TEAM to TEACH

A FACILITATOR’S GUIDE TO PROFESSIONAL LEARNING TEAMS

ANNE JOLLY
Team to Teach:
A Facilitator’s Guide to Professional Learning Teams
By Anne Jolly

Editor: Valerie von Frank
Copy editor & designer: Sue Chevalier

© National Staff Development Council, 2008. All rights reserved.


Reproduction in whole or part without written permission is prohibited. Unless indicated otherwise, buyers of this book have permission to make up to 30 copies of handouts if they are to be used for instructional purposes as long as this book and NSDC are properly cited.

Requests for permission to reprint or copy portions of this book for other purposes should be faxed to 513-523-0638 on organization letterhead. E-mail requests will be accepted at permissions@nsdc.org. All requests must specify the number of copies that will be made and how the material will be used. Please allow two weeks for a response. See www.nsdc.org/library/publications/permpolicy.cfm for more information.

Printed in the United States of America
Item #B394

ISBN 978-0-9800393-4-4
## Tools

### CHAPTER 1
1.1 What do I know? What do *we* know?
1.2 Think about your professional learning
1.3 Look at teacher needs
1.4 Will collaboration work?
1.5 Quick quiz
1.6 Focus questions
1.7 What does the research say?

### CHAPTER 2
2.1 Professional learning team FAQs
2.2 Terms that describe professional learning teams
2.3 The professional learning team decision-making cycle
2.4a Table tent question 1
2.4b Appropriate use of learning teams
2.5 Meeting overview checklist
2.6a What did you see and hear?
2.6b Professional learning team meeting skit

### CHAPTER 3
3.1 The ideal start-up
3.2 Support structures for professional learning teams
3.3 Learning team options
3.4 Team logistics
3.5 Time to meet
3.6 Resources on time
3.7 Sample timeline for implementing professional learning teams

### CHAPTER 4
4.1 Traits of successful team members
4.2 Why norms?
4.3 A norm sampler
4.4 Considerations for team norms
4.5 Develop team norms
4.6 Quick check
4.7 Norms tune-up
4.8 A brainstorming protocol
4.9 Tips for team members

### CHAPTER 5
5.1 What *are* data?
5.2a Subgroup analysis chart
5.2b Sample subgroup analysis chart
5.3 Reflecting on the data
5.4 Deciding on a team focus
5.5a Decision-making cycle for developing goals
5.5b Decision-making cycle description
5.6 Team goal-setting guidelines
5.7 Setting your team goal
5.8 Check out that goal

### CHAPTER 6
6.1 Reflect on our beliefs and assumptions
6.2 Reflect on our current reality
6.3 Reflect on priorities and actions
6.4 Team long-term planning guide
6.5 Plan for team growth
CHAPTER 7
7.1 Let’s get acquainted!
7.2 Professional learning team roles
7.3 Professional learning team activity generator
7.4 Quality indicators
7.5 The dysfunctional discussion division
7.6a Trust factors
7.6b Trust factors
7.7 A portrait of trust
7.8 Team communications
7.9 Anywhere School memo
7.10 Hold productive conversations
7.11 Conversation quick guides
7.12 Understanding Student Thinking video observation guide
7.13 Regroup before the meeting
7.14 Team progress self-assessment
7.15 Are we on target?

CHAPTER 8
8.1 Stages of Concern about professional learning teams
8.2 Levels of Use
8.3 Tool talk
8.4 Ask the right questions
8.5 The balcony view
8.6 Feedback analysis
8.7 It’s OK! cards—teacher version
8.8 It’s OK! cards—facilitator version
8.9 Something to celebrate
8.10 Protect these teams!
8.11 Finding relevant resources
8.12 Database of teacher talent
8.13 Hunting for help
8.14 Share a site
8.15 Team progress reminders
8.16 Facilitation check

CHAPTER 9
9.1 Participant perception survey
9.2 Pre/post survey
9.3 Survey of teacher beliefs about teaming
9.4 Year one debriefing questions
9.5 Year two planning questions
9.6 Checkpoint survey
9.7 Our team members
9.8 Professional learning team survey

CHAPTER 10
10.1 The facilitator’s role
10.2 Organize for the journey
10.3 Build rapport with teams
10.4 A sample professional learning team agreement
10.5 Information checklist for facilitators
10.6 Professional learning teams that work
10.7 Is this a good policy?
10.8 How important are you?
10.9 What’s a leader to do?
10.10 Sample note from an administrator
10.11 Consensus-building tips
TOOLS
Tool 1.1: What do I know? What do we know?

**Directions:** You and a team of colleagues are helping to design a professional learning initiative for teachers in your school. The principal has promised you the resources you need to engage in effective professional learning.

Begin by considering three questions. Answer the questions individually, then form groups of three to four and share your answers. Make notes of any new ideas and information you gain as you share.

1. **What outcomes should result from a strong professional learning initiative?**

2. **What characteristics of quality professional learning should be included in this initiative?**

3. **What supports will teachers need in order to effectively participate in this professional learning?**

**Reflect:**

- What value did working with a group add when answering these questions?

- What might be the value of regularly working with a group of teachers to improve instructional practices?
Tool 1.2: Think about your professional learning

**Directions:** How does the professional learning you normally receive measure up? These statements describe some benefits of quality professional learning. Circle the answer that best describes to what degree you feel this description is true of the professional learning you participate in.

1. Fits naturally with our school system or school goals.
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly agree

2. Provides a consistent focus and ongoing training and assistance.
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly agree

3. Engages teachers in using multiple sources of data and information to determine student learning needs.
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly agree

4. Creates a collective commitment among teachers to deepen their content knowledge and to learn and use research-based instructional practices to meet student needs.
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly agree

5. Provides time and opportunities for groups of teachers to meet regularly to share, reflect, and work together on the art of teaching.
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly agree

6. Empowers teachers to make decisions about their own professional learning needs.
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly agree

7. Is relevant and useful to situations teachers face each day in the classroom.
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly agree

8. Provides a way for teachers to learn and grow in a supportive atmosphere.
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly agree

9. Honors teachers’ current knowledge and skills.
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly agree

10. Provides teachers with a process for successfully dealing with individual student learning needs.
    - Strongly disagree
    - Disagree
    - Agree
    - Strongly agree

11. Provides teachers with continuing opportunities to grow professionally at the school site and routinely integrate their learning into classroom practice.
    - Strongly disagree
    - Disagree
    - Agree
    - Strongly agree

12. Engages teachers in spending greater amounts of time in professional learning.
    - Strongly disagree
    - Disagree
    - Agree
    - Strongly agree

**REFLECT:** Which of these professional learning characteristics are needed by teachers in your school?
Tool 1.3: Look at teacher needs

DIRECTIONS: Think about your school as you read the statements below. Place a check mark next to the statements you think describe the needs of teachers at your school. Discuss the items you check with other participants nearby and explain your thinking.

_____ 1. We need to increase student achievement.

_____ 2. We need to continually increase our knowledge and teaching expertise.

_____ 3. We need to strengthen professional relationships, become less isolated from one another in our work, and create bonds of trust and caring.

_____ 4. We need to examine new ideas, implement new teaching strategies, and evaluate the impact on student learning.

_____ 5. We need to sustain changes in our teaching practices over the long term.

_____ 6. We need to effectively mentor and assist new teachers.

_____ 7. We need flexible, relevant, job-embedded professional learning.

_____ 8. We need to increase our teacher leadership capacity and skills.

_____ 9. We need to be regarded as valuable professionals and instructional decision makers.

_____ 10. We need a cost-effective way for all faculty members to engage in ongoing professional learning.

_____ 11. We need a practical way to implement new instructional initiatives.

_____ 12. We need a realistic way to engage in action research.

Reflect: How could systematically working together in teams help us meet these needs?
Tool 1.4: Will collaboration work?

**Directions:** Duplicate and cut apart the cards. Each team will receive one card, and then brainstorm ideas. Refer to Tool 4.8 for help brainstorming. Chart the team’s ideas.
PROFESSIONAL DESIGN TEAM

You are members of Design Inc., a professional think tank that specializes in creating opportunities for professionals to engage in on-the-job collaboration and increase their skills and productivity.

Your firm has been hired by Innovation High School to develop an organizational structure, working conditions, and a procedure that will enable teachers to work together in teams to increase their knowledge and skills so that they become cutting-edge teachers. What will you recommend? What information, opportunities, and working conditions will teachers need to be able to work together effectively?

Brainstorm ideas and jot your plans on the chart paper.

Your design team has 10 minutes.

---

PROFESSIONAL SABOTAGE TEAM

You are members of Sabotage Inc., a firm that specializes in undermining attempts that would allow professionals to collaborate on the job and increase their skills and productivity.

Your firm has been hired to undermine a plan by Innovation High School. This school plans to create conditions that allow teachers to meet and work together to continually increase their knowledge and skills so that they are cutting-edge teachers.

Your job is to sabotage this plan. Design an organizational structure, working conditions, and procedures that will result in teachers working in isolation and will make it difficult for them to collaborate.

Brainstorm ideas and jot down your plans on the chart paper.

Your sabotage team has 10 minutes.
Tool 1.5: Quick quiz

Directions: Take this quiz and discuss your thinking with a small group of participants. You can find the answers in Tool 1.7, “What does the research say?”

1. The most important determinant of student achievement is:
   a. Socioeconomic status
   b. Teacher knowledge and expertise
   c. Parental and societal factors

2. Most of the achievement gap between poor minority children and students in more affluent communities can be explained by:
   a. Access to more resources and better facilities
   b. Family income and parental education levels
   c. Differences in the quality of teaching

3. How much time per year does the average teacher spend in professional learning?
   a. 8 hours or less
   b. 3 days
   c. One week

4. What percent of teachers identified strong results from those learning experiences?
   a. 8%
   b. 15%
   c. 42%

5. Which group reported spending the least amount of time working together with colleagues on instruction?
   a. Beginning teachers
   b. Elementary teachers
   c. Secondary teachers

6. Teacher experience (years of teaching) is correlated with gains in teaching quality in what way?
   a. The more experienced the teacher, the higher the quality of the teaching.
   b. There is no correlation between teacher experience and teaching quality.
   c. There is little or no correlation between experience and teaching quality after the first year of teaching.

7. Which of these structures has proven to be essential for improving teaching quality?
   a. Collaboration to improve instruction
   b. Supportive school conditions and culture
   c. Both A and B
Tool 1.6: Focus questions

Directions: Copy and place these tent cards on tables. Use these questions with Tool 1.7 to discuss the need for and benefits of professional collaboration.
Why do we need to continually improve and adapt our instruction?
QUESTION 2

Why should we work in professional learning teams to do this?
How can working together on instruction make a difference for us?
How can working together on instruction make a difference for our students?
Tool 1.7: What does the research say?

By Anne Jolly

PART 1: EFFECTIVE TEACHING MATTERS

“More can be done to improve education by improving the effectiveness of teachers than by any other single factor.”
— Paul Wright, Sandra Horn, & William Sanders, 1997

Competent, committed, and caring teachers are the single biggest influence on student achievement and the most important factor in preparing students for a 21st-century world. Over the last two decades, evidence continues to mount that teacher quality accounts for the majority of variance in student learning. The 1997 report of the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, Doing What Matters Most: Investing in Quality Teaching, spotlights teacher knowledge and expertise as the most important influence on what students learn. According to the report, teachers who know a lot about teaching and learning and who work in supportive school environments can overcome many of the conditions outside of school that often impair student success.

An analysis of 900 Texas school districts by Harvard professor Ronald Ferguson (1999) confirms teacher expertise as a primary influence on student performance. Researcher Linda Darling-Hammond (1998) points out that the effect of teacher knowledge and skill in this study was so strong that “after controlling for socioeconomic status, the large disparities in achievement between black and white students were almost entirely accounted for by differences in the qualifications of their teachers.”

Groups of students with comparable abilities and initial achievement levels may have vastly different academic outcomes as a result of the teachers to whom they are assigned, according to Eric Hanushek (2002). He discovered that differences in students’ annual achievement growth between having a highly effective and an ineffective teacher can be more than one grade level in test performance. Furthermore, students who have ineffective teachers for three consecutive years score as much as 50% lower on achievement tests than those with effective teachers for three consecutive years. William Sanders and June Rivers (1996) found that the residual effects of the type of teaching students received were measurable two years later, regardless of the effectiveness of later teachers.

Teaching quality impacts all students, regardless of their circumstances. A 2001 report by researcher Judith Langer compared student performance in reading, writing, and English in 88 classrooms in California, Florida, New York, and Texas. None of these schools was low-achieving. In fact, all of these schools were characterized by active and engaged students and teachers in well-supported classrooms. Once again, effective teachers had a marked impact on student performance. Over a two-year period, Langer found student achievement to be higher among students with more skilled teachers. In fact, students with the most accomplished teachers achieved at an even higher level than expected.

Such research shines a hopeful light on the
What, exactly, defines “teaching expertise”? According to NSDC’s Standards for Staff Development (2001):

“Successful teachers have a deep understanding of the subjects they teach, use appropriate instructional methods, and apply various classroom assessment strategies. These teachers participate in sustained, intellectually rigorous professional learning regarding the subjects they teach, the strategies they use to teach those subjects, the findings of cognitive scientists regarding human learning, and the means by which they assess student progress in achieving high academic standards” (p. 32).

No initiative or program a school adopts will substitute for effective teachers who continually build the knowledge, skills, and understanding of today’s learners, and who help them master both subject matter and 21st-century skills.

PART 2: TEACHER OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN MATTER

“Sustained, intellectually rigorous staff development is essential for everyone who affects students’ learning.”

— National Staff Development Council, 2001

The vast number of our nation’s teachers are hard-working, well-educated, and committed to helping students learn and prepare to be successful citizens. So why the increasingly intense national focus on teacher preparation, ongoing learning, and the format and quality of that learning?

Teachers today are working with rapidly shifting student populations whose lives are saturated by the 21st-century media culture. According to Josh McHugh (2005), a survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that media use among children and teens skyrocketed with the launch of iPod, instant messaging, mobile video, and YouTube. With the arrival of social networking sites like MySpace, young people are rarely out of contact with media. These
students carry their visual world and their network of friends with them everywhere they go in the form of cellular phones, PDAs, handheld games, and laptops. At home they are surrounded by computers, TVs, and game consoles. Considering the wide range of rich, interactive encounters students experience in other areas of their lives, their school experiences frequently seem rigid, isolated, and boring.

Add to that the increasing student diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, native language, and socioeconomic status. Teachers are discovering that tried-and-true methods that once worked to help students succeed no longer work. Information is doubling so rapidly that Thomas L. Friedman, in his 2006 bestseller, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the 21st Century* (Farrar, Straus, & Giroux), points out that what students learn today in school will be outdated by tomorrow.

Our nation’s teachers face a real dilemma. Their teaching expertise is the most critical factor in student achievement. Yet Hanushek, John Kain, Daniel O’Brien, and Steven Rivkin (2005) showed that teaching experience does not improve the quality of teaching after the first year. How will our teachers continually maintain their edge so that they will be the effective instructors that students need? In fact, what does effective teaching and learning look like for a constantly changing student population in a 21st-century society? Teachers face the daunting task of learning new ways to equip students with the knowledge and skills to be successful in a rapidly changing world — a world that we can’t even envision.

Never before has there been such a pressing need for teachers to continually update their teaching skills, content knowledge, and understanding of what students must know and be able to do to be successful 21st-century citizens. They must find the balance between providing students with core academic knowledge and helping them develop “portable skills” such as critical thinking, making connections between ideas, generating new ideas, problem solving, and knowing how to keep learning.

The key to continual growth and just-in-time learning is professional learning of a new sort. Traditional professional development relies on periodic workshops to update teachers on the latest initiatives. That paradigm of teacher learning must shift dramatically in order to prepare teachers for 21st-century teaching and learning. The direction of that shift was foreshadowed in the 2001 report, *Teacher Quality: A Report on the Preparation and Qualifications of Public School Teachers*, from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). In that report, NCES found three criteria to be particularly important in preparing teachers for today’s teaching challenges:

1. Teachers must spend more time in professional learning than they currently spend.
2. Teachers must engage in collaboration and on-the-job learning in a climate that supports professional growth.
3. Teacher learning must be ongoing, integrated with their daily work, and must maintain momentum over the long term.

Although most states, districts, and school systems offer substantial amounts of staff development, a 2000 report by the U.S. Department of Education, *A Talented, Dedicated, and Well-Prepared Teacher in Every Classroom*, points out that teachers still have too few opportunities to update and increase their knowledge and skills, and they spend too little time in meaningful professional learning. A 2005 NCES Issue Brief (Scotchmer, McGrath, & Coder) concurs, reporting that a
majority of teachers participate in eight or fewer hours of professional learning per year in either subject-matter content or teaching methods. Only 8% of these teachers reported a lasting impact from this professional learning. The NCES Issue Brief also reports that most professional learning still focuses on workshops or training sessions, although 74% of teachers did report engaging in collaborative activities focused on instruction. The report indicates that teachers with three or fewer years of teaching experience were less likely to collaborate with other teachers on issues of instruction. Secondary teachers were less likely to collaborate than elementary teachers. Additionally, many efforts that pass for collaboration still fall short of professional learning that provides teachers with new knowledge and the expertise they need to be highly effective.

**Bottom line:** Schools need a better, more intentional way to build teacher knowledge and expertise. Teacher learning must be ongoing, job-embedded, and continually supported. Schools must provide more frequent opportunities for teachers to gain the skills and knowledge they need to prepare students for a demanding curriculum and an ever-changing, high-tech society. Teachers’ professional learning needs an overhaul.

**PART 3: COLLABORATIVE TEAM LEARNING WORKS**

“Quality teaching is the responsibility of the entire school community. Fostering a supportive community that helps new teachers become good teachers – and good teachers become great teachers – is critical to providing a rewarding career path for educators and a quality learning environment for students.”

— Fulton, Yoon, & Lee, 2005, p. 1

Professional learning for 21st-century teachers requires a bold, flexible, and creative approach. It must effectively address rapidly changing classrooms filled with new problems and with new possibilities. It must provide teachers with support and opportunities to bring their teaching methods and their curriculum into line with the way the modern world works. Because of rapid changes in workforce demands and student demographics, this professional learning must be ongoing, adaptable, and continually upgraded as new information becomes available. 21st-century professional learning will engage teachers in collaborative work to examine and question the status quo, seek new ways of working with students, experiment with those methods, and reflect together on the results.

The type of powerful professional learning that can accomplish this occurs in ongoing teams of teachers who meet on a regular basis to focus on instructional practice. When whole faculties begin meeting in teams and working together to improve teaching and learning, the school is often referred to as a professional learning community. In his recent book, *Whatever It Takes: How Professional Learning Communities Respond When Kids Don’t Learn* (2004), Richard DuFour and co-authors identify collaborative teams as the engines — the driving forces — of professional learning communities. He describes these teams as composed of interdependent members who “engage in collective inquiry both into best practice and the current reality regarding their students’ existing levels of achievement” (p.3).

Working in teams provides a logical way to support and extend the training teachers gain through workshops and seminars. Research indicates that when teachers work together and challenge one another, they are more likely to sustain their commitment.
Tool 1.7, p. 5

to innovative and effective instructional practices. Additionally, teams where teachers are working together to improve instruction provide an ideal setting for mentoring and inducting new teachers.

Team-based professional learning is indeed powerful, and evidence shows that this type of collaborative learning works well for teachers. According to Hanushek and his co-authors (2005), schools have significant differences in terms of teaching quality. Teachers working together to improve instruction across the board can raise the bar for teachers and level the learning field for students. James Stigler and James Hiebert, authors of *The Teaching Gap* (The Free Press, 1999), analyzed the reasons that working together to prepare and design instruction nets such sizeable benefits for students and teachers in Japan. They discovered that by working in teams, teachers were able to describe and analyze classroom teaching and to teach each other. Working together provided teachers with benchmarks to gauge their own practice and identify ways to improve.

Collaborating with colleagues also creates a new view of teaching as a joint responsibility rather than the responsibility of single individuals. In *Education in a New Era* (ASCD, 2000), Ann Lieberman and Lynn Miller also describe the greater sense of joint responsibility for the success of all students that emerges in collaborative groups. Teachers make the transition from exclusive concerns about “my classroom” and “my students” to a more inclusive attitude about “our school” and “our students.”

Team-based professional learning also works for students. To cite several examples, Linda Darling-Hammond in *The Work of Restructuring Schools: Building from the Ground Up* (Teachers College Press, 1995), found that schools where teachers worked together on teaching and learning showed academic improvement more quickly than schools where this did not happen. A 2005 study (Bolam, McMahon, Stoll, Thomas, & Ingram) of 393 schools and all grade levels found that high-functioning learning teams had a positive impact on both student learning and attendance. Studies by Regina Mistretta (2005) indicate that collaborative learning led to changes in teaching methods and statistically significant gains in student achievement. Work by Susan Trimble (Trimble & Peterson, 2000) also shows changed classroom practices and substantial increases in test scores for students who consistently scored in the lower 25%. In her book, *Professional Learning Communities: Communities of Continuous Inquiry and Improvement* (SEDL, 1997), Shirley Hord presents evidence that a collaborative adult environment leads to more student engagement, fewer tardies, and better attendance.

**Bottom line:** Collaborative team learning is more effective for teacher and student learning and performance. According to the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 21st-century teaching must become a “team sport” (Fulton, Yoon, & Lee, 2005). Simply organizing teachers into teams does not guarantee positive outcomes, however. Many things influence whether teacher teams accomplish something worthwhile for themselves and their students. These include the team’s desire for accomplishment, members’ understandings of the purpose of the collaboration, the clarity of the goals and focus, and the school conditions in which teachers work. Shirley Hord wisely reminds us (1997) that professional collaboration among teams of teachers can increase teacher effectiveness, but success depends on what the teachers do in their collective efforts.
PART 4: DOING WHAT MATTERS

“Today’s young teachers grew up digital. They are ready to meet the challenge of teaching by working with their colleagues and students to transform our factory-era schools into 21st-century learning centers. But they find themselves working alone on self-contained classrooms where they are bound to the teaching practices of the past. Faced with a choice between working in the last century or the 21st century, these new teachers are voting with their feet. The young people we are counting on to teach for the future are leaving our obsolete schools at an alarming rate.”

— Fulton, Yoon, & Lee, 2005

Change is the most important thing we can accomplish for our next generation of teachers and students — change from an outdated model of education to one that successfully prepares students for a new era. Teachers are leaving the profession today in unprecedented numbers, and recruiting a new generation of teachers by asking them to work in isolation in stand-alone classrooms is not working. The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future report (Fulton, Yoon, & Lee, 2005) reminds us that yesterday’s teachers were stand-alone instructors who delivered a fixed body of knowledge and skills to students who used it to engage in predictable careers and pursuits. Today’s young citizens are driven by principles of teamwork and smart networking. It’s time to incorporate collaboration and teamwork into our schools as a way of organizing teaching and learning.

We know that teachers must increase their effectiveness and expertise in order to prepare students for life in a rapidly-changing 21st-century world. Doing so will be an ongoing process. Teachers must spend more time in professional learning, and much of this learning should occur at the school site. Teachers must work together in a collaborative, intentional manner and support one another in their efforts. Establishing schools where accomplished teaching and learning is occurring requires serious and sustained attention to changing current teaching practices and providing a school organization that allows teachers to collaborate and focus on instruction.

Professional learning teams are a part of the change that must take place if our schools are to become 21st-century learning organizations.

REFERENCES


DuFour, R., Dufour, R., Eaker, R., &


Tool 2.1: Professional learning team FAQs

Directions: Read about professional learning teams, then share your thoughts about these teams with a colleague.

WHAT ARE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING TEAMS?

Professional learning teams are small groups of teachers working together to learn more about teaching and build new instructional skills to accomplish needed results. These teachers meet on a long-term, regular basis (preferably at least one hour per week). Professional learning team meetings focus exclusively on teacher professional learning and growth.

WHO IS PART OF A TEAM?

Teams may form around grade levels, disciplines, topics, or other commonalities. They may be interdisciplinary or organize around other criteria. Teams should be small enough that all team members can actively participate, share leadership, and build supportive relationships. Teams with three to five members usually work well together.

WHEN AND WHERE DO TEAMS MEET?

Optimally, teams meet at the school during the school day. Meeting space should be as comfortable and free from interruption as possible.

WHAT DO TEAM MEMBERS DO?

Team members:

1. Examine student achievement and classroom data to make decisions about what teachers need to learn and what new skills they need to help students learn.
2. Develop a shared instructional goal based on identified student needs.
3. Establish shared norms and values that spell out the expectations and interpersonal skills team members will use during team meetings.
4. Study and learn about research-based instructional practices that can help them meet student learning needs.
5. Build supportive relationships with colleagues and a culture of openness and shared responsibility for effective teaching and learning.
6. Rotate leadership responsibilities to build joint ownership in the team’s work and expand leadership skills.

“Isolation of teachers is so ingrained in the traditional culture of schools that invitations to collaborate are insufficient. To build professional learning communities, meaningful collaboration must be systematically embedded into the daily life of the school.”

7. **Work together** to examine current instruction, develop new or improved teaching materials and approaches, and implement new classroom strategies. Team members monitor progress, observe one another, examine student responses and work, and engage in other activities that move them toward more effective and accomplished teaching.

8. **Analyze** the results of their efforts and adjust their teaching practices based on collective reflection and wisdom.

9. **Communicate** information about learning team activities with the faculty, administration, parents, and others as appropriate. Teams document big ideas and decisions from their meetings as one way of sharing their work with others and creating avenues for conversation among school staff about instruction.

---

**REFLECT: In what ways do professional learning team meetings differ from other types of meetings at your school?**

---

**REFLECT: What value do you think these meeting might have for teachers? For students?**

---

### Tool 2.2: Terms that describe professional learning teams

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative</td>
<td>These meetings engage teachers in working together to increase their teaching expertise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Team members keep written records (logs) of team discussions and decisions and use these as a tool for sharing information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continual learning</td>
<td>Cutting-edge teaching requires updating knowledge and skills on an ongoing basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data-driven</td>
<td>Instructional practices are revised and adapted based on an analysis of student data and information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>Team members experiment with new instructional practices, analyze them, and adjust them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence-based</td>
<td>Teams build their instruction on studies of practices that have been tested and found to be effective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>Team goals focus teacher learning and growth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional focus</td>
<td>Meetings focus exclusively and only on improving classroom instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job-embedded</td>
<td>Meetings occur at the school site and during the school day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norms</td>
<td>Teams establish ground rules and procedures for working together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public practice</td>
<td>Team members open their classrooms and make their teaching visible to colleagues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purposeful</td>
<td>Professional learning team meetings focus on improving existing classroom practices and generating new teaching practices to increase student learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective</td>
<td>Teams engage in rigorous reflection and questioning about teaching and learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared leadership</td>
<td>Team responsibilities rotate weekly or monthly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systematic</td>
<td>Meetings occur on a regular basis, preferably at least once a week.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tool 2.3: The professional learning team decision-making cycle

Adapted from the Evidence Based Decisionmaking Cycle, SERVE Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.
Tool 2.4a: Table tent question 1

**Directions:** Create table tents with the question on the next page and use it as a reminder in team meetings.
Is the focus on teacher learning and growth?
Tool 2.4b: Appropriate use of learning teams

**Directions:** Put a check mark under the appropriate column for whether you think the statement accurately describes professional learning teams’ work. Thumbs-up indicates you agree; thumbs-down means you disagree. When you are finished, discuss your responses with the group.

**Professional learning teams:**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Keep the same team members all year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Focus on school improvement issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Coordinate and improve classroom teaching strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Keep the same focus for the entire school year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Work on curriculum alignment and mapping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Examine student work and analyze student thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Look at and apply research-based information on teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Focus on classroom management and discipline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Meet at the school and during the school day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Examine the impact of new teaching strategies on students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Include the principal as a member of the team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Rotate responsibilities among team members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Focus on teacher professional learning and growth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Discuss department or grade-level issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Observe colleagues using relevant teaching strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Attend all learning team meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Document team activities and discussions in a meeting log.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Work on procedures for improving standardized test scores.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Discuss administrative and front-burner issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Share team logs and accomplishments schoolwide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Keep the team size small (three to five members).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Meet on an as-needed basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Keep a focus on classroom instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Periodically evaluate team functioning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tool 2.5: Meeting overview checklist

Directions: There is no single way to conduct learning team meetings. This list suggests ideas for some activities. Refer to this list periodically for ideas that might have value for your team. Include as many activities as possible throughout the year.

ALL MEETINGS
• Communicate! Keep records (logs) of all team meetings. Include big ideas from the meeting discussions, decisions made, and plans for the next meeting. After each meeting, e-mail the log or post it on a school wiki. Read logs from other teams and offer insights.
• Plan the next meeting.

INITIAL MEETING(S)
• Take care of team logistics.
• Set team norms.
• Determine a team goal.
  1. Look at a variety of student data and information.
  2. Decide on an area in which teachers need to increase their expertise, based on where students need the most help.
  3. Plan an initial course of action.
  4. Determine what information and resources are needed.

CONTINUING MEETINGS
• Examine research and information (books, articles, etc.).
• Share, develop, and/or modify instructional practices to address student needs.
• Coordinate and systematically apply new instructional practices in classrooms.
• Monitor student responses.
• Reflect on and discuss classroom applications and make needed adjustments.

POSSIBLE MEETING ACTIVITIES
• Develop joint or coordinated lessons.
• Examine student written work.
• Examine videotapes or DVDs of student responses to particular activities.
• Examine teacher assignments.
• Observe other team members or teachers using specific activities with students.
• Observe a videotape or DVD of a colleague implementing a particular strategy.
• Discuss the effectiveness of teaching strategies and approaches.
• Monitor the team’s progress toward instructional goals.
• Monitor the team’s functioning as a collaborative group.
• Keep the team’s work public. Post logs on websites, e-mail logs and activities schoolwide, engage other teachers, run ideas by the faculty, and honor their input.
• Develop a tool kit of information and practices that can serve as a resource for other teachers.
• Modify and improve the professional learning team process throughout the year.

REFLECT: Keep a list of additional activities in which your learning team engages over the course of the year, and make these ideas available to other teams.
Tool 2.6a: What did you see and hear?

**Directions:** As you watch the skit, observe how teachers interact. Jot down your thoughts in the space below. Share your ideas with colleagues.

A. How teachers interact with one another.

B. What types of conversations team members have.

C. The kinds of activities team members engage in.

D. Things that seem to make the meeting successful.

**REFLECT:** After watching this skit, discuss your observations with colleagues. Together make a list of things you noticed about this professional learning team meeting. Prepare to share your ideas.
Tool 2.6b: Professional learning team meeting skit

Directions: Read the part for which you have volunteered or been selected. Be dramatic, and have fun with it.

Team members sit in the designated area, with coffee cups, notebooks, and pens in hand.

Narrator: Teachers do not normally work together on a regular basis to examine their teaching practice closely, so knowing exactly what to do during learning team time may be puzzling, at least at first. To give you an idea of what might go on, consider this highly contrived scenario.

Meet today’s team members: Sue, Maria, Chris, and Juan. Each one teaches a different subject — science, math, social studies, and language arts. They meet during the school day for one hour each week. These learning team members have already met several times. They’ve decided on a team goal — to learn more effective methods of helping students read and understand their textbooks. They also have set some ground rules for how their meetings will run.

As team members take their seats, Maria volunteers to record today’s big ideas from the team’s discussions, along with any decision the team makes, in a team log. Today’s team leader, Sue, begins the meeting.

Sue: Several weeks ago, we kicked off our learning team by analyzing several types of data for our students. The data verify what we already know — our students need help in reading comprehension. Many of them don’t read their assignments. Even when they do, some of them struggle and don’t understand what they read. So we decided to work together this year to learn how to help our kids understand what they read in all of their subjects. We are going to start by using a book that has some research-based ideas that may work for us. This week, we all read the chapter on how to diagnose our students’ reading needs. What is it, exactly, that they can’t do? Chris, you volunteered to lead today’s discussion.

Chris: Well, as I started looking at all the things that good readers can do, I was amazed. I’m a good reader, but I didn’t realize I was doing all of these things. Take a look at page 17.

Narrator: For the next 15 minutes, Chris and the other team members share information and ideas on assessing students’ needs in reading. Then Maria, the math teacher, comments:

Maria: This is really helpful. A lot of my students can’t handle reading math problems. This gives me a way to diagnose where their comprehension is breaking down. And it gives me ideas for specific strategies to help them conquer those problems.
Chris: I feel the same way. But I have a question. While we're in the process of diagnosing our students' individual reading problems, should we go ahead and start using some of these reading strategies in our classrooms?

Juan: I'd say yes, we should definitely do that. I've scanned the book, and there are several strategies there that I think would help all of my students.

Sue: So, exactly which of these strategies are we going to work with first?

Narrator: Team members discuss various reading strategies they could use with their students. They agree to begin by all working with prereading strategies.

Juan: OK, so what now? Do you want me to look for more information on prereading strategies before our next meeting and come up with additional suggestions for how to use these in our classrooms?

Chris: Sounds good to me. In the meantime, I'll use the information in this chapter to draft a checklist we might use to diagnose our students' reading difficulties. That will help us target our reading strategies better.

Sue: Hey, I just had another idea. One of our teachers, Ms. Duke, conducts workshops on reading comprehension strategies. Why don't I invite her to one of our team meetings to give us all some tips?

Narrator: Team members like Sue's idea and decide to ask Ms. Duke to be a resource for them throughout the year.

Sue: OK, let's review where we are. We've decided to start by learning how to diagnose our students' reading problems. While we are doing that, we will also be learning some ways of helping them prepare to read a selection from their textbooks.

Juan: You nailed it, but are we moving fast enough with this? I mean, what are we going to do in our classrooms this week? What if the principal comes in and says, “Hey, Juan! What are you doing to help your kids with reading?”

Maria: (Waving the log in the air.) That's one reason we have this log. It gives us a record of when we're meeting and what we're learning. Hey! Did you guys read the copy of last week's log that we e-mailed to the principal? He really read it! Did you see the message he e-mailed back to us?

Sue: Yeah, these logs really come in handy. The principal doesn't have to sit in here and meet with us to know what's going on.

[All nod vigorously.]
**Juan:** And it gives us a way to communicate regularly with him. He really does seem to like what we’re doing. Hey, speaking of communicating, did you see that several teachers from other learning teams replied to the log we e-mailed? The 6th-grade team even sent us an article they came across to use as a resource.

**Narrator:** Team members agree that sharing logs is a good way to build a sense of community within the faculty and to share ideas and expertise.

**Maria:** Here’s something else we need to think about. How are we going to know that the strategies we use really help our students understand what they read? What kind of evidence are we going to collect during the year?

**Narrator:** The team discusses different kinds of evidence they can gather, and Maria volunteers to call the reading specialist for additional ideas to bring back to the team at the next meeting.

**Juan:** You know, I can put together a web page where we can post information about reading strategies and assignments, along with examples of what our kids are doing.

**Chris:** What a great idea! Want to post our team logs there also? Then our students and parents can see what we’re doing. The kids can see that we believe learning is important, because we’re learning, too.

**Narrator:** The team agrees that a web page would be a valuable resource, and that continual learning is an important concept they can model for their students.

**Sue:** OK, now let’s recap what we’ve done. We’re going to focus on two areas: diagnosing specific reading difficulties our students have and working together on some prereading strategies. Juan is going to get more information on prereading strategies before our next meeting. Chris will draft a checklist to help us get started with assessing our students’ difficulties. I will ask Ms. Duke to meet with our team, and I’ll also see if I can observe her using some prereading strategies. Maria will talk to the reading specialist to get ideas on how to tell if we’re making a difference for students. Juan will start developing a web page. Now, who wants to be the team leader next week?

**Maria:** What does the leader do?

**Sue:** Well, as this week’s team leader, I checked with all of you to be sure you remembered this meeting. I reminded Chris that he was going to lead today’s book discussion. I also asked the office folks not to interrupt us during the meeting. Basically, I just tried to keep the meeting on everybody’s front burner. Once we got here, I tried to keep us on track.
Maria: I guess I can do that next week.

Sue: Great! Thanks, Maria. Now, does anyone have any concerns or recommendations about today’s meeting?

Juan: I’m just glad I have you guys to help me as I muddle through this. I’m a science teacher. I’m not that good at teaching reading right now.

Maria: Hey, we’re all going to muddle through this together. None of us alone is as good as all of us together! Uh-oh — it’s time for the bell.

Narrator: Grabbing their now-empty coffee cups, team members head for their classrooms.
Tool 3.1: The ideal start-up

Directions: Answer the questions below to generate ideas about what would ideally be in place for a successful rollout of professional learning teams. While these ideas may not materialize, the gap between the actual and the ideal can provide useful information for planning purposes and can help you identify issues to address early on.

1. Ideally, what knowledge, skills, and information about professional learning teams would teachers have?

2. Ideally, what attitudes would teachers have about participating in professional learning teams?

3. Ideally, what school policies and procedures would be in place to support professional learning teams?

4. Ideally, what incentives would be in place to support professional learning teams?
Tool 3.2: Support structures for professional learning teams

Directions: How ready is your school to begin the professional learning team initiative? Do a quick front-end analysis to see how many of these factors that influence team performance are in place. Place a check mark in the box next to items you agree currently describe your school. Discuss which boxes you checked in small groups. Which items can be addressed prior to beginning professional learning teams? Which will need attention during the course of the initiative?

TEACHER KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND INFORMATION
The faculty knows:
☐ How to collaborate with other adults.
☐ Why teachers are using professional learning teams.
☐ How learning teams are structured.
☐ What to do in a learning team meeting.
☐ How to manage resistance and conflict.
☐ How teachers can get needed information, resources, and assistance.

TEACHER MOTIVATION AND COMMITMENT
The faculty:
☐ Sees professional learning teams as relevant.
☐ Values the opportunity to work collaboratively.
☐ Feels confident teachers can succeed in this initiative.
☐ Exhibits enthusiasm.
☐ Believes this effort will help students.

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT, TOOLS, AND PROCESSES
☐ Policies and procedures are in place that will support learning teams.
☐ The school culture and organization are structured in a way that makes learning teams a natural outcome.
☐ Resources are available.
☐ Existing teacher workloads and expectations allow for learning team work.
☐ Teachers’ noninstructional responsibilities are minimal.

INCENTIVES
The school will encourage learning team participation through:
☐ Memberships in professional organizations and education journal subscriptions.
☐ Conferences and workshop attendance as teams or groups.
☐ Opportunities for learning team presentations.
☐ Celebrations, appreciation, and high team visibility.
☐ Exchanges (e.g. professional learning credit, business cards, time trades).
☐ Frequent feedback.
☐ Involvement in decision making about professional learning teams.
☐ Adjusted teacher workloads.
☐ Spotlighting team successes.
☐ Spotlighting student successes.
## Tool 3.3: Learning team options

**Directions:** Discuss each option and record your thinking. Which option would ideally produce the best results for your students? Which are realistic for your staff?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Student learning needs that could be addressed with this option</th>
<th>Advantages/disadvantages of this option</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty-wide teams</td>
<td>The entire faculty participates in learning teams focused on the same initiative.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special topic teams</td>
<td>Teachers group themselves in teams around topics of interest that relate to instruction.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdisciplinary teams</td>
<td>Teams of teachers who share common planning times and the same students work together.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade-level teams</td>
<td>Teachers work together on effective instructional practices for students at a particular grade level.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertical teams</td>
<td>Teachers work together across grade levels to address specific student needs across grades.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject-area teams</td>
<td>Teachers address instructional and learning needs within their subject areas.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between-school teams</td>
<td>Teachers from different schools work together on a common initiative.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Tool 3.4: Team logistics

**Directions:** Use this activity to help with initial team logistics. Work with other team members to brainstorm ideas for each question. The bullet points in the column at left suggest issues you may need to consider in making these decisions. After discussing each question in the column on the right, write the team’s decisions in the space provided beneath each question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guidelines and suggestions</th>
<th>Decisions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Keep team small (three to five people).</td>
<td>Who is on our professional learning team?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Consider personalities, diversity of ideas, and teaching styles, forming a critical mass of positive people.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Teachers only” is recommended; however, to get off to a good start, teams may begin by using a different composition.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meeting during the school day lends value and credibility to the process.</td>
<td>When will our team meet?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• At the school, in comfortable surroundings.</td>
<td>Where will our team meet?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In an area safe from interruptions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In an area where teachers can sit facing each other.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Access to computer during meetings.</td>
<td>What resources will our team need to begin?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Articles, books, and other sources of information about the topic of study.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Basic supplies (pens, sticky notes).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A team notebook (three-ring binder) and a set of tabs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A process and schedule for rotating team roles and responsibilities.</td>
<td>Who will be team leader and recorder?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A variety of methods for communicating with other teams and the principal.</td>
<td>What methods of communicating our work will we use?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Tool 3.5: Time to meet

**Directions:** Place a check mark by ideas that appeal to you and an asterisk (*) by those you think are most workable for your school. Talk over your choices with others from your school or with nearby participants.

#### Bank Time
- Lengthen the regular school day. Save the extra minutes to create larger blocks of time when teachers can plan or learn together.
- Adjust arrival and dismissal times so that school begins 30 minutes early on Monday through Thursday and dismisses two hours early on Friday for teachers to have time to meet collaboratively each Friday.
- Create regularly scheduled early dismissal/late start days.
- Shave minutes off the lunch period and save that time for teacher learning time.
- Total the number of hours teachers meet after school in learning teams, and do not require teachers to report to school for that amount of time on regularly scheduled teacher workdays.

#### Buy Time
- Use paraprofessionals to release teachers during the school day for meetings.
- Hire a team of rotating substitute teachers to release teachers and enable them to plan or learn together.
- Hire one or two permanent subs to fill in regularly for teachers to free them for professional learning team meetings.
- Schedule a team of substitute teachers for a day a week to release teachers on a rotating basis for learning team meetings.
- Hire more teachers, clerks, and support staff to expand or add learning time for teachers.

#### Use Common Time
- Use common planning time to enable teachers working with the same students, the same grade level, or the same subjects to meet in professional learning teams.
- Organize special subjects into blocks of time to create common time for teachers to meet.
- Link planning periods to other noninstructional times, such as lunch periods, giving teachers the option of using time for shared learning.
- Create double planning periods.

#### Use Resource Personnel for Student Learning Activities
- Enlist administrators to teach classes.
- Allow teaching assistants and/or college interns to monitor classes.
- Pair teachers so one teaches while the other meets with his/her professional learning team.
- Plan off-site field experiences for students and use the block of time created for teacher professional learning team meetings.
- Ask parent volunteers to take classes for an hour for a learning team to meet.
- Arrange educational activities for students led by professionals from local colleges, businesses, governmental agencies, or community agencies, and use this time for professional learning team meetings.
FREE TEACHERS FROM NONINSTRUCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS
- Use non-homeroom teachers to occasionally perform homeroom duties so teachers can meet for an extended time before school and through homeroom.
- Reassign school personnel to allow teachers to meet during pep rallies and assemblies.
- Provide more time for teachers to engage in collaborative work by removing noninstructional administrative, clerical, and school management tasks from teachers’ duties and encouraging teams to use that extra time to meet and focus intently on instruction.

ADD PROFESSIONAL DAYS TO THE SCHOOL YEAR
- Create multiday summer learning institutes for teachers to give them needed depth in the areas of focus for the professional learning teams.
- Create a midyear break for students, and use those days for teacher learning.

USE EXISTING TIME MORE EFFECTIVELY
- Set aside faculty meeting times for professional learning, and put all general faculty announcements in newsletters and/or e-mails to teachers.
- Spread time from existing planning days across the calendar to provide more frequent, shorter school-based opportunities to learn.

Reflect: Your thoughts, please! Which options do you prefer? What other ideas do you have?

Reflect: Which options do you think are most able to be accomplished from the school’s standpoint?

Tool 3.6: Resources on time

Directions: Here are resources for additional information on finding time for professional learning. You can also go to an Internet search engine and type in “finding time for professional development.”

**NATIONAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL**

See www.nsdc.org/library/resources/time.cfm. This site has many articles on finding time, including:

- “Finding time for faculties to study together,” by Carlene Murphy. (1997, Summer). *Journal of Staff Development, 18*(3). Murphy states that if a faculty agrees that schools are learning organizations for the adults in the building as well as for children, time will be found. She cites numerous examples of real schools that are finding time for professional learning.

- “Think outside the clock: Create time for professional learning,” by Joan Richardson. (2002, August/September). *Tools for Schools, 1-2.* Richardson offers examples of real schools that have made time for teachers to learn during the school day. She cites experiences of staff developers and consultants who offer insights into the problems and possibilities of finding time.

- “Target time toward teachers,” by Linda Darling-Hammond. (1999, Spring). *Journal of Staff Development, 20*(2). Darling-Hammond writes about numerous schools that have restructured for ongoing professional development. She discusses strategies that (1) allow for shared planning, (2) support stronger relationships and deeper knowledge of learners, and (3) create longer blocks of instructional time while reducing teaching loads and increasing planning time.

- *Finding Time for Professional Learning,* by Valerie von Frank, Ed. Oxford, OH: NSDC, 2008. This compilation of articles and tools about time features ideas and articles published in NSDC’s newsletters and *JSD* during the last decade. It includes suggestions about how to use the articles to guide the discussion about time in your school and district.

- “Time: It’s made, not found,” by Stephen Barkley. (1999, Fall). *Journal of Staff Development, 20*(4). Barkley argues that school reform is slowed due to lack of time for professional learning. He cites examples of making time, including periodically regrouping students into larger classes, thus freeing up as many as half the faculty to meet together.

**ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE**

Go to www/eric.ed.gov and type “time for teacher professional development” in the “search terms” box. Select “title” under the “search in” area. Click “search” and bring up a variety of articles on finding time.

**LEARNING POINT ASSOCIATES**

Go to www.learningpt.org and type “finding time for professional development” in the search engine at that site. The site offers a variety of resources and information for creating time for professional learning during the school day.

**NATIONAL COMMISSION ON TIME AND LEARNING**

- *Prisoners of Time,* by the National Education Commission on Time and Learning. Washington, DC: Author, 1994. This is an excellent resource for thoroughly examining the challenge of time for teaching and learning. The Commission makes realistic, powerful recommendations concerning the use of time as a factor to support learning, not a boundary that marks its limits. The entire document is available online at www.ed.gov/pubs/PrisonersOfTime/.
Tool 3.7: Sample timeline for implementing professional learning teams

Directions: This timeline is based on a guide for implementing professional learning teams created by Linda Winburn for the Richland 2 School District in Columbia, S.C. Review this school implementation timeline with your principal and faculty, and use the example to create your own implementation guide. Revisit your plan periodically and adjust it as needed as implementation proceeds.

JUNE ACTIVITIES
1. Meet with teachers and administrators to discuss and plan for improving student achievement and teaching quality through professional learning teams.
2. Identify teacher leaders to assist with supporting professional learning teams at the school.
3. Collect data so teams can identify needs and establish goals.

AUGUST ACTIVITIES
1. Provide professional learning team information and facilitation training to identified teacher leaders.
2. Give all participating faculty the pre/post survey.
3. Introduce the concept of professional learning teams to faculty.
4. Engage school staff in planning and organizing learning teams in a manner best suited for your school. Set weekly team meeting times and locations; identify team members, and note needed resources.
5. Train school faculty in the professional learning team process.
6. Provide teachers with information, assistance, and tools for implementing and sustaining productive learning teams.
7. Identify administrators and faculty who will receive team meeting logs (one per team). Include team members and the principal.
8. Begin professional learning team meetings by the end of August or first of September. Teams will begin by:
   a. Defining team expectations/setting norms (Step 4).
   b. Looking at student data (Step 5).
   c. Deciding on a team goal and designing a plan (Steps 5 and 6).
   These steps will take several meetings. Keep encouraging the teams.
9. Forward team logs to the principal, team members, and other identified recipients. The principal will provide brief feedback on each team log. Others also may provide some feedback.

SEPTEMBER THROUGH MAY
1. Begin full implementation of professional learning teams. Teams study, develop plans for increasing teacher expertise and quality instruction, experiment with new teaching practices in the classroom, reflect on results, and make needed adjustments.
2. Continue forwarding team meeting logs to the school principal, team members, and other designees. When the teachers are comfortable with the process, ask teams to forward their logs to the entire school faculty.
Tool 4.1: Traits of successful team members

Directions: Use the following scale to rate each statement in terms of how well you think it describes — or will describe — you as a current or future team member. (You may write the numbers or simply make a mental note of your score.) Add comments to explain or clarify your thinking.

4 – All of the time  3 – Most of the time  2 – Some of the time  1 – None of the time

1. I am committed to the professional learning team and its goals. ___
   ____________________________________________________________

2. I show respect and understanding toward other team members. ___
   ____________________________________________________________

3. I am willing to help, support, and trust other team members. ___
   ____________________________________________________________

4. I participate in a way that creates a comfortable atmosphere for sharing both successes and failures. ___
   ____________________________________________________________

5. I have a high tolerance for discussion, debate, and disagreement. ___
   ____________________________________________________________

6. I am willing to question, get outside my current mindset, and be open to new ideas and solutions. ___
   ____________________________________________________________

7. I value my team members and their input. ___
   ____________________________________________________________

8. I share in team leadership and other team responsibilities. ___
   ____________________________________________________________
Norms put the ‘Golden Rule’ into practice for groups

By Joan Richardson

Lillian always arrives late and thinks nothing of chatting with her seatmate while someone else is trying to make a point. Arthur routinely reads a newspaper during each meeting. Barbara can’t wait until each meeting ends so she can head to the parking lot to tell someone what she could have said during the meeting.

Later, most of them grumble that “these meetings are just a waste of my time. We never get anything accomplished.”

Having a set of norms — or ground rules — that a group follows encourages behaviors that will help a group do its work and discourages behaviors that interfere with a group’s effectiveness.

Think of norms as “a behavior contract,” said Kathryn Blumsack, an educational consultant from Maryland who specializes in team development.

Norms are the unwritten rules for how we act and what we do. They are the rules that govern how we interact with each other, how we communicate, even how we dress when we get together.

“Norms are part of the culture. They exist whether or not you acknowledge them. They exist whether or not you formalize them,” Blumsack said.

Pat Roy, director of the Delaware Professional Development Center, said identifying a set of norms is an effective way to democratize a group. Writing norms helps create groups that are able to have honest discussions that enable everyone to participate and be heard, she said.

WHO NEEDS NORMS?

Any group that meets regularly or that is trying to “do business” needs to identify its existing norms or develop new norms. In school districts, that would include department groups, grade-level teams, interdisciplinary teams, content-area teams, school improvement teams, action teams, curriculum committees, leadership teams, advisory committees, and special project groups.

Although a group can pause and set norms at any time, Blumsack and Roy agree that it’s ideal

to set norms at the beginning of a group’s work together.

“If you don’t set norms at the beginning, when the behaviors become ineffective, you have a harder time pulling behavior back to where it should be,” Roy said.

Because every group has unspoken norms for behavior, groups need to work at being explicit about what they expect from each other. “Get those assumptions out on the table,” Blumsack said.

CREATING NORMS

Some groups would prefer to have a set of norms handed to them. But Roy and Blumsack both said groups will feel more ownership of the norms if they identify and write their own.

“If they don’t do this, 10 minutes after you’ve handed them a list, they’ll begin violating the norms because they aren’t their norms,” Roy said.

There are two distinct ways to write norms. The first is by observing and writing down the norms that already are in use.

That’s how the NSDC Board of Trustees established the set of norms it has used for about eight years. The NSDC board meets for two days twice a year, each time with a lengthy agenda of material that must be addressed.

The norms grew out of a board discussion about how it operated and how it wanted to operate. Pat Roy, who was then a board member, was tapped to observe the board’s implicit norms during one meeting and draft a set of norms. “Essentially, I wrote down what I saw in operation,” Roy said.

Roy’s first draft was edited and refined by staff and other board members. That set of initial norms has been largely unchanged over the years.

The second way is to have group members suggest ideal behaviors for groups, eventually refining those suggested behaviors into a set of norms.

Blumsack cautions that norms must fit the group. Not every group would feel comfortable with the same set of rules, which is why each group must create its own rules, she said.

For example, she recently worked with a group that was “very chatty, very extroverted.” Initially, the group wanted a norm that banned side conversations. Two days into their work, the group was frustrated because Blumsack, as the facilitator, kept trying to enforce the norm against side conversations. Finally, the group agreed to modify the norm to fit its unique personality. Their new norm was: “If you need to make a comment, do so but return quickly to the main conversation.”

PUBLICIZING THE NORMS

Simply writing norms does not guarantee that the group will remember and respect them. Groups need to continually remind themselves about the norms they’ve identified.

At a minimum, the norms should be posted in the group’s meeting room, Roy said. “Post them and celebrate them,” she said.

Blumsack recommends creating tented name cards for each group member. On the side facing out, write the group member’s name; on the side facing the member, print the group’s norms.

The NSDC board receives a list of its norms along with materials for each of its twice-a-year board meetings. Then, at the beginning of each meeting, the president reintroduces the norms to reacquaint board members with them. Since new board members join each year, this also helps to acculturate newcomers with the board’s expectations.

Sometimes the board uses activities to aid in that. During one meeting, for example, each board member was asked to illustrate one norm and the others tried to identify the norms based on those illustrations. Those illustrations were then taped to the meeting room’s walls as visual reminders to be vigilant about the norms. Another time, board members were asked to write down as many board norms as they could recall from memory.

ENFORCING THE NORMS

Perhaps the toughest part of living with norms is having the norms enforced.

“The reality is that every group will violate every norm at one time or another. So you have to talk about violations and how you’ll deal with them,” Roy said.

Blumsack agrees. “If you don’t call attention to the fact that a norm has been violated, in effect you’re creating a second set of norms. For example, a common norm is expecting everyone to be on time. If you don’t point out when someone violates that norm, then, in effect, you’re saying that it’s really not important to be on time,” Blumsack said.

After a group identifies its norms, they suggest asking how they would like to be notified that they have violated a norm.

Roy recommends finding light, humorous ways to point out violations. One group she worked with kept a basket of foam rubber balls in the middle of the table. Violation of a norm meant being pelted with foam rubber balls. Other groups have used small colored cards, flags, or hankies that could be waved when a violation was noted.

Having all group members take responsibility for enforcing the norm is key, Blumsack said. Enforcing the norms should not be just the job of the group’s leader.

EVALUATING THE NORMS

Finally, each group needs to periodically evaluate its adherence to the norms. A group that meets once or twice a year might evaluate each time they meet; a group that meets weekly might evaluate once a month or so.

Blumsack recommends giving each group member an opportunity to speak about what he or she has observed or take each statement and ask group members, “How well did we do on this norm?”

Each member should be encouraged to identify the group’s areas of strength as well as its areas of weakness, but not to single out violators.

“The more up front you are about how the group is doing, the easier it will be to communicate about the other issues you’re dealing with,” Blumsack said.

Tool 4.3: A norm sampler

Directions: Read each norm created by an imaginary learning team at Norton High School. Place a check mark next to norms you believe will help these teachers operate efficiently and productively as a team. Discuss with a partner what other norms you might suggest.

What rules will govern attendance?
- Each team member will commit to participate actively for the school year.
- All members will arrive on time and stay for the entire meeting.
- We will start on time and end on time.

What rules will govern how we talk together?
- All members will join in the team’s discussions.
- No one will dominate the discussions.
- Each member will listen attentively as others speak.
- Everyone’s point of view will be considered.
- Our conversations will reflect our respect for and acceptance of one another.
- We will disagree with ideas, not individuals.
- No zingers or put-downs.
- We will keep confidential any information shared in confidence.

What other expectations do we have for team members?
- We will rotate the team leader role.
- All members will be prepared for the meeting when they arrive.
- All members will be “totally present” during the meeting.
- All members will refrain from grading papers and working on other things during the meeting.
- All members will refrain from scheduling other activities during the meeting time.
- All members will turn off cell phones.
- All members will stay on task during the meeting.
- All members will work to keep team meetings positive and productive.
- The atmosphere will remain cordial and friendly throughout the meeting.
- We will have fun and enjoy working together.

What decision-making procedures will we use?
- We will reach decisions by consensus.

How will we assess our team functioning?
- We will briefly revisit our norms after each meeting or two and decide which ones we need to follow better and which we need to change.
**Tool 4.4: Considerations for team norms**

**Directions:** As you begin working together, think about ground rules that might guide the way your team does business. Several categories are suggested here. Read each question and make suggestions in the column on the right, then discuss your ideas with your team members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONSIDERATIONS</th>
<th>IDEAS FOR NORMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What procedures will govern meeting attendance?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Consider:</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Will team members be dependable and committed for the entire year?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Will team members arrive on time and stay for the entire meeting?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Will they stay on task, avoid side conversations and interruptions, and focus on the task at hand?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What procedures will govern teacher dialogue?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Consider:</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How will team members react to others’ work and ideas?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are out-of-the-box and off-the-wall ideas welcome?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are differing opinions welcome?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Will what members say be held in confidence?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How will the team encourage listening and discourage interrupting?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What rules will govern decision making?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Consider:</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Will the team reach decisions by consensus?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How will members deal with conflicts and differences of opinion?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Considerations

### What attitudes and behaviors do you expect from team members?

**Consider:**
- Are all team members expected to be prepared and to participate?
- Should they be “fully present,” both mentally and physically?
- Will they put away other work (grading papers, filling out reports, etc.)?
- Should team members try to convey positive attitudes?
- Will team members try to maintain a sense of humor?

## Ideas for Norms

### How often will your team evaluate its functioning, and what indicators will you evaluate?

**Consider:**
- Are team members abiding by the team’s agreed-upon norms?
- What ground rules did you use well?
- What norms do you need to re-emphasize, add, or adjust?
Tool 4.5: Develop team norms

Directions: Use this process to jump-start your thinking about useful team norms that will enhance interpersonal skills, trust, and respect among team members. When team members have completed the handout, share your responses as a group. On chart paper, list the behaviors and norms on which you all agree. Then consider the remaining norms, and reach consensus on others that may be important to include at this time.

List six behaviors you value in others during team meetings.

1. _________________________________________________________________________________
2. _________________________________________________________________________________
3. _________________________________________________________________________________
4. _________________________________________________________________________________
5. _________________________________________________________________________________
6. _________________________________________________________________________________

What norms could your team put in place to promote these behaviors during team meetings?

1. _________________________________________________________________________________
2. _________________________________________________________________________________
3. _________________________________________________________________________________
4. _________________________________________________________________________________
5. _________________________________________________________________________________
6. _________________________________________________________________________________
Tool 4.6: Quick check

Directions: After each meeting, look at your list of your team’s basic ground rules and take a minute to consider whether team members followed them. You may use the suggestions below to add to the ground rules your team has set.

☐ Did every member join in the team’s discussions?

☐ Did each member listen attentively as others spoke?

☐ Did one or two members dominate the discussions?

☐ Did all members arrive on time and stay for the entire meeting?

☐ Were all members prepared for the meeting when they arrived?

☐ Were all members “totally present” during the meeting?

☐ Did each member of the group believe that his or her time at the meeting was well spent?

Tool 4.7: Norms tune-up

Directions: If team meetings need some smoothing, revisit the norms set during earlier meetings. Have chart paper available to record any new procedures and ground rules on which the team reaches consensus. The leader for this meeting can use these questions to guide the discussion or can let each member write individual responses before a general discussion.

1. What norms do we usually observe well?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

2. Which norms do we seem to ignore?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

3. What behaviors are team members using now that seem to be useful?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

4. What behaviors surprise us or make us uneasy?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

5. Based on our answers to these questions, what norms do we now need? List new and adjusted norms below.

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
Tool 4.8: A brainstorming protocol

**Directions:** Brainstorming is a way of generating an assortment of ideas without criticism or judgment regarding the quality of those ideas. The team leader, or another team member, can use this procedure to lead team members to brainstorm answers to questions or responses to issues as needed.

1. Have chart paper and markers available.

2. Write the question or issue the team is addressing at the top of the chart paper.

3. Explain the following guidelines for generating responses to the question or issue:
   - Ideas should be developed as fast as possible.
   - Everyone on the team should contribute ideas.
   - Unique and off-the-wall ideas are welcome.
   - Do not critique or evaluate ideas during the brainstorming period.
   - No discussion during this time! Just throw out ideas.

4. Begin with the first question or issue the team will address and toss out ideas. List all suggestions on the chart paper. Continue until the supply of ideas seems exhausted.

5. Examine team members' suggestions. Team members may now explain their ideas or ask questions about ideas that others suggested. They should delve more deeply into each other's thinking and consider which ideas are most useful.

6. With a marker, put a check mark by keepers — those suggestions that all team members agree to include as one of the answers for the question or issue.

7. Cross out ideas that team members do not think work well as a response.

8. Reach consensus on remaining suggestions, and decide whether or not to include them with the team's list of agreed-upon responses.

9. Compile a list of all keepers.

10. Continue using this process as needed to generate a list of ideas for each question or issue the team needs to discuss.
Tool 4.9: Tips for team members

**Directions:** Reproduce this page as a chart or poster to help learning team members keep in mind tips for building a successful team.
Tips for team members

1. Become a quick-change artist. Keep an open mind to new ideas.

2. Add value. Scope out opportunities to contribute and be responsible.

3. Take ownership for yourself and the team. Learn about the professional learning team process. Take initiative and responsibility.


5. Manage your own morale. Keep a positive attitude.

6. Ask for what you need. This includes information, resources, materials, assistance, training, and support.

## Tool 5.1: What are data?

**Directions:** Teams thinking about improving teaching and learning can find a lot more information than just grades and test results. Data-driven schools in Alabama used these data sources in their school improvement process. Review the list, then brainstorm what other data may be available. Determine as a team which sources you want to use.

### STATE & NATIONAL TEST RESULTS
- State-mandated subject-area assessments
- Writing assessments
- Graduation exams
- College entrance exams
- Advanced placement exams
- Yearly progress reports
- National Assessment of Educational Progress scores

### COMMERCIAL ASSESSMENTS
- Packaged program assessments
- Individual reading assessments

### CLASSROOM ASSESSMENTS
- Daily and unit tests
- Student portfolios
- Checklists
- Running records
- Evaluations of student projects
- Evaluations of student performances
- Examples of student work

### SCHOOL CLIMATE
- Attendance records
- Counseling referrals
- Discipline reports (with trend analysis)
- Student comments to counselors, teachers

### SCHOOLWIDE ASSESSMENTS
- School report cards
- School Improvement Plan yearly assessments
- Collective analyses of student work
- Schoolwide writing assessments
- Products of accreditation processes
- Reports from school walk-throughs

### OTHER STUDENT DATA
- Course assignments
- College admission data
- Quarterly, interim, and final grades
- Dropout data
- Minutes/records of student support teams
- Special education referrals

### OTHER DATA
- Student honors and awards
- Student and parent demographic information
- Results of teacher action research
- Reports from teachers
- Academic lab and library usage
- Faculty turnover rate
- Registration data

---

**Source:** Compiled by John Norton for the Alabama Best Practices Center.
### Tool 5.2a: Subgroup analysis chart

**Directions:** Fill in this chart as completely as possible using the records you have to analyze student data by subgroups. A completed sample is included as a reference if you need it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBGROUP TO BE ANALYZED</th>
<th>(e.g. race, gender, other demographics)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Categories within this subgroup</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of students in each category</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content area to be examined</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results/scores/ performance for each subgroup</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengths</td>
<td>What are the strongest areas for this subgroup?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaknesses</td>
<td>What are the weakest areas for this subgroup?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patterns and trends</td>
<td>What patterns and trends are striking?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change from previous years</td>
<td>Is this a consistent trend?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency across grade levels</td>
<td>Is this trend similar in all grades?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency across subject areas</td>
<td>Is this trend evident in all subjects?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Tool 5.2b: Sample subgroup analysis chart**

**Directions:** Refer to this completed chart as an example of a subgroup analysis chart examining similarities and differences among students of different ethnicities. You might similarly examine data for gender, exceptional children, socioeconomic levels, and other categories of students in your school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBGROUP TO BE ANALYZED (e.g. race, gender, other demographics)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Categories within this subgroup</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percent of students in each category</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content area to be examined</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Results/scores/ performance for each subgroup</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44.6% proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Strengths**  
*What are the strongest areas for this subgroup?*            |
| Main ideas  
Significant details                                          |
| Main ideas  
Significant details                                          |
| Main ideas  
Significant details                                          |
| Main ideas  
Vocabulary  
Significant details                                             |
| Main ideas  
Vocabulary  
Significant details                                             |
| **Weaknesses**  
*What are the weakest areas for this subgroup?*                |
| Inference  
Comparisons  
Vocabulary                                                       |
| Inference  
Cause-effect  
Summarizing                                                      |
| Inference  
Cause-effect  
Summarizing                                                      |
| Inference  
Comparisons  
Summarizing                                                      |
| Inference  
Cause-effect  
Summarizing                                                      |
| **Patterns and trends**  
*What patterns and trends are striking?*                       |
| Student reading comprehension is lower than we want in all categories. Inference, cause-and-effect, comparison, summarizing, and vocabulary are the most critical areas of focus. |
| **Change from previous years**  
*Is this a consistent trend?*                                   |
| Some improvement | N/A | Consistent trend | Some improvement | Some improvement |
| **Consistency across grade levels**  
*Is this trend similar in all grades?*                          |
| Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| **Consistency across subject areas**  
*Is this trend evident in all subjects?*                         |
| Similar across subject areas | Math scores typically lower | Math scores typically higher | Math scores typically lower | Math scores typically lower |
Tool 5.3: Reflecting on the data

**Directions:** Think about what you learned from examining student information and data, and write your responses to the questions. Discuss your answers with your team. Have a recorder make notes of big ideas and decisions from this discussion.

What sources of data did we examine?

What parts of these data really caught our attention?

What parts of these data encourage you the most?

What parts concern you the most?

What differences, if any, are there in grades, attendance, and behavior among our students?

Do some groups of students achieve at higher levels than others? If so, to what degree?

Which students are not working to potential? What evidence is there that students who were given more challenging work also achieved more?

Which groups appear to need instruction more tailored to their learning styles?

What other questions does this data raise for you?

What are the implications for what our professional learning team should focus on this year?
Tool 5.4: Deciding on a team focus

**Directions:** What is your team’s instructional focus for the year? Discuss and record this decision after analyzing and reflecting on student and subgroup data. This information will be used to help you craft your team goal.

What student strengths do these data highlight?

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

What student needs do these data highlight?

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

What are the implications of the data we examined for our professional learning team?

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

On what areas could we focus our collective efforts? What are the pros and cons of each?

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

Which area will we select as an intensive focus for our team’s work?

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

What results do we want for our students by the end of the school year?

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

**TEAM FOCUS:** General area of student need we will address

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________
Tool 5.5a: Decision-making cycle for developing goals

**Directions:** Use this diagram as a poster or team visual to keep you on track in thinking about goals. Remember that all team members must completely understand and agree on the goal.
Reflect, discuss, and reach consensus throughout the process.

1. Examine multiple sources of data.
2. Identify a focus area for the team’s work.
3. Decide what part of the focus area the team will address.
4. Develop a goal that meets the guidelines.
5. Agree on the goal with total team support.
6. Plan and carry out actions based on the goal.
7. Assess progress and adjust the goal when needed.
Tool 5.5b: Decision-making cycle description

Directions: Clarify stages of the decision-making cycle by elaborating as a team on actions and ideas you think are included in Stage 1. Then read the information below and add that information to your understanding. Use this procedure to examine each stage.

Stage 1: Examine multiple sources of data. Study at least three sources of data about students. If you think of data as test scores or report card grades, you will ignore many characteristics of good learners — initiative, creativity, conceptual thinking, judgment, special talents, and more.

Stage 2: Identify a focus area for the team’s work. The data will reveal areas of relative strength and weakness in student achievement in different categories and probably among subgroups. This information can suggest an area on which to concentrate your efforts.

Stage 3: Decide what part of the focus area the team will address. Your team’s work will target an area in which students need help to learn and achieve at higher levels. Team members may develop a goal that encompasses a broad area of need or may home in on a part of that area. For example, if your team focus is reading comprehension, you might set an initial goal dealing with that general area and then narrow your goal as teachers diagnose specific reading difficulties that call for more specific interventions.

Stage 4: Develop a goal that meets the guidelines. Tools 5.6 to 5.8 offer guidelines for developing a goal that will set a concrete direction for the team. In addition to being based on student learning needs, your goal needs to be clear, collaboratively developed, measurable, and realistic. It should focus on teacher learning and actions that will increase student achievement.

Stage 5: Agree on the goal with total team support. All team members should agree on the team goal. Without understanding the goal and/or believing that the goal is valuable to them, members may unintentionally sabotage the team’s efforts. Tool 10.11 may help team members reach agreement if necessary.

Stage 6: Plan and carry out actions based on the goal. The goal should propel team members into learning and action and keep members focused on the purpose of this professional learning team.

Stage 7: Assess progress and adjust the goal when needed. As team members increase their knowledge and learn more about students’ challenges, the work may become more targeted and the team goal should reflect that shift. Keeping the goal tightly focused keeps the team more focused and leads to more purposeful and productive team meetings.
Tool 5.6: Team goal-setting guidelines

Directions: You know from your data analysis on what general area you will focus your efforts. Now set a goal to propel you on your way. Read these guidelines in your group and ask each member to be responsible for keeping one or two in the discussion as you establish your goal.

MAKE YOUR GOAL:

• **Clear.** The team goal is totally clear and completely understood by each team member. Every member should understand and be able to explain what the team intends to achieve.

• **Needs-based.** The goal results from a data analysis and addresses an area in which students need to learn and achieve at higher levels. The goal states how teachers will increase their effectiveness as professionals so students benefit.

• **Shared.** The goal has value and commitment from everyone on the team. When all team members work together toward a common goal, one’s success contributes to the success of all. Collaboration builds synergy and good working relationships.

• **Measurable.** Team members need to see the results of their efforts and to get feedback about progress toward their goals. The team needs ways to measure the progress and to determine to what extent the goal is being achieved.

• **Doable.** The goal is realistic and achievable within a specified time frame. Generally, that time frame is the school year. Do not aim low, but do not overreach or the team may become discouraged by a lack of perceived progress. Take on a manageable challenge.

*Be sure to write down your goal!*
Tool 5.7: Setting your team goal

Directions: This tool provides information for setting team goals. Read this information silently, then discuss the sample goals with your teammates and work together to draft a team goal.

Professional learning team goals focus on teacher growth. Team members will work together all year toward personal and professional growth targeting an area of student need.

A professional learning team goal may be written as a question:
- What research-based practices can we use in our classrooms to help all of our students better understand what they read in their textbooks?
- What can we do differently in our classrooms to improve student achievement in math computation across all grade levels?

A learning team goal may be written as a purpose statement:
- We will gain knowledge and skill in using inquiry-based methods of teaching science to engage students in higher levels of thinking and learning.
- We will increase our knowledge and skill in using number talks to identify student knowledge gaps and misconceptions, and to create effective cross grade-level teaching practices for overcoming these.

DISCUSS AND DECIDE:
1. Consider your students. In what areas do they need your help? What will your general focus be?

2. Consider yourselves. What do you all need to learn and be able to do more effectively to meet these students’ needs in this area?

3. Write a goal for your team. Refer to Tools 5.5 and 5.6 as you develop this goal.

4. Check out your goal using Tool 5.8.
# Tool 5.8: Check out that goal

**Directions:** Discuss the answers to these questions about your goal statement with your learning team. If your team cannot answer yes to the first seven questions, decide how to rewrite your goal statement to bring it in line with the guidelines for a clear goal.

1. Is the goal clearly stated? __Yes__ __No__

2. Does it focus on teacher learning? __Yes__ __No__

3. Does it focus on teachers becoming more accomplished in instruction? __Yes__ __No__

4. Does it focus on a specific area? __Yes__ __No__

5. Do students need help in this area? __Yes__ __No__

6. Do all team members agree on this goal? __Yes__ __No__

7. Is it doable? __Yes__ __No__

8. How will you be able to tell that your team is making progress?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
**Tool 6.1: Reflect on our beliefs and assumptions**

**Directions:** What assumptions about teaching and learning drive your instruction and that of your team members? Write your team’s goal in the top box. Then reflect on your personal answers for these questions and make notes in the spaces provided. Following personal reflection, discuss each question as a team. The team recorder should compile a list of team members’ thoughts and responses and have these available as the team drafts a plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEAM GOAL:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 1. What specific needs do our students have in this area? |

| 2. What do we believe high-quality teaching in this area looks like? What would teachers and students be doing? |

| 3. What do our current instructional practices look like in this area? |

| 4. What do our current practices imply about how we believe our students learn? |

| 5. What beliefs about our students do we want our teaching to reflect? |

| 6. Is there a gap between what we believe about teaching and learning and what we actually do? If so, why? |
**Tool 6.2: Reflect on our current reality**

**Directions:** Write your thoughts about each question, then work with others on your team to make decisions. These questions can help guide your team in developing a relevant and rigorous plan for reaching your goal. If brainstorming would be helpful, use Tool 4.8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEAM GOAL:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What knowledge and experience do we already have in this area?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What do we as team members need to understand at a deeper level to be able to increase student learning in this area?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What instructional practices are we already using that would have a greater impact on student learning if we improved them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What new instructional practices can we adopt that would help our students learn and achieve at higher levels?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** The Mobile Math Initiative (MMI) and Susan Pruett.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Specifically, what professional learning and instructional growth do we want to achieve this year?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. How will we know we are becoming more accomplished in our teaching? What information might we gather to determine whether we are succeeding?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What resources and assistance will we need to carry out our plans?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. How will we communicate to others information about what we are learning and doing?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** The Mobile Math Initiative (MMI) and Susan Pruet.
**Tool 6.3: Reflect on priorities and actions**

**Directions:** Brainstorm and discuss responses to these questions, and reach consensus. Take time to discuss ideas and get input from everyone on the team.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEAM GOAL :</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. What will we explore, learn, and plan to do in order to reach our goal?

2. What activities might we engage in as we work toward our goal?

3. What should our main activities and tasks be in the first month?

4. What kind of timeline would we propose for the remaining activities and tasks?
**Tool 6.4: Team long-term planning guide**

**Directions:** After discussing, reflecting, and making notes about issues from Tools 2.1, 6.2, and 6.3, begin to develop a plan. This plan will likely change as the team continues to meet and learn together, so think in terms of a monthly plan until all feel ready to develop a long-term plan.

Decide as a team on milestones for the month, and then work together to determine activities, resources, and responsibilities to accomplish these milestones. Be certain that activities you select focus on teacher learning and growth.

**Team goal:**

_________________________________________________________________________

**Milestones:** What we plan to achieve this month through our professional learning team work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achievement area</th>
<th>Milestones/accomplishments (Keep realistic and achievable)</th>
<th>By when?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For our learning team</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Activities:** What we plan to do to help us achieve our milestones and move toward our goal:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Tasks to complete activity</th>
<th>Person(s) responsible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Resources: Books, materials, and other resources we will need.

Additional plans:
Tool 6.5: Plan for team growth

**Directions:** Begin now to plan for success as a productive team. Use this tool to track how well your team is modeling these 10 important characteristics. Discuss each characteristic together, and fill in the column at right. Complete a chart at regular intervals — monthly or quarterly.

**Date** ______________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEAM GROWTH INDICATORS</th>
<th>What might someone observing us see or hear that would indicate we’re growing in this direction?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintain a focus on teacher professional growth.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abide by norms that guide team interactions and behaviors.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn new and relevant information about teaching.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share leadership and responsibility.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate to others what we are learning and doing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet regularly and on schedule.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice trusting behaviors.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work productively as a team.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply new knowledge and skills in the classroom.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor student learning and success.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Tool 7.1: Let’s get acquainted!

**Directions:** Please prepare to share some information about yourself with your teammates. Answer the questions below. Use the back of the paper if you need more space. Bring this sheet with you to our professional learning team meeting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>E-mail address</th>
<th>Teaching assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Interests and hobbies:
   - 
   - 
   - 

2. Information about your family:
   - 
   - 
   - 

3. Something you look forward to about teaching:
   - 
   - 
   - 

4. Something that troubles you about teaching:
   - 
   - 
   - 

5. Something you want to learn about teaching:
   - 
   - 
   - 

6. What you like best about your students:
   - 
   - 
   - 

7. Your chief concern for your students:
   - 
   - 
   - 

8. Something you’ve accomplished:
   - 
   - 
   - 

9. Something you plan to accomplish:
   - 
   - 
   - 

10. Something else about you:
    - 
    - 
    - 
Tool 7.2: Professional learning team roles

Directions: With other team members, review this list of responsibilities for each role and decide whether each task is useful in your setting. You also may add to the list. Keep your checklist up-to-date and use it as a guide to responsibilities.

When I am the team leader

BEFORE THE MEETING, I WILL:
- Remind other team members about the meeting.
- Check to be sure all needed tasks are done prior to the meeting.
- Check with the office staff to remind them not to interrupt us during the meeting.

DURING THE MEETING, I WILL:
- Keep team members and conversation focused and on task.
- Review the norms with the team as needed to keep us on track.
- Make sure that everyone has input.
- Make sure everyone understands and is committed to team decisions.
- Summarize and clarify as we go along.
- Help us stay within our time boundaries.
- Be sure the team has planned for the next meeting.

When I am the team recorder

DURING THE MEETING, I WILL:
- Record information about big ideas from our discussions.
- Record any decisions we make.
- Record our plans for the next meeting.
- Include this information on each log:
  - Name of the team.
  - Team goal (long-term goal).
  - Names of members present.
  - Date and length of meeting.

AFTER THE MEETING, I WILL:
- E-mail or electronically post a copy of the log to the principal, all team members, and others with whom we will share the log. (Many schools share their logs schoolwide and with outside consultants and administrators.)
Tool 7.3: Professional learning team activity generator

**Directions:** Professional learning teams are centered around the critical activities of teaching and learning. Use this tool to gather or generate more ideas of activities teams might try during the course of the year.

**WHEN RESEARCHING AND INFORMATION-GATHERING:**

- Decide what you want to help students learn. (See the team goal.)
- Look for two types of information: How to better understand the content area and how to better understand ways students learn this information.
- Study relevant books and journal articles about your area of focus.
- Watch DVDs and videos designed to increase your knowledge and skill in this area.
- Search online for ideas and information.
- Invite someone with expertise to visit team meetings and share information.
- Observe other teachers using related activities with their students.
- Share experience and professional wisdom within the team.

**WHEN WORKING TOGETHER ON DEVELOPING TEACHING APPROACHES:**

- Decide what research-based methods will make the content motivating and meaningful to students.
- Choose a procedure that you believe would help students master the content.
- Design a teaching approach or lesson for this specific content.
- Arrange to test an idea, lesson, or approach in the classroom.

**WHEN WORKING TO MONITOR THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE INSTRUCTION:**

- Observe colleagues trying agreed-upon strategies in the classroom.
- Invite others to observe you teaching.

**WHEN WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE INSTRUCTION:**

- Observe student reactions and responses during the teaching.
- Examine together student-written responses.
- Examine videotapes or DVDs of student responses to a particular activity.
- Observe a videotape or DVD of a colleague implementing a particular strategy.
- Examine teacher assignments.
- Discuss the effectiveness of the instruction for students.
- Modify and improve the activities and strategies.
- Plan how to turn what you are learning into a usable product for other teachers.
Tool 7.4: Quality indicators

Directions: Copy this sheet onto colorful card stock and cut into bookmarks or use it to create a poster to display in the team meeting room. Encourage teachers to use the indicators in their work and in reflecting on that work.
### Does the teaching activity or lesson you are developing meet these quality indicators?

This lesson:
- Is engaging to students.
- Leads to deep understanding of content.
- Allows students to reflect on their own thought processes and/or set goals for their own learning.
- Makes connections to other concepts within this discipline and/or to concepts in other disciplines.
- Asks students to use higher-order cognitive skills, such as to analyze, apply, evaluate, examine issues, and solve problems.
- Contains clear yet rigorous expectations for learning, beyond the minimum standards.
- Is appropriate for students’ age and grade level.
- Expresses high teacher expectations for completing the work.
- Encourages studying essential concepts or understandings. (The work involved is worthy of the time and energy invested.)
- Mirrors an authentic and challenging task (real-world application or connection).

**Source:** Nancy McMunn, former project director with the SERVE Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

---

### Does the teaching activity or lesson you are developing meet these quality indicators?

This lesson:
- Is engaging to students.
- Leads to deep understanding of content.
- Allows students to reflect on their own thought processes and/or set goals for their own learning.
- Makes connections to other concepts within this discipline and/or to concepts in other disciplines.
- Asks students to perform higher-order cognitive skills, such as to analyze, apply, evaluate, examine issues, and solve problems.
- Contains clear yet rigorous expectations for learning, beyond the minimum standards.
- Is appropriate for students’ age and grade level.
- Expresses high teacher expectations for completing the work.
- Encourages studying essential concepts or understandings. (The work involved is worthy of the time and energy invested.)
- Mirrors an authentic and challenging task (real-world application or connection).

**Source:** Nancy McMunn, former project director with the SERVE Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.
Tool 7.5: The dysfunctional discussion division

Directions: Pretend you are assembling a team of individuals whose assignment is to shut down productive conversation on your team. Pick from this group, or recruit your own dysfunctional disruptors and name those persons.

The Abrupt Advisor. Assignment: To offer immediate advice without active listening or working through issues. (“What we can do is…”)

The Circuitous Communicator. Assignment: To communicate indirectly with a team member through someone else. (“I don’t think she’s right about…”)

The Intimidator. Assignment: To verbally bully others with the intention of harming their ideas and suggestions. (“That’s the most ridiculous thing I ever heard.”)

The Judge. Assignment: To place blame or make judgments about team members. Often involves finger pointing. (“What you said isn’t true…”)

The Mind Reader. Assignment: To assume that he or she can read other team members minds, even on confusing issues. (“I already know what you’re getting at…”)

The Know-It-All. Assignment: To circumvent discussion by assuring others that there’s no need to talk because he or she already knows what should be done. (“I’ve done this many times.”)

The Mixed-Message Expert. Assignment: To send a message where the words say one thing, but the body language or attitude convey a different meaning.

The Naysayer. Assignment: To cast gloom and doom on other team members’ suggestions. (“That won’t work.”)

The Parent Substitute. Assignment: To give people advice. (“You should do this…”)

The Patronizer. Assignment: To discount or minimize another person’s comments by inappropriate and excessive reassuring or humoring. (“Oh come now, you know better than…”)

The Silent Accuser. Assignment: To silently nurture feelings of resentment or anger and withdraw.

The Terminator. Assignment: To deliver statements that shut down or cut off discussion with no opening to continue. (“We already know that.”)

The Whine Wizard. Assignment: To complain at every opportunity. (“Why do we have to…?”)

Now assemble a team to counter those discussion destructors. Work with others in your group to develop a Creative Communicators Corps. What types of individuals would you pick?
Tool 7.6a: Trust factors

**Directions:** The characteristics below help to increase trust among team members. Build a picture of the trust level in your team by placing marks on the chart (Tool 7.6b) at the appropriate level for each trust factor. Consider your team members as a whole when indicating the level of trust.

- **Care:** We care about each other professionally and personally, and we are willing to go the extra mile for one another. We show sensitivity to one another’s needs, desires, and interests.

- **Collaboration:** We limit our competitive tendencies to lower the barriers between us. We share power and control during the course of our work rather than hoarding it.

- **Competence:** We believe in each other’s ability and willingness to fulfill our responsibilities effectively. We believe that everyone on our team has skills and is capable of contributing.

- **Confidence:** We have confidence in one another, and we lean on one another. We believe we will all fulfill our obligations and do the right thing for the right reasons.

- **Consistency:** We behave in consistent and predictable ways. Our words match our subsequent actions, and we honor our team commitments. We do what we say we will do.

- **Integrity:** We trust each other to put the interests of students first and to make changes to meet their needs. We are clear about the intentions and motives for others’ actions.

- **Openness:** We communicate accurately, openly, and transparently. We lay our cards on the table respectfully, and others accept who we are and what we think.

- **Conviviality:** Our team meeting atmosphere is relaxed and enjoyable. People can be direct in their communications.

- **Respect:** We acknowledge one another’s ideas and interact in courteous ways. We genuinely listen to one another and treat each other with dignity.

- **Self-acceptance:** We are comfortable with ourselves. We accept ourselves and our potential.

- **Support:** We verbally and publicly support each other.

- **Familiarity:** We get to know each other. We know each other’s interests, contributions, abilities. We are aware and accepting of team members’ assets and shortcomings.
### Tool 7.6b: Trust factors

**Directions:** Using the description of the attitudes and behaviors from Tool 7.6a as a guide, mark the approximate level of trust that currently exists on your team on the chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRUST LEVEL</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Care
- Collaboration
- Competence
- Confidence
- Consistency
- Integrity
- Openness
- Conviviality
- Respect
- Self-Acceptance
- Support
- Familiarity
Tool 7.7: A portrait of trust

Directions: What goes into building trusting relationships? Think about what team members might say and do in a meeting where they trusted one another. List different ideas below.

Trust relationships

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Tool 7.8: Team communications

Directions: Teams should keep written records (logs) of all team meetings. Review the information below as a team and decide on any logistics that need to be in place.

Q. What is the main purpose of this log?
A. The most valuable use of these logs is as a communication tool. Your logs will provide opportunities for feedback and interaction between school leaders and team members. They offer a way to share ideas with other teachers and teams, with the principal, and with central office personnel. The logs will make your team’s work public and invite input. Your logs also may be used as documentation for professional development credit, personal growth plans, mentoring-induction activities, and other purposes.

Q. What information should we include in the log?
A. Professional learning team logs include the following information:
   1. Team name, date, time, team members present.
   2. Big ideas from the team’s discussions.
   3. Decisions the team makes.
   4. Plans for the next meeting.

Q. Is there a template for a log?
A. No. Teams logs are generally more informative and useful as a communication tool when they are free-flowing and not confined by a template.

Q. Does the log take the place of planning an official agenda for our team meetings?
A. Yes. Each log will reflect your team’s plans for the next meeting. In this way, all team members have input in deciding what needs to happen at the next meeting. Participatory agenda-setting is more productive, gets more commitment from team members, and will result in more appropriate plans to address your team goal.

Q. What do we do with these logs?
A. At a minimum, e-mail a copy of the team’s log to your principal and to each team member. The principal then can communicate with every team member when replying to the log. As you get comfortable with sending logs, add other school leaders and external consultants. Eventually, you may send team logs to the entire faculty. Exchanging team information schoolwide is one way to reach across grade-level and departmental boundaries to create a culture of professional learning. Keep in mind that you may also post logs on wikis and web sites. Giving students and parents access to logs builds awareness of the importance of learning, because teachers are learning, too.
Tool 7.9: Anywhere School memo
(Use with Tool 7.10)

Directions: You teach at Anywhere School. Pretend you and several colleagues are in the teachers’ lounge when you receive this notice from the office. Read the memo and talk about it together. Carry on a typical conversation that might result from reading this memo.

MEMO TO TEACHERS

Homeroom Teachers:

The Sugar Treat Donut Company is new to our town, and this business has volunteered to be a community partner for our school. In return for their support, Sugar Treat Donuts would like us to help them advertise their tasty products.

On Friday morning, our new partner will deliver boxes of Sugar Treat Donuts to each classroom with enough donuts for each student to eat up to three of these yummy products. Please give your students at least 15 minutes to eat their donuts before you begin your classwork. Be sure to encourage students to tell their parents about the new Sugar Treat Donut Company and their generosity. If any donuts remain, offer these to students at lunch.

Thank you for your cooperation in this exciting new partnership!

Your PTA Publicity Committee
Tool 7.10: Hold productive conversations

Directions: Use this procedure at times when the team conversation seems to be going nowhere, or when you need a method of conducting a productive conversation about specific topics and issues. This process will help guide conversations into productive channels that lead to team decisions. Review the process as a team before you begin.

1. **Share facts.** To begin the discussion, ask a question that would encourage team members to share facts about the issue.

2. **Share feelings and reactions.** Continue by asking a question to help team members share personal reactions and feelings about the issue.

3. **Discuss applications and implications.** Ask a question that would draw out meanings and implications for the team’s work based on the issue.

4. **Make a decision.** Ask a question that would lead team members to discuss an application or make a decision based on the issue.

Source: Adapted from *The Art of Focused Conversation: 100 Ways to Access Group Wisdom in the Workplace*, by Brian Stanfield (Ed.). Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Canadian Institute of Cultural Affairs, 2000.
Tool 7.11: Conversation quick guides

Directions: Use these conversation guides to engage team members in focused and productive discussions about activities important to their professional learning team work. Choose from suggested questions or add questions as needed. Copy and cut apart the cards, fastening them together with a brad to make a set for each team member.

Source: Adapted from *The Art of Focused Conversation: 100 Ways to Access Group Wisdom in the Workplace*, by Brian Stanfield (Ed.). Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Canadian Institute of Cultural Affairs, 2000.
EXAMINE STUDENT RESPONSES
1. What did students say about this activity?
2. What are our personal impressions of the activity?
3. What did students learn from the activity?
4. What did students not learn that we expected them to learn?
5. What data (information from student work) do we have related to this activity?
6. What conclusions can we draw about this activity?
7. What are our next steps?

PLAN FOR THE NEXT MEETING
1. What do we want to accomplish at our next meeting?
2. What major tasks need to be done to prepare for the meeting?
3. Who will be responsible for each task?
4. Who will lead the next meeting?
5. Who will be the recorder for the next meeting?

REFLECT ON THE MEETING
1. What did we accomplish today?
2. What was the high point of our team's work today (or this week)?
3. What was the low point?
4. What did we learn today?
5. What is a key insight from the day?
6. What unfinished business do we need to continue at the next meeting?

REVIEW AND SHARE BOOKS OR ARTICLES
1. What part of the book/article really caught our attention?
2. What can we learn from this book/article that would help us in our team efforts?
3. What would we like to know that is not included in this book/article?
4. What actions or activities (if any) do we want to plan based on this book/article?
5. What challenges would we face in taking these actions?
6. What specific activities do we want to plan today?
DISCUSS A VIDEO
1. What scenes from the video caught our attention?
2. What were some of the key points the video made?
3. What ideas impressed us as most important?
4. What was missing in this video that we’d like to know more about?
5. What actions (if any) do we want to take based on this video?
6. What specific action steps do we want to plan today?

PLAN A TEACHING ACTIVITY
1. What do we want this activity to accomplish?
2. What are some things about this activity that might work well with our students?
3. What are some things that might not work well?
4. What adjustments do we need to make to this activity?
5. When will team members use this activity?
6. What student information will we collect during or following this activity?

REFLECT ON A TEACHING ACTIVITY
1. What teaching activity or strategy did we field-test?
2. What did our team intend this activity to accomplish?
3. How did our students respond to the activity?
4. What insights do students seem to be gaining?
5. When or where do they seem to have difficulty?
6. Is this activity a keeper? If so, what improvements does it need?
7. What are our next steps?

PERSONALIZED CONVERSATION PROMPTS
Ahead of the meeting, decide on some questions that you could use to lead your team in a focused conversation about an article or issue the team will discuss. You may want to consider:
1. A question or prompt to pull out facts about the topic.
2. A question or prompt to explore team members’ feelings about the topic.
3. A question or prompt to identify implications for the team’s work.
4. A question or prompt to lead the team to make a decision based on the topic.
Tool 7.12 Understanding Student Thinking video observation guide

Directions: Follow these guidelines as you examine student responses in order to make informed decisions about their thinking and learning. You don’t need to discuss every bullet, but do try to cover most major categories.

OVERALL
• Don’t judge the students’ responses as good or bad. Remain objective and focused on what you can learn from their responses.
• Look for patterns in the responses that will provide clues to how students are thinking.

DEFINE THE PURPOSE
• Briefly review the students’ task and the reasons the professional learning team decided to make a video sample of students responding.

DISCUSS THE ASSIGNMENT
• What knowledge and skills do students need in order to do this assignment?
• What types of responses might you expect?
• Does the assignment seem suitable for helping students accomplish their assigned task?

EXAMINE STUDENT THINKING
• What did you see in students’ responses that was interesting or surprising?
• What do these responses tell you about how the students think and learn?
• How do students’ responses meet or fail to meet standards?
• What are the students’ strengths and weaknesses?
• How do students appear to be making sense of the problem or assignment?

ANALYZE AND INTERPRET THE RESPONSES
• What do we know about the students’ thinking?
• What do these students do well? What do they know how to do? What do they seem on the verge of understanding?
• What misconceptions or errors in thinking, if any, do they seem to have?
• What do their responses tell us about student thinking and learning?

IDENTIFY CLASSROOM APPLICATIONS
• What are the implications for our teaching? What changes might we make in instructional practices, in assessment tools, or in our thinking about students?
• What do we need more information about?
• What do we need to do differently in the classroom to help students reach the standards?
• What new strategies can we use in teaching this content?
• What questions about teaching and assessment did examining the students’ responses raise for us?

DETERMINE NEXT STEPS
• What, if anything, would make this assignment better?
• Who will revise the assignment, if needed?
• Do we need additional resources or information related to issues discussed today, either prior to the next meeting or at a subsequent team meeting?
• If so, what are they, where are they, and who’s responsible for getting them?
• Should we continue with this procedure at our next meeting?

Tool 7.13: Regroup before the meeting

**Directions:** Before beginning today’s meeting, use this tool to help your team reflect on a previous meeting. After discussing the questions, decide whether you need to adjust today’s meeting.

What happened at our last meeting?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Did our last meeting focus on our own professional learning?
- What did we learn?
- What applications did we make (or consider making) in our classrooms?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

How did the meeting go?
- Did everyone participate?
- Were we all positive and supportive?
- Did we follow our norms?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

What do we want to happen today?
- What changes do we want to make in today’s meeting?
- What are the keepers from the last meeting?
- What do we want to accomplish by the end of this meeting?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
**Tool 7.14: Team progress self-assessment**

**Directions:** Respond individually to these descriptors by placing an X along each line to indicate how you think your team ranks for each descriptor. Cold indicates you do not think the phrase describes your team at all. Hot means you think the team is doing great. Then discuss responses and fill out a chart as a team.

**As I think about our learning team:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cold</th>
<th>Cool</th>
<th>Lukewarm</th>
<th>Warm</th>
<th>Hot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>We have a sense of accomplishment.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Our team is supportive and collegial.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>We trust one another.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>We enjoy working together.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Everyone feels accepted.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Diverse ideas are respected.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>We are solving some problems.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>We actively listen to each other.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>We stick with our team norms.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>We have a high energy level.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>We are curious and inquisitive.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>We know where we are going.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>We are organized.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>We are learning more about teaching.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Our meetings are productive.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>We spend more time than before talking about instruction.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>We share what we are learning with other teachers and teams.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>We hold ourselves more accountable for student learning.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>We have a feeling of shared responsibility for student learning.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>We are becoming stronger teachers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tool 7.15: Are we on target?

Directions: Display this poster in your team meeting area. Periodically examine these descriptors together to keep track of your team’s functioning. Place a removable sticky dot in the appropriate box by each descriptor. Move the dot when needed.
Are we on target?

Not there yet

- Working well/smoothly as a team
- Remaining focused on our goal
- Maintaining a regular meeting schedule
- Reading and sharing current research
- Developing and refining our teaching practices
- Using new teaching practices in the classroom
- Monitoring changes in student performance

Doing great!
Tool 8.1: Stages of Concern about professional learning teams

**Directions:** The Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM), a well-researched model from the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, describes how people feel as they adopt an innovation such as professional learning teams. The chart on the next page shows what CBAM outlines as specific Stages of Concern that teachers typically experience, using professional learning teams as the change.

Use the chart to identify where you fall in the Stages of Concern about this new professional learning team initiative. Put a checkmark next to the column of the stages through which you think you have progressed. Discuss with your colleagues where they feel they are, and determine what assistance your team may want so the team is able to move to the next stage.

Examples of interventions have been added as ideas that can help you progress through the levels.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE OF CONCERN</th>
<th>HOW TEAM MEMBERS FEEL AND THINK AT EACH LEVEL</th>
<th>EXAMPLES OF INTERVENTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| AWARENESS        | I have little information, concern, or involvement with professional learning teams. I am not concerned about this change and am not doing anything about it. | • Web resources and written resources about professional learning teams.  
• Opportunities to attend workshops and conferences.  
• Conversations providing a rationale for professional learning teams. |
| INFORMATIONAL    | I have a general interest in professional learning teams and would like to know more about this process. I'm taking the initiative to learn more about learning teams. | • Question-and-answer sessions.  
• Discussions with individuals who have expertise with professional learning teams via conferences or webinars.  
• Opportunities to attend workshops and conferences. |
| PERSONAL         | I want to know the personal impact of the professional learning team initiative. | • Information about time and work commitments.  
• Involvement in planning for learning teams.  
• Discussions with experts in professional learning teams.  
• Facilitated discussions. |
| MANAGEMENT       | I am concerned about how professional learning teams will be managed in practice and what members need to know in order to do this work. | • Organizing and planning sessions.  
• Information on logistics and debriefings.  
• Involvement in planning for professional learning teams.  
• Training in learning team work. |
| CONSEQUENCE      | I want to know how my work in a professional learning team affects my colleagues and my students, and how to make my involvement have more impact. I am moving from simply attending meetings to making changes to improve teaching and learning. | • Surveys.  
• Self-assessments.  
• Reflection.  
• Experimentation.  
• Communication with other learning teams.  
• Assistance with diagnostic activities such as looking at student work.  
• Access to research and study materials. |
| COLLABORATION    | I share, coordinate, and align my professional growth and teaching practices with others on my team. I depend on them, and I give them help and support. I have joined forces with other teachers to have a collective impact on teaching and learning. | • More frequent opportunities to share, coordinate, and learn with colleagues.  
• Opportunities to observe colleagues.  
• Schoolwide information sharing about learning teams.  
• Communication and interaction with other professional learning teams.  
• Opportunities to share at conferences. |
| REFOCUSING       | I am interested in making our professional learning team even more effective, and I have ideas about modifications that might work even better. | • Review of research on professional learning teams.  
• Field-testing of products from professional learning team work.  
• Data analysis.  
• Consistent and regular support. |

Tool 8.2 Levels of Use

**Directions:** The Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM), a well-researched model from the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, identifies eight Levels of Use that describe how teachers act or behave as they adopt a new program or initiative.

Use the chart on the next page to identify where you fall in the Levels of Use of this new initiative. Discuss with your colleagues where they feel they are, and determine what assistance your team may want so members are able to move to the next stage.

Examples of interventions have been added as ideas that can help you progress through the levels.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVELS OF USE</th>
<th>WHAT TEAM MEMBERS DO AT EACH LEVEL</th>
<th>EXAMPLES OF INTERVENTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nonuse</td>
<td>Team members demonstrate no interest, no involvement, or are taking no action.</td>
<td>• Written information and web resources.  &lt;br&gt; • Overviews and displays.  &lt;br&gt; • Explanation of the rationale for professional learning teams.  &lt;br&gt; • Personal contacts with knowledgeable users.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>Team members express a general interest in professional learning teams, would like to know more, and are taking the initiative to learn more about the professional learning team process.</td>
<td>• Workshops.  &lt;br&gt; • Question-and-answer sessions.  &lt;br&gt; • Discussions with facilitators.  &lt;br&gt; • Talks with experienced team members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>Team members are making definite plans to begin participating in professional learning teams and are learning the processes and skills needed to successfully implement this initiative.</td>
<td>• Guided overview of tools and materials.  &lt;br&gt; • Advice and tools for learning team management.  &lt;br&gt; • Modeling and practice with teaming strategies.  &lt;br&gt; • Consensus on area for team focus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanical</td>
<td>Team members are attempting to organize and master the tasks required in the early stages of implementation. The focus is mainly on day-to-day use of learning teams with little reflection.</td>
<td>• Study and research to deepen content knowledge in a focus area.  &lt;br&gt; • Use of norms to smooth bumps.  &lt;br&gt; • Regular self-assessments by team members of their teamwork.  &lt;br&gt; • Logistical help and support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routine</td>
<td>Team members are making few or no changes and have an established, comfortable pattern of working in a professional learning team. Little preparation or thought is being given to improving the use of learning teams.</td>
<td>• Study and research to deepen content knowledge in the focus area.  &lt;br&gt; • Application of learning to the classroom.  &lt;br&gt; • Examination of student work.  &lt;br&gt; • Development and use of formative assessments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refinement</td>
<td>Team members are making changes to increase the impact and consequences of professional learning teams.</td>
<td>• Study and research to deepen content knowledge in the focus area.  &lt;br&gt; • Development and use of joint instructional strategies.  &lt;br&gt; • Observations of colleagues who are using strategies.  &lt;br&gt; • Examination of student work.  &lt;br&gt; • Use of formative assessments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>Team members are working deliberately to coordinate and combine efforts with others using professional learning teams in order to have a collective impact.</td>
<td>• Professional learning team activities and information shared schoolwide.  &lt;br&gt; • Learning teams used as a vehicle for collaborative mentoring.  &lt;br&gt; • Work with colleagues to develop joint instructional practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renewal</td>
<td>Team members reevaluate professional learning teams and seek ways to make them increasingly effective in order to achieve greater impact.</td>
<td>• Data analysis.  &lt;br&gt; • Review of new information and research.  &lt;br&gt; • Field testing of new instructional products.  &lt;br&gt; • Consistent and regular support.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tool 8.3: Tool talk

**Directions:** Choose a tool that you feel best represents the group’s work so far. You may also choose a tool not represented here. Tell the group why you selected the tool you did and how it represents the team’s work. Share a hope or expectation you have for future meetings.
Tool 8.4: Ask the right questions

Directions: Reflect silently on what progress your learning team has made so far. Then think: What questions do we need to answer to propel our team forward? Write three or more questions below.

Question 1

Question 2

Question 3

Question 4

Question 5
Tool 8.5: The balcony view

**Directions:** Imagine you are on a balcony watching your professional learning team in operation. Describe what you see. Where is the team meeting? Who is present? How are team members seated? What are they doing? What are they saying? What attitudes and behaviors do you notice?

__________________________
__________________________
__________________________
__________________________
__________________________
__________________________
__________________________
__________________________

Now put yourself in the meeting. What are you doing that is making a difference for your team?

__________________________
__________________________
__________________________
__________________________
__________________________
__________________________
__________________________
__________________________
__________________________
__________________________

## Tool 8.6: Feedback analysis

**Directions:** Use this tool to give suggestions concerning my feedback on your professional learning team work. Check the box that best matches your response to each question and offer suggestions. You may remain anonymous.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I, as the facilitator, need to know about the feedback I provide</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>At times</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>What should I continue doing? How can I improve?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Is the feedback specific to the needs of your professional learning team?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Is the feedback clear? Do you understand?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Is the feedback consistent? Does it help you maintain a steady direction in your professional learning team?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Is the feedback positive? Does it acknowledge your team’s good performance?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Is the feedback frequent and timely?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Does the feedback seem critical or negative?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Does the feedback provide you with useful support?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Is the feedback constructive? Does it help you understand how your team is doing?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Is the feedback upbeat when it is public? Does it contribute to a risk-free professional learning team environment?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Does the feedback provide you with information you need to find your own solutions?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Does the feedback give you more information than you can use about issues?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Does the feedback overload you with suggestions and advice?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Does the feedback indicate support for your learning team and caring about your success?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Does the feedback acknowledge your professional learning team’s accomplishments?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Do you feel that the feedback is sincerely and honestly intended to help your team?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Is it OK to continue to provide you with feedback on meetings and other professional learning team issues?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tool 8.7: It’s OK! cards — teacher version

**Directions:** Copy and cut apart the cards. Give each team member a card to remind him or her that learning comes as much from our successes as from our failures. This ticket gives team members permission to try a new strategy, fail, and try again. It also entitles them to support from you and their colleagues.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>It’s OK!</th>
<th>It’s OK!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I used a new teaching strategy, and it did not work as well as I’d hoped. This ticket entitles me to continue trying new ideas to help my students be more successful and to have my colleagues’ support while I do so.</td>
<td>I used a new teaching strategy, and it did not work as well as I’d hoped. This ticket entitles me to continue trying new ideas to help my students be more successful and to have my colleagues’ support while I do so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s OK!</td>
<td>It’s OK!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I used a new teaching strategy, and it did not work as well as I’d hoped. This ticket entitles me to continue trying new ideas to help my students be more successful and to have my colleagues’ support while I do so.</td>
<td>I used a new teaching strategy, and it did not work as well as I’d hoped. This ticket entitles me to continue trying new ideas to help my students be more successful and to have my colleagues’ support while I do so.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tool 8.8: It’s OK! cards — facilitator version

Directions: Copy and cut apart the cards. Give yourself a stack of cards to remind you that getting professional learning teams up and running, and keeping them running smoothly, is a demanding task that will have ups and downs. This ticket gives you permission to know that things do not always proceed smoothly. If you are working with other facilitators, give them a card also.
### It’s OK!

We had a team meeting today, and it did not go as well as I’d hoped. This ticket entitles me to:
- Take a deep breath.
- Accept some setbacks as normal.
- Relax and regroup.
- Feel optimistic.
- Grab a cup of coffee.
- Seek out ideas and approaches.
- Look forward to the next meeting.

### It’s OK!

We had a team meeting today, and it did not go as well as I’d hoped. This ticket entitles me to:
- Take a deep breath.
- Accept some setbacks as normal.
- Relax and regroup.
- Feel optimistic.
- Grab a cup of coffee.
- Seek out ideas and approaches.
- Look forward to the next meeting.
### Tool 8.9: Something to celebrate

**Directions:** Use this page to keep a running collection of team events to celebrate. Write one item in each patch of the quilt. When the patchwork quilt is filled, turn it into a wall poster and place it where others can see what’s going on with your team. You may decide to join with other teams to prepare one large, collective patchwork quilt for the entire faculty that spotlights good things happening through professional learning teams schoolwide.

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tool 8.10: Protect these teams!

**Directions:** The poster on the next page can help remind office personnel and others to guard team meeting times from interruptions. Write your information in the appropriate boxes on the poster. Put the poster on the office bulletin board or in a designated area.
Please do not interrupt these teams during professional learning team time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MONDAY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TUESDAY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEDNESDAY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THURSDAY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRIDAY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tool 8.11: Finding relevant resources

Directions: As you work in your professional learning team, stay abreast of new and relevant research and information pertaining to your team goal. Don't limit yourself to one or two sources of information. Explore some of the leads listed here, along with others that you discover as you investigate.

- **Online libraries.** Access an online professional library catalog at a university to ferret out appropriate articles. If you don't have access to such a resource, a university graduate assistant might agree to locate and copy these articles for a team.

- **Workshops and conferences.** Teachers in your school probably attend workshops and conferences throughout the year. Alert them to information your team needs before they go and ask that they bring back any available information from those sessions. When they return, invite them to visit your team and share information, handouts, and other materials. Many times, teachers give a brief overview of a workshop in a faculty meeting. A full faculty presentation is generally less personal and consequently less valuable than sharing in a team setting.

- **School librarian.** Ask the school librarian to order media and books related to your team's goals. These materials might be made accessible to other faculty by shelving them in a section of the library set aside for professional learning teams.

- **Professional organizations.** Join one or more professional organizations. These organizations generally publish professional journals and articles that may be relevant to your professional learning team work. The school librarian might purchase a school membership in several national organizations known for their best-practice periodicals and publications.

- **Regional Education Laboratories.** Regional Education Laboratories provide access to research and information on a variety of subjects. Each school in the U.S. is served by a Regional Education Laboratory, and these labs also maintain extensive downloadable resources at their web sites. To locate the lab serving your state and the resources it provides, go to www.ed.gov/prog_info/Labs/.

- **Faculty expertise.** When you need information, send out a call to your faculty. A team in one school posted a notice in the teacher work area that its members needed help from colleagues with expertise in a particular strategy. Through a faculty survey (see Tools 8.4 and 8.5), members discovered, often for the first time, a wealth of skills and knowledge within their own school faculty and began using one another as resources and peer coaches.
• **College teaching staff.** College professors, if available in the community, may lend a hand to learning teams. Many of these educators enjoy working with groups of energetic teachers, and both groups benefit.

• **College students.** College students, where available, often are looking for research projects and authentic work to use in their coursework. You may find a willing set of hands in locating information about specific topics by using these students. Exposing them to the idea of teachers working together and engaging in ongoing learning can be a valuable model for education students you engage as helpers.

• **District-level instructional supervisors.** District area supervisors often have a wealth of information to share. Using central office administrators as a resource also ratchets up the team’s visibility at the district level.

• **Internet tools.** The Internet can be a rich source of lesson plans and teaching strategies on almost every topic. A faculty survey of favorite web sites can provide a ready-made list of Internet sites to visit and analyze for research-based lessons. (See Tool 8.14.) RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds will deliver updated content to you on a regular basis when you log in to your browser. Podcasts and videos add to the list of accessible information. Sites such as Tapped In (www.tappedin.org), an online community of teachers helping teachers, provide free, ready-made access to a group of colleagues ready to share ideas and practices.

• **Education listservs** are a good source of information for teachers looking for ideas. Listserv resources range from subject-area ideas to teaching and learning in general. Many grade-level and subject-area associations sponsor Internet conversations among their members and other interested teachers. Teachers who regularly participate in these virtual professional communities share successful strategies and support one another in trying out new ideas. Ask the district technology coordinator to help create a private listserv for professional learning teams in the district. Or create such a list yourselves by taking advantage of one of the many free online listserv services (for example, www.epals.com/chat/ or www.tappedin.org).

• **Students.** Students can be an unexpected source of help in locating compelling lesson plans and teaching strategies. A teacher from one school located an intriguing student assignment on the Internet that related to her learning team’s focus on inquiry-based teaching. The day after giving students the assignment, one student announced he had located the web site where she found it. He gave her two more related lesson plans he found online that he thought looked interesting. Other students then took part in an online search for student activities related to inquiry-based learning. When team members used these student-researched teaching strategies, students were involved and enthusiastic.
• **Web sites.** Many educational organization websites offer a rich supply of information in a variety of subject areas and topics. The starter list below may help generate ideas and link teachers to some current research and cutting-edge instructional practices.

- **Access Excellence @ the National Health Museum** (www.accessexcellence.org/) is a highly interactive site that provides an array of free, cutting-edge resources for health, life science, biology, and other bioscience teachers.

- **The National Council for the Social Studies** web site provides free lesson plans for download at www.socialstudies.org/lessons/ and teaching resources at www.socialstudies.org/resources/.

- **The National Science Digital Library (NSDL) Middle School Portal,** http://msteacher.org/default.aspx. This site is a direct path to online resources for instruction and professional development. You can click on the links to access the math pathway (http://msteacher.org/math.aspx) to locate resources to help teachers and students thoroughly explore teaching and learning in mathematics. A companion site (http://msteacher.org/science.aspx) offers resources and links for science.

- **ReadWriteThink** (www.readwritethink.org/) is the site of the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English. This site provides teachers and students access to high-quality practices and resources in reading and language arts instruction.

- **Thinkfinity** (www.marcopolo-education.org/home.aspx), a web site linking literacy, education, and technology, provides standards-based resources, including lesson plans, student materials, reviewed Internet resources, and interactive resources.
Tool 8.12: Database of teacher talent

**Directions:** Please give us some information on your professional skills and interests. No modesty allowed! Responses will help identify specific expertise, teaching strategies, and interests so faculty members know whom to call if they need a consultant or peer coach in a particular area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching assignment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective teaching strategies you use</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development events you’ve attended</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentations you have made</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other professional interests</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other professional activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional information about you</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tool 8.13: Hunting for help

**Directions:** Fill in the answers to each question to help identify teachers and others who can assist teams with specific topics. Place the form in teachers’ boxes, post it on the faculty or professional learning team bulletin board, post it on a school wiki, or e-mail it to faculty members.

**Our professional learning team is working on this topic:**

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

**We are looking for fresh ideas and expertise in this area:**

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

**Please contact us or write your name below if you are willing to talk with us or act as a resource for us.**

____________________________________________________________________________________

(E-mail, phone, or other contact information)

Thanks!
**Tool 8.14: Share a site**

**Directions:** List your favorite education web sites, and give some information about them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Web site name:</th>
<th>Web address:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What’s it about?</td>
<td>Why do you like it?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Web site name:</th>
<th>Web address:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What’s it about?</td>
<td>Why do you like it?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Web site name:</th>
<th>Web address:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What’s it about?</td>
<td>Why do you like it?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Tool 8.15: Team progress reminders

**Directions:** It’s time to check your team progress. Is your team working together or simply getting together? Review the questions to help you identify your success level. Make up your own rating scale by labeling the boxes to the right, and use it to rate yourselves on how well you are succeeding.

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Are you meeting regularly (preferably at least weekly)?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Does each meeting focus on your goal and on specific outcomes you will accomplish at that meeting?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Are you documenting discussions and decisions at each meeting and sending this information out in a timely manner?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Is the atmosphere at team meetings friendly and supportive?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Are teams becoming more effective over time in managing themselves and working together smoothly?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Are team members learning more about how their students learn best?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Are team members learning new research-based information about teaching?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Are teachers applying new and/or improved teaching strategies in their classrooms?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Do team members monitor the results of classroom applications and discuss student learning resulting from teaching practices?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Is the team expanding its tool kit of field-tested strategies for teaching and making this public?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tool 8.16: Facilitation check

Directions: I need your advice on how I can better support your professional learning team work. Please fill out this form anonymously and give me your honest feedback.

1. What am I doing right? What has worked for you?

2. What should I start doing?

3. What do you want me to continue doing, but adjust and tweak?

4. What would you like me to stop doing?

5. Do you think I value your work? Why or why not?

6. What do you think about the feedback I provide? How could I improve it to be more useful?
**Tool 9.1: Participant perception survey**

**Directions:** Rate your perceptions of this professional learning team event by circling your response to each question on this short survey. The highest rating is 5 (totally met my need) and the lowest is 1 (did not help at all). NA means that this issue was not addressed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TO WHAT EXTENT DID THIS EVENT:</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Increase your understanding of the rationale for professional learning teams?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Clarify the difference between professional learning teams and other types of team meetings?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Help you with preliminary logistics and organizing for professional learning teams?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Explain the reason and a process for setting team norms?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Guide you in beginning a planning process?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Provide ideas for conducting successful team meetings?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Offer useful information for building interpersonal skills?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Suggest ways to build an effective team communication process?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Provide workable ideas to help maintain team momentum?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Provide tools and information for assessing team progress?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Actively engage you in the learning process?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Allow you to interact and work with other participants?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Give you useful tools for working in professional learning teams?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Provide you with new insight?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Increase your interest in being a member of a professional learning team?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Lead you to feel that your time attending this event was well spent?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Is there additional information that you would like to have? If so, what information?**

Please share comments, ideas, and suggestions here or on the back of this survey.
**Tool 9.2: Pre/post survey**

**Directions:** Use the following scale to rate each statement in terms of how well it describes your knowledge and feelings about teacher collaboration. Circle the number that best expresses your answer. Do not put your name or any identifying information on this survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I am familiar with the rationale for teachers collaborating on classroom instruction.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I know the basic procedures that make up structured learning team meetings.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I feel that meeting regularly in teams to focus on increasing teachers’ knowledge and expertise would be valuable.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I prefer to work alone to learn and to increase my teaching expertise.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I prefer to participate in regular meetings with colleagues to learn and increase my teaching expertise.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. When we work together on committees at this school, the atmosphere is collegial.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. When teachers at my school work in groups, all members participate and share responsibilities.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I regularly read professional journals and current research on teaching and learning.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I regularly look for different teaching strategies and adjust or change my teaching practices throughout the year.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I want to learn and practice new ways to teach.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tool 9.3: Survey of teacher beliefs about teaming

**Directions:** Answer each question thoughtfully and honestly. This information will be used to plan the professional learning team process that will be most valuable to you. Do not put your name on this survey or include identifying information.

1. How much experience have you had with collaborative teamwork for learning?

2. How often do you call on fellow teachers for help with teaching ideas and strategies?

3. How important is it to you to work together with other teachers?

4. What benefits do you expect to gain from working in professional learning teams?

5. What disadvantages do you perceive to working in a professional learning team?
Tool 9.4: Year one debriefing questions

**Directions:** Answer each question thoughtfully and honestly. This information will be used to improve the professional learning team process. Do not put your name on this survey or include identifying information.

**THINKING ABOUT THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING TEAM PROCESS**

1. What part of the process do you feel has been most successful? Why?

2. What part of the process do you feel has been least successful? Why?

3. What part of the learning team procedure needs to be adjusted? How would you change it?

4. What additional support would you like to have?

5. What would make learning teams more valuable for teachers?

6. What changes have occurred as a result of working together in learning teams? (Individual, team, classroom, students, school)

7. What would you like to see happen in professional learning teams in the future?

8. Use the back of this page to make additional comments.
Tool 9.5: Year two planning questions

Directions for teams: Use this tool to help you plan and set directions at the beginning of the second year of professional learning teams. Add questions and information as needed to help you examine the work your team did last year and get ready for planning a course of action this year.

1. What are some indicators that our team made progress last year?

2. What new information did we learn that improved our teaching?

3. What new teaching practices did we use in our classrooms as a result of our professional learning team work?

4. What evidence do we have that these practices did/did not work?

5. Do we think our time in professional learning team meetings this year will be well-spent? Why or why not?

6. What will make our professional learning team experience more valuable this year?

7. What happened because of our professional learning team that probably would not otherwise have happened?

8. What do we want our team to accomplish by the end of this school year?
## Tool 9.6: Checkpoint survey

**Directions:** Circle the rating that best applies to each statement about your professional learning team meetings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Our meetings focus on our own professional learning and expertise.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Our meetings stay on task and on target.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>In our meetings, our energy is spent working on ways to improve instructional practices.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I feel that meeting regularly in learning teams is valuable.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Our team sticks to our norms.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Team members have a clear understanding of our purpose.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>The atmosphere in our team meetings is collegial and respectful.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Team meetings are upbeat and positive.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>All team members participate and share responsibilities.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>We regularly examine current research and information on teaching and learning.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>We share effective teaching strategies we are already using.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>We select a teaching strategy to use with our students and work together to implement it in our classrooms.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>We systematically monitor how specific teaching strategies work with our students and discuss this in our team meetings.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>We adjust or change our teaching practices and strategies based on our work together.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>I have a clear understanding of what the goals and outcomes of our professional learning team meetings are.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Use the back of this page to make additional comments.*
Tool 9.7: Our team members

Directions: Which statements do you think describe teacher attitudes, experiences, and actions on your team? Place a check mark by all that apply. List any evidence that leads you to your conclusions. Fill out the form individually, then compare your answers with your teammates’ responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OUR TEAM MEMBERS:</th>
<th>✓</th>
<th>Evidence to support this statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Share common beliefs about our students and how they learn best.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Share a common vision about what accomplished teaching and learning in this school should look like.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Take collective responsibility for student learning.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Take responsibility for helping one another become better teachers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Focus our professional learning on areas of identified student needs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Use research that is relevant and practical to inform our practice.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Participate regularly in our professional learning team meetings.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Work together productively.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Monitor our team’s progress regularly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Rotate team leadership responsibilities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Value working with one another.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Regularly discuss our teaching experiences.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Are comfortable sharing failure as well as success.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Show trust in and respect for one another.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Feel free to experiment with and use new and innovative instructional methods.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Share responsibility for carrying out team tasks.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Are increasingly supportive of one another.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Actively seek and use feedback from students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Routinely share what our team is learning and doing with the whole faculty.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Observe one another teaching and provide feedback on strategies team members are using.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tool 9.8: Professional learning team survey

Directions: Give your opinions about your professional learning team. There are no right or wrong responses. Do not put your name on this survey.

School _______________________________ Subject/Grade level __________________________

1. How many times have you met with your learning team? _____ 1-7 _____ 8-14 _____ 15+ _____ Have not met

2. How many people are in your learning team? ________________

3. On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 being the most positive), what rating best describes your feelings about these meetings?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most negative (-)</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>Most positive (+)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unproductive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Productive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not task-oriented</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Task-oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not well-facilitated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Well-facilitated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incompatible group members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Compatible group members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less-than-honest communications</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Honest communications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. What, if any, are the positive effects of these meetings on you personally?

_____________________________________________________________________________________

5. What, if any, negative effects or concerns have you experienced with the learning team meetings?

_____________________________________________________________________________________

6. Rate the extent to which you feel you have benefited by participating on a learning team.

Rating scale: 1 (not at all) to 5 (a great deal)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent have you gained:</th>
<th>(Circle choice)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research-based knowledge about teaching and learning?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insights about how to reach certain students?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas for increasing your teaching expertise?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspectives on your strengths and difficulties in teaching?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater understanding of ways to monitor results of teaching strategies and make adjustments?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater confidence in experimenting with a range of instructional methods?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A stronger sense of connection with and support from other team members?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A greater sense of yourself as a professional?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. When thinking about your team’s focus, how successful has your group been with each activity listed below?

**Rating scale: 1 (not at all successful) to 5 (extremely successful)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analyzing and discussing student needs?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting a long-term goal and purpose for your team’s work?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researching and studying successful teaching practices for addressing student needs, and discussing how to apply what you have read/studied?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing successful teaching practices you currently use?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigating new instructional strategies and materials that might help students?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working together to select and experiment with specific strategies in your classrooms?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designing new materials, lessons, or assessments for students?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trying out new materials and approaches in teaching and monitoring students’ learning?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking at student work to diagnose student understandings and misconceptions?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working as a productive team?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing collegial and caring working relationships?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using logs to communicate with others (all faculty members, the principal, etc.) your team’s work?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Below is a list of activities that support teacher growth and development. Choose and circle a rating based on your assessment of the extent to which the practice occurred (1) before learning teams were started and (2) at the conclusion of the first year of learning team meetings.

**Rating scale: 1 (not very effectively practiced) to 5 (very effectively practiced)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers talk to each other about teaching methods and results.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers learn from each other by watching each other teach.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers design lessons, assessments, and/or units together.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers critique lessons, assessments, or units for each other.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers develop strategies to address different types of learners.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers share, read, and discuss articles, books, and other professional resources.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers ask each other for advice and help with particular strategies or topics.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers visit one another’s classrooms to examine teaching strategies.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers visit other schools to examine instructional approaches in different settings.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers work together to examine student work samples to better understand student strengths and weaknesses.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers provide moral support and encourage each other to try new ideas.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers help each other implement new ideas and practices in the classroom.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. In your opinion, what percent of the students whom you teach have benefited from your learning team participation?

   ___ less than 25%           ___ 26% to 50%           ___ 51% to 75%           ___ 76%+

10. Based on your experiences so far with the learning team:

    Rating scale: 1 (not at all) to 5 (a great deal)

    | I think my participation on the learning team will:          | (Circle choice) |
    |-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
    | Increase my overall teaching effectiveness.                  | 1 2 3 4 5       |
    | Increase my skills in helping students learn.                | 1 2 3 4 5       |
    | Change my expectations for some students’ learning abilities.| 1 2 3 4 5       |
    | Increase my understanding of how to engage students in more  | 1 2 3 4 5       |
    | rigorous learning.                                           | 1 2 3 4 5       |
    | Significantly change some of my teaching practices.         | 1 2 3 4 5       |
    | Significantly change ways in which I work with other teachers.| 1 2 3 4 5      |

11. Rate the extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

    Rating scale: 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)

    | I am enthusiastic about my participation on a learning team. | 1 2 3 4 5       |
    | I feel a lot of stress during the work day.                  | 1 2 3 4 5       |
    | I need more time to participate in my learning team.         | 1 2 3 4 5       |
    | The leadership here actively supports learning team          | 1 2 3 4 5       |
    | participation.                                              | 1 2 3 4 5       |
    | I am excited by my students’ accomplishments this year.     | 1 2 3 4 5       |
    | Student achievement is a major problem here.                 | 1 2 3 4 5       |
    | My team has made progress in improving instructional practices this year. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
    | Teachers here tend to work in isolation with little          | 1 2 3 4 5       |
    | coordination.                                               | 1 2 3 4 5       |
    | The work environment here is collaborative and teachers get along well. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
    | I often feel unsure of my teaching.                         | 1 2 3 4 5       |
    | Learning teams are of value to teachers and students.       | 1 2 3 4 5       |

Source: SERVE Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.
Tool 10.1: The facilitator’s role

Directions: Use this tool to help you and other leaders understand roles and typical responsibilities of facilitators. You might use these suggestions to create a job description and responsibilities, to help leaders understand needed facilitation tasks, or to provide information when requesting funding for a professional learning team facilitator. This sheet also could be a checklist for you to determine your own strengths, keeping in mind that the list is not comprehensive and should be adapted for your situation. In areas you do not feel confident, locate someone to assist with that task while building your own skills.

THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING TEAM FACILITATOR:

Models continual learning and builds knowledge and skill in the following areas:
• Professional learning team goals, concepts, and processes.
• Fundamentals of professional learning team work and of team development.
• Team facilitation strategies and skills.
• Working effectively with adult learners.
• Establishing productive relationships with team members.

Develops the expertise to successfully:
• Guide teams in holding productive meetings.
• Provide helpful feedback to teams on their work.
• Move teams to the next level of collaboration when needed.
• Read and respond appropriately to team logs.
• Establish online communication among teams; and between teams, designated school and district leaders, and consultants.
• Model leading a team meeting, if necessary.
• Troubleshoot team problems as they arise.
• Help with team logistics to the extent possible (gather needed resources; teach a class to allow a teacher to observe a colleague, etc.).
• Observe classroom applications of teaching practices that teachers are working on collaboratively and provide productive feedback.
• Provide books and/or research-based information on topics teams are studying.

• Provide updates on the team’s work to the principal, outside consultants, and others as requested.
• Set up webinars and other types of online networking as a way of connecting team members with outside consultants for coaching and troubleshooting.
• Assist in seeing that team members respond to surveys and help with other formative data collection as needed.
• Regularly publicize the work of the teams (through wikis, school web sites, newsletters, bulletin boards, PTA meetings, faculty meetings, etc.).
• Recognize and advocate for needed changes in the school organization that will better promote and support teacher collaboration.

Builds the knowledge and skill to:
• Train new teachers in the professional learning team process.
• Do follow-up training with existing teams as needed.
• Lead training sessions for other faculties as needed.
Tool 10.2: Organize for the journey

Directions: Good facilitation begins with good organization. Set up a method to collect and organize information before the team start-up. Keep on hand this list of types of information and artifacts a facilitator might maintain throughout the professional learning team process, and review it periodically to be sure you are covering the team's needs.

INFORMATION:

1. **Teams:** Record team members’ names, information about each (subject taught, special skills and training, etc.), and contact information. See Tool 7.1 for one method of gathering information about team members.

2. **Logistical information:** Keep a record of when teams will meet, where they will meet, and how long meetings are scheduled to last.

3. **Team goals:** Keep each team’s goal in a place where you can easily access it while reading logs, briefly visiting a meeting, and so on.

4. **Team logs and communications:** Set up a separate folder, a notebook section, or electronic folder for each team. Keep a record of each team’s communications there. Include copies of all team logs as well as feedback sent to teams in response to their logs. Add other communications concerning the team’s work.

5. **Reports and memos:** Include copies of any reports you make on a team’s progress or of the professional learning team project in general. These records might include informal memos to the team members, principal, etc.

6. **Resources:** Keep a record of materials (research articles, books, web sites, DVDs, outside experts, etc.) that team members use in their study and work.

7. **Monitoring and evaluation:** Include team self-assessments, pre-assessments, mid-year evaluations, and end-of-the-year evaluations, plus other input and observations. Include anecdotal data, such as agendas from faculty meetings, showing changes in school faculty meetings as professional learning teams gain higher priority, for example. Include information on changes in classroom instruction, changes in teachers’ behaviors, and any signs that teacher collaboration across the school is increasing.

8. **Tools and tips:** Keep track of tools, tips, and ideas that further the team’s progress. These can inform future professional learning team work.

9. **Personal journal:** Keep a journal of your own activities and reflections. Soon you’ll have an understandable history of the project and a source of invaluable information for later use. Journaling may seem like a nuisance at first, but it’s a great way to document the project’s evolution. Your daily reflections will spur valuable personal insights and help steer your future course.
Tool 10.3: Build rapport with teams

**Directions:** These 10 categories of actions can help the facilitator build and maintain good relationships with team members. Expand on the list as you work with teams. Included with each category is a space to reflect and record what you are doing or have done to build relationships with team members in that specific area.
Relationship-building behaviors and ideas

Show an interest in team members.
Some ideas:
• Call team members by name.
• Learn something about their families, interests, hobbies, and aspirations, and use this information to personalize conversations when you talk with them.
• Take time to mention something they told you in a previous conversation. (To help you recall information, carry a small notebook and make notes in it.)
• Be attentive as they speak.
• Send birthday cards and recognize big events in team members’ lives.

What I’m doing in this area


Relationship-building behaviors and ideas

Be an effective listener.
Some ideas:
• Face the person speaking, lean forward slightly, and make eye contact.
• Respond. Your responses can be both verbal and nonverbal, such as nodding, smiling, etc. When you respond, speak with the same energy level as the person speaking.
• Concentrate on what the person is saying. Listen for what team members mean as well as what they say.
• Do not think about what to say next while listening to someone. Give that person your full attention.
• Do not interrupt. A quick way to destroy trust and rapport is to interrupt while a person is speaking.

What I’m doing in this area


Relationship-building behaviors and ideas

**Spend time informally in team members’ classrooms.**

Some ideas:
- Gain insight into their teaching styles and any innovative strategies team members are using. Then reference the good things they are doing when you stop by a team meeting, during a faculty meeting, and at other times you have opportunities to offer kudos to team members.
- Offer to videotape a teacher using a strategy the team developed so that team members can examine the videotaped lesson during a team meeting.

**What I’m doing in this area**


Relationship-building behaviors and ideas

**Establish ways for teams to network.**

Some ideas:
- Set up an electronic folder for each team containing e-mail addresses for team members. Make these folders available to all teams and invite them to use these as a location for sharing teaching ideas.
- If you’re an off-campus facilitator, invite teams to send you copies of their logs electronically, and respond by e-mail.
- Set up an online site such as a wiki (or have a student do this) where teams can post resources, updates about team members, teaching tips, student successes, and other community-building information.

**What I’m doing in this area**


Relationship-building behaviors and ideas

Stay in frequent contact.
Some ideas:
- Periodically send articles and information to team members electronically.
- Connect teachers to high-quality education web sites, and involve them in exploring resources that exist beyond the school site. (See Tool 8.11.)

What I’m doing in this area

Relationship-building behaviors and ideas

Be mindful of your body language.
Some ideas:
- Unfold your arms, and remember to smile.
- Watch your tone of voice, facial expression, repetitive movements, and muscle tension.
- Remember to make eye contact and show genuine interest.
- Smile a lot.
- Avoid looking down or fiddling with objects.
- Keep your body relaxed.

What I’m doing in this area
Relationship-building behaviors and ideas

Exhibit the same qualities you value in others.
Some ideas:
• Be dependable.
• Be respectful.
• Be friendly and positive.
• Do what you say you will do.
• Exhibit honesty, integrity, and follow-through.

What I’m doing in this area


Relationship-building behaviors and ideas

Do not take team reactions personally.
Some ideas:
• Expect that change of any kind will cause some degree of turmoil and resistance.
• Practice keeping an objective mental stance regarding team members’ comments and responses.
• Avoid personalizing comments. Imagine that you are looking down on the situation from a balcony and analyzing it. Do not label the situation as “good” or “bad.” Instead, just think to yourself: “This is interesting. I wonder what this is all about.” This exercise will help you retain an analytical viewpoint that will prove more effective in working with teams.

What I’m doing in this area


### Relationship-building behaviors and ideas

**Relax and give it time.**

Some ideas:
- Understand that building relationships takes time, persistence, and energy.
- Accept that you will not know all answers.
- Apologize if you make a mistake, and remain grounded in the basic principles of good professional learning team work.
- Relax and be yourself as you work with teams.

#### What I’m doing in this area


---

### Relationship-building behaviors and ideas

**Show appreciation.**

Some ideas:
- Provide team members with personal business cards.
- Send faculty memos to call attention to good things teams are doing.
- Provide teachers with a surprise luncheon.
- Hold occasional drawings for a team gift for teams with perfect attendance.
- Take pictures of teachers meeting together, trying new teaching strategies, and engaging in other team events. Post the photos on school bulletin boards, or use them in newsletters.
- Take photos of students (with permission) from each team member’s class. Look at the pictures during team meetings to motivate teachers and remind them of the importance of their learning team work.
- Create surprise baskets of office supplies or snacks for teams.
- Provide team members with a duty-free lunch.

#### What I’m doing in this area


---
Tool 10.4: A sample professional learning team agreement

**Directions:** Use this example of an agreement between a facilitator and members of a professional learning team to work with team members to clarify both your own role as facilitator and expectations for team members. After modifying this example or writing your own agreement, be sure that you and each team get a copy of the completed agreement.

**LEARNING TEAM GOAL**
To increase student learning in our goal area, we will work together weekly throughout the school year to add to our knowledge and teaching expertise in this area. The school administration will actively encourage the learning team process by providing resources, time, and support.

**The facilitator will:**
1. Assist team members in building their skills in working together in professional learning teams.
2. Assist the professional learning teams with logistics, troubleshooting, and specific areas of need.
3. Provide regular feedback when requested.
4. Spotlight the team’s work in the school community.
5. Provide the team with resources for research and information as needed.
6. Read and respond to team logs.
7. Collect data and information about the changes that occur as a result of the team’s work during the year.

**Learning team members will:**
1. Actively participate in the professional learning team during the school year.
2. Keep a positive attitude and persist in moving the team’s work forward.
3. Study and experiment with new teaching approaches to help students learn.
4. Systematically monitor how the team’s work is making a difference for students, teachers, and the school.
5. Keep team logs of team discussions and decisions.
6. Share logs schoolwide and read logs that other teams share.
7. Provide productive feedback and recommendations regarding the professional learning team process.
**Tool 10.5: Information checklist for facilitators**

**Directions:** This checklist can give the facilitator a quick picture of a team over time and an idea of where to intervene to help teams progress. Keep periodic tabs on the team’s progress. Check the box next to each item according to your impression of the team’s work. **Yes** means you clearly observed this behavior. **No** means that team members had an opportunity to exhibit this behavior but did not do so. **NA** indicates that team members had no opportunity to exhibit this behavior. (For example, the team plan may not call for teachers to review and study research at a particular meeting.) Add comments to help you remember and track progress, then use the information to intervene and help team members increase their skills and productivity when needed, using your wisdom and tools from previous steps.

Team ___________________________            Date___________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviors</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>NA</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.  The team meets regularly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.  During the meeting, all discussions center on the team’s focus.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.  The team keeps the same focus from meeting to meeting.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.  Learning team meetings differ from department or grade-level meetings.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.  The atmosphere at team meetings is relaxed and friendly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.  Team members follow the norms they established.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.  Roles and responsibilities rotate among team members.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.  Team members demonstrate skill in working together.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.  Team members are studying research and information in their focus area.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Team members are learning more about effective ways of teaching students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Team members are developing and applying new instructional strategies.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Team members monitor and discuss the results of their work in terms of both teacher progress and student progress.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Team members are gaining new understanding of their students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. The team keeps logs of each team meeting that contain big ideas from discussions and decisions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Team members are communicating their work to others outside the team.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tool 10.6: Professional learning teams that work

Directions: Share this list of characteristics of schools that have produced effective professional learning teams and seen positive changes in classroom instruction and student learning with other school leaders, including teacher leaders, to determine what characteristics are present in your school. Next, decide what steps leaders might take to create desired characteristics.

A professional learning team that works:  
*Has a supportive context and:*
- Meets at the school.
- Meets during the school day.
- Has sufficient time, support, and resources to enable teachers to master new content and pedagogy and to integrate these into their practice.
- Is sustained over time, allowing teachers to integrate new knowledge and strategies into their practices and to reflect on the experience.

*Is planned in advance and:*
- Is driven by analyses of student-learning data.
- Is driven by a coherent long-term plan.
- Is collaboratively developed with teachers and those who will participate in and facilitate that development.
- Includes intentional follow-up and support.
- Provides resources to support teacher learning and collaboration.
- Builds in accountability practices and evaluation of professional development programs to provide a foundation for future planning.

*Produces outcomes and:*
- Enhances teachers’ content and pedagogic knowledge.
- Enhances teachers’ understanding of how their students learn.
- Prepares teachers to make informed decisions about instruction.
- Results in more accomplished teaching.

Promotes collegiality and collaboration.
- Promotes an attitude of continuous inquiry and improvement.
- Contributes to measurable improvement in student achievement.
- Contributes to a professional culture in which teachers develop a common understanding of accomplished teaching.

A school that produces successful professional learning teams:  
*Meets teacher learning needs and:*
- Provides teachers with the knowledge and skills to collaborate productively.
- Deepens educators’ content knowledge, providing them with research-based instructional strategies to help students meet rigorous academic standards.
- Prepares teachers to use various classroom assessments appropriately.
- Builds deeper insight into how students learn in their particular context.
- Builds a clear, well-defined image of effective classroom learning and teaching.
- Prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students and to have high expectations for their academic achievement.
- Aligns with the curriculum and assessments in use in the setting.
Supports ongoing teacher growth and:
- Focuses on teachers as central to student learning.
- Allows time for teachers to engage in meaningful discussion, planning, and practice.
- Provides resources for teachers to refine and expand their pedagogical repertoire and their content knowledge.
- Provides comfortable, respectful meeting environments conducive to adult learning.
- Monitors its own progress, provides its members with effective feedback, and helps team members sustain momentum.

Supports team activities and:
- Makes available student performance and achievement data — including student feedback, teacher observation, analysis of student work, and test scores — to help teachers determine where to focus their collective efforts.
- Affords teachers with time and opportunities to develop new understandings and skills, and to broaden their teaching approaches to create better learning for students.
- Provides for and promotes continuous inquiry, experimentation, and reflection about instruction.
- Includes occasions for team members to observe and be observed teaching.
- Provides teachers with research-based information and resources.
- Supplies effective and regular feedback to teams.

Assesses the impact of professional learning teams on:
- Teachers’ knowledge and skills.
- Teachers’ attitudes and motivation.
- Classroom practices.
- Student learning.
- Productive teaming.

Evaluates and:
- Involves continuous assessments.
- Uses multiple sources of data and information.
- Uses data to guide teacher growth and team efforts.

Provides capable leadership and:
- Respects and nurtures teachers’ professional and leadership capacity.
- Guides continuous instructional improvement.
- Respects teachers as professional, adult lifelong learners.
- Uses teachers’ expertise, cultivates leaders, and involves teachers in planning.
- Applies knowledge about adult learning and change.
### Tool 10.7: Is this a good policy?

**Directions:** Policies in place in schools today often have existed for decades. Periodically revisiting school policies and operating procedures can be eye-opening and can pave the way to creating fresh policies that better accomplish goals of openness, trust, and productive professional collaboration.

Use these questions with other school leaders, including teacher leaders, to discuss specific policies and procedures in place at your school. These may include both written policies and traditional ways of working. (For example, some administrators highly structure teachers’ meeting times.)

Place an X along the continuum beneath each question to indicate what you think about the policy. Then discuss your perceptions of this policy as a group. If the policy does not help build a collaborative school culture with shared leadership and vision, then discuss how to begin making needed policy changes.

1. Does the policy/procedure reduce teachers’ isolation, or does it perpetuate the traditional policy of working alone?

   - [ ] Perpetuates isolation
   - [x] Reduces isolation

2. Does the policy provide schedules and structures that keep teachers who teach the same students in close proximity with one another?

   - [ ] Perpetuates separateness
   - [x] Promotes close proximity

3. Does the policy encourage teachers to assume the role of learners, or does it reward customary teacher-as-expert approaches to teaching and learning?

   - [ ] Teacher as expert
   - [x] Teacher as learner

4. Does the policy reward individuals or teams?

   - [ ] Rewards individuals
   - [x] Rewards teams

5. Does the policy establish an environment of professional trust and encourage problem solving, or does it encourage hiding problems?

   - [ ] Defensive environment
   - [x] Trusting environment
6. Does the policy make it possible to restructure time and space within schools, or are new forms of teaching and learning expected to emerge within traditional structures?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional use of time and space</th>
<th>Reorganized use of time and space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

7. Does the policy encourage a focus on teacher professional growth and learning that gives priority to teachers learning why and how, or does it emphasize teachers following prescribed teaching patterns?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prescribed teaching patterns</th>
<th>Teacher learning and growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

8. Does the policy encourage a risk-free environment for experimenting with new ways of teaching?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cautious environment</th>
<th>Risk-free environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

9. Does the policy support teachers’ use of multiple methods of communication?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No focus on communication</th>
<th>Supports a variety of communication methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

10. Does the policy provide greater autonomy for teachers?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching driven by external guidelines</th>
<th>Teachers use professional wisdom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

11. Does the policy empower teachers to be genuine decision makers?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrators make decisions</th>
<th>Teachers share in decision making</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

12. Does the policy foster collaboration rather than competitiveness?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competitiveness</th>
<th>Collaboration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Tool 10.8: How important are you?

Directions: Read the first three statements on this sheet to yourself. Then read and discuss the three research findings at the bottom of the page. Brainstorm a list of ways school leaders might accomplish these actions. Then compile a list of actions you will take to provide successful professional learning team leadership.

Successful leadership of professional learning teams involves:

1. Setting a clear direction so that faculty members develop shared understandings about the school and its goals. Develop a clear direction to help faculty members make sense of their professional learning team work.
2. Developing people. Provide individualized team support and encouragement through direct feedback and contact with each professional learning team.
3. Redesigning the school. Organizational conditions sometimes wear down teachers’ good intentions and actually prevent professional learning teams from doing their work. Examine your school policies to identify and revise those that hinder collaboration and take the focus off quality instruction.

A look at the research

A 2004 study commissioned by the Wallace Foundation, How Leadership Influences Student Learning, points to leadership as a major factor in student learning. The major findings include:

- Leadership is second only to classroom teaching in its impact on student achievement. What leaders do (directly and indirectly) accounts for about 25% of total school effects.
- Leadership effects are largest where and when they are needed most. Studies demonstrate that the effects of successful leadership are much greater in schools that are challenged by difficult circumstances.
- Leadership has a positive impact on achievement when the leader focuses on changes that improve classroom practice and understands the magnitude of the change being undertaken.

“To improve schools, improve leadership. Indeed, there are virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around without intervention by a powerful leader. Many other factors may contribute to such turnarounds, but leadership is the catalyst.”


Tool 10.9: What’s a leader to do?

**Directions:** Consider how you would accomplish each of these ideas to support professional learning teams.

1. **Understand** what a fully functioning professional learning team looks like.

2. **Promote** teachers’ beliefs in the benefits of working together and in their ability to do so productively.

3. **Arrange** the school schedule to allow for meetings during the school day.

4. **Be aware** of teachers’ levels of commitment, and support full, active participation in professional learning teams.

5. **Involve** teachers in making decisions about professional learning teams.

6. **Give** teachers opportunities to meet and to observe one another’s classes as they implement new strategies.

7. **Provide** rewards and recognitions for teams rather than for individuals.

8. **Provide** gestures of appreciation (surprise baskets, supplies, business cards, coupons, duty-free lunch, etc.).

9. **Remove** a noninstructional duty.

10. **Give** teachers permission to take risks and try new teaching approaches.

11. **Provide** team members with professional learning credit.

12. **Allow** teachers to tie learning teams to personal growth plans.

13. **Give** professional learning teams high visibility schoolwide.

14. **Provide** regular and productive feedback to teams.

15. **Maintain** a strong, observable commitment to professional learning teams.

“Leadership appears to be the art of getting others to want to do something you are convinced should be done.”

— Vance Packard, author

“Leadership is practiced not so much in words as in attitude and actions.”

— Harold S. Geneen, founder, MCI Communications
Tool 10.10: Sample note from an administrator

Directions: Use this sample note of how one administrator provided initial direction to a group of teams as they began the learning team process, adapting it as needed for your situation. Use the example to generate ideas for how you and other leaders will provide guidance, visibility, and a sense of importance to this professional learning team work.

Hi, professional learning teams:

I look forward to this new adventure!

1. Please decide on a regular meeting schedule (day, date, and time) for your team meetings. Send this information, along with the names of everyone on your team, to the facilitator, who will then send it to me.

2. Remember, your professional learning team is not a team planning meeting. The focus must be on a specific instructional area that team members would like to investigate, implement, and evaluate. For example, math, science, and social studies teachers might examine reading strategies across content areas and develop a tool kit of common strategies to help students improve their understanding of written text. Communications teachers may want to focus on balanced literacy using the materials from your workshop this summer.

3. Whenever you hold a meeting, choose a recorder. That person should capture the following information: who was present, how long the meeting lasted, and the date. He or she should also record briefly the major discussion points and what was decided or the outcome of the meeting. This log should be in a Word document and attached to an e-mail.

4. The log should be sent directly to all members of the professional learning team, the principal, the facilitator, and me as soon as possible following your meeting. The easiest thing to do is for everyone to set up a professional learning team group in your personal address book.

I plan to visit teams whenever I can. I will also respond to your logs. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or need resources.

Sincerely,
Dr. Howard
Tool 10.11: Consensus-building tips

Ask Dr. Developer: Honoring all voices crucial in consensus

Q: I’m all for getting everybody on the school improvement team to agree with a decision. But what do you do when you’ve got a couple of stubborn people who just won’t go along with the group?

A: This is the $64,000 question of the Reaching Consensus Challenge. Individuals who block consensus are likely to feel as if they haven’t been heard by the group. They probably aren’t objecting to the whole solution, just to part of it. Your mission is to ensure that their concerns are heard and that the group responds to them.

Here’s a series of questions the facilitator can ask to help move the group toward consensus.

- Under what conditions would you support this solution?
- What part of the solution do you oppose?
- What parts of the solution would you modify so you’d be more comfortable with the solution?
- What would be necessary for you to agree with this solution?
- Would you be willing to live with the solution for a limited time?
- What would be a reasonable time before we reassess the decision?
- Under what conditions would you be willing to put aside your differences?

In addition, ask the team members who support the recommendation:

- What are you willing to do to adjust your views to respond to the discomfort of those who are not yet in agreement?
- If you were not in agreement, what parts of the solution might be troublesome to you?

One caution: Individuals who feel as if they haven’t been heard can become uncomfortable by being singled out for this kind of attention. The facilitator needs to be sensitive to that issue as well.

These can be frustrating moments. Try to keep in perspective that whole school systems may struggle with similar issues. As you discover how to deal with this challenge, you’ll be learning a great deal that can be applied to other, even larger, debates in your district and state.

NSDC’S PURPOSE

Every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves.

NSDC STAFF

Stephanie Hirsh, Executive director
Joellen Killion, Deputy executive director
Leslie Miller, Director of business services
Hayes Mizell, Distinguished senior fellow
Shirley Hord, Scholar laureate
Dennis Sparks, Emeritus executive director

NATIONAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

The National Staff Development Council is a nonprofit education association whose members are primarily district administrators, principals, and teachers committed to high levels of learning and performance for all students and staff members.

Information about membership, the conferences, academies for staff developers, state affiliates, and other services is available from:

National Staff Development Council
504 S. Locust St.
Oxford, OH 45056
Tel: 800-727-7288
Fax: 513-523-0638
E-mail: NSDCoffice@nsdc.org
www.nsdc.org