

TEAM BUILDING ROLES

- Supporting
- Confronting
- Gatekeeping
- Mediating
- Harmonizing
- Summarizing

TEAM-BUILDING ROLES

In an effectively functioning team, members consistently perform certain roles that contribute not only to reaching the current objectives set by the group but also to the ongoing improvement in the team's long-term operation. Some of the most common and helpful team-building roles include supporting, confronting, gatekeeping, mediating, harmonizing, summarizing, and process observing. This chapter looks at each role in detail.

SUPPORTING

Supporting another member of the team goes beyond reinforcing the other's point of view when you agree with it. That's immensely desirable, but even more important is providing support and encouragement for a team member when you may not agree with him or her. In the latter function, your support says, "I know that your idea or opinion is something you take seriously, and I accept that seriousness even though I may not have the same view." But over the long-term life of the group, you realize that your support and encouragement of another member result in more and better contributions from him or her, if only because that member realizes that his or her comments will be accepted and considered, and not put down or discounted.

CONFRONTING

There are times when a person's behavior is detrimental to the success of the team as it works toward its goals. (See Chapter

8.) The "offender" may try to keep others from offering their ideas, may publicly make fun of the contributions, or may say unkind words about another person that have nothing to do with the inherent value of his or her contributions. In such an instance, another team member may confront the undesirable behavior: "Ted, it bothers me that you break in with your own arguments without letting Sheila finish. I'd really like to hear her out before you respond." Or "Randy, I don't think it's fair to suggest that Jerry's opposition to your idea is based on his 'stubbornness,' as you describe it."

Confronting is a constructive role when it is confined to people's behavior. When one member confronts another's personality, or presumed attitudes or motives, the result is usually disruption of the group's work and resentment in the person who is being confronted.

GATEKEEPING

Some members of a team are less assertive, and others far more so. Consequently, some opinions from the somewhat retiring people get ignored; they may not even be expressed. When the gate seems closed to some contributors, a team member performs as gatekeeper: "Hey, Jenny has been trying to make a point for the past ten minutes, but she hasn't gotten more than two or three words in. I'd like for the rest of us to stop talking long enough to hear what she has to say." Or "I'm distressed that we keep talking about 'Phil's idea,' when I distinctly remember that Ruth made the same point two days ago."

There are times when certain members monopolize a discussion so completely that others can't enter it or are intimidated enough to keep silent. In this case, a member might say to the monopolizers, "You folks have expressed yourselves quite clearly. I'd like to hear what some of the others feel. For example, Ben looks as if he has something to say."

MEDIATING

Sometimes disputes can be so intense or prolonged that the people involved no longer listen or respond to each other.

They may have become so polarized that they can't move toward each other's point of view. One member who is not involved in the debate intervenes, not to arbitrate but to illuminate. First, the member asks permission to interpret each position, then does so for each side of the argument. After each interpretation, the mediating member asks whether that version reflects the disputant's argument. The arguer has a chance to revise or correct. The intervention can clarify the real differences and areas of agreement that neither side has heard. It also provides a chance for others in the group to discuss the disputed points. Groups can get quite stuck during a debate; mediating can break the stall and push the discussion forward.

HARMONIZING

Again, during a heavy debate-style disagreement, the disputants can become so involved in scoring points for themselves that they fail to realize their agreement on certain points. Perhaps they simply use different terms. An intervenor summarizes the various views to show how close they actually are. Then he or she invites other members of the team to help the debaters build on the areas of agreement that they have not listened to during the intense discussion.

SUMMARIZING

A group can find itself awash in details or varying points of view, and the consequence is confusion. Members begin to ask, "Where are we?" or "What are we talking about?" At times the members of the group are stuck, feeling that there are simply too many pieces of a jigsaw puzzle before them. One member intervenes to sum up the discussion so far. The summarizing gives the group time to breathe. And a good summary clarifies some of the confusion. Furthermore, the summary may restore the group's confidence in itself by showing that more progress has been made than anyone previously thought. The summary also provides concrete points on which further work can be based.

Teacher development must move center stage in school improvement, Sergiovanni argues. That means, he says management systems, organizational patterns, and teacher growth strategies must:

- Recognize individual differences among teachers
- Encourage teachers to reflect on their own practices
- Give a high priority to conversation and dialogue among teachers
- Provide for collaborative learning among teachers
- Emphasize caring communities
- Call upon teachers to respond morally to their work.

“Teaching will not become a learning profession until the vast majority of its members become change agents capable of working on their own sense of purpose through inquiry, competence building, and collaboration (Michael Fullan)

“Sergiovanni stresses the need for a school community to come together around shared values and ideas because “real schools” are managerially loose and culturally tight. That means, he believes, that the change process must be norms based rather than rules based. Such approaches emphasize professional socialization, shared values and purposes, collegiality, and natural interdependence.

“...New approaches are needed to connect teachers to one another through in-school teams and cross-school professional communities that tackle problems of [practice over time...”

“Ongoing professional development can be incorporated into teachers’ daily work through joint planning, research, curriculum and assessment work, study groups and peer coaching...”

“If we pay attention to supporting knowledgeable teachers who work in productive schools, American education need suffer through no more dead-end reforms.”

(What Matters Most: Teaching for

Teamwork, goals, and the judicious use of data are powerful forces for improvement, especially if combined, says Schmoker, a research analyst for the Amphitheater Public Schools in Tucson, Arizona, and author of Results: The Key to Continuous School Improvement.

Teamwork addresses the social dimensions of improvement, he argues. Goals, in turn, give teamwork meaning and drive improvement. But data is essential in helping schools measure what they have achieved...

Schmoker argues that schools improve when purpose and effort are untied. "The kind of significant, sustained improvement that we need in schools will not occur in an isolated, freelance culture, where no one knows what anyone else is doing or what each other" operative goals are. That is a system in disarray," he writes.

"After a decade of reform, we have finally learned in hindsight what should have been clear from the start: Most schools and teachers cannot produce the kind of learning demanded by the new reforms – not because they do not want to, but because they do not know how, and the systems in which they work do not support them in doing so...

On the whole, the school reform movement has ignored the obvious: What teachers know and can do makes the crucial difference in what children learn...

Standards for students and teachers are the key to reforming American education. Students should have the right to be taught by competent teachers and teachers should have the right to high-quality preparation, induction, and professional development." (What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future)

In most professions, there are at least two sides

To the job. You work with your patients or clients for part of the time, and you spend part of the time with colleagues discussing what went wrong in your work, what's going right how you did it, and how others have done it or fluffed it. This exchange of experiences, ideas, and problem-solving approaches provides a vital kind of professional development that most professional people take for granted.

The work life of American teachers is very different. They spend their days in classrooms teaching with virtually no time to learn from and confer with other teachers. They work in isolation in their classrooms and do their planning, grading, and thinking alone at home (Albert Shanker)

...(there is) a critical link between what happens to teachers and what happens to students. If schools and teachers are going to be successful in getting children to be more curious and more actively involved in their learning, then adults who teach them likewise will have to be actively engaged, he says.

"Inquiring classrooms are not likely to flourish in schools where inquiry among teachers is discouraged. A commitment to problem solving is difficult to install in students who are taught by teacher for whom problem solving is not allowed. Where there is little discourse along teachers, discourse among students will be harder to promote and maintain. And the idea of making classrooms into learning communities for students will remain more rhetoric than real unless schools become learning communities for teachers to," he writes. (Thomas Sergiovanni)

"In Japan, teachers spend time making common lesson plans and talking about various methods for teaching difficult concepts," Shaker writes.

"Then, after a lesson, teachers discuss what worked and what did not do that they can do a better job next time. Teachers here need similar time during the workday to focus on the problems of teaching and learning, to figure out how to deal with specific subject matter that is difficult for students, to plan lessons and examine their effect, to engage in ongoing experimentation aimed at specific improvements, and to observe and learn from one another. (Albert Shanker)

"If the trend today is to engage students as active participants in their own learning, to encourage group and cooperative projects, to foster critical thinking and problem solving, and to improve the transfer of learning, those same objectives should inform professional development..."

"In good schools, professional development is woven into the fabric of everyday life, into the kind of community that binds its members together. This is due in part to such practical matters as the way time is used and organized to allow educators to collaborate in joint work... Some schools promote educator learning as a natural and necessary aspect of daily work. Other schools operate on the assumption that little continued learning is needed once a teacher walks through the door.

Such characteristics of schools profoundly influence the prospects for professional development, and school based change."
(Gary Sykes)

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Carol Fine and Lenaya Raack write in "Professional Development: Changing Times":

"Professional development must be based on these assumptions:

- Ongoing individual and organization development are required for school change
- Professional development must support both the inquiry into and the study of teaching and learning.
- Training, practice, feedback, individual reflection, and group inquiry all contribute to teacher learning.
- Professional development is critical to school development
- Effective professional development is primarily school-focused and embedded in the job.

Although district wide workshops are appropriate on occasion, most professional development should be school-based and should involve teachers in a variety of job-embedded learning activities. Through such activities as case discussions, study groups, peer coaching, action research, curriculum development, and joint problem solving, teachers form professional learning communities that lead to instructional improvement. This approach to professional development contrasts starkly with approaches in which teachers work in isolated, non-collegial settings where traditional and outdated assumptions are less likely to be challenged...

New approaches to professional development are essential as educators work to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices with research on teaching and learning. Such a shift is possible only if school faculties can rely on professional development opportunities that help them work as a unit, rather than as a collection of independent educators.

Before job-embedded professional development can flourish, teachers must be able to count on having regularly-scheduled times to meet, study, plan, and reflect together." (School Team Innovator)

IDENTIFYING GROUP-BUILDING BEHAVIORS

Read the following statements made by participants in a group discussion, and identify each as one of the following group-building behaviors:

- a: Supporting
- b: Confronting
- c: Gatekeeping
- d: Mediating
- e: Harmonizing
- f: Summarizing
- g: Process observing

1. "Ralph, you've given us a lot of your ideas in the last ten minutes, and I wonder whether we can take time out from your presentation to get some other opinions or reactions." _____
2. "Twice I've heard someone suggest that we get the thinking of our supervisors on the proposed procedures, but the suggestion hasn't been picked up on for some reason. I think it's an important idea that should be discussed, not passed over." _____
3. "I'm not sure I completely understand all the points you've been making, Joe and Connie. Maybe it would help me, and others, if I fed back to you what I've been hearing, and you can tell me whether I'm right." _____
4. "Quite candidly, Jim, I hadn't thought of that as being a problem before you mentioned it. I'm glad you brought it up so we can look at it." _____
5. "We've talked about so many things that maybe this is a good time to look at all of the ideas that have been offered. It would help me to organize things in my mind." _____
6. "Joan, you and Petra seem to differ on the time period, but you both seem to agree that it should be short term. Am I right?" _____

7. "I know it looks as if we're talking about a cat and dog from every town, but what surprises me is that there seem to be certain threads running through the discussion so far. May I review what I've written down, and the rest of you can tell me whether I've captured the various comments accurately?" _____
8. "I haven't heard anyone finish a statement in the last fifteen minutes. Everyone seems to be interrupting everyone else." _____
9. "Donna, every time someone makes a suggestion, you say that's been tried before. I think you ought to give us a chance to judge whether the idea being proposed today is really the same as before, or maybe different. Or whether circumstances are different." _____
10. "I counted four times that Earl tried to get a word in, but no one let him. I'd like to hear what's on his mind, and I think we ought to give him a chance." _____
11. "That's an interesting approach, Harry. I'm not sure it would work, but I think we ought to look at it." _____
12. "So that I'm more confident that I understand what each of you is talking about, let me tell you what I hear you saying, and you check me out." _____
13. "Apparently the bottom line of what you're both saying is that we have to cut that division back. But you don't seem to agree on how and when. Let's work backward from that to see just where you may be parting company." _____
14. "What I don't understand is why Mary and Eddie are doing all the talking about this. Is it because we're not interested? Should we be talking about something else? What's going on now doesn't seem to be helpful to us." _____

ANSWERS

1. **c:** Gatekeeping
2. **b/g:** Confronting/
process observing
3. **d:** Mediating
4. **a:** Supporting
5. **f:** Summarizing
6. **e:** Harmonizing
7. **f:** Summarizing
8. **g:** Process observing
9. **b:** Confronting
10. **c:** Gatekeeping
11. **a:** Supporting
12. **d:** Mediating
13. **e:** Harmonizing
14. **g:** Process observing

TEAM-SUBVERTING ROLES

- Shutting Off
- Analyzing or Labeling
- Dominating
- Yes-Butting
- Naysaying

TEAM-SUBVERTING ROLES

In a group that does not operate as effectively as it can, you often see people performing roles that apparently suit their purposes but act against the group's interests. The roles are even destructive, undermining the chances that the group can become a team. The principal obstructive functions that you'll see are shutting off, analyzing or labeling, dominating, yes-butting, and naysaying. Let's examine each in detail so that you can recognize them and deal with them when you encounter them among team members.

SHUTTING OFF

Jeff is talking. Suddenly, Craig says, "Hey, that reminds me of something. Do you remember when? . . ." Jeff is probably sitting there with his mouth open, a quizzical look on his face. Craig has shut him off—has silenced him. In this case, Craig has taken off in a different conversational direction, but he might also have started to rebut Jeff's point before Jeff finished. Or he might have used derisive humor: "Good old predictable Jeff. No discussion is complete until Jeff talks about that bad appraisal experience he had a couple of years back." Everyone laughs, or at least smiles, and Jeff's usefulness is destroyed for the moment.

One bizarre shutting-off method is for other members in the discussion to ignore the speaker. For example, a member says, "I think we ought to determine the best way to spend the next half hour talking about the project. How do we proceed? How do we organize ourselves?" The person is ignored. It's as if no one heard him. He sits there feeling a bit foolish. In some

groups, ignoring one another is standard practice: Someone asks a question or makes a suggestion, and the discussion continues as though nothing has been said by this member.

When some people are silenced, they get angry and break in to complain, often starting an argument. Others withdraw, saying to themselves, "What's the point of trying to make a contribution?" Still others resolve to create barriers, tit for tat, when their interrupters offer an idea or make a comment: "You get me, I'll get you."

ANALYZING OR LABELING

When you put labels on a person's behavior, or you try to describe his or her attitudes or motives, you're threatening a discussion. Martha has been arguing a particular point of view, and she has met some disagreement. She begins to talk forcefully, dominating the conversation. Finally, Shelly says, "I think, Martha, if you weren't being so defensive, we could probably approach this more constructively." Instantly Martha denies that she has acted out of defensiveness.

In another case, Jan returns to a subject that has been mentioned a number of times: cutting back people in another section. Mark reacts vigorously and negatively, whereupon Jan retorts, "I don't know, Mark, why you are so threatened by talking about this cutback. It's not going to affect you." Mark responds with a denial that his resistance is based on feeling threatened.

In yet a third example, Rob protests when a coworker, Priscilla, criticizes a third member of the group, Cal. Priscilla turns on Rob with the charge "You always try to protect Cal, and I'm getting tired of it. It's like you don't want people to talk about him, that you're trying to hide something about him."

In these three cases, someone is putting a label on behavior or suggesting that another group member has a particular attitude or unworthy motive. A label or analysis can easily sidetrack a discussion while people argue whether the label or the analysis is justified. The give-and-take easily degenerates into "I didn't," "You did," "I wasn't," "You were," "I'm right," "You're wrong." Dead end.

*determining
intent*

DOMINATING

The dominator likes to take over the discussion. He or she may rationalize, "I'm a person who likes to get things done, so let's cut through all this nonsense and get our act together," or "We're really wasting time. I say we should vote on this and move on."

The dominator wants influence and can be very heavy-handed in efforts to get it. The problem for the group is that the dominator is usually less interested in the goals of the group and far more focused on his or her personal agendas. When the dominator takes over, other people's participation falls off. The group doesn't get the full value of its resources.

YES-BUTTING

Probably one of the most common behaviors in a group discussion is the yes-but response. For example, "Yes, I understand what you're saying, but I think you're missing the point." Translated: "I hear you, but you're wrong." Sometimes people use the yes-but technique to try to soften the blow of disagreement: "I agree that that's an excellent idea, but I don't think it'll work here." Consider that if the idea won't work, it's hardly excellent. The yes-but technique displays hypocrisy at worst, and a personal discounting of the other person at best. Very often, what the contributor hears is "I know you think you've come up with a good idea, but it really isn't worth much."

The yes-but approach can be used so skillfully that it's hard to detect. To illustrate: "I believe that Mike has shown his usual imaginative approach in coming up with this suggestion, and I think he merits the congratulations of every member of the group for the quality of his thinking, which we've come to expect. However, when you look at the plan closely, you can see a slight flaw that is all too easy to overlook but that could render the whole idea unworkable."

Discussions among group members are most effective when they communicate in clear, unambiguous messages. The yes-but response seems to say one thing when it actually says another.

NAYSAYING

In many groups, there is the person who declares himself or herself the "devil's advocate," whose function it is to make sure that whatever is bad about another person's idea gets expressed. So relentless can such naysayers be in emphasizing what is wrong that what is right can get buried. The discussion becomes lopsided.

Unfortunately, *no* has a power that is disproportionate in many deliberations. If the group members are exploring an option that may be risky, is unpleasant, or at least carries uncertain consequences, they may be unusually susceptible to the naysayer, who provides them with a reason not to proceed further: "I really don't think we have enough information on this. Let's table this." Or "We tried something like this a few years ago, and it didn't work." Or "We need to go slowly on this, because if we make a misstep, we could pay through the nose." With a collective sigh of relief, the group abandons the discussion. For the moment, the naysayer has opened up the escape hatch.

There are ways to neutralize or reverse the damage of behaviors that are obstructive. The simplest is to immediately intervene by using one or more of these countering statements:

Countering Team-Subverting Behaviors

"I've heard what you have to say about the project, Eileen, but I'd also like to hear what others around the table feel. Would you please just withhold your comments for a time, and let's hear from others."

"I really am not interested in why Sam may have been impelled psychologically to take that position. I'm sure he has good reasons, and those are what I'd like to hear."

"Yes, I agree that there may be reasons why this won't work, but I'm intrigued by the possibility that it will. At the moment, I'd like to hear why it just might."

"Okay, now that the two of you have talked at length, I'm well-acquainted with where you stand. Here's what I think, and then I hope others will join in."

"Well, maybe it didn't work then, but perhaps times have changed. I wonder whether this idea is now facing a different world. Could someone else comment?"

"I don't know whether Rita is projecting or not, and I guess I don't care. Rita, please elaborate on your thinking."

"Wait a minute. You may think these issues are not important, but I'd like to give Egan a chance to show us they are. Go ahead, Egan."

"You didn't let Ray continue. I want to hear the rest of his thoughts. Go ahead, Ray."

IDENTIFYING TEAM-SUBVERTING BEHAVIORS

Read the following statements made by participants in a group discussion, and identify each as one of the following team-subverting behaviors:

- a: Shutting off
- b: Analyzing or labeling
- c: Dominating
- d: Yes-butting
- e: Naysaying

1. "We're talking in circles. Here's what we really need to do: bite the bullet and tell those people that this is the way it's going to be done. It's the only thing to do. Otherwise we're going to be here forever. I say we take a vote on it right now so we can get on to more productive things." _____
2. "Swen, I think you've made an extraordinary point, and if the circumstances were a bit different, it would be the solution we've been looking for. Unfortunately, I don't think that what you're suggesting has taken into sufficient consideration the fact that we don't have such a skilled person on our staff." _____
3. "Come on, Rita, now you're projecting." _____
4. "If you'll look in the files, you'll see that we did that, and it didn't work then. How come we think it'll work now? I think we ought to look elsewhere. We're wasting our time on this direction." _____
5. "Hey, I'm just reporting some facts. There's no need for you to get angry." _____
6. "I think those issues you're talking about are marginal. A more important consideration is whether we can meet the deadline." _____
7. "Can we keep all the emotional stuff out of the talk? Let's keep our heads." _____
8. "I suggest that this discussion is premature. Why don't we wait until we have more facts?" _____
9. "That just won't work." _____
10. "This discussion is way off the track. Let's get back to the Protax project. That makes more sense." _____

Team-Subverting Behaviors (continued)

11. "I want to pick up on the point that Tom made, because I think it is important, although I really believe it would be more relevant in slightly different terms. What you said, Tom, is timely, but I think it needs to be reworded and rethought." _____
12. "You know, Midge, every time we bring up anything that even remotely has to do with the decision to add bonuses to the field compensation system, you seem to get uptight. Why do you feel the need to protect the old system? You're certainly doing everything to sabotage any possible change." _____

ANSWERS

1. **c:** Dominating
2. **d:** Yes-butting
3. **b:** Analyzing
or labeling
4. **e:** Naysaying
5. **b:** Analyzing
or labeling
6. **a:** Shutting off
7. **b:** Analyzing
or labeling
8. **e:** Naysaying
9. **e:** Naysaying
10. **c:** Dominating
11. **d:** Yes-butting
12. **b:** Analyzing
or labeling

STRATEGIES

- Getting Everyone's Voice in the Room
- 3rd View Thinking
- Apollo Process
- Advocacy Subgroups
- Fist to Five

APOLLO PROCESS

■ DESCRIPTION

The Apollo Process is a consensus activity that enables group members to synthesize their diverse ideas into one. All members of the group have an opportunity to contribute their thoughts. As a result, support for the final product is usually unanimous.

■ APPLICATION

The Apollo Process is especially useful for developing a mission or vision statement, or defining an attribute or quality such as instructional leadership or school effectiveness. Members have an opportunity to develop their own product (definition, summary, etc.) and then look for commonalities with others'.

■ TIME REQUIRED

Ninety minutes to two hours.

■ GROUP SIZE

Ten to forty participants.

■ MATERIALS

Chart paper, markers, masking tape or pushpins. Notepaper and pencil for participants.

■ PROCESS

1. Define the task. What idea, goal, or definition must the group agree upon? Include all contingencies. Write the task on chart paper for all to see. A clear statement of the task is critical for this process to succeed.
2. First, ask each person to write his or her own answer to the task. The individual writing task may be done in advance. Having participants write in advance of the workshop is a technique that can be used to save time while also providing participants with the opportunity to think through the task more thoroughly.
3. Then, have each person find/choose/be assigned a partner. Odd-number groups will have one group of three and the rest will be dyads. Each pair of individuals is to produce one product by synthesizing its two definitions or statements into one. Both individuals must support the new product. This will take anywhere from fifteen to forty minutes, depending on the complexity of the task. However, providing ample time will reduce the time needed later on in the process.

4. Once agreement has been reached in the dyads, combine two dyads together and repeat the process of synthesizing the two existing definitions into one that all four people can support. If you have an uneven number of dyads, permit one to be "silent observers" of a chosen foursome. Once that foursome has reached consensus on the task, the silent observers can interact with two speakers from the foursome to combine the foursome product with the dyad product. It is important to combine only two products at a time. Have each foursome put its product on chart paper for use in the next step.
5. Once agreement has been reached in the foursomes, combine them into groups of eight. Resort to the "odd number" procedure referred to in Step 4 should you have an odd number of foursomes. The next task is for eight people to combine two products into one. At this point post the products that have been written on chart paper, and have all eight group members read both products. The purpose of reading both products carefully is to identify areas of agreement between the two products. Select a facilitator for each group of eight to manage the flow of conversation so that all can be heard. The facilitator should encourage each group of eight to identify agreement within the two products. As agreement is identified, the facilitator writes it on a new piece of chart paper (this is the drafting of the new product). All aspects of the definition are worked with in this manner until the group has agreed on the new product.
6. When combining groups of eight to form groups of sixteen, first allow the entire group to read the two definitions that have been posted for all to see. There are several options at this point.
 - Use the facilitator method to work with the group of sixteen in the manner described in Step 5.
 - Use the "fishbowl" technique. Identify four speakers who will do the majority of communicating and seat them in a small circle. Add a fifth chair to the circle but keep it empty. All other group members form a second circle around the foursome. At points during the discussion members of the outer circle may want to contribute to the discussion and they may do so by sitting in the "empty chair." Once they have made their point and are comfortable with the results, they leave the inner circle and return to their outer circle seat.

Materials adapted from Training to Increase Student Achievement workshop, Aurora Chase, West Chicago, IL, August 1985.

enriched curriculum.



Maria Patterson, principal of Hollinger Elementary School in Tucson, Arizona, discusses the importance of high teacher expectations. Filmed in 1992 for NCREL's urban school leadership case studies (QuickTime slide show, 537k).

High-achieving learning environments involve students in a variety of learning activities that are challenging and aligned with learning goals, promote engaged learning, and draw on the culture, life experiences, and knowledge of all students. They allow students to discuss, argue, and analyze issues and concepts. Students explore, solve problems, and construct knowledge rather than just memorizing it. Their work is authentic, engaging, and important, and it builds understanding from in-depth investigation.

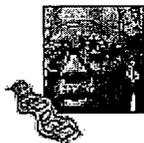


Henry Gradillas, principal of Garfield High School in Los Angeles, California, describes the effects of a challenging curriculum at his school. Excerpted from a presentation at NCREL's 1992 Academy for Urban School Leaders. (Audio comment, 129k)



GOALS:

- Instructional strategies teach all students both basic skills and demanding, higher-order thinking skills.
- A new view of at-risk students challenges the deficit model often applied to urban learners.
- Students have the opportunity to construct knowledge - not just memorize it.
- Culturally responsive curricula and instructional practices foster understanding of and respect for students of different cultural backgrounds and make use of students' culture, language, and prior experiences.



James Banks, professor in the School of Education, University of Washington-Seattle, emphasizes that culturally responsive education is as important for homogeneous, white schools as it is for schools serving students from many cultural backgrounds. Excerpted from NCREL's video, *Many Voices, Many Dreams* (1995) (QuickTime slide show, 278k).

- Active, engaged learning tasks motivate as well as teach.
- Classrooms and schools are heterogeneously grouped and tracking is avoided.
- Groups of students work together on projects that explore ideas and information.
- Instruction accommodates students' learning styles.

- Instructional uses of technology promote engaged learning, rather than rote, skill-driven, or low-level instruction on computers.
- Elements that promote high performance and successful learning include interactive instruction, focus on in-depth understanding, self-regulated learning, and higher-order thinking.
- Traditional tracking is replaced by a "culture of detracked" schools (Oakes & Lipton, 1992) that:
 1. Recognize that tracking is supported by powerful norms and assumptions that should be acknowledged and addressed as alternatives are created
 2. Broaden the reform agenda so that changes in the tracking structure become part of comprehensive changes within the school
 3. Engage in inquiry and experimentation that is idiosyncratic, opportunistic, democratic, and politically sensitive
 4. Change teachers' roles and responsibilities to include new ways of working with other adults in the school
 5. Involve risk-taking leaders who guide schools toward a focus on scholarship and a commitment to democratic values



ACTION OPTIONS:

- Encourage teachers to use new approaches in the instruction of at-risk students.
- Develop professional development activities, classroom instruction, and schoolwide programs that go beyond the surface in celebrating cultural diversity. Students' learning experiences must be transformed to nurture relationships among culturally diverse students by face-to-face contact or via technology and to build upon students' culture, language, and experiences in reading, writing, and content area instruction.



Paul Winfield, actor and narrator of NCREL's video, *Many Voices, Many Dreams* (1995), challenges educators to move beyond the surface in celebrating cultural diversity (QuickTime slide show, 278k).

- Promote efforts to reshape the curriculum and encourage the development of in-depth curricular offerings as described by the new standards being developed in several disciplines, such as math and science.
- Explore authentic instruction and provide students with tasks that allow high levels of thinking and engagement.
- Make higher-order thinking, problem solving, and the construction of knowledge available to all students.
- Replace homogeneous grouping and tracking with heterogeneous grouping to serve all students.
- Complement teacher-centered instruction with cooperative learning and small group activities.
- Replace norm-referenced assessments with authentic assessments.
- Explore new instructional frameworks for producing high-achieving learning environments.
- Establish faculty teams to examine alternative ways to organize instruction, such as longer

- class periods, new scheduling formats, and cross-disciplinary programs.
- Acquire funding and support for technology that is needed in the classroom to prepare students for the demands of a predominantly service-oriented, high-technology workforce.
- Contact schools, programs, and organizations that can help your school implement culturally responsive practices throughout the school.
- Stay up-to-date on the latest research in effective teaching practices by reviewing journals, research-based educational materials, and so forth.
- Increase teacher engagement (which leads to greater student engagement) by creating a professional, collegial atmosphere that encourages teachers to work together in teams.

Karen Seashore Louis, associate dean for academic affairs, University of Minnesota, describes the effects of high levels of teacher engagement and peer pressure on teachers' motivation to work hard, and clarifies the relationship between teacher and student engagement. Excerpted from NCREL's Urban Education monograph, *Teacher Engagement and Real Reform in Urban Schools* (NCREL, 1995, forthcoming).

- Document and evaluate the norms of experience of students in your school in order to make informed decisions about instructional practices, programs, and policies.
- Discuss new initiatives with parents and community members when implementing new grouping patterns and new forms of instruction and assessment.



IMPLEMENTATION PITFALLS:

- School districts and staff often do not have the skills and knowledge needed to implement new forms of instruction and assessment. Program planners and staff need to consider important issues in redesigning educational programs for educationally disadvantaged students.
- Extensive staff development may be necessary to institutionalize new instructional approaches.
- It is important to understand the complexities of the change process when initiating major improvement efforts. If school leaders do not acknowledge and address the challenges of substantive change, staff and community may resist change and retaliate against it.
- Rigid and entrenched policies of districts and schools are among the factors that inhibit the implementation of high-achieving learning environments.
- Teacher schedules often do not include time for professional development - to discuss, learn, and plan new instructional approaches.
- There is a danger in introducing new instructional programs without buy-in and real commitment among classroom teachers. Teachers may perceive these new programs as the latest fad rather than making lasting changes in instruction.



DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW: Some writers still believe that curriculum should focus on the dominant Western European culture. They contend that factual knowledge should be a core element of classroom work and that students should be organized according to ability.

The early effective schools programs and some state efforts emphasized basic skills learning. Many of these early initiatives are being redesigned to focus on higher-order thinking, problem solving, and

University of Washington at Seattle, discusses the role of the principal in creating the collective vision of a school. (Audio comment, 255K.) Excerpted from the NCREL monograph, *Raising Expectations to Improve Student Learning* (NCREL, 1994), by Jerry Bamburg.

Leading successful change and improvement involves developing and managing six critical components of schooling: (1) a clear, strong, and collectively held educational vision and institutional mission; (2) a strong, committed professional community within the school; (3) learning environments that promote high standards for student achievement; (4) sustained professional development to improve learning; (5) successful partnerships with parents, health and human service agencies, businesses, universities, and other community organizations; and (6) a systematic planning and implementation process for instituting needed changes. Louis and Miles (1990), drawing on several case studies of urban high schools, emphasize the importance of planning: "Substantial change programs do not run themselves. They need active orchestration and coordination."



GOALS:

- School leaders encourage and support the development of a collaborative school culture, with clear educational missions and processes, structures, and resources that allow educational change to flourish.
- School leaders shape the school culture through their actions, words, and deeds; what they get excited about; and the plans and activities to which they devote their energy. (Deal & Peterson, 1994).
- School leaders understand the dynamics of the change process. Successful schools have leaders in administration and the classroom who can overcome the obstacles and challenges that develop during the change process.
- School leaders are committed to providing high-quality learning for all students, initiating, implementing, and integrating programs that improve access to engaged teaching and learning for all students. They are concerned with issues of equity and access to powerful learning, particularly for those students most at risk of academic failure.



Kent Peterson, professor of educational administration, University of Wisconsin at Madison, discusses the challenges in demonstrating a strong commitment to providing high-quality learning. (Audio comment, 168K.) Excerpted from a presentation at the Urban School Leadership Mini-Conference for NCREL's Academy for Urban School Leaders (July 1993).

- School leaders appreciate the importance of working in teams and facilitate the development and work of teams that lead school improvement initiatives.
- School leaders use the resources and expertise of parents, businesses, and social service and community agencies to foster the academic, emotional, and social well-being of students.
- School leaders are able to understand and overcome resistance to change and build teachers' sense of efficacy.
- School leaders recognize and foster the knowledge, will, and skill required for successful change.



ACTION OPTIONS:

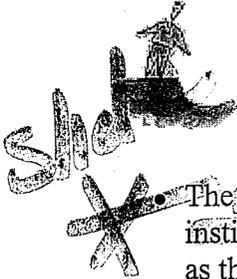
- Before beginning the change process, become familiar with the school improvement cycle, the stages of the change process, and change models associated with each. Leaders must be able to distinguish between the school improvement cycle and the change process, determine where the school is located within the change process, and identify appropriate next steps.
- Learn more about the complexities of the change process by reading (see, for example, Sparks's (1993) "thirteen tips for managing change"); talking with expert practitioners, and attending seminars.
- Accept the change process as a positive experience to be understood and embraced, rather than a negative experience to be feared and avoided. See, for example, Fullan and Miles's (1992) "seven propositions for successful change."
- When you are ready to begin the school improvement process, bring in change experts and facilitators to build the capacity of school staff to lead change efforts. It is important to draw upon the expertise and skills of university faculty, central office personnel, external consultants, professional staff developers, and others.
- Lead discussions about the school's "history of change" in order to understand how and why past change efforts have succeeded or failed.
- Fullan (1993) favors simply beginning the change process - without necessarily planning every step in advance. However, it is important to manage, guide, document, and learn from the change process.
- Learn about the roles that principals, teachers, central office staff, parents, board members, and others involved in serving children and youth play in the school improvement process, and use this knowledge to form effective school improvement teams. School leaders should understand and cultivate their roles and the roles that others play within improvement initiatives.
- To build a more collaborative school culture, institute faculty study groups and cross-grade or department teams and provide time for collegial work.
- Build commitment and a collaborative culture to support the change process by being a "leader of leaders," having and communicating high expectations, and demonstrating confidence in school staff and the surrounding community.
- Form partnerships with parents, businesses, and social service and community agencies to consolidate resources and meet the entire range of student needs - emotional, social, and academic - in order to improve student learning.
- Create high-achieving learning environments by selecting and integrating a variety of programs to improve teaching and learning.
- Establish and follow a set of guidelines for implementing new approaches to student learning.



Maria Patterson, principal of Hollinger Elementary School in Tucson, Arizona, talks about being a "leader of leaders." (Audio comment, 306K) Excerpted from video footage developed for NCREL's Urban School Leadership case studies.

- Reflect on your leadership practices using leadership style inventories, surveys, and/or checklists.

- Use a variety of methods to celebrate success; for example, some schools have used the following activities to celebrate success:
 1. Planning teams have meals together at the end of the year to review progress and celebrate success.
 2. Principals send out congratulations and notes that celebrate success.
 3. Schools hold assemblies to recognize not only the success of students but of their teams.
 4. The principal passes out coffee cups with the school logo to recognize teachers and teams that have been particularly successful.



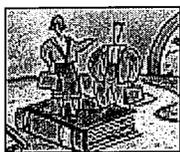
IMPLEMENTATION PITFALLS:

- The school improvement process takes place in three stages: initiation, implementation, and institutionalization (Louis & Miles, 1990). Knowing about the challenges and problems as well as the success factors associated with each stage of the change process can increase the likelihood of success (Fullan, 1993).
- Initially, some members of the school community - including school staff - may be reluctant to change. School leaders, through their actions and words, can overcome such reluctance by rewarding risk-taking and encouraging school community members to offer new ideas and strategies.



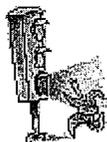
Linda Sienkowitz, Principal of Piccolo Elementary School in Chicago, Illinois, discusses the strategies she used to encourage risk-taking among her staff and the effects of her leadership. (Quicktime movie, 658K.) Excerpted from video footage recorded for NCREL's Urban School Leadership case studies.

- If reforms are to improve learning for *all* students, leaders must find and implement meaningful curriculum and effective instructional programs for an increasingly diverse student population. To ensure that reforms do not overlook entire groups of students, leaders must understand the culture and needs of diverse students.
- Without a focused effort to align and integrate school improvement initiatives, the probable result will be fragmented, uncoordinated programs and activities that may have conflicting objectives. It is up to school leaders to create a shared vision and mission for school improvement, to coordinate various change efforts so that they work together toward similar objectives rather than against one another, and to ensure that these efforts reach for the common goal of improved learning for all students.
- Leaders of improvement efforts need to address the problems of resources (time, money, and support), the need to train and retain knowledgeable and motivated personnel, and the challenge posed by the shifting goals of the central office, the state, and the local community.
- Leaders should be wary of mismanaged agreement. Everyone in a group agrees to a decision - even though no one in the group supports the decision - because they are unwilling or unable to communicate their reservations; it also refers to a situation in which everyone in the group agrees about a problem that must be solved, but no one actively pursues strategies or actions to deal with the problem. Therefore, leaders must nurture teams that are able to communicate and



Critical Issue: Establishing Collaboratives and Partnerships

[Pathways Home Page](#) | [Critical Issues for this area](#)



ISSUE: School leaders must create successful home-school partnerships and mobilize parents, community members, and social service agencies to engage in true collaboration on behalf of children and their families (Jehl & Kirst, 1992). This view of school leadership sees the school in the much broader context of the community and asserts that children's life chances are not likely to get better without collective action in many arenas - the schoolhouse, the local health clinic, the neighborhood, the block, the home, and so on (Comer, 1988; Ascher, 1990).

A principal who functions within this broader context possesses the mobilization and advocacy skills of a community organizer, advocating for the school as a provider of child- and family- centered educational and social services (Comer, 1988; Ascher, 1990). The principal provides leadership in forging partnerships with churches, health and human service agencies, and other youth agencies (Nettles, 1991) and sees the school and its principal as leaders in community revitalization.



OVERVIEW: Students who are at risk often receive services and help from a variety of agencies. Frequently, these agencies provide fragmented services with little coordination or communication between them, even though such contact could help improve services for the student. Agencies often do not know what other service providers are doing, what services are already being provided, or what information is already available to help understand a student's needs.

In many schools across the country, leaders are helping develop collaboration between schools and other agencies and partnerships between schools and businesses. Schools are serving as core organizations, collaborating with agencies in the community and providing a central location where multiple agencies can come to meet students' needs.

Several states, counties, and cities are implementing programs in which agencies collaborate in a variety of ways and coordinate their services for at-risk youth. Such collaboration:

- Reduces the fragmentation of services
- Builds a comprehensive support system for at-risk students and their families
- Increases the knowledge of service professionals about the needs of the students and their

families



GOALS: Collaboratives and partnerships should build upon all of the community's resources in addressing the needs of students and families. They should include parents, health and social service agencies, community organizations, businesses, universities, educational institutions, and so forth. Indeed, involving parents as leaders in the school - as tutors, program coordinators, volunteers, and community liasons - is essential to building a climate of nurturing and engaged learning in the school.



Henry Gradillas, principal of Garfield High School in Los Angeles, California, discusses the role of parents in creating support systems necessary for young people to achieve. Excerpted from a principals' panel presentation at NCREL's Academy for Urban School Leaders in July 1992. (Audio comment, 165k)

Partnerships and collaboratives involving parents, businesses, and community agencies can:

- Share information on particular students and families
- Develop shared missions and unfragmented programs
- Coordinate services more completely
- Combine funds for shared purposes
- Provide multiple services in schools

To meet the goals of collaboration, social service providers need to be sensitive and responsive to the linguistic and cultural diversity of the clients they serve (Chang, 1993). Historical power relations, along with differing cultural beliefs and practices, can lead to mistrust and misunderstanding between families and social service providers. Organizations must give community members greater input and control, hire staff members at all levels who reflect the diversity of the community, train staff to work with people from diverse backgrounds, and modify ineffective or harmful policies and practices.



ACTION OPTIONS:

- Conduct a needs assessment in your community to identify needs, problems, and community resources that will assist you in developing partnerships and collaboratives. Develop and use a planning tool that will guide you in identifying needs and in monitoring the development of partnerships to address those needs.
- Contact resource organizations and agencies for information, products, and services to help build collaboration with parents and community agencies.
- Contact local agencies to mobilize support for collaborative relationships.
- Use key research and planning guides to help you get started in strengthening partnerships with parents and community agencies.

- Begin communicating with agencies that serve your students or examine models for collaboration already in use in order to develop your own model.
- Encourage school staff to collaborate with parents and community agencies in developing programs and services for students.



Jeanne Jehl, administrator on special assignment, San Diego Public Schools, discusses the principal's role in advocating for school-linked, integrated services and increased partnerships with parents. Excerpted from the NCREL monograph "Getting Ready to Provide School-Linked Services: What Schools Must Do" and reprinted with permission from *The Future of Children* (Vol. 2, No. 1, Spring 1992), a publication of the Center for the Future of Children, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation (Audio comment, 204k).

- Develop a coordination committee or governance group to work with external agencies to find ways to strengthen links with groups who serve your students.
- Review your own vision or mission statement and try to build a collective vision across agencies.



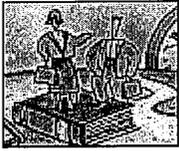
Otis Johnson, executive director of the Chatham-Savannah Youth Futures Authority in Savannah, Georgia, emphasizes the importance of building a collective vision among participating agencies. Excerpted from NCREL's videoserries, *Schools That Work: The Research Advantage*, videoconference 8, *Integrating Community Services* (NCREL, 1992). (Audio comment, 83k)

- ~~Establish mechanisms for sharing information on how the school is reaching individual students and encourage other agencies to share information with the school.~~
- If possible, develop a shared financial commitment, as some coordinated service models are doing.
- Contact foundations and funding sources about financing your collaboration efforts.
- Place services where they are most accessible to students.
- Visit or contact other organizations and/or districts that have successfully developed school-linked, integrated services.



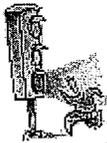
IMPLEMENTATION PITFALLS:

- Some staff may resist giving up power. Help them understand the benefits of working collaboratively.
- Union representation can increase the distance between teachers and other professionals (Jehl & Kirst, 1992).
- The rules and regulations of individual agencies sometimes make it difficult to coordinate



Critical Issue: Building a Committed Team

[Pathways Home Page](#) | [Critical Issues for this area](#)



ISSUE: Making schools successful takes more than just individual effort - it takes teamwork. Schools are using teams to accomplish many tasks. Teams may work on-site-based decisionmaking, curricular reform, implementing new programs, or restructuring. For teamwork to be successful, teams and individual team members need to have clear, shared goals; a sense of commitment; the ability to work together; mutual accountability; access to needed resources and skills; and other elements of effective teams.

While successful teamwork can be rewarding in itself, teamwork should focus on meeting the academic and social needs of all students in the school. Just as the school vision and mission should focus on student learning, team building, team planning, and team developing should be directed toward improving student outcomes.



OVERVIEW: In many schools, teachers work in isolation, administrators try to accomplish tasks alone, and the responsibility of implementing new ideas falls to individuals. Working together in teams often is a more effective way to accomplish important tasks. Teams have many advantages over individuals working in isolation. Teams tend to be better at solving problems, have a higher level of commitment, and include more people who can help implement an idea or plan. Moreover, teams are able to generate energy and interest in new projects.

Both research and practice demonstrate the advantages that teams bring to accomplishing goals. But effective teams do not develop by accident. Teams take time, skills, and knowledge to be successful.



Kent Peterson, professor of educational administration, University of Wisconsin-Madison, challenges administrators to support team-building and collaboration by providing time and resources, in order to reap the benefits effective teams can bring to schools (audio comment, 313k). Excerpted from a presentation given at NCREL's Urban School Leadership Mini-Conference in July 1993.

Transformational leadership skills can help in developing such high-performing teams. Leaders of school transformation must be able to inspire, motivate, and support teams. Engaged and high-performing teams thrive in a "learning organization," where colleagues support each other in learning, risk-taking, innovation, and change (Senge, 1990).



GOALS: School leaders (including administrators, teachers, and parents) should help nurture and build highly committed teams for accomplishing school activities and goals, which may include school improvement planning, site-based management, budget and personnel decisions, and implementing programs or plans.



Former kindergarten teacher from Joyce Elementary School in Detroit, Diana Langlois, talks about how her principal supports team building and learning at the school and the benefits that have resulted (QuickTime slide show, 487k). Excerpted from NCREL's urban school leadership case studies (1992).

~~Effective team functioning requires finding time, selecting team members, empowering team members, providing training in relevant skills and knowledge, developing shared goals, and facilitating team functioning - particularly in the early stages of the team's work.~~



ACTION OPTIONS:

- Obtain support, training, and information on shared decisionmaking, perhaps by contacting organizations that work with schools in developing teams.
- Learn about the importance of teams in the success of organizations by reading about how teams are more effective than individuals.
- Discuss how the team is functioning and learn about the functions of teams in schools by reading about programs that work (Maeroff, 1993).
- ~~Teams can become more efficient, with less conflict and more successful decisionmaking, by participating in training for effective team building.~~
- To overcome individuals' resistance to working together, team members should learn from other successful teams, perhaps by viewing videotapes on effective teamwork or reading about another team's accomplishments.
- ~~Learn how collaboration and a shared culture can support teamwork.~~
- Teams also can become more self-aware and successful by learning about the stages of team development, the positive and negative roles that can exist in teams, team problem finding and problem solving (Yukl, 1989), and methods for avoiding and resolving conflict.