How our school measures up

Facilitators:

Have each team member fill out the table below. Use responses to build a shared understanding of the current state of the school's commitment to collective responsibility. Then answer the questions on the following page to outline aspirations and action steps over the course of the school year.

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
Teachers have opportunities to get to know students outside of their classes.				
Teachers meet regularly in teams for collaborative learning and problem solving.				
Teachers have regular access to information about students in classes beyond their own.				
Teachers have frequent opportunities to provide support to their colleagues one-on-one or in teams.				
Learning teams emphasize sharing best practices and examining individual challenges.				
Teachers make an effort to get to know all students in the building.				
Teachers are eager to share helpful information or strategies.				
Teachers know they can turn to their colleagues anytime for support.				
Teachers celebrate the successes of their colleagues.				
Teachers pool their talents to ensure no student falls behind.				

FURTHER READING

- "A culture of collaborative inquiry: Learning to develop and support professional learning communities," by Tamara Nelson, David Slavit, Martha Perkins, and Tom Hathorn. (2008). *Teachers College Record, 110*(6), 1269-1303. Available at www.tcrecord.org/ExecSummary.asp?contentid=14745

This narrative case study seeks to discover how to foster and sustain a "culture of collaborative inquiry" for teachers. The study follows a group of 12 professional development providers tasked with building a three-year professional development project, Partnerships for Reform in Secondary Science and Mathematics (PRiSSM). To better understand the dynamic of sustaining collaborative inquiry, the group agreed to use the processes they were building to guide their own activities as a group. Assuming the inquiry stance allowed the group to experience the same challenges that teacher groups would typically experience, such as communication difficulties and schedule demands, and the protocols that help overcome these challenges.

- "Teachers' learning communities: Catalyst for change or a new infrastructure for the status quo?" By Diane Wood. (2007). *Teachers College Record, 109*(3), 699–739. Available at www.tcrecord.org/content.asp?contentid=12829

This study explores conflicts and challenges that can arise when cultures and policies of schools and districts inadvertently conflict with systemic efforts to support teacher collaboration. Based on two and a half years of data from a mid-Atlantic city, the district sought

Exploring our aspirations

Facilitators:

In pairs or in learning teams, discuss the questions below and outline preliminary steps to move your school forward to develop collective responsibility.

What kinds of words would you hear and actions would you see in a school that values collective responsibility?
In what ways do we already demonstrate collective responsibility in our school?
In what ways would additional commitment to collective responsibility benefit our school?
What are barriers that prevent us from achieving these additional benefits?
What are opportunities for advancing collective responsibility and achieving additional benefits?
Given our strengths and collective outlook, what changes are most necessary to advance our efforts?
What professional learning do we need to strengthen our capacity for collective responsibility?
What support do we need from within our building? From beyond our building?
Who else might we involve in our next discussion of this topic?
What is our next step as a team? What is my next step as an individual?

to avoid state mandated intervention by creating professional learning communities in all of its schools. Despite sincere efforts on all levels, district culture and policies may be unwittingly causing conditions that threaten to undermine the sustainability of the learning communities. Ultimately, the author makes six recommendations for the collaborative groups and the district to improve the likelihood of success.

• "From hunger aid to school reform: Positive deviance approach seeks solutions that already exist." Dennis Sparks. (2004). *JSD.* *25*(1), 46-51. Available at www.learningforward.org/news/articleDetails.cfm?articleID=456
   In this article, Dennis Sparks discusses positive deviance, where solutions are found within a group instead of from external sources,

with Jerry Sternin. Sternin reflects on his work using positive deviance to alleviate malnourishment in Vietnamese children and offers six steps for implementing and evaluating the positive deviance approach.

• *Professional community and professional development in the learning-centered school* by Judith Warren Little. (2006). Washington, DC: National Education Association. Available at www.nea.org/assets/docs/mf_pdreport.pdf
   This report offers an overview of research and practice that support professional learning in improving student outcomes. Little offers best practices, content opportunities, and the importance of collective and comprehensive support from the school.