

## TOOL 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?

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

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

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4. Ideally, what incentives would be in place to support professional learning teams?

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**Source:** Jolly, A. (2008). *Team to teach: A facilitator's guide to professional learning teams*. Oxford, OH: NSDC.

## TOOL 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 before 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.

**Source:** Jolly, A. (2008). *Team to teach: A facilitator's guide to professional learning teams*. Oxford, OH: NSDC.

## TOOL 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?

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

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## TOOL 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.

Guidelines and suggestions	Decisions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep team small (three to five people).</li> <li>• Consider personalities, diversity of ideas, and teaching styles, forming a critical mass of positive people.</li> <li>• “Teachers only” is recommended; however, to get off to a good start, teams may begin by using a different composition.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Who is on our professional learning team?</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting during the school day lends value and credibility to the process.</li> </ul>	<p><b>When will our team meet?</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At the school, in comfortable surroundings.</li> <li>• In an area safe from interruptions.</li> <li>• In an area where teachers can sit facing each other.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Where will our team meet?</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to computer during meetings.</li> <li>• Articles, books, and other sources of information about the topic of study.</li> <li>• Basic supplies (pens, sticky notes).</li> <li>• A team notebook (three-ring binder) and a set of tabs.</li> </ul>	<p><b>What resources will our team need to begin?</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A process and schedule for rotating team roles and responsibilities.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Who will be team leader and recorder?</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A variety of methods for communicating with other teams and the principal.</li> </ul>	<p><b>What methods of communicating our work will we use?</b></p>

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## TOOL 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.

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