for continuous school improvement. |

Overview

The important elements of effective leadership structures include:

- ♦ *Partitioning of all school staff in a manner that makes sense for supporting the implementation of the vision.* For example, in elementary schools, establishing grade-level teams and cross-grade-level teams to implement the vision makes sense. This is especially effective since the focus is to make sure each teacher is implementing grade level standards, and to ensure that standards implementation is calibrated across grade levels. Most traditional high schools and middle schools have departments, which could represent an effective leadership structure—if that structure supports the implementation of the vision. However, if the middle school or high school is trying to integrate subjects, individual subject-specific departments might keep the school from implementing its vision. The leadership structure must reflect the vision. Support staff should be included in the leadership structure in a way that makes sense for implementing the vision.
- ♦ *Clarifying purposes and roles and responsibilities of all teams.* Team members create and agree on the purpose and roles and responsibilities of each team so everyone knows the intricacies of the team as well as how everyone can contribute to the successful implementation of each team. A part of identifying roles and responsibilities is to set structures for norms, timed agendas, and rotating roles (facilitator, timekeeper, and recorder) to keep the team focus on student learning during team time.
- ♦ *Identifying times to meet and keeping them sacred.* The teams meet no matter what. There can be no cancellations because of other meetings. It is important to not put the Principal as lead of any team. We find that the Principal is often pulled out at the last minute, and then the team thinks the meeting has to be cancelled. However, the Principal should participate in as many meetings as possible, ensure that the meetings take place, and reinforce the cross-grade level work. To implement the vision with a strong leadership structure, the team meeting times and agendas must be adhered to. At least one hour a week or 90 minutes every other week needs to be dedicated to grade level or subject-area teams to review data and to update instruction.

Overview (Continued)

Additional time needs to be protected for leadership team meetings and other leadership teams that look across grade level/subject matter to ensure instructional coherence. Time must be created. Many schools bank time by extending the school day four days a week, providing an early dismissal or late start for students so teachers can meet part of one day a week. Developing a meeting calendar with dates, times, and locations will help members plan and keep times sacred.

Process Protocol

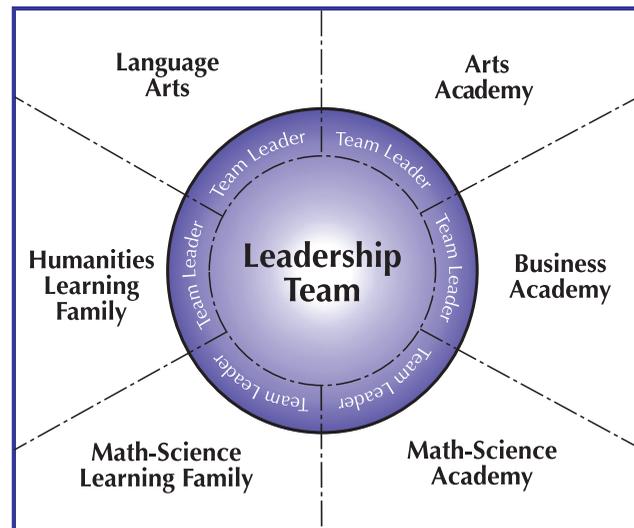
- Step 1.** Gather and randomly arrange staff into small groups of five to seven. Try to find a room with big blank walls to post lots of chart paper.
- Step 2.** Lead the staff in reviewing the school core values and beliefs, purpose, mission, vision, and continuous improvement plan.
- Step 3.** Ask staff members to think, independently, about all the purposes leadership teams can meet, with the vision as a “given” target. Have them share with another individual.
- Step 4.** Provide time for the pairs to share their ideas with their small group. Ask small groups to display their discussion on chart paper. Some of the things staff may want leadership teams to help them with, include—
 - a. implementation of the vision by all staff—which directs what teachers will teach, how they will teach, and how they will assess student learning.
 - b. implementation of the vision as intended.
 - c. implementation of the common core standards, in each classroom, and across classrooms.
 - d. use of formative assessments.
 - e. the review of formative assessment data and the discussion of how instruction could be improved to better meet the needs of all students, by grade level, and/or subject area.
 - f. implementation of strategies that help all students learn.
 - g. collaboration among all staff.
 - h. support for the implementation of professional learning.
- Step 5.** Provide time for each small group to report its ideas to the whole group.
- Step 6.** As the whole group discusses and merges common ideas into a leadership structure, create a visual for the leadership structure the staff agrees to implement and that everyone understands in the same way.
- Step 7.** Define team member roles and responsibilities.
- Step 8.** Establish meeting calendar.

Comments to the Facilitator

In order to establish a shared decision-making structure to implement the vision, the vision must be crystal clear, and all staff must share the vision. Once you are clear on the vision, it is much easier to engage in scenarios of how decisions should be made throughout the organization, and how staff can collaborate to implement the vision. Try drawing a picture of a leadership structure that would align with the way the vision must be implemented, before people are identified to be on the team, and before the vision is implemented. This can desensitize the whole process and can be a very good way to make the vision actually happen. Four tools, three attached to this activity, will support the leadership team work. They are as follows:

- ◆ *Running Efficient Meetings*
- ◆ *Ground Rules*
- ◆ *Meeting Etiquette*
- ◆ *Norms of Behavior*
- ◆ *Coming to Consensus* (see Appendix A, Figure A-1)

Another helpful activity is the *Communication Protocol*, Appendix R.



Running Efficient Meetings

The time that shared decision making requires is the most frequently cited disadvantage of the process. Here are some tips on running efficient meetings to help ease the time crunch.

Running the Meeting

- ◆ Formalize a meeting time and place (e.g., first Monday of every month in the cafeteria).
- ◆ Set and distribute the agenda before the actual meeting day.
- ◆ Set a time limit for each item on the agenda.
- ◆ Set up a process to make sure that the most important issues (school vision, mission and goals) are addressed, instead of spending time on issues that can be dealt with by one or two people.
- ◆ Assign a facilitator, time-keeper, and record-keeper at each meeting; rotate roles from meeting to meeting.
- ◆ Decisions should be made on the basis of data collected on the issue rather than hunches or "gut feelings," which can obscure the difference between treating the problem or the symptom.
- ◆ Stay on schedule.
- ◆ Make assignments to individuals to follow-up.

Ground Rules

If ground rules are established, purposes kept clear, and time is focused on the issues at hand, teams can stay away from focusing on individual or group behaviors which usually cause conversations to lose focus.

Example ground rules include:

- ◆ This is a safe room
- ◆ There is no rank in this room.
- ◆ All ideas are valid.
- ◆ Each person gets a chance to speak.
- ◆ Each person gets a chance to listen.
- ◆ We are here to focus on the future.
- ◆ Our purpose is improvement, not blame.

Meeting Etiquette/Norms of Behavior

It might be that your staff members need new ways of behaving as a team. Developing norms of behavior and agreeing on meeting etiquette are ways to get all staff to think about their meeting behavior. It is also a way to monitor the meeting behavior.

Example Norms of Behavior

- ◆ Each member of this school will strive to understand the other person before trying to be understood.
- ◆ We will not make assumptions. We will ask for clarification.
- ◆ We will not talk behind each other's backs.
- ◆ There will be no cross-talk in open meetings.
- ◆ Feelings will be expressed openly, without judgment.
- ◆ We want to be respected.
- ◆ There is no such thing as failure; there are only results.
- ◆ There are win-win solutions to every problem. We will find them.
- ◆ Our commitment is to help every student succeed. All of our actions are focused on this commitment.
- ◆ We value trust and will act with trustworthiness.

We are each accountable to the other to uphold the intent of these guidelines. When we all work together to behave in a manner that will increase our abilities to meet the needs of students, our reward will be the achievement of our outcomes—increased student achievement.