COLLABORATING FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

A Comprehensive, Practical Guidebook for
Increasing Shared Decision Making
Through Lasting Partnerships

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Great Public Schools for Every Student

Draft copy, October 2019. Material subject to change.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome

If there is one thing we can agree on when Americans seem so polarized, it's that we all want a bright future for our children. We envision their schooling filled with authentic learning experiences that prepare them to create a happy, just, and prosperous future for their generation and the ones that follow. Parents, community members, school board members, educators, and principals all want to create these experiences for our children, and all of us can meaningfully contribute to this shared goal.

As key stakeholders in our public school system, the National Education Association, American Federation of Teachers, American Association of School Administrators, and National School Boards Association agree that realizing this vision for our children's future requires new ways of working together and contributing expertise toward shared goals. In their recent *Call to Action*, these organizations committed to "fostering a culture of learning and joint problem solving in our schools and districts… to transform our nation's public schools." As the professional associations representing teachers, education support professionals, administrators, and school boards, these organizations urged their members across the nation to work together towards student-centered goals and to make collaboration "the new normal - the usual way that education decisions are made."

This guidebook is written for education stakeholders who want to answer this call; those who desire sustained and authentic involvement in school improvement, professional practice, and student learning. It is designed to help you create and grow the systemic structures for shared decision making among stakeholders, focused on achieving student-centered goals.

> **REMEMBER**
>
> *Collaboration does NOT mean one group relinquishes power and authority to another.*
>
> *Collaboration means working together for student success: shared decision making toward shared goals.*

This guidebook helps integrate the district administration's traditional leadership role with the "natural network" of the education association/union, establishing collaborative relationships and structures to increase shared leadership at the school level. **Research shows that effective education partnerships expand the association/union representatives' roles in areas such as ensuring educator voice in decision making and education quality, communicating about internal school improvement, and communicating with other representatives about school improvement in other schools. These expanded roles decrease the amount of time that association/union representatives spend on grievance issues, and reallocate that time toward jointly solving the school's most pressing student-centered challenges.** This shared leadership results in both the principal and association/union rep being seen as professional resources by school staff (McCarthy & Rubinstein, 2017).

Through education partnerships, we seek to create state and local change and, ultimately, grow a national movement that develops lasting structures for shared decision making in schools, districts, and states across the nation. It's time to usher in a new era in education – one characterized by unity and collaboration dedicated to student-centered outcomes. By fostering a culture of learning and joint problem solving in our schools and districts, the solutions to today's education challenges arise from within the system, not from outside. Together, as those closest to students and families, empowered education stakeholders will transform our nation's public schools. We invite you to join us.

A Policy Imperative

For far too long, our nation's school systems have been hierarchical. Education policies are determined by those far away from the educators implementing them and the students experiencing their impacts. Hierarchies, however, have proven ineffective at preparing, positioning, and supporting leaders to address the most challenging issues facing our public schools. As a result, school transformation is difficult, slow, and relatively rare. Educators, who are closest to the students and often know best what is needed for their success, are not typically included in decision-making processes in meaningful ways. This systemic disempowerment of the nation's educators contributes to their dissatisfaction and widespread turnover of the teaching force, which itself is detrimental to student achievement.

A huge step toward assuring educator empowerment occurred with the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015. This federal law has several key provisions that recognize educators' expertise. It seeks to empower them to make collaborative decisions about their practice as well as district and state policies. The law requires that educators - those who know their students' names - have greater decision-making opportunities. It also maintains supports that ensure a student's zip code does not determine the quality of their education.

ESSA provides support for increasing educators' voices in decision making by:

- Requiring that state education plans be designed in consultation with stakeholders
- Calling for committees of practitioners, parents, and community members to work together to improve local schools

- Requiring consultation with organizations representing educators, ensuring that teachers have a say in decision making
- Requiring stakeholder partnerships for the development and implementation of school improvement plans for the lowest-performing five percent of Title I schools and schools with low graduation rates

Under ESSA, state-level education plans were submitted in September, 2017. Districts, then, are tasked with implementing the state plan in their school systems, and with designing and implementing local school improvement plans, which effectively shifts the policy focus from the state to the local level. The policy will be most successful when education stakeholders stay engaged in ensuring successful implementation of their plans. Districts are encouraged to work with their educators, education association/union, parents, and community organizations on the issues outlined in ESSA, such as the achievement of vulnerable subpopulations of students, teacher quality and evaluation, and student discipline. These issues, among others, can serve as potential starting points for education stakeholders to collaborate using the techniques and resources in this guidebook. Thus, ESSA codifies collaboration as a mandate in federal education law, offers collaborative teams potential issues to work on, and provides grant resources on some specific issues to help offset associated costs.

ESSA requires that state, district, and school-level education plans be developed "in meaningful consultation" with multiple education stakeholders. This guidebook helps you do just that. It addresses engaging a range of partners, so that the knowledge and experience of those closest to the children are included in discussions and decisions about improving schools and attaining educational equity for students.

Traditional Education Relationships

As discussed above, school systems are not typically designed to include educators' knowledge and experiences in decision making. Top-down decision making persists, in spite of evidence showing the promise of distributed leadership on decisions related to teaching and learning.

The traditional relationship between education unions and district administration centers around the bargaining table where both sides convene to negotiate competing interests. Negotiation, a necessary and important process, by its nature is a push-pull relationship between two sides: one side puts forth a position and the other counters. Ultimately, each side cedes some of their initial position - compromises are made until an agreement is reached.
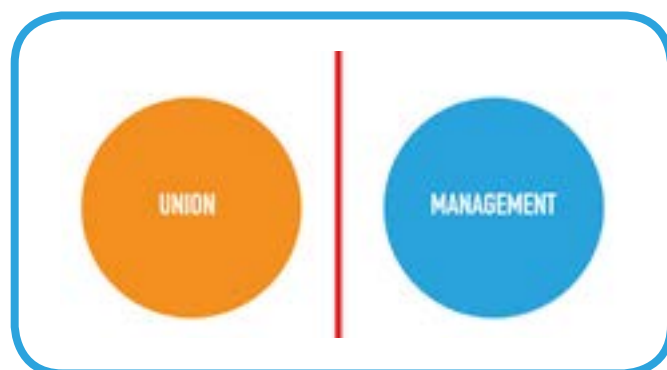
Collective bargaining addresses competing interests

Interest-based bargaining is an alternative to traditional collective bargaining, in that both sides agree at the outset to negotiate around a shared interest or goal, such as "what is best for student learning." Interest-based bargaining provides a much-needed lens through which to view the issues on the table, but ultimately, it is still two sides negotiating until an agreement is reached.

Collaboration and Partnership: An Additional Space for Educator Voice

Whereas bargaining refers to two sides negotiating back and forth to reach agreement, collaboration refers to two – or more - groups of stakeholders working together towards a common goal. Instead of the push-pull of a negotiation, a collaborative education partnership involves all sides having an equal voice at a shared table – it provides an additional space where teachers and support professionals work with administrators towards shared student-centered interests. Such a partnership involves increased educator involvement, shared decision making, mutual respect, transparency, and trust.
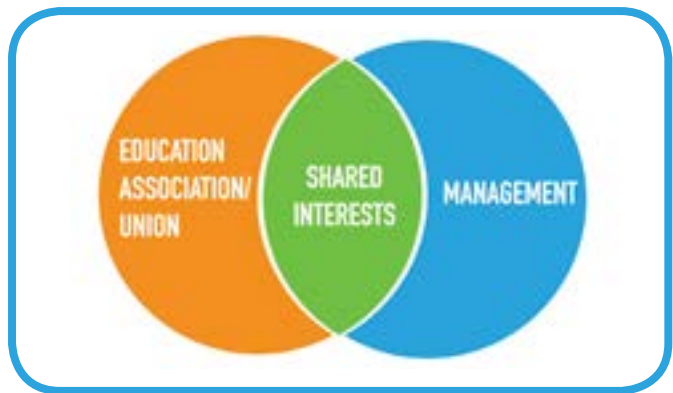
Collaboration creates the space to work towards shared interests

Throughout this guidebook, we use the term *collaboration* when discussing school-level collaboration, such as between educators and the principal and other administrators. We use *partnership* to describe district-level relationships, such as between district administration and the education association/union, led by the superintendent and local association president.

Although negotiating contracts is an important activity for the union and management, it occurs in a set timeframe and typically results in a single predetermined output (a ratified contract). A collaborative partnership between district administration and education associations/unions, on the other hand, is ongoing, with a much broader set of possible teaching and learning outputs and outcomes. Collaboration expands the opportunities for decision making and voice, around common interests rather than competing ones.

There are excellent examples of labor-management collaboration, and of education collaboration more broadly, throughout the country. There is a wide body of research on teacher professional collaboration and on leadership practices in schools, and a growing body of research on the formal partnerships between educators' unions and district administrators – all showing that collaboration yields positive outcomes for both the students and the adults in the system.

Unfortunately, however, collaborative teams too often depend on the dispositions and relationship between the individuals involved, so when team members depart, the collaborative relationship often falters. This guidebook provides a framework, tools, and resources intended to help build systems for collaboration that transcend individual relationships.

Sustaining Collaboration: A Framework for Success

Collaboration is not new; educators are naturally collaborative and have sought each other's wisdom, guidance, and teamwork for centuries. Collaboration between unions and administration has been researched, studied, and implemented for years and many schools and districts have reaped its benefits. There have been books written on labor-management partnerships, and resources toward collaboration have been provided to existing collaborative teams through organizations such as the Teachers Union Reform Network, the Consortium for Educational Change, as well as state consortia such as the California Labor-Management Initiative and the New Jersey Public School Labor-Management Collaborative.

This guidebook contains the supports and structures needed to develop the sort of partnership that can implement, sustain, and repeat collaborative processes across schools, districts, and states.

What *is* new is research showing that district-level partnerships are a strong predictor of, and a catalyst for, school-level collaboration (McCarthy & Rubinstein, 2017). From this insight, we conclude that strong district-level partnerships can be the agent that helps sustain and expand collaboration in schools. The district-level partnership spurs and supports educators and administrators jointly solving problems deep within school systems, and it is this joint problem solving that results in positive outcomes for students. Building and sustaining the district-level partnership, then, can be a driving force in producing positive education outcomes.

For collaboration and its benefits to last, it must be embedded into the culture of both the district and the education association/union. This culture shift comes about by building a history of promises kept, by working successfully together over time, and by establishing structures and processes that can be reused and repeated, even without the original leaders.

Culture shift is hard, and without a clear roadmap is often unsuccessful. The goal of this guidebook is to provide that roadmap. The following page presents a comprehensive framework that walks teams through establishing a collaborative partnership, building a productive working relationship, fostering school-level collaboration, working together on a student-centered issue, and repeating and growing these processes. The framework can help stakeholders not only build, but grow and sustain collaborative work. It provides staying power and allows the culture shift to occur.

COLLABORATIVE EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS FRAMEWORK

PREPARE

| LEARN THE CASE FOR COLLABORATION | → | IDENTIFY PARTNERS & DISCOVER SHARED GOALS | → | COMMIT TO COLLABORATE |

ACT

| IDENTIFY COLLABORATIVE TEAMS & FUNCTIONS | DEFINE CONTENT FOR COLLABORATION | | |
| ESTABLISH SUPPORT RESOURCES | DEFINE PROCESS FOR COLLABORATION | → | IMPLEMENT COLLABORATION |

REFLECT

| EVALUATE PROCESS & CONTENT OUTCOMES | → | SUSTAIN AND EXPAND THE EFFORT TO COLLABORATE! |
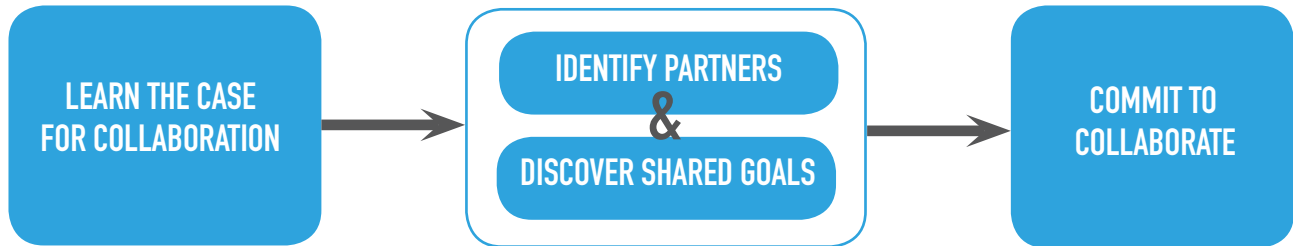
PREPARE: Understand the benefits of collaboration and seek commitment to collaborate.

ACT: Build the structures and processes needed to start collaborating. Form working teams.

REFLECT: Catalog successes and challenges and share lessons learned with others.

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The sequential stages of this framework are: Prepare, Act, and Reflect. The Prepare stage contains the foundations of education partnerships, including getting to know: the collaboration movement; the various collaborative partners and their roles; partner relationships; discovering shared student-centered goals; and committing to begin working together collaboratively.

PREPARE

LEARN THE CASE FOR COLLABORATION → IDENTIFY PARTNERS **&** DISCOVER SHARED GOALS → COMMIT TO COLLABORATE

Act describes forming teams and doing the collaborative work. After your teams and working committees are formed, you'll identify support resources for the teams and committees, determine your team's focus, establish group norms, determine the processes you'll use to manage your work, and manage the work itself. Keep in mind that collaborative work may happen at a district level or at a school level. Either way, the actions are the same.

ACT

IDENTIFY COLLABORATIVE TEAMS & FUNCTIONS DEFINE CONTENT FOR COLLABORATION **&** ESTABLISH SUPPORT RESOURCES DEFINE PROCESS FOR COLLABORATION → IMPLEMENT COLLABORATION

Once you've completed your initiative, it's time to Reflect on your work and how you got there. This section of the framework helps you: evaluate both your initiative and the processes used for the work; understand strengths and areas needing improvement; and guide you to use lessons learned to grow and sustain your collaborative work.

REFLECT

EVALUATE PROCESS & CONTENT OUTCOMES → SUSTAIN AND EXPAND THE EFFORT TO COLLABORATE!

Start Somewhere: The Organic Nature of Collaboration

Collaboration often grows organically from various circumstances, relationships, and needs. In some regions, district-level partners may be willing and ready to collaborate, but their school counterparts are not quite there. In other regions, there may be a great grassroots collaborative movement, but district leaders are not yet ready to take the plunge.

That's why we highlight the "Start Somewhere" approach throughout this guidebook. It's another way of saying that the steps outlined here are not necessarily sequential; in fact, the opposite is more often true. The intent is to provide information and tools to help you build a strong and sustainable partnership for student success, wherever your starting point might

be. The collaborative partnership process is organic and endlessly customizable – you build it as you do it, in ways that work for you and your partners.

Thus, education partnerships have an inherent flexibility of their start-point, attributes, and components. Because of this, there is no single model that can be applied to every partnership. There are, however, certain best practices, structures, milestones, and repeatable processes that characterize successful partnerships. A wide range of these are included in this guidebook, but we recognize that there are few districts that currently have all of the components or processes described in the following chapters.

Building your collaborative system may not be linear, and the components described in this guidebook may not occur sequentially. And that's OK. It is important to remember that the goal of an education partnership is for stakeholders from different parts of the system to come together and collectively impact student success. How you go about it – including whether, how, and in what order you address the components presented in this guidebook – is up to you to co-create with your partners.

About This Guidebook

Despite the excellent examples of labor-management collaboration, and of education collaboration more broadly, throughout the country, there are few comprehensive resources for stakeholder teams that can walk them through establishing a collaborative partnership, building a productive working relationship, working together on a student-centered issue, and repeating and growing those processes.

This guidebook offers a framework and tools to help you bring about a lasting shift toward collaboration in your school system. It can help improve collaboration among and across all education stakeholders, including establishing the relationships, culture, and change processes necessary to achieve student-centered goals. Information and resources from vetted sources have been curated and adapted for this guidebook, along with new tools for education stakeholder teams.

Our hope is that you will be inspired by what you learn about the power of education partnerships and the benefits of collaboration, and that you'll get to work building a system that supports collaborative processes in your school district. To that end, this guidebook can help you:

1. Speak knowledgeably about the research-based benefits of education partnerships between district and school administrators and education associations/unions, and share the case for collaboration with the other stakeholders in your school system
2. Identify the best partners, and work with them to discover your shared goals for your students and educators
3. Set up the structures that support collaboration – the leadership teams and working committees that provide the "space" for collaborative decisions and learning
4. Analyze your system's needs, decide what to work on first, and determine what group

norms and decision-making processes will best support your team's collaborative work

5. Evaluate the extent to which your collaborative projects have met their goals, and make a plan to abandon, adapt, or adopt and scale the successes

6. Sustain and spread the support structures for collaboration in your school system to deepen the partnership itself for years to come

How to Use This Guidebook

This guidebook follows the sequential stages of the collaborative education partnerships framework: Prepare, Act, and Reflect. Each section's chapters address the actions needed for effective partnerships and collaboration. The partnership-building stages are sequential, however your partnership teams should determine how best to use the actions – or chapters – within each stage. The chapters provide more detail on the collaborative actions, and you can use them sequentially, or not. In other words, some actions can happen before or after others, or simultaneously. It is important that these actions take place and that they take place during the appropriate stage, but you and your team should implement them in the order that makes the most sense to you.

Take the time to first learn about the benefits of collaboration, and then use the guidebook sections to understand how you and your teams can move forward to make your work as collaborative and successful as possible.

Each chapter includes background information and research about the topic discussed. It provides examples in districts around the country, where possible. It includes links to additional resources throughout. Finally, each chapter includes a set of tools to help you and your team implement each stage of the framework. Each tool includes an activity designed to help you and your team either start somewhere or build on your work to date.

A Note About Terminology

The education partnerships strategy highlighted in this guidebook stems from a robust body of research on the benefits of professional collaboration in education, which includes many types of relationships: collaboration among educators through professional learning communities, mentoring, and other professional relationships; labor-management collaboration between education association/unions and district administrators; community-school collaboration that offers parents and community members a path to help enhance or transform their local school systems through committees or task forces; and more.

Much of the research and practice on education partnerships between local teachers' unions and district administrators uses the term "labor-management collaboration" (LMC). When the term LMC is used in this guidebook, it refers to specific research or programs that utilize that term.

More generally, we use "education partnerships" because we feel the broader term leaves space for parent and community stakeholders beyond the union ("labor") and the administration ("management"). We also recognize that to many educator affiliates, especially those without collective bargaining rights, the terms "labor" and "union" do not resonate with their members and communities, and they are careful to brand themselves as the "association."

We believe that this collaboration strategy is an effective way to elevate educators' voice and decision-making authority, and will benefit students, regardless of whether or not the stakeholders engage in collective bargaining. Put simply, we do not want stakeholders to get hung up on terminology – we're asking you to work together with others toward shared goals to benefit students, regardless of what you call yourselves or how you describe the collaboration. We hope this guidebook offers an easy-to-follow process and helpful resources to support you in that effort.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

We hope that this guidebook will be a comprehensive, informative, and accessible guide for your partnership work. We want you to use this book to:

- Become familiar with the foundations of collaboration
- Understand educator empowerment and education stakeholder collaboration, and understand the impact that working collaboratively with other stakeholders will have on decision making in your school system
- Understand the roles of various collaboration partners and be prepared to determine which partners should be included in your collaboration initiatives based on their motivation and readiness
- Understand why assessing needs is an important step and how to access and use assessment tools
- Understand education partnership teams and be able to determine what teams are needed to collaborate on student-centered projects
- Know how to set measurable team goals and objectives
- Understand the processes needed to manage a collaborative group and be able to create plans and norms based on those processes
- Create a plan to monitor and support your team's work and a checklist of tasks to complete
- Develop plans to sustain your partnership, expand upon your successes, and share your learnings with your stakeholder groups

PREPARE: LEARN THE CASE FOR COLLABORATION

LEARN THE CASE FOR COLLABORATION → IDENTIFY PARTNERS & DISCOVER SHARED GOALS → COMMIT TO COLLABORATE

This chapter describes the benefits of education partnerships and collaboration to help prepare you to share "the case" for collaboration with others.

Including:
I.   **The Case for Collaboration**
      o Increased Student Achievement
      o Increased Educator Retention
      o Increased Educator Empowerment
      o Transformed Role of the Association
II. **Sharing the Case for Collaboration: Additional Resources**
      o National Labor-Management Partnership's 2018 Call to Action
III. **Tools to Share the Case for Collaboration**
      o Sharing the Case for Collaboration with Others
      o Extending the Invitation

THE CASE FOR COLLABORATION

Research has long shown that collaboration between and among educators (teachers, support professionals, and their unions) and other education stakeholders yields positive outcomes. More recent research has shown that an education partnership at the district level - among district administrators, education associations/unions, and other stakeholders can be a powerful catalyst for educator collaboration within schools.

Saul A. Rubinstein and John E. McCarthy, two chief researchers in the field, write about their recent research (McCarthy & Rubinstein, 2017):

> We focus on school and district decision-making and problem-solving, particularly as they apply to the relationship among administrators, teachers, and their unions. We are interested in how collaborative processes at the school level – specifically shared decision-making; goal alignment; and teacher discretion, voice, and psychological safety impact student performance, teacher turnover, and engagement, and the extent to which teachers view their principals and union leaders as educational resources. In addition, we study how union-management partnerships in school districts shape school culture.

Rubinstein and McCarthy found that when district and education association/union leaders choose to establish an education partnership, commit to work together, and share in decision making around shared student-centered goals, a culture of professional collaboration emerges, yielding positive outcomes for students, educators, administrators, and the system as a whole. These positive outcomes include increased student achievement; improved educator retention, particularly in high-poverty schools; increased educator empowerment; and a transformed role for the education association/union. These benefits are discussed below and illustrated as a graphic handout at the end of this chapter.

Increased Student Achievement

Schools and districts firmly engaged in using collaborative processes have shown significant increases in student achievement in both English language arts and math, particularly in high-needs schools. Schools with the highest levels of collaboration have, on average, 12.5% more students performing at or above standards in English language arts, and 4.5% more students performing at or above standards in math than schools with the lowest levels of collaboration, even after adjusting for poverty (Rubinstein, 2014).

Increased Educator Retention

Educator retention increases in collaborative school environments. In high-poverty schools, teachers are less committed to remain, but collaboration mitigates this effect. When collaboration is low, teacher turnover is 3.5 times greater in high-poverty schools than it is in low-poverty schools. When collaboration is high, there is no statistical difference in teacher turnover between high-poverty and low-poverty schools (McCarthy & Rubinstein, 2017).
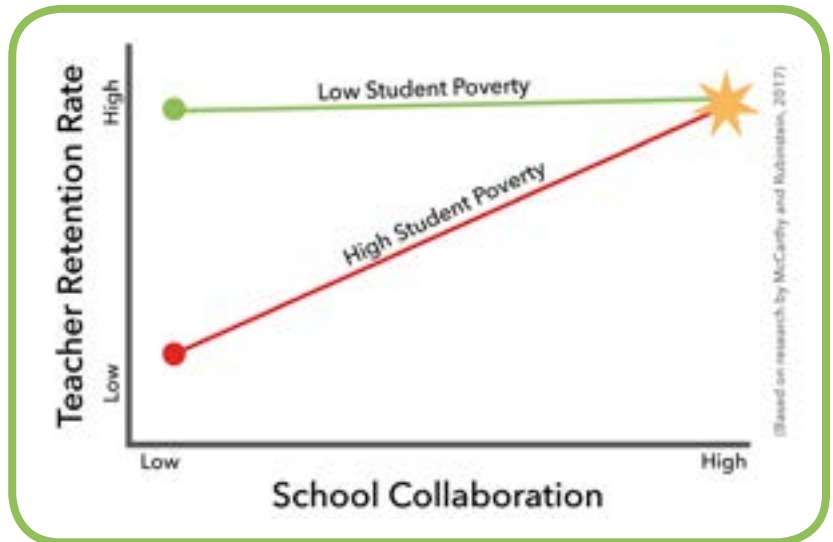
Increased Educator Empowerment

Educator empowerment is a broad term that describes the ability for teachers and other school professionals to influence decisions that affect their professional lives. Greater educator empowerment in the form of increased voice in school and district decision making is an unmet professional need and desire that has held constant over several decades (Feistritzer, 2011; Hodges, 2018). Educators, being closest to students, are best positioned to speak to their educational needs. Including educator voices in discussions about teaching and learning programs and policies leads to more informed decision making.

Across the country, many districts have found ways to meaningfully increase educator empowerment by establishing a collaborative education partnership with the local education association/union. When collaboration between administrators and education associations/unions is strong in schools and districts, researchers have found greater goal alignment between educators and principals, increased educator efficacy, stronger mentoring relationships between educators, and perceptions by staff that the principal and education association/union representative are both trusted professional resources (Rubinstein & McCarthy, 2014).

Transformed Role of the Association/Union

One interesting (and somewhat surprising) benefit of collaboration is that it transforms the role of the education association/ union representative in ways that benefit everyone involved. Rubinstein and McCarthy (2016) found that in schools with strong, long-standing partnerships and high levels of collaboration, the association/union representatives take on unique roles and re-

sponsibilities that help improve teaching and student learning. In such schools, the association/union representative's role shifts from more transactional (primarily about contractual issues and grievances) to more balanced and transformational. In this new role, the association/union representative works with the principal to foster collaboration and to increase educator empowerment on issues related to school improvement and education quality.

Rubinstein and McCarthy also describe the education association/union as a "natural network" because of its structure of democratically-elected leaders in every worksite. Union members across a school district are connected to one another through their local affiliate, to educators in other districts through their state affiliate, and to educators across the country through the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers. This network facilitates sharing innovative practices across schools and districts, and sometimes even across states and the nation. The association/union representative plays a key role in this knowledge-sharing (McCarthy & Rubinstein, 2017).
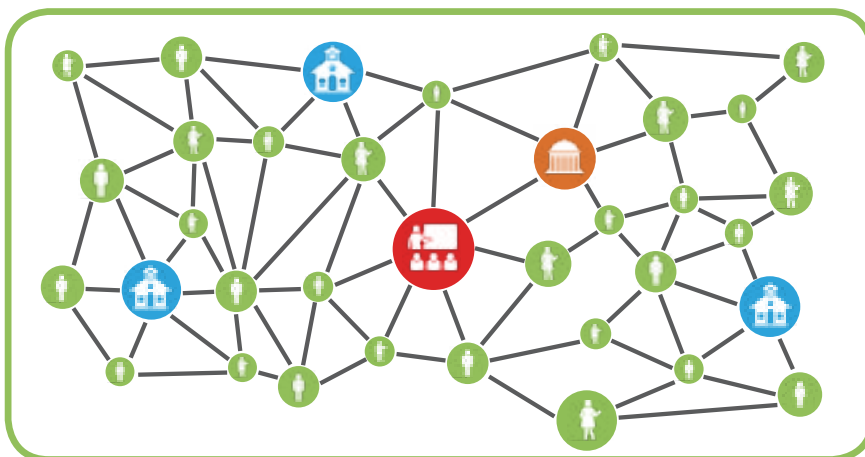
SHARING THE CASE FOR COLLABORATION: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Sharing the policy imperative and research-proven benefits of collaboration is often the first step in establishing an education partnership. The case for collaboration is so compelling that the national-level professional associations of the major education stakeholders have issued a joint *Call to Action* to urge their members to join with other stakeholders and share in decision making around student-centered goals (Alvarez & Rosales, 2018). Through their participation in the National Labor Management Partnership, the American Federation of Teachers, American Association of School Administrators, National Education Association, and National School Boards Association have all signed onto this Call, and encourage you to get started.

Where do you start? First, learn all you can about collaboration. This chapter presents an introduction, and additional resources are listed below and in the bibliography at the end of this guidebook. Use these resources to increase your knowledge about the movement and its impact on students and education. Think about what collaboration could mean in your school and district, and consider who might be a good partner. Who would share an interest? Who would help you spread the word? Are there already established groups of stakeholders who are ready to learn more and accept the *Call to Action*? How would you approach them? What resources would you like to share with them?

Use the *Call to Action* as a way to show the stakeholders in your system that this isn't just coming from you: their national counterparts also endorse this strategy and encourage them to work collaboratively. The *Call to Action* is included starting on page 17, or you can download it at: myschoolmyvoice.nea.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/NLMP-2018-Call-to-Action.pdf.

> **"Schools work best when educators, administrators, and school boards all work together, and when teachers have a seat at the table. "**
>
> *-New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy, in remarks given to the New Jersey Public Schools Labor-Management Collaborative, March 2018*

The handout on collaboration research results, found on page 21, is one sharable resource to help you get started. Another resource is the printable collaborative partnerships pamphlet (myschoolmyvoice.nea.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Collaborative-Education-Partnerships-EMAIL-V15-copy-.pdf), which presents an overview of the benefits of education partnerships and stakeholder collaboration. Give it to a key education stakeholder, and use it as a conversation starter.

In addition, it's often helpful to hear from different stakeholders who have engaged in successful collaborative partnerships. Watch the videos below, and consider forwarding the one you feel is most compelling to a key education stakeholder as a way to introduce the idea of intentionally increasing collaboration in your district or school:

Teacher Voice in Corona-Norco - the power of educator voice in decision making (youtu.be/i2VWz8KhH2c)

Labor Management Collaboration: Rockford's Journey - collaborative processes and relationship led to improved community support and morale, higher AP class enrollment, fewer suspensions, and a narrowed graduation gap (youtu.be/-35kK1Xndog)

Peoria High School: A Case Study - structures like a Partnership Council, PLCs, and scheduled student "Pride" time led to improved reading and math performance, more college applications, higher AP class enrollment, and fewer suspensions and discipline referrals (youtu.be/ln6qKtbdYog)

California Labor Management Initiative - a short introduction to collaboration by Dr. Saul Rubinstein (vimeo.com/212780880)

The Impact of Labor-Management Collaboration - a more comprehensive presentation from Dr. Saul Rubinstein, discussing his research results (youtu.be/keUP7JDuBi4)

The table below summarizes some of these collaboration resources by the issue addressed to help you identify resources most applicable to your situation.

Issue:	Source of Supporting Information:
AP class enrollment	youtu.be/-35kK1Xndog, youtu.be/In6qKtbdYog
College applications	youtu.be/In6qKtbdYog
Community support	youtu.be/-35kK1Xndog
Discipline referrals	youtu.be/In6qKtbdYog
Educator empowerment	Feistritzer, 2011; Hodges, 2018
Educator retention	McCarthy & Rubinstein, 2017
Graduation gap	youtu.be/-35kK1Xndog
School morale	youtu.be/-35kK1Xndog
Social capital of association/union representative and of principal	McCarthy & Rubinstein, 2017
Student achievement in math and English language arts	McCarthy & Rubinstein, 2017, youtu.be/In6qKtbdYog
Suspensions	youtu.be/-35kK1Xndog, youtu.be/In6qKtbdYog

If you haven't already, check out the *My School, My Voice* website (**myschoolmyvoice.nea.org/ collaborating-for-student-success**) and share it with others. Use the buttons on the right side of the web page to tell us how you're engaging in this work, and to sign up for email updates.

We, the organizations of the NLMP, believe that the moment is right for us to unite to achieve a culture shift toward a collective focus on student success, and collaboration at all levels of our system to support it. Educators, administrators, and communities are collectively rejecting the last wave of top-down education reforms that blamed educators for students' under-performance without providing the supports, resources, and authority needed to improve student outcomes. Education stakeholders are moving beyond the test-and-punish era of reforms because they see the evidence that shows there is another way – a better way – to ensure that every student is afforded the benefits of attending a great public school.

It is time to usher in a new era in education – one characterized by professional respect, unity, and collaboration toward student-centered outcomes. **By fostering a culture of learning and joint problem solving in our schools and districts, the solutions to today's education challenges will arise from within the system, not from outside it. Together, as those closest to the students and families, empowered education stakeholders will transform our nation's public schools.**

This call to action is not merely inspirational, but is based on decades of research showing the benefits of school-level collaboration on student outcomes, and on a rich and growing body of evidence showing the promise of district-level collaborative partnerships as a strategy to enhance school transformation. Specifically, when principals distribute school leadership, organizational trust among educators increases, and they are more likely to engage one another as mentors, coaches, and advisors on professional issues[i]. This increase in engagement and collaboration raises the social capital of those involved, which is associated with increases in student performance[ii].

When collaboration is strong in schools and districts, researchers have found **greater goal alignment** between educators and administrators, **increased educator efficacy, stronger mentoring relationships** between educators, and perceptions by staff that **the principal and education association representative are both trusted professional resources**[iii]. School boards and district and school administrators have critical roles to play in fostering the forms of distributed leadership and collaboration in schools that lead to these positive outcomes[iii]. The identification of shared, student-centered goals and commitment to work together to achieve them serves as the first step in creating a culture of collaboration. The communication structures that are built to enable effective collaboration around these goals not only fortify the relationships that the adults in school systems have with one another, but can also be sustained beyond the initial short-term projects and used for continuous improvement efforts. The local education association also plays a particularly critical role in establishing and supporting collaborative structures within this partnership: the education association's democratic governance and web of building representatives is a "natural network" of educators that not only represents the collective wisdom of those closest to the students, but also can easily identify educators with expertise in district-level priorities and support the district in increasing shared leadership at the

school level[iii]. Research suggests that **when decisions are shared by administrators and educators at all levels, the resulting culture is so nurturing to the educator and student that, even in high-poverty schools, teacher turnover and low student achievement can be mitigated**[iv].

Shared decision-making does not imply one group relinquishing power and authority to another, and not all decisions in an education system are appropriate to be shared. For example, certain personnel and budgetary decisions will always reside in administration, while governance decisions will reside among the school board who is accountable to the public that elected them, and decisions about pedagogy will continue to be made by classroom educators. However, stretching the boundaries of which district and school-level decisions can be made jointly, particularly around issues such as instructional practices, mentoring, and student performance, results in positive outcomes for school climate, student achievement, and teacher retention[iii] – outcomes valued by all education stakeholders.

Working together is not a new concept; many district leaders throughout the nation have strong, productive relationships with their local education associations. We have seen, however, that these relationships are often built on the charisma of individual leaders, and when those leaders leave, the collaborative initiatives wither away. What is new about this Call to Action is the commitment from each partner organization to **intentionally foster and support lasting structures for collaboration at all levels,** so it becomes a part of how we all operate and is sustained at a systemic level, beyond any individual's tenure. The collaborative partnerships we seek will create structures for all stakeholders to contribute expertise toward specific shared goals, appropriate to their roles in the education system. Such partnerships offer district and school administrators a meaningful way to tap into the knowledge base and mobilized network of the education association and its members for the benefit of schools and students. In this new era, district administrators and education associations will no longer see each other as opposing sides, fighting for power over limited resources. These partnerships acknowledge the important role of each set of stakeholders in student success, and each stakeholder commits to one another's success as they work together to maximize resources and implement policy and program changes to increase the effectiveness of their public school systems.

The promise of this strategy is undeniable, and it has taken root in key places around the country, particularly in districts in California, Illinois, and New Jersey. Partnerships between NLMP organizations, universities, and/or nonprofits in these states have established consortia to support districts in using collaborative processes to strengthen programs and policies, and address students' needs. In recent years, districts participating in such consortia have successfully used collaborative partnerships to identify and implement reading and math curricula for targeted populations, to improve school schedules to allow for increased professional learning time, to explore and integrate social-emotional learning opportunities into students' school lives, and more. The ABC Unified School District in California, through one of the longest-running and most comprehensive collaborative partnerships in the country, has seen dramatic and sustained increases in student achievement over time, with formerly-troubled schools now labeled Schools of Excellence and district leaders nominated for national awards. Put simply, **this strategy works.**

NATIONAL LABOR–MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIP: 2018 CALL TO ACTION

We share responsibility for achieving our shared goal – strong public schools that meet the needs of the children and families they serve. **Leading together on this goal requires a system that is designed for collaboration and shared leadership. It is time to create this system.** We, as national education stakeholders, call upon educators, in their respective organizations, to engage in student-centered education partnerships. To that end, we call for three immediate changes in the ways that we as education stakeholders relate to each other:

1 Start Somewhere: Begin Collaboration on Shared Goals

2 Build Sustainable Structures for Local–Level Collaboration

3 Include Parents and Community in Education Transformation

We are asking leaders and members at all levels of each NLMP organization to commit to join with the other education stakeholders, develop the collaborative systems necessary to support and sustain this new era in education, and create structures that will support this collaborative work. We also ask our members to come together at the state level to provide technical assistance for districts or schools as needed and to facilitate opportunities for districts engaged in collaborative partnerships to learn from one another.

1 The first step in developing a collaborative process is simply to "start somewhere." Stakeholder groups identify shared student-centered goals, then work collaboratively and share decision-making in the improvement processes to achieve them. For example, in the initial collaborative project, the education association might use its network to bring forward educators' most pressing concerns for their students, and to identify members whose expertise on those issues is highly respected by their peers, while the district administrators might carve out time for a collaborative committee to be established, and offer data on performance, climate, or other issues. If helpful, external partners from universities or non-profits can aid in selecting change theories and in using best practices for collaboration around school transformation.

2 Simultaneously or after "starting somewhere," collaborative partnerships will need to create a rich web of communication and collaboration structures between stakeholders at all levels of the local school system. This includes regular meetings between district department leaders and educators appointed through their association, as well as the establishment of school level leadership teams, professional learning communities, and committees to address specific issues or topics.

NATIONAL LABOR–MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIP: 2018 CALL TO ACTION

(3) Schools do not operate in a vacuum; they are part and parcel of the communities they serve. As such, collaborative education partnerships will be even stronger if they include the knowledge, resources, and passion of parents and community members in efforts to transform local school systems. Parents want the best education possible for their children. And, community leaders know that the local economy is bolstered by a top-notch education system that attracts businesses to the community and that prepares a homegrown workforce. Creating opportunities for these stakeholders to join in the transformative work will benefit everyone.

The time is right for collaboration to become the new normal – for educators, administrators, and other stakeholders working together on student-centered goals to become the usual way that education decisions are made. We call upon the local-level leaders in each of our respective organizations to join with one another and with all the education stakeholders in their communities, and immediately embark upon collaborative efforts to address the district's most pressing concerns for students and schools. Begin with one project, and use it to build lasting partnership structures that will survive the test of time and position your district to solve whatever challenges it faces. And, we call upon the state-level leaders in each of our respective organizations to join with one another and with other coalition partners to support these local-level partnerships. Just as our organizations have shown they have the mobilization strength, the unity, and the will to push up on the system and insist on improved public education funding, these same structures can be used to ensure that support is channeled down to those closest to students and families. Through shared responsibility and collective leadership, we will ensure that every student, in every district, is afforded the lifelong benefits of attending a great public school.

The National Labor-Management Partnership (NLMP) is a working group comprised of the American Association of School Administrators, American Federation of Teachers, National School Boards Association, and the National Education Association, which together represent the professional voices of educators, school board leaders, and district superintendents.

The NLMP was founded in 2011 to acknowledge and promote a unified philosophy: Improving student learning and equity require strong, consistent, and sustained collaboration among parents, teachers, school boards, superintendents and administrators, business leaders, and the community. And such improvements require that we all take responsibility for the wellbeing of the students in our charge. As a national-level partnership, the NLMP supports local-level transformation, including greater shared responsibility and leadership toward the educational outcomes we seek.

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[i] Louis, K.S.; Leithwood, K.; Wahlstrom, K.L.; & Anderson, S.E. (2010). Investigating the links to improved student learning: Final report of research findings. St. Paul, MN: University of Minnesota.
[ii] Leana, C.R. (2011, Fall). The missing link in school reform. Stanford Social Innovation Review.
[iii] McCarthy, J.E. & Rubinstein, S.A. (2018). In progress.
[iv] Rubinstein, S.A. & McCarthy, J.E. (2011). Reforming Public School Systems through Sustained Union-Management Collaboration. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress.

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THE BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION: A SNAPSHOT

COLLABORATION MITIGATES THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF POVERTY

MORE STUDENTS ACHIEVE

When there is greater collaboration in schools, more students perform at or above grade level standards.

+4.5%
MATH

+12.5%
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS
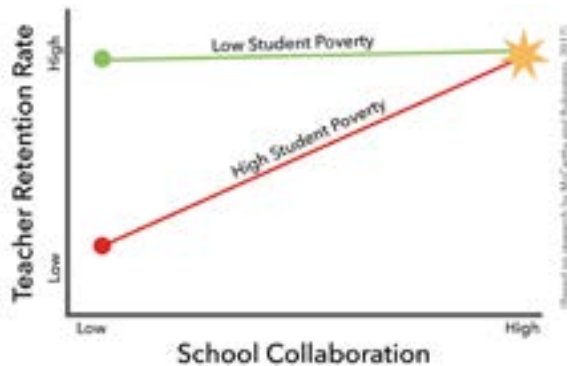
MORE TEACHERS STICK AROUND

When collaboration is low, teacher retention is 3.5x lower in high-poverty schools than in low-poverty schools. But, when collaboration is high, there is no statistical difference in teacher retention between high-poverty and low-poverty schools.

Teacher Retention Rate — High / Low
Low Student Poverty
High Student Poverty
School Collaboration — Low / High
Based on research by McCarthy and Rubinstein 2017

COLLABORATION INCREASES EDUCATOR EMPOWERMENT

Improved goal alignment

Increased educator confidence

Association/union rep and principal seen as professional resources

THE ROLE OF THE ASSOCIATION/UNION IS TRANSFORMED

COMMUNICATING ABOUT SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

ENSURING EDUCATOR VOICE IN EDUCATION QUALITY

COMMUNICATING ABOUT GRIEVANCE ISSUES

ENSURING SHARED DECISION-MAKING

Building reps see their roles shift from primarily transactional, to more balanced and transformational roles.

In collaborative environments, the association/union's natural network facilitates sharing of innovative practices across schools and districts.
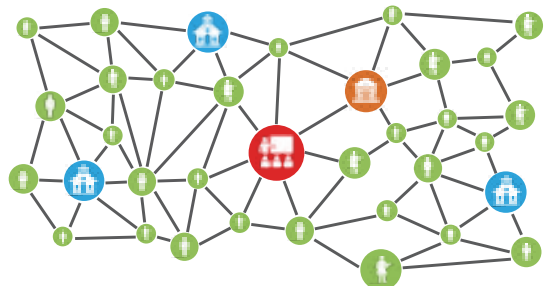
(Infographic based on research by McCarthy and Rubinstein, 2017)

TURN LEARNING TO ACTION

Research has shown that collaboration in schools leads to positive outcomes, including increased teacher retention and improved student achievement, even in high-poverty school environments. Creating an education partnership between the district and school administration, the local education association/union, and other stakeholders can be a powerful stimulant for school-based collaboration, which in turn yields the outcomes all stakeholders want. In short, this is a winning strategy for all involved that helps to:

- Increase student achievement
- Improve school climate factors, including educator empowerment
- Improve teacher retention
- Transform the role of the education association/union

To apply what you've learned in this chapter, answer the following questions:

- What about the case for collaboration is most compelling to you?

- What about the case for collaboration will be most compelling to the members of your stakeholder group?

- What do you think would be most compelling to other stakeholders in your system?

- With whom might you share this message so you can get started?

The tools in the next section offer you an opportunity to learn more and to get started on this step of the framework.

TOOLS TO HELP YOU SHARE THE CASE FOR COLLABORATION

ABOUT THESE TOOLS

These tools will help you share the case for collaboration with the other stakeholders in your school system. You'll determine how to share the benefits of collaboration and ask others to collaborate with you based on your style, your audience, and your context. The tools offer multiple formats and many ways to customize your message.

Think about who you'd like to invite, and go share the case!

TOOLS

- Fill out the Sharing the Case for Collaboration with Others worksheet to help you think about how, when, and with whom you'll share the case. Brainstorm how to use collaboration information and resources to help you show others the benefits of collaboration and encourage them to get started with you. Begin with in-reach: How will you share the case for collaboration with members of your own stakeholder group, so you can present a unified request and vision when you approach the other stakeholders? Use your responses to formulate a plan of action, and get started!

- Choose your audience and begin Extending the Invitation! This tool can help you invite stakeholders to collaborate with you around shared interests and goals. Preparing an invitation for a specific audience can help you feel comfortable broaching the subject of collaboration with other stakeholders. Read sample invitations, and then create your own.

SHARING THE CASE FOR COLLABORATION WITH OTHERS

PURPOSE

This worksheet can help you create a comprehensive plan of action for sharing the case for collaboration with others. First, you'll brainstorm, then you'll create in-reach and outreach plans based on your brainstorming ideas.

STEP 1: BRAINSTORM

Consider the following questions and jot down your responses. Your answers will help you formulate a plan to share the case for collaboration.

What makes me most excited about the possibilities of collaboration in my school/district?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

How and when will I tell my own stakeholder group (e.g., educators, administrators, etc.) about the case for collaboration?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

STEP 1: BRAINSTORM (cont'd)

With which other stakeholders in my school/district will I share the case for collaboration?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Which resources will I use?

My School, My Voice website

Collaboration videos

Pamphlet on collaborative partnerships

Collaboration infographic

Call to action

Invitation

Others such as...

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

STEP 2: IN-REACH PLAN OF ACTION

Fill out the table below to create a plan to share the case for collaboration with **members of your own stakeholder group** and ask them to join you in collaborating with other stakeholders in your education system around shared student-centered goals.

Individuals and Groups/ Caucuses within My Stakeholder Group	What aspects of the case for collaboration will be most compelling to them?	Target Date	Method of Approach	Notes

STEP 3: OUTREACH PLAN OF ACTION

Fill out the table below with your plan to share the case for collaboration with other stakeholders in your system and ask them to collaborate with you around shared student-centered goals.

Stake-holder Group	Specific Person(s)	Issue Most Compelling to Them	Target Date	Method of Approach	Notes
Education Association/Union					
District Administration					
Principal(s)					

STEP 3: OUTREACH PLAN OF ACTION (cont'd)

Stakeholder Group	Specific Person(s)	Issue Most Compelling to Them	Target Date	Method of Approach	Notes
School Board					
Parents					
Community Organizations					
Other					

EXTENDING THE INVITATION

This tool can help you invite stakeholders to collaborate with you.

STEP 1: DO YOUR HOMEWORK!

In this step, you'll think about **who** you'll invite, and **what** you're inviting them to.

For your first invitation, it makes sense to select someone with whom you already have a good working relationship, or someone you think would be open to collaboration based on their reputation or on observation of how they work and interact with others.

Initial Invitee: _____

Now for the "what." Consider your invitee's position in the district or school, their internal stakeholders, and the groups they report to. What do they care about? What will resonate most with them? Is there a specific issue or problem taking a lot of their attention right now? Next, gather specific, relevant data or examples of an issue of importance that you can use to either grab their attention or to support your ask. Think about your invitee – are they more likely to respond to hard data, or to a story about another school or district?

Issue of importance: _____

Relevant resources:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Next, define the desired result of the conversation. In a perfect world, what would be the outcome of this conversation? What are you inviting them to do? What do you envision the next step being?

Desired outcome: _____
_____

STEP 2: DRAFT YOUR INVITATION
Choose an invitation style, review the sample invitations, and use the template to draft your invitation.

Regardless of who you're talking with or the topic, your invitation should begin with a strong opener that grabs the listener's attention and makes a connection to their interests. Your invitation should end with a specific request to take the next step towards a collaborative partnership. Base the request on your desired result from Step 1.

Use your own natural speaking style and vocabulary for your invitation, and remember to keep your invitee and their interests in mind. To what information and style are they likely to respond favorably?

Invitations can take various forms, depending on your objective, your personal style, who you're talking with, and the issue at hand. The styles are not radically different, but one may feel more applicable or more natural than another.

Invitation Styles:

1. Problem/Solution:
- Strong opener: articulate the problem or pain point
- Present a potential solution
- Request to take next step

2. Join Me!
- Strong opener: statement of excitement or question
- Supporting information
- Request to take next step

3. Tell a Story:
- Strong opener: our present state (what is the critical issue, what are the stakes)
- The problem (potential consequences, what happens if we take no action?)
- What we can do about it/potential solution
- Request to take next step

4. Compare/Contrast:
- Strong opener: present compelling future vision
- Contrast with present situation
- Present how we might get to future vision
- Request to take next step

5. Monroe's Motivated Sequence: (Various examples and templates can be found online.)
- Attention (strong opener)
- Need (state the problem or need)
- Satisfaction (outline a solution)
- Visualization (tell them how they'll benefit from your solution)
- Action (request to take next step)

INVITATION TEMPLATE

Invitee: _____

Issue I know this person cares about: _____

Desired outcome: _____

Invitation style: _____

Strong opener: _____

_____

_____

Other elements of your selected invitation style:

Element:	Your text:

Request to take the next step: _____

_____

Also refer to the sample invitations on the next page!

EXAMPLE 1: JOIN ME! STYLE, USING DATA

Have you seen the national *Call to Action* for education partnerships? The educators', principals', superintendents', and school boards' associations are jointly encouraging their members across the nation to work together on student-centered goals, like language arts proficiency. There's research that shows schools and districts robustly using these partnerships average twelve-and-half percent more students performing at or above grade level in English language arts, as well as other benefits. I'll send you a copy of the information. I think we could work together to really make a difference. Can we sit down next week to talk in more detail?

EXAMPLE 2: COMPARE/CONTRAST STYLE, USING A STORY

Imagine being able to report a twelve-and-half percent increase in student language arts performance! We both know this has been an ongoing and stubborn problem for us. I just watched a video about a high school in Illinois that was facing some of our same problems, and they've been able to make tremendous headway by using education partnerships to overcome some of their toughest challenges. I'll send you the link. If you're interested, I think we could make some real progress by working together. Can we sit down next week to talk in more detail?

PREPARE: IDENTIFY PARTNERS

| LEARN THE CASE FOR COLLABORATION | → | IDENTIFY PARTNERS & DISCOVER SHARED GOALS | → | COMMIT TO COLLABORATE |

This chapter describes the various education stakeholders and the roles each stakeholder can play. Use this information to examine your existing relationships with potential partners, and then build upon these relationships to create a sustainable partnership that will foster collaborative work.

Including:
I. **Potential Stakeholder Contributions to Collaboration**
   o District and School Administrators
   o Education Associations/Unions
   o School Boards
   o Parents and Community
   o Selected Activities for Partners in the Collaborative Process
II. **Setting the Stage for a Strong Partnership**
   o Shared Interests
   o Partner Relationships and Trust
III. **Tools to Establish a Strong Partnership**
   o Potential Partner Brainstorm Template
   o Relationship Continuum Self-Assessment

POTENTIAL STAKEHOLDER CONTRIBUTIONS TO COLLABORATION

Research on collaboration demonstrates that when leaders in school administration and education associations/unions agree to work together to support their students, not only do students achieve more, but teachers and other educators are more likely to stay at the school, and principals and association/union representatives are more likely to be viewed as trusted resources (McCarthy & Rubinstein, 2017). In other words, overall results in terms of school climate and achievement improve. These results are clearly desirable to all education stakeholders, so there are various stakeholders who should be included in collaborative work, each with their own perspectives to add and roles to play.

Collaboration occurs at multiple levels, and the stakeholders may be different, depending on the level and context. At the school level, potential stakeholders include the principal, other school administrative staff, the association/union building representative, educators, as well as students, parents, and the community. Association/union representatives can play a primary role in organizing educators and elevating their voices and views. At the district level, stakeholders might include school board members, the district administrator, representatives of the local association/union, and parent and community groups.

The national and state counterparts can provide support in a number of ways, such as spreading the word, encouraging new districts to join the movement, and convening collaborative teams for joint learning opportunities. The National Labor-Management Partnership's members have already pledged to provide this support.

Stakeholders can offer various contributions to the collaboration process, as discussed below. **However, the most important step is for them to agree to participate and put forth a good faith effort to put students first and value the views of others in decision making.** Rubinstein & McCarthy (2016) note that an education partnership between the district administration and the local education association/union acts as the catalyst for the sort of school-level collaboration that leads to the positive outcomes we all want.

District and School Administrators

District administrators are tasked with overall district operations, including implementing school board policies, hiring and overseeing school administrators and personnel, ensuring educator quality and student performance in accordance with state standards, etc. In this role, they can model collaborative behaviors to encourage collaboration throughout the district. A starting point might be regular meetings with the association/union president to discuss timely issues. They can also encourage others in their administration to meet with their association/union counterparts, such as the district's head of curriculum meeting with the association/union staff responsible for teaching and learning issues. Together, district administrators can work with the association/union to create the spaces and structures, such as committees, for collaboration to occur. This critical structure of district administrators and association/union

> In this new era,
> district administrators and education associations will no longer see each other as the enemy, fighting for power over limited re-sources. These partnerships acknowledge the important role of each set of stakeholders in student success, and each stakeholder commits to one another's success as they work together to maximize resources and implement policy and program changes to improve public schools.
>
> *-NLMP Call to Action, 2018*

representatives, known as a District Leadership Team (DLT), has been a successful foundation for collaboration.

District administrators can also play a primary role in fostering collaboration at the school level by actively encouraging principals to engage in collaboration and to develop positive relationships with the association/union representative(s) and other teacher-leaders in their building.

District-level administrators can support collaborative processes by hiring principals who are open to distributive leadership, and by encouraging principals to include educators in the decision-making process. Where possible, district leaders can demonstrate their commitment to shared leadership by offering release time and/or stipends for educators to participate in district- and school-level leadership opportunities.

School-level administrators are tasked with school operations, including employment decisions, budgeting, staff supervision, and ensuring that schools are delivering the best education possible to students. They can foster collaboration by working closely with association/union and other educator leaders towards shared decision making. Forming a School Leadership Team (SLT) and other working committees have proven to be excellent ways to engage stakeholders in collaborative decisions. According to research, principals who collaborate on school decision making are more likely to be viewed as a valuable professional resource by the teachers in their school (McCarthy & Rubinstein, 2017).

Education Associations/Unions

Elected local association/union leaders can play a unique and important role in collaboration because they are directly in touch with educators throughout the district, both members and nonmembers. Arguably, they are in the best position to accurately communicate educators' views and interests, and hence to be vehicle for educator voice in district decision making. The association/union representatives should

know who the most respected content experts are at each worksite, and share that information with elected association/union leaders, so that these educators can be nominated to committees and task forces as opportunities arise.

The association/union president and other officers can be instrumental in collaborating with the district administration. Association/union leaders and district counterparts meeting regularly to develop and sustain DLTs is a very effective way to cement the collaborative approach into the fabric of the district culture. At the school level, the association/union can identify association/union representatives and other respected educator leaders who can work with the principal and other school administrative staff.

To achieve its potential in the collaborative processes, the local association/union must have strong listening mechanisms, where building representatives at each worksite consistently take the pulse of their peers' thoughts and feelings on education issues, and routinely administer member surveys.

The natural network provided by the local is also a massive and effective communication vehicle. The denser the communication network, the more effectively knowledge spreads across the local as stakeholders exchange experiences, knowledge, processes, and outcomes. Research also shows that the denser the network, the greater the collaborative impact on student learning:

> "Union-management partnership is defined by the extent to which union leaders and district administration work together to improve teaching and learning. In a study of 30 schools in one district with strong, long-standing partnership, we found that many school-level union leaders took on responsibilities to improve teaching and student learning. Union leaders helped to foster denser, more productive school collaboration. We also found that teachers in schools with stronger collaboration are more likely to know about and implement innovations from other schools, and that union representative who have more ties to other union representatives facilitate this knowledge sharing" (McCarthy & Rubinstein, 2017).

As mentioned earlier, national and state counterparts of these local stakeholders can provide support in many ways and this can contribute significantly to sustaining the collaborative work. They can help by spreading the word and encouraging new districts to join the movement. They can convene collaborating teams, so they can learn from each other and they can identify best practices in educator collaboration. State education associations/

unions can address state-wide implementation and technical support needs and provide additional support by:

- Growing and supporting regional networks
- Incorporating education partnerships into descriptions of leadership and hiring criteria
- Having state staff and leaders participate in education partnership convenings
- Highlighting districts where stakeholders are working collaboratively to improve school performance and student achievement
- Facilitating the sharing of research and best practices on building education partnerships in public schools
- Providing technical and staffing assistance to schools and districts
- Bringing together stakeholders from across regions for targeted networking and training

One of the goals of education partnerships is to increase educator participation and voice in the teaching and learning decisions in their schools and districts, since they are the most knowledgeable about students' needs. When educators participate in district and school committees and on leadership teams, they share in the decision making concerning teaching and learning. However, increasing educators' voice and authority over their professions through education partnerships can only succeed if educators themselves take advantage of the opportunities afforded them through education partnerships. The association/union will actively encourage member participation at both the district and school levels and will also work with local leaders to ready members to play both formal and informal leadership roles within the association/union to advance this work.

School Boards

School boards, responsible for setting education policy, can set the tone for collaboration in the community, participate in district-wide collaborative efforts, encourage participation among parent and community groups, and tell the story by highlighting the collaborative work and its results. School boards can include willingness and intent to collaborate with the association/union and other stakeholders as a part of their hiring criteria for superintendents.

Parents and Community

Schools do not operate in a vacuum; they are part and parcel of the communities they serve. As such, collaborative education partnerships are stronger if they include the knowledge, resources, and passion of parents and community members in efforts to transform local school systems. Parents want the best education possible for their children. And, community leaders know that the local economy is bolstered by a top-notch education system that attracts residents and businesses to the community. Creating opportunities for these stakeholders to join in collaborative and transformative work benefits everyone.

One of the most important reasons to involve the community, however, is to help ensure the sustainability of the education partnerships, beyond the tenure of any given stakeholder. The community, as a key and enduring stakeholder in the education partnership dream, has the influence and longevity to keep the work alive. Remember, it is the community who elects the school board and whose students benefit from strong teacher voices and a collaborative school system, therefore, it is imperative that the community be an active stakeholder in the education partnership.

Finally, some communities are fortunate to include colleges, universities, or non-profit education organizations. These entities can serve as facilitators or supporters of collaborative partnerships. These organizations often have meeting space that can be used for convening stakeholder groups. They may also have experts in interest-based problem solving or other inquiry-based processes who can offer impartial guidance to stakeholders as they begin to work together.

The table on the following page lists some of the contributions that partners can bring to the collaborative process. You may want to refer to this table as you establish the collaborative process, as it highlights suggestions that complement many phases of collaboration.

SELECTED ACTIVITIES FOR PARTNERS IN THE COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

DISTRICT & SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION	EDUCATION ASSOCIATIONS/UNIONS	SCHOOL BOARDS	OTHER STAKEHOLDERS
Open the decision-making table to other stakeholders	Identify educators' most pressing concerns for their students and schools, and raise them as possible issues for collaboration	Set the tone: establish an expectation for collaborative decision making	Universities or non-profits: offer training in change theory and improvement processes
Make district- and school-level data on performance, climate, and other issues available to collaborative committees	Use the association's/union's network to identify knowledgeable educators who are respected by their peers for collaborative committees	Provide resources for training and ongoing support in collaborative processes, relationship building, and subject-matter expertise	Universities or non-profits: facilitate improvement processes and convene collaborative networks across districts and states
Establish standing meetings with association/union leaders and district-level committees on key issues/topics	Place and support knowledgeable and respected educators on collaborative committees	Provide funding and support for collaborative processes to occur as a regular part of participants' professional lives	Community/parent groups: establish a liaison to the local education association/union and work together to set priorities that both parents and educators agree upon
Ensure that there is a District Leadership Team and School Leadership Teams, with expectations for shared decision making	Maintain strong two-way communication structures between the workforce and the educators serving in decision-making roles	Ensure that your district's collaborative partnership has the opportunity to network with other education partnerships working on similar projects, or in a similar context, for sharing	Community/parent groups: offer services, expertise, and participation in collaborative decision making to improve schools in your community
Work with the local PTA council to invite parents to participate on district-level committees	Establish strong two-way communication structures between the association/union and other stakeholder groups at district and school levels	Identify and connect with local community groups and ensure they have a place within your collaborative partnership	
Encourage principals to include parents on the School Leadership Team, and on issue-based school committees	Develop and foster relationships with parents and community partners, and elevate shared goals	Ensure there are ample listening structures for the school board to hear from constituents about the community's priorities for their school system	

SETTING THE STAGE FOR A STRONG PARTNERSHIP

Shared Interests

All it really takes to begin is willingness and a shared goal. Don't exclude any stakeholder who indicates willingness to work with you, even if you don't yet have a strong relationship or a history of trust. You can always *start somewhere*! Creating a collaborative climate and building trust is something that happens through this work, over time, they're not prerequisites!

Partner readiness may be contingent upon the topic at hand or student-centered issue to address. If a particular issue is compelling for a partner, they may be more motivated to collaborate to resolve it. Identifying the first issue might be very informal and result from a discussion, or it might already be present in an existing strategic goal, or it might stem from community or parent input. This initial issue identification is typically exploratory and very high-level. It is useful, however, when trying to identify potential partners.

Remember that collaboration is an organic process: Establishing a formal partnership and discovering shared goals may not be linear – and that's okay!

Subsequent chapters discuss the importance of formal needs assessments and partner surveys to deepen the discovery process and decide exactly what the collaborative work should entail. This discovery informs the more targeted and formal issue identification that occurs later in the process.

Partner Relationships And Trust

Once you have convinced at least one other stakeholder of the benefits of collaboration, it's time to partner with them for student success. In the best case scenario, the district administration, school board, education association/union, parents, and community stakeholders all partner together; however, you need not have everyone on board to begin. A partnership between the administration and association/union is enough to *start somewhere*.

So, how do you know who would be a good first partner? Look at your existing relationships with other education stakeholders. Are they built on trust? Common interests? Have you met formally to tackle education issues together, or is your relationship less formal? What about stakeholders with whom you don't have a standing relationship? Is there potential to develop a relationship? Which partners might be more willing to collaborate with you?

It can be helpful to take an inventory of potential partners and evaluate their readiness to collaborate with you. Think about your existing relationship with them and what it would take to become collaborators. The tools at the end of this section can help with this evaluation.

When thinking of a partner, consider stakeholders who have a history of good working relationships built on trust - they are more likely to build upon those relationships in formal education partnerships. A potential partner who is viewed as trustworthy increases the likelihood of a strong collaborative relationship, even If there is no existing relationship. Researcher and education consultant Dr. Ken Futernick suggests that the presence of relational trust moderates the sense of uncertainty and vulnerability that individuals feel as they confront strong demands. He also notes that when trust is strong, individual engagement with change does not feel like a heroic call to action, and that relational trust is a catalyst for innovation (Futernick, 2016).

The Consortium for Educational Change (CEC, 2018) sourced *Five Key Components Commonly Used to Measure Trustworthiness* and they include:

- **Benevolence**: Having the confidence that a partner has your best interests at heart and will protect your interests
- **Reliability**: Being able to depend on a partner to act consistently, to follow through, and to maintain their commitment
- **Competence**: Believing that a partner can perform the tasks required by their position
- **Honesty**: Believing in a partner's ability to represent situations fairly
- **Openness**: Believing that the partner is sharing information freely with others

Although it's tempting to think about trustworthiness as something inherent in the other party (especially when we feel it is lacking), experts recommend that we focus on what we can control: becoming wholly trustworthy ourselves. If each party agrees to behave in ways worthy of the other's trust, the relationships will improve. In thinking about the components above, it's best to ask ourselves "How are we demonstrating these attitudes to our partners?"

TURN LEARNING TO ACTION

You have learned about the various education stakeholders who can become potential collaboration partners, and what their roles may be in these relationships. In some cases, establishing a shared interest will be key to forming a partnership; in others, simply being willing to collaborate is all you need. Remember, you don't need to have every potential partner on board to begin: an agreement between the district administration and the education association/union is enough to *start somewhere*.

To begin applying what you have learned in this chapter, answer the following questions:

- What roles do different education stakeholders have in collaborative partnerships?

- Who should be included in an education partnership in my school system?

- What are my existing relationships with the other stakeholders in my system?

- How can I leverage existing relationships toward creating a partnership that will foster collaboration at all levels?

The resources and tools in the next section offer you an opportunity to learn more and to get started on this step of the framework.

TOOLS TO HELP YOU SET THE STAGE FOR A STRONG PARTNERSHIP

ABOUT THESE TOOLS

Who are your potential partners and what relationship do you have with those stakeholders?

These tools provide insight into the education stakeholders in your system, and will ask you to assess your existing relationships. Knowing the relationship status can help you determine the best way to approach each stakeholder with an invitation to collaborate. Existing positive relationships can be leveraged toward developing a collaborative partnership. And, partnering around shared goals offers an opportunity to work on relationships that are not yet strong.

TOOLS

- The **Potential Partner Brainstorm Sheet** asks you to think about your existing relationships with other stakeholder groups in your system and categorize them as based on whether or not you have an existing relationship with them.

- The **Relationship Continuum Self-Assessment** tool introduces the collaboration continuum between stakeholder groups. Use it to understand how cooperative the relationships between you and your partners are and how you might improve.

POTENTIAL PARTNER BRAINSTORM TEMPLATE

PURPOSE

This tool can help you identify the other stakeholders in your system and consider the strength of your relationships with them, for the purpose of selecting potential partners for collaboration.

STEP 1

Use the list below of common stakeholder groups to start your brainstorming. Who do you know in these groups and others that may be partners in your collaborative work?

COMMON STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

ADMINISTRATION

ASSOCIATION/UNION

SCHOOL BOARDS

STUDENT GROUPS

PARENTS & COMMUNITY GROUPS

STEP 2

Once you've identified your potential partners, consider the strength of those relationships, and sort them accordingly. With whom do you already have strong relationships, and with whom do you need better relationships?

HAVE STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

NEED BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

RELATIONSHIP CONTINUUM SELF–ASSESSMENT

PURPOSE

This tool can help you consider the nature of your working relationships and understand how you might work to improve them, so that they fall into the "Cooperative" or "Partner" category.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Consider the stakeholders in your system, and assess your relationship with them using the continuum. Where do you believe the relationships fall? Place your answers in the first two columns of the table on the next page.

2. As your collaboration progresses, consider which characteristics you and your partners need to attend to in order to move towards *Cooperative* and *Partner*. Brainstorm ways that you might strengthen your relationship and put your thoughts in the last column of the table.

Very Adversarial	Adversarial	Traditional	Cooperative	Partner
• Hostile environment • Slowdowns • Legal challenges • Strikes/lockouts • "Work to rule"	• Lack of trust • Poor communication • Rigid, legalistic interactions • "Gotcha" mentality • Use of power and rights whenever possible • Win/lose attitude	• Moderate level of trust and credibility • Sharing of some information • Union leaders have some knowledge of district issues • Administration understands union's history and mission • Some joint efforts, but mostly reactive problem solving	• Open sharing of much information • High level of trust and credibility • Leaders of stakeholder groups see the need for collaboration • Awareness of mutual goals • Few grievances or arbitrations • Mechanisms for educators' voices to be heard • Anticipatory problem solving	• Shared vision, goals, and action plans • Presence of collaborative teams at all levels • Educators share in many decisions • Joint problem solving fixes most problems; fighting is rare • "We won't let each other fail" mentality

Adapted from 1199 SEIU/League
Labor Management Project (2018).
labormanagementinitiatives.org/why-partner/

RELATIONSHIP CONTINUUM SELF–ASSESSMENT (cont'd)

Potential Partner	Current Relationship Continuum	How to Strengthen

PREPARE: DISCOVER SHARED GOALS

LEARN THE CASE FOR COLLABORATION	IDENTIFY PARTNERS & DISCOVER SHARED GOALS	COMMIT TO COLLABORATE

This chapter introduces the discovery process and the role of a needs assessment in this process. You will learn why gathering stakeholders' opinions on the school system's needs and priorities is an important first step in a partnership's work, and you'll see examples of and access to tools to help in gathering this crucial input from education stakeholders.

Including:
I.   **Where to Start**
II. **Assessing Current Needs**
     o Why Do a Needs Assessment
     o Needs Assessment Design
     o Role within the Discovery Process
III. **Including Parents and Community Voices**
IV. **Tools to Help You Discover Shared Goals**
     o Discovering Shared Goals Planning Template
     o NEA's Opportunity Checklist
     o OPSCAN Survey
     o Community Outreach Guide
     o Community Conversations Overview

WHERE TO START

You have learned about the research supporting collaboration and have evaluated partner readiness to collaborate; now it's time to focus on the issues to address to improve student success. It is important that all partners agree on the issues, vision, and goals of their collaborative work.

No one-size-fits-all topic serves as the entry point for collaborative solution-building. Collaboration often begins when there is a problem to be solved and people decide to work together to address it. It can be organic and bottom-up, such as groups of teachers asking their principal to form an anti-bullying committee, or it can be formal and top-down, such as a district leader putting together a task force to make recommendations to the school board about a district-wide issue. In these cases, the problem and topic at hand are clear at the outset.

At other times, however, the desire to work together and forge a more productive relationship occurs first, without an obvious topic to work on. There are myriad challenges facing public schools and the range of topics can often be plentiful; therefore, it's necessary to prioritize the topics by evaluating stakeholders' needs and wants, perhaps through data collection and partner listening processes. Which school improvement issues do the educators in your district care about? Of the possible issues, which ones are best for collaborative partnership work?

Successful collaborative partnerships around the country have recommended that new partnerships begin with "low-hanging fruit." That is, they recommend that your partnership initially focus on a topic that is relevant and important, but is also low-risk and has a high likelihood of success. Remember that the goal of the partnership is twofold: you are making improvements on the student-centered topic at hand and building sustainable structures in support of an ongoing, productive, collaborative relationship. To achieve the latter, set yourself up for success in the topics you choose. As trust develops over time and the partners gain experience in joint problem solving and shared decision making, more challenging issues can be addressed.

> "A thoughtful and well-planned assessment not only provides data that stakeholders need to start at the right place, it also helps deepen collaborative efforts down the road. The needs assessment does this in three ways. First, it builds buy-in early on in the process. Second, the needs assessment helps create or communicate a sense of urgency across stakeholders. Thirds, the process, if done correctly, established transparency in current and future collaborative work."
>
> *- Marietta, D'Entremont and Kaur (2017): Improving Education Together: A Guide to Labor Management Community Collaboration*

ASSESSING CURRENT NEEDS

A needs assessment can help collaborative teams identify and focus on a specific issue to address in an education partnership. Needs assessments identify key issues facing educators and offer the data needed to define a baseline for your work. The success of your initiatives will be measured against this baseline.

Why Do a Needs Assessment?

Perhaps you've already determined the broad student-centered topic that you hope to address with your partnership but don't know where within that topic to begin. Or, you may have partners who are ready to commit to collaboration but have varying viewpoints on which topic to work on. Perhaps there are several topics that need attention and you need to understand which ones take priority. These are all reasons to conduct a needs assessment – a listening mechanism that allows stakeholders to offer input about what they believe to be the most pressing needs in your school system. Once identified, these pressing needs become the priorities for your partnership to address and develop shared goals and objectives.

A needs assessment helps you collect data to provide a baseline or starting point. It becomes a record of where you began, and can be used as a reference as you proceed with your work. It also provides stakeholder perceptions of the issues, an idea of their importance, and a glimpse at a stakeholder's readiness to address them. Analyzing this information also informs the content for your collaborative work and possibly the processes as well, both of which are discussed later in this guidebook.

Needs Assessment Design

A needs assessment can be very formal, in the form of a survey distributed to stakeholders and analyzed by software, or it can be a telephone interview with hand-written responses. It can be a survey or a focus group or an interview with teachers, parents, administrators, or school board members. The nature of your needs assessment should reflect the amount and type of knowledge you need to collect, as well as the comfort of your target audience with the process.

Just as there is no one topic that every partnership team should start with, there is also no one-size-fits-all method for assessing the issues that are important to educators. Many of the methods

for assessing needs and issues vary depending on the size of the audience and the degree of scientific process required. Needs might be assessed at broad levels such as state or district, or more intimate levels such as the school or working committee. Assessments can include a broad range of stakeholders or a small sampling of educators passionate about a niche topic. Needs assessments may be confined to school personnel or can include the community to target parents. In any event, stakeholder needs should be identified early in the collaborative process.

Needs Assessment's Role Within the Discovery Process

Discovery – sometimes called "inquiry" in education spaces – is an adult learning and improvement process. Collaborative education partnerships engage in discovery as a way to determine what needs improving, learn about the root causes of the challenges, and then brainstorm, attempt, and reflect on ideas for positive change. As shown in the figure below, the discovery process continues throughout the entire partnership lifecycle. A needs assessment is often used early in the process.

In reality, most education stakeholders enter into the possibility of partnership knowing broadly what the system's challenges are, and where they'd like to work. Broad statements such as "our new superintendent's vision statement includes a goal of equalizing graduation rates across the high schools in the district," or "we have a challenge retaining special education teachers," or "our English learner sub-population is not scoring as high on reading assessments as we'd like" are often indicators that the broad issue a partnership could address has already been identified. The broad issue is often chosen based on existing data points, or on existing priorities set by stakeholders. If no issue is pre-selected at the outset of a partnership, a needs assessment can help determine the most pressing issues facing your educators.

Once a broad topic is identified, the next step of discovery is to determine which aspect(s) of the broad topic educators truly care about. A needs assessment in this phase should answer the question, "Which aspects of this issue feel most salient to those experiencing the challenge?" For ex-

CONTENT DISCOVERY

IDENTIFY BROAD ISSUE — PREPARE
PRIORITIZE/FOCUS ISSUE
IMPLEMENT CHANGES — ACT
EVALUATE PROGRESS — REFLECT
SCALE/SUSTAIN

ample, if you already know that teacher attrition is an issue in need of attention, a needs assessment might determine that early-career teacher support and retention is the aspect most compelling to the local collaborative team.

The process of defining the content of your work – the issue you're collaborating around – is hourglass-shaped. It typically starts as a broad notion, becomes more narrow as you and your partners prioritize and hone in on a specific goal and initiatives to achieve it, then widens again as you reflect on the effectiveness of your pilot initiatives and begin to scale them up and spread them.
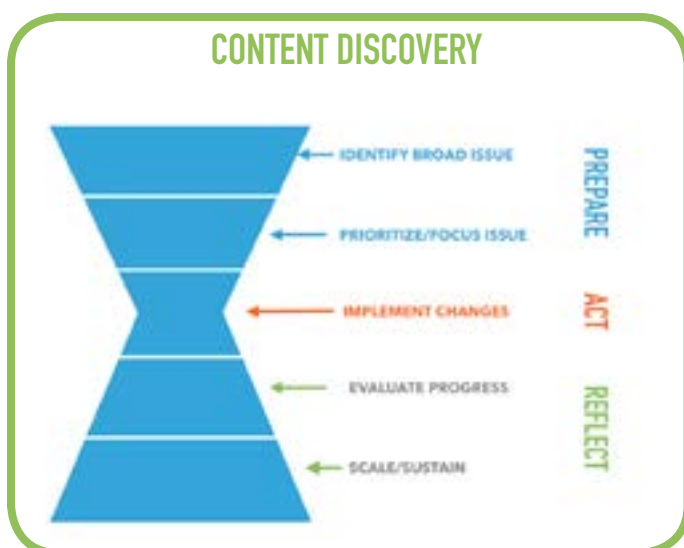
INCLUDING PARENT AND COMMUNITY VOICES

For partnerships that want to include the voices of parents and community members in their collaborative work, it is important to invite them in at the outset of the partnership, so that their input can be considered as shared goals are agreed upon. There are many ways to include parents and community, some more comprehensive than others. Sometimes community organizations are specifically invited to join an education partnership because of alignment between the organization or company's business model and the emerging goals of the partnership.

For instance, partners who know they want to address early literacy may intentionally seek out the local librarians' association, non-profit groups that run reading-based after-school programming, or businesses that donate books, and include them in the early planning stages. In other cases, parents and community are included in broader, less specific ways. Conducting a survey, for example, is useful to solicit input and to understand the community's priorities and ensure that the partnership's emerging goals are aligned with the needs, wants, and expectations of the parents and community the school system serves. In some cases, administrators and education association/union leaders co-host open houses, forums, or community conversations as a way to hear the community's point of view and identify individuals with particular interest and/or expertise who may be interested in participating more fully in the partnership work.

Community conversations are facilitated forums to guide groups of stakeholders to build a vision for what their school could achieve and become. In the best cases, Community conversations lead to an action plan that is jointly implemented by a coalition of education stakeholders. In the context of education partnerships, these conversations help administrators and association/union leaders understand and connect with others who care about students. They offer ways to generate new ideas, test existing assumptions, and better understand the viewpoints and priorities of diverse stakeholder groups. They help identify parents and community members who have expertise and passion, and who may want to serve on committees alongside educators and administrators. An overview of the community conversations strategy is included as a tool in this chapter.

For a more robust toolkit about community conversations, refer to NEA's *At-a-Glance Organizer's Guide for Community Conversations* (nea.org/assets/docs/Organizer%27s%20Guide%20 to%20Community%20Conversations.pdf) and/or Achieving the Dream's *Campus and Community Conversations Planning Guide* (achievingthedream.org/system/files_force/resources/ CampusAndCommunityConversationsPlanningGuide.pdf?download=1) which detail the steps involved in this strategy.

TURN LEARNING TO ACTION

The discovery process allows education partners to determine what issues they would like to work on and to explore those issues, so that they can implement new ideas and evaluate their progress. The first step in discovery is to identify shared goals, first by identifying broad issues that stakeholders care about and then determining which aspects of those broad issues are most salient.

A needs assessment is one way to determine stakeholder needs and interests. Needs assessments can be formal or informal, quantitative (survey) or qualitative (interviews, focus groups). They can be open-ended or focused on already-identified priorities. While topic and methodology will vary, the result should be a clearer starting point for partners to work together, using the processes in the chapters that follow.

In applying what you have learned in this chapter, answer the questions:

- What school improvement issues do stakeholders in my system care about?

- What data are available to help us hone in on our goals?

- How do we figure out what to work on first?

The tools in the next section offer an opportunity to learn more and to get started on this step of the framework.

TOOLS TO HELP YOU DISCOVER SHARED GOALS

ABOUT THESE TOOLS

Where should we start? These tools can help determine the issue you'll collaborate around. If you have willing partners but don't yet know which issues matter most to your stakeholders, these tools can help you figure that out. They'll also help narrow a broad area of interest down to specific issues for your partnership to address.

TOOLS

- Use the **Discovering Shared Goals Planning Template** to think through potential places to start. Do you know what the members of your stakeholder group care about and want to work on? If so, how will you test your assumptions? If not, how will you find out? Do you know the district's greatest needs, regardless of which stakeholder group you're in? How?

- Use **NEA's Opportunity Checklist** as a quick survey of the school-based educators in your district. To take advantage of the association's/union's natural network, your building representatives can be responsible for distributing and collecting the checklists, and compiling data for each school. Building representatives can report the results to their principal and/or School Leadership Team, and to the education association's/union's executive board, who can then compile district-level data and share educators' most pressing concerns with district administrators and other stakeholders.

- You can use NEA's **OPSCAN surveys** to learn more about your chosen issue. OPSCAN is a validated survey instrument that state and local education associations/unions can use to carry out scientifically-based survey resources. OPSCAN includes a portfolio of surveys on a broad range of topics. In the spirit of collaboration, the survey should be administered jointly by the district administration and education association/union.

- The **Community Outreach Guide** helps you brainstorm how you might meaningfully include parents and community in your collaboration.

- Use the **Community Conversation Overview** to help you organize a community conversation in a targeted school. The results can be used to inform existing teams' and committees' work, create new committees, and/or or increase parent and community involvement and inclusion on collaborative teams and committees.

DISCOVERING SHARED GOALS
PLANNING TEMPLATE

PURPOSE

This tool helps identify areas of interest for you and your partners to address collaboratively. It is a short questionnaire for staff and/or parents to identify common interests. Use the results to help your team formulate shared goals and begin the work.

INSTRUCTIONS

Review the items below and answer them with your partners as a group using the table on the following pages.

- Make a list of the issues the stakeholders in your system care about. (For example: literacy retention, collaborative climate, etc.)

- What data are available to help test your assumptions and help you know whether these are real needs in your system? For each issue you listed, add the data that may already exist to help you better understand it.

  For example, if one issue facing your district is "retaining new teachers," the district likely has data on the numbers of new teachers hired each year, their placement, how many receive mentoring or other professional supports, the percentage of teachers who remain in the district after several years, etc.

- How do we figure out what to work on first? Rank the issues you listed, based on the considerations below (as well as other considerations you deem important for your context).
    Priority considerations:
    - What is the level of effort needed to complete the task?
    - How important is the issue to stakeholders in your school and/or district?
    - What impacts does the issue have on students?
    - Who is willing to participate in addressing the issue?
    - How much time do you have to work on the issue?

DISCOVERING SHARED GOALS PLANNING TEMPLATE (cont'd)

Issue	Data	Where does this rank and why?

DISCOVERING SHARED GOALS PLANNING TEMPLATE (cont'd)

Issue	Data	Where does this rank and why?

NEA'S OPPORTUNITY CHECKLIST

PURPOSE

This tool helps identify areas of interest for you and your partners to address collaboratively. It is a short questionnaire for staff and/or parents to collect data to identify common interests. Use the results to help your team formulate shared goals and begin the work.

INSTRUCTIONS

Do students and educators at your school have everything they need? If not, this is your opportunity to speak up! On the lists below and on the following pages, place a checkmark next to the top areas where school needs to improve.

NOTE: Complete this form online at: pages.email.nea.org/your-school-checklist. Completing the form online allows for follow-up from NEA with additional resources.

Community: It's important that your school is open to the community it serves.

- ☐ A welcoming front office
- ☐ Active community involvement (parent support groups, and a community liaison, for example)
- ☐ Materials available in the languages the school serves

Healthy Students in Modern Schools: Students need their essential human needs met, and to be in a healthy learning environment that is clean and in good working order.

- ☐ Healthy meals
- ☐ School nurse
- ☐ School counselor
- ☐ A roof that is free of leaks
- ☐ Healthy indoor air quality (free of mold, proper ventilation, and proper temperature control)
- ☐ Clean, unbroken flooring

NEA'S OPPORTUNITY CHECKLIST (cont'd)

- [ ] Ample and appropriate learning spaces (cafeterias, gyms, auditoriums, playgrounds, libraries, and computer labs with enough computers for all students)
- [ ] Class sizes that allow for one-on-one attention

Well-Rounded Curriculum: All students need access to the right courses to prepare them for life after graduation.

- [ ] Full day kindergarten
- [ ] Fine Arts (music, art, and theatre, for example)
- [ ] Advanced courses (science and math, for example)
- [ ] A pathway for advancement for every student (a path from general education courses to college prep, honors, AP and/or IB)
- [ ] Regular physical education classes (150 minutes in elementary school, 225 minutes in middle and high school)
- [ ] Foreign language courses
- [ ] Career and technical education

School Climate: It's important that students feel safe and respected in their classrooms and in their school.

- [ ] Students have a safe, reliable, and secure way to get to school
- [ ] An environment that welcomes and celebrates diversity
- [ ] A policy of restorative practices to create an environment of respect and collective responsibility (school policy with alternatives to suspension and expulsion)
- [ ] Use of early warning systems to keep students on track
- [ ] A community free from bullying and harassment

Quality Educators: It's important that all educators are prepared and excited to help students excel.

- ☐ Educators who have high expectations for every student in the school
- ☐ Teachers teaching in their credentialed subject
- ☐ Teachers are fully prepared to teach students in their school (teachers have completed a residency program where they were mentored by great teachers)
- ☐ Librarians
- ☐ Paraeducators and other education support professionals
- ☐ All staff trained in positive behavior supports and bullying prevention (all staff includes teachers, paraeducators, other education support professionals, and specialized instructional support personnel (SISP))
- ☐ All school staff contributing to a culturally responsive learning environment
- ☐ Staff that has time to collaborate
- ☐ Relevant, timely professional development

OPSCAN SURVEY

PURPOSE

The referenced surveys can help you determine stakeholders' needs and wants for their school.

WHAT IS OPSCAN?

Optical scanning (OPSCAN) survey tools allow a large number of survey responses to be easily entered and analyzed. NEA has developed a portfolio of surveys covering a broad range of school and educator issues to help gain an accurate view of educator opinions and needs. These surveys can be used as-is or customized to your needs (see the end of this tool for more details). All responses are anonymous.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

We recommend you use this tool to supplement the Opportunity Checklist tool. After determining educators' most pressing concerns, you can use a survey to dig deeper into educators' opinions on a subset of issues. Surveys can also provide insight into educators' relationships with other stakeholders and their perceived level of voice and influence in their schools.

While the Opportunity Checklist is intended to be informal and result in a preliminary understanding, these surveys provide more formal, scientifically valid quantitative results about both the content issues that educators care about, and about the strength of the relationships among the collaboration partners and stakeholders which can help you move forward with educator-led school improvement efforts. Local associations/unions should administer these surveys with their district leadership to all employees across the district or in targeted schools.

The OPSCAN surveys are available on the Inside NEA website. The links below are to sample surveys that can be used as a question bank for developing your own surveys. To use the surveys as-is and have NEA collate and analyze the results, see the information at the end of this tool.

OPSCAN SURVEY (cont'd)

OPSCAN surveys to help you determine stakeholders' needs and wants for their school:

- **Parent and Community Involvement in School:** Rates levels of involvement and satisfaction with various aspects of the school, and gathers information on the roles of parents, school staff, and community members in promoting student achievement and school success. (insidenea.nea.org/neabiz/researchinfo/documents/pci%20survey%20english.pdf)

- **Professional Development Issues:** Contains items about the availability, quality, and effectiveness of PD activities, as well as on desired types of content, delivery, and scheduling. (insidenea.nea.org/neabiz/researchinfo/documents/professional%20development%20survey.pdf)

- **School Culture:** Questions relate to: existence of shared vision, collaboration, communication, time/resources, efficacy, tolerance for ambiguity, culture of inquiry, and reflection. (insidenea.nea.org/neabiz/researchinfo/documents/culture%20survey.pdf)

- **School Restructuring:** Questions relate to: school mission and goals, curriculum, instruction, school organization, facilities and equipment, assessment, and staff development. (insidenea.nea.org/neabiz/researchinfo/documents/restructuring%20survey.pdf)

- **School Safety and Student Discipline:** Questions relate to: weapons, gangs, illegal drugs, theft, vandalism, and interpersonal behaviors among students and staff, as well as the root causes of student misconduct. (insidenea.nea.org/neabiz/researchinfo/documents/school%20safety%20survey.pdf)

- **Staff Satisfaction:** Questions relate to: job accomplishments, workload and working conditions, professional development and training, compensation and benefits, relationships and communication, administrative leadership and support, and safety and environment, as well as union or professional association services. (insidenea.nea.org/neabiz/researchinfo/documents/staff%20satisfaction%20survey.pdf)

- **Technology Issues:** Covers a broad range of technology-related areas, such as how computers are used for instructional purposes, teachers' uses of the internet, obstacles to the use of technologies, and the adequacy of various technologies. The survey is designed primarily for teachers, although others can answer to the best of their abilities. (insidenea.nea.org/neabiz/researchinfo/documents/technology%20survey.pdf)

Local associations/unions have two options for administering these surveys:

- **Use the NEA OPSCAN forms, and NEA processes the data:** You can use any or all of the survey instruments exactly as written. In this case, NEA processes the data and provides your results within three weeks. For this option, request an OPSCAN survey by filling out the Service Request Form (insidenea.nea.org/NEABiz/ResearchInfo/Documents/SERVICE%20REQUEST%20FORM.doc). The request must come from an NEA-affiliated individual, such as a local association/union president, and must be approved by the state association/union before being submitted to NEA.

- **Create your own survey using the question banks, and process the data:** You can pick and choose relevant questions from one or more of the existing surveys to create your own custom survey. In this case, your association/union will analyze your own survey data. The survey questions use a simple four-point scale, making analysis straightforward.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH GUIDE

PURPOSE

This tool can help you brainstorm how you might meaningfully include parents and the community in your collaboration.

- How do you already include the voices of parents and community in decision making?

How could you better include those voices?

Examples:
- Survey parents'/community priorities for district/school improvement
- Hold a community conversation or town hall to solicit input on the district's priorities or on specific topics
- Include parents/community on committees or task forces
- Reach out to community partners for collaboration

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS OVERVIEW

This tool provides an overview of the steps involved in hosting a community conversation. If you feel community conversations would be beneficial for parent and community engagement in your partnership, use this tool as a logistical guide.

Community conversations bring diverse stakeholders together to discuss a broad topic of shared concern, generate a shared vision for improvement, and brainstorm strategies to achieve the shared goals.

STEP 1

Assemble a coalition of community stakeholders to serve as a steering committee for planning and implementing the community conversation.

STEP 2

Plan the community conversation. Create subcommittees to address the following planning needs:

Select a broad topic: How can we improve _____ in our school/district?

Create the agenda: Choose a set of discussion questions that will help illicit a diverse set of experiences, concerns, opinions, and ideas about the topic.

Create a logistics plan for the community conversation: When and where will it be held? What materials are needed? (Hint: feed people!)

Select moderators and recorders (one each for every 10-12 participants): If training for moderating a discussion is needed, plan to hold a training session before to the community conversation.

Create an advertising plan: Whom will you invite, and how?

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS OVERVIEW (cont'd)

STEP 3

Hold the community conversation

Be sure to tell everyone what the steering committee will do with the thoughts and ideas shared at the community conversation, and what participants should expect next.

- Will you send them a write-up of the event?
- Will you create committees to work on specific improvement ideas, and invite them to be a part of them?

STEP 4
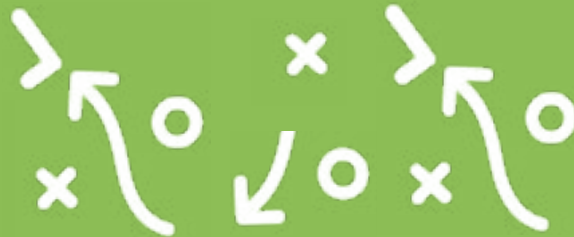
Plan next steps

Steering committee reviews the recorders' notes from the meeting and decides upon how to proceed.

Points to consider:

- Can these ideas be shared with existing leadership committees at the school or district level?
- Should new committees or working groups be formed to work on specific ideas or topics?
- Were there participants who were particularly passionate or knowledgeable? Make a plan to engage them further.
- Are additional community conversations needed?
- How will you follow up with participants for thanks and next steps?

PREPARE: COMMIT TO COLLABORATE

| LEARN THE CASE FOR COLLABORATION | → | IDENTIFY PARTNERS & DISCOVER SHARED GOALS | → | COMMIT TO COLLABORATE |

This chapter describes the promises and commitments that stakeholders in successful partnerships make to one another to foster a collaborative atmosphere. You will learn about the individual and group attributes that contribute to lasting partnerships, and the ways that committing to these behaviors can be codified. The chapter includes examples of attribute assessment and commitment tools.

Including:
I.   **Committing to Collaborate**
II. **Fostering a Collaborative Atmosphere**
     o   Collaborative Climate
     o   Collaborative Attributes and Skills
     o   Key Components of Strong Education Partnerships
III. **Codifying Your Commitment**
IV. **Tools to Support Making a Commitment to Collaborate**
     o   Collaborative Attributes Commitment List
     o   Collaboration Skills Checklist
     o   Guiding Principles, Guiding Behaviors: Codifying Your Commitments
     o   Building a Strong Partnership
     o   Sample Joint Letter/Memo

COMMITTING TO COLLABORATE

At this point, you've identified the key stakeholders in your system and have helped them understand the benefits of working collaboratively on student-centered issues. You understand the role each partner can play in your partnership, and you may have even chosen a broad topic for collaboration. This chapter focuses on the individual attributes and the group behaviors that contribute to successful collaboration so that you and your partners are comfortable committing to the work, and you can begin collaborating. In other words, we're asking you to develop the collaborative climate necessary for a true commitment-based partnership.

> "Every enterprise requires commitment to common goals and shared values... Unless a commitment is made, there are only promises and hopes, but no plans."
>
> *- Peter F. Drucker,*
> *The Essential Drucker*

It is useful for all partners to first learn about the foundations and principles that support collaborative decision making at all levels. All partners need to understand what they are committing to. Strong partnerships start with a common understanding that effective collaboration follows a process based on best practices and that collaboration is not a series of compromises, but the work of entertaining and respecting partners' diverse opinions and ideas and creatively forming joint solutions. In effective collaborations, each team member commits their time, openness, honesty, and trust in the process and in fellow team members to see the process through to fruition. A partner's commitment to their team includes not only resolving the issue at hand, but also adhering to the collaborative process and norms of shared decision making. It is important for all partners to understand the full collaboration framework before committing to join a team.

FOSTERING A COLLABORATIVE ATMOSPHERE

Consider the collaborative atmosphere in which you'll be working. Along with your willing partners, how will you foster a climate that fosters a productive relationship? What do you and your partners need to attend to, to get to that climate?

High quality partnerships are characterized by shared decision making, collaboration, and mutual respect among stakeholders. To best nurture these characteristics, research-based indicators include: the extent to which a collaborative climate exists; organizational attributes toward collaboration; and the collaboration skills of individuals involved.

The longer you and your partners are productively collaborating, the more positive your partnership's working environment will become. Although the beginning of a collaborative rela-

tionship is often organic, understanding the factors that contribute to a healthy relationship will help strengthen your partnership. Of course, it is most useful to ask ourselves whether we exhibit these characteristics and creating opportunities for others to demonstrate them, rather than thinking of these factors as litmus tests for others.

Collaborative Climate

Characteristics of a collaborative climate are listed below. They are not prerequisites; we encourage stakeholders to begin using collaborative processes even if they do not yet exhibit these characteristics. But, they serve as indicators that collaborative work has resulted in positive cultural shifts in the ways that stakeholders relate to one another (McCarthy & Rubinstein, 2017):

- **Peer Collaboration:** The amount and quality of collaboration among stakeholders in a system, encompassing information sharing, social support, and the extent to which stakeholders successfully work together to accomplish goals.

- **Discretion:** The amount of autonomy afforded to stakeholders. In high discretion settings, employees have the ability to make decisions independently.

- **Goal Alignment:** The extent to which stakeholders work towards common goals. High goal alignment is demonstrated by a common purpose and shared priorities.

- **Psychological Safety:** The extent to which stakeholders are comfortable voicing their concerns and sharing their opinions. Stakeholders who feel psychologically safe believe that they can voice concerns or make mistakes without being harshly judged. Psychologically safe environments allow for respectful discourse that includes and respects all viewpoints.

- **Shared Decisions:** The extent to which stakeholders collaborate on important decisions. Where shared decisions are the norm, stakeholders at all levels regularly consult with one another for input on significant items.

Partners engaged in collaboration can develop these characteristics over time, especially when they are mindful of building positive relationships while they are addressing student-centered issues.

Collaborative Attributes and Skills

A collaborative partnership involves relationships between groups or organizations, and between the individuals involved. As such, there are both individual and organizational attitudes and behaviors that can foster or inhibit a collaborative climate within an education partnership.

While every partnership is unique, individuals and organizations engaged in successful collaborative processes demonstrate predictable attributes and attitudes toward one another. They acknowledge each other's importance in the educational system and treat each other with respect. Collaborators build consistent communication avenues, consult each other before deciding on issues of shared concern, and whenever possible, employ shared decision-making techniques.

Effective collaborators separate relationship issues from process and content issues, take the high road when feeling slighted (rather than reacting in kind), and describe situations factually and in a neutral way (rather than characterizing). They seek out each other's perspectives, paying close attention to areas of disagreement so that they can be worked out, and maintaining the drive to gain consensus. They are unconditionally constructive and committed to the collaborative process. They assume the other stakeholders' goodwill. In the best-case scenarios, leaders of each stakeholder group make a pact not to let each other fail.

Key Components of Strong Education Partnerships

Before a set of partners commits to collaborate, it is important that each partner knows the expectations of the collaborative education partnership. Education partnerships are about both content and process; that is, they are about the issue you've chosen to work on, and about the ways that you relate to one another around decision making. In effective education partnerships, each partner agrees on their desired outcomes, as well as what they'll be building together as partners – the lasting structures and processes that will sustain success beyond the initial collaborative project.

We have studied education partnerships across the country, and the organizations and leaders that are supporting them, and have noticed several key commonalities that serve as best practices. The following components have been deemed as extremely useful by successful education partnerships:

An agreement between district administration and education association/union leadership to work together with stakeholders on plans to improve schools, and a pledge not to let each other fail.

A commitment to *start somewhere*: identify shared student-centered goals, and then work collaboratively and share decision making in the improvement processes to achieve them.

A rich web of communication and collaboration structures among stakeholders at all levels of the local school system (e.g., regular meetings between district department leaders and educators appointed through their association/union; district- and school-level leadership teams; working committees; professional learning communities).

Planning tools and defined goals and objectives, so that everyone involved in collaboration understands expectations of the group members, the work to be done, and so that progress can be monitored and managed.

Training and ongoing support in collaborative processes, relationship building, and subject matter expertise.

Connection to other education partnerships working on similar projects, or in a similar context, for sharing and mentorship.

A tool is provided at the end of this chapter to help you and your partners commit to building these components over time. Other tools throughout this guidebook address each of these components, and serve as resources to help you along the way.

CODIFYING YOUR COMMITMENT

At some point in your partnership, it is worthwhile to discuss the commitments you are willing to make to one another as you engage in joint problem solving and shared decision making. Putting these commitments in writing serves multiple purposes. First, it signals to each partner that the others are serious about working in this new way, simultaneously working on solving the problem at hand and on building the collaborative relationship. It shows that your intention through this work goes beyond whatever issue you first choose to address; your intention is to create a lasting, sustainable partnership. Next, codifying your commitment in writing offers a way for you to share these promises and intentions with all members of the stakeholder groups. Furthermore, it serves as the North Star to which each stakeholder can hold themselves and one another accountable. And finally, the established commitment to the partnership is a document essential to sustainability. Individuals in school systems and stakeholder groups come and go, but an agreement between organizations and groups is more likely to be sustained beyond the individuals involved.

In some cases, codifying the partnership's key tenets at the partnership's outset helps get the partnership off to a good start. In other cases, partners need to build trust through a series of collaborative projects over time before they are willing to formally codify the partnership.

For example, the ABC Unified School District in California has one of the longest-standing labor-management partnerships in the country, which they call the Partnership between Administration and Labor (PAL). At its inception, the then-president of the ABC Federation of Teachers

and the then-district superintendent created a list of guiding principles and behaviors that they each committed to uphold for the duration of their partnership. The guiding principles were developed to codify the partners' shared beliefs about their students and their shared responsibility for ensuring their success. These shared goals guide their discussions, actions, and outcomes and support the collaborative process. They are the underpinnings of the collaborative work and the outcomes ABC strives to achieve.

The guiding behaviors were developed to characterize the behaviors of their collaborative relationship. They reflect the attributes the union and the district agree foster a safe, effective, and sustainable partnership. Similar behaviors were discussed in an earlier section of this chapter.

Although neither founder is still in their role, the ABC partnership itself is still going strong. In fact, both the union and the school board have intentionally chosen leaders with a collaborative mindset, who would agree from the outset to continue the PAL. The Guiding Principles, and the behaviors that exemplify them, continue to serve as the North Star for the partners. A handout of ABC's Guiding Principles and Behaviors is included on the following page as an example of a codified commitment to collaboration.

Once you have established your collaboration partners and committed to working together to realize shared goals, communicate your intentions with other education stakeholders outside of the partnership. Let them know that the partnership exists, that a shared goal for student success has been established, a commitment has been documented, and plans are emerging for pursuing the work. Not only will this inform others in your school about your collaborative work, it will contribute to the solidification of your commitment.

ABCFT and ABCUSD's
Partnership Between Administration and Labor (PAL)

Guiding Principles

All students can succeed, and we will not accept any excuse that prevents that from happening. We will work together to promote student success.

All needed support will be made available to schools to ensure every student succeeds. We will work together to ensure that happens.

The top 5% of teachers in our profession should teach our students. We will work together to hire, train, and retain these professionals.

All employees contribute to student success.

All negotiations support conditions that sustain successful teaching and student learning. This is the MAIN THING!

We won't let each other fail.

Guiding Behaviors

We will work hard to understand the core of each other's job.

We will respect each other.

We will be honest with each other.

We will not "sugar coat" difficult issues.

We will disagree without being disagreeable.

We will reflect on each other's comments, suggestions, and concerns.

We will seek clarification until we understand.

We will maintain confidentiality.

We will both "own the contract."

We solve problems rather than win arguments.

We will laugh at ourselves and with each other.

TURN LEARNING TO ACTION

This chapter detailed the characteristics of strong partnerships, and the value of garnering partners' commitment to collaborate before initiating a joint project. Highly-functioning partnerships are characterized by shared decision making, collaboration, and mutual respect among stakeholders. Examining the behaviors and attributes that characterize positive collaborative climates can offer a starting point for building or strengthening relationships among partners, and for establishing the psychological safety necessary for people to fully participate in such a partnership. Taking steps to improve relationships and foster a strong climate of collaboration benefits the individuals and organizations who engage in this work. This chapter also described the components of a strong education partnership, including the structures and processes that partners agree to build together. It is worthwhile to codify your commitments to your partners in writing, both so you can hold one another accountable to them as your partnership work unfolds, and so that you can share them with the broader system.

To apply what you have learned in this chapter, answer the questions:

- How will we demonstrate the collaboration skills and the attributes of a collaborative climate to our partners?

- What do we need and want from each other to be successful in our collaborative partnership?

- Which principles and guidelines should we adopt for building lasting trust? What commitments are we willing to make to one another?

- How will we share our commitments to each other with others in our system?

The resources and tools in the next section offer you an opportunity to extend your learning and get started on this step of the framework.

TOOLS TO HELP YOU COMMIT TO COLLABORATE

ABOUT THESE TOOLS

How will you and your partners build an atmosphere conducive to collaboration?

These tools can provide insights into your collaborative environment and help you make commitments to one another at the outset of your partnership. They'll help you build an atmosphere that is conducive to collaboration, and help you explore the existing climate among your stakeholder groups, the attributes that you and your partners can demonstrate toward one another to strengthen your relationship, and some skills that you as an individual can hone or develop as you engage with other people in your school system. They will help you codify your commitments to one another and set you up for a successful partnership.

TOOLS

- Use the Collaborative Attributes: Commitment List to discuss the attributes of a collaborative relationship you want to commit to for growing your relationship. It can be used as a starting point to develop your partnership's own set of guiding principles.

- The Collaboration Skills Checklist helps you, as an individual, assess your collaboration skills. Whereas the other tools provide insight into relationships among stakeholders in your partnership, this tool offers a chance to reflect upon the skills you bring to the collaboration table.

- The Guiding Principles, Guiding Behaviors tool offers a set of discussion prompts for you and your partners to begin codifying your commitments to one another in writing.

- The Building a Strong Partnership tool details the key components of a strong partnership, and offers an opportunity for you and your partners to commit to building them together.

- The Sample Joint Letter is an example of how a superintendent, association/union president, and other stakeholders can publicize their partnership to the district's employees and/or the community at large.

COLLABORATIVE ATTRIBUTES: COMMITMENT LIST

PURPOSE

This is a tool for collaborative groups to use together. It offers a set of collaborative attributes to discuss and agree upon, ultimately providing a set of commitments as you begin your education partnership.

INSTRUCTIONS

What promises are you and your partners comfortable making to one another in support of this new partnership? Discuss these attributes of collaborative partnerships with your partners, and place a checkmark next to the ones where you feel that both you and your partners agree with the statements.

☐ **Awareness** – We each see ourselves and each other as necessary parts of a working system

☐ **Motivation** – We have the drive to gain consensus when engaging in joint problem solving

☐ **Participation** – We are equally committed to participating in a collaborative partnership

☐ **Shared decision making** – We make working together the default and collaborate on as many important decisions as possible

☐ **Professional discretion** – We respect the professional autonomy of the people within our system and create space for role-appropriate, independent decision making at all levels

☐ **Peer collaboration** – We support educators in working together for their students' success

☐ **Social support** – We portray each other as valued partners to our peers

☐ **Goal alignment** – We seek to align goals among stakeholders in our system by emphasizing our common purpose and shared priorities

☐ **Authenticity** – We are honest with each other about our thoughts, feelings, and opinions

☐ **Psychological safety** – We create an environment where all partners feel comfortable sharing thoughts and opinions, and where participants are not harshly judged for mistakes, voicing concerns, or holding unpopular viewpoints

☐ **Mediation** – We are able to positively negotiate, compromise, and get to agreement

☐ **Reciprocity** – We share information, and we expect sharing in return through reciprocity

☐ **Reliability** – We are consistently reliable, and in return expect our partners to follow through

☐ **Reflection** – We think through the possibilities, and are willing to consider alternatives

☐ **Engagement** – We proactively engage, rather than wait and react

✓ COLLABORATION SKILLS CHECKLIST

PURPOSE

This is a self-reflection tool for you, as an individual who is participating on a collaborative team, to consider the interpersonal skills that support collaboration and take inventory of your own strengths and weaknesses.

- ☐ Actively listening to the concerns of team members
- ☐ Agreeing on roles that capitalize on individual strengths
- ☐ Analyzing problems without assigning blame
- ☐ Brainstorming solutions to problems
- ☐ Building consensus about goals and processes for group projects
- ☐ Compromising when necessary to move the group forward
- ☐ Defining mutually acceptable roles
- ☐ Delegating tasks with open discussion
- ☐ Displaying a willingness to find solutions to problems
- ☐ Drawing consensus around goals and processes
- ☐ Eliciting the views of reluctant group members
- ☐ Facilitating group discussion
- ☐ Following through with commitments in a reliable manner
- ☐ Forgiving others when they come up short
- ☐ Giving credit to others for contributions
- ☐ Identifying obstacles to success

- ☐ Interviewing clients to determine their needs and preferences
- ☐ Investing the required time and energy to complete tasks
- ☐ Taking a leadership role
- ☐ Listening to team members' concerns
- ☐ Maintaining a sense of humor whenever possible
- ☐ Making sure the perspectives of quieter collaborators is heard
- ☐ Meeting deadlines for individual contributions
- ☐ Recognizing the contributions of other collaborators
- ☐ Recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of collaborators
- ☐ Selecting compatible partners to carry out projects
- ☐ Sharing feelings of frustration or dissatisfaction as they occur
- ☐ Speaking respectfully with team members
- ☐ Taking responsibility for mistakes
- ☐ Updating collaborators on developments with the project
- ☐ Working hard to fulfill obligations to the team

Adapted from Doyle, A. (2018). Collaboration Definitions, Skills, and Examples.
thebalance.com/collaboration-skills-with-examples-2059686

GUIDING PRINCIPLES, GUIDING BEHAVIORS: CODIFYING YOUR COMMITMENTS

PURPOSE

This tool can guide you and your partners toward agreeing upon and codifying the guiding principles and guiding behaviors that will characterize your working relationship.

STEP 1

DISCUSSION

Gather your partners together to discuss your shared vision for the partnership. Keep the focus on the relationships, not a particular topic.

Use the following questions to guide your discussion, and then use what you discuss to serve as the foundation for your shared commitments.

- What do you both/all believe about the role of education/school in students' lives?
- What do you both/all believe about your responsibilities towards students?
- What do you both/all believe about each stakeholder's roles in student success?
- How should disagreements be handled?
- When your partner is not in the room, how will you speak to others of them and this partnership?

STEP 2 — WRITE YOUR COMMITMENTS

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

We believe...
[Draft your shared beliefs about your students and your shared responsibility for ensuring their success.]

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

GUIDING BEHAVIORS

We will honor these principles in our relationship with one another by...
[Draft your commitments toward one another – the behaviors that will characterize your relationship as partners.]

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

BUILDING A STRONG PARTNERSHIP

PURPOSE

This tool presents a set of key components to successful education partnerships – the sustainable structures that you'll build together through this work. Use this tool to discuss these components with your partners and to commit to building them together.

INSTRUCTIONS

Discuss these components with your partners. What do they mean to you? What are your hopes and aspirations for your partnership in each component? After discussing the components you are committing to build together, all partners can write their initials in the box provided.

KEY COMPONENTS TO A STRONG EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP   INITIALS

An agreement between district and education association/union leadership to work together with local stakeholders on plans to improve schools, and a **pledge not to let each other fail.**

A commitment to **start somewhere.** Identify shared student-centered goals, and then work collaboratively and share decision making in the improvement processes to achieve them.

A **rich web of communication and collaboration structures among stakeholders at all levels** of the local school system (e.g., regular meetings between district department leaders and educators appointed through their association/union; district- and school-level leadership teams; working committees; professional learning communities).

Planning tools and defined goals and objectives, so that everyone involved in collaboration understands expectations of the group members, the work to be done, and so that progress can be monitored and managed.

Training and ongoing support in collaborative processes, relationship building, and subject matter expertise.

Connection to other education partnerships working on similar projects, or in a similar context, for sharing and mentorship.

SAMPLE JOINT LETTER/MEMO

INSTRUCTIONS

Use the following example of a joint letter from an education association/union and a school district administration, describing their shared commitment to form a partnership, and letting employees know (a) that the partnership exists; (b) the topic that the partnership will first address; and (c) some of the teams/committees that will be formed.

Dear employees of **[school district]**,

Dear **[stakeholder(s)]**,

On behalf of **[Partner 1]** and **[Partner 2]**, we are very pleased and excited to announce our commitment to engage in a formal collaboration process to address **[topic]** in our school system. We have chosen to address this topic because of the impact it has on our students.

Research has long shown that collaboration between and among educators in a school yields positive outcomes. **[School district]** is a school system that values the voice and professionalism of its educators. We know that educators are closest to the students and are uniquely positioned to advise on issues of teaching and learning. More recent research has shown that a formal education partnership between a district's administrators, education associations/unions, and other stakeholders can serve as a powerful antecedent to educator collaboration within schools.

Over the next couple of months, we will form district and school leadership teams to support working committees around **[issue]**. The committees will be comprised of representatives from throughout the school system who have an interest and the skills to realize our goal. All working committee members will have a shared voice in decision making and the group process. District and school leadership teams will provide support and oversight for the project. These teams will be comprised of members from all aspects of system leadership – administrators, education association/union representatives, school board members, and parent and community members.

This partnership may require us to work together in new ways, but we hope that you will join us in our excitement and follow our collaboration process so that – together – we can make a difference in the lives of our students.

Respectfully,

[Partner 1] and **[Partner 2]**

ACT: IDENTIFY COLLABORATIVE TEAMS AND FUNCTIONS

IDENTIFY COLLABORATIVE TEAMS & FUNCTIONS

DEFINE CONTENT FOR COLLABORATION

ESTABLISH SUPPORT RESOURCES

&

DEFINE PROCESS FOR COLLABORATION

IMPLEMENT COLLABORATION

This chapter introduces the leadership teams and working committees that comprise a collaborative education partnership. The teams and committees make up a comprehensive system in support of district- and school-level collaboration. You'll determine what teams are needed for collaboration on your student-centered projects.

Including:
I.   Creating the Spaces for the Work to Take Place
        o District Leadership Team
        o School Leadership Team
        o Working Committee
II. Tools to Identify Collaborative Teams and Functions
        o Collaborative Structure Worksheet
        o Standing Meeting Worksheet

CREATING THE SPACES FOR THE WORK TO TAKE PLACE

Once you have identified partners who are ready to collaborate, collectively formed a commitment, and identified a focus for your collaboration, it's time to create the "spaces" for the work to take place. Is this work best suited to the school-level? District-level? Or both?

Whether at the district or school level, there are typically two types of teams: a leadership team and working committees. The District or School Leadership Teams usually set vision and goals and help guide the work of the working committees. The working committees who implement the projects to realize student-centered goals. Working committees can be formed at both the district and school levels.

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP TEAMS, SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAMS, AND WORKING COMMITTEES
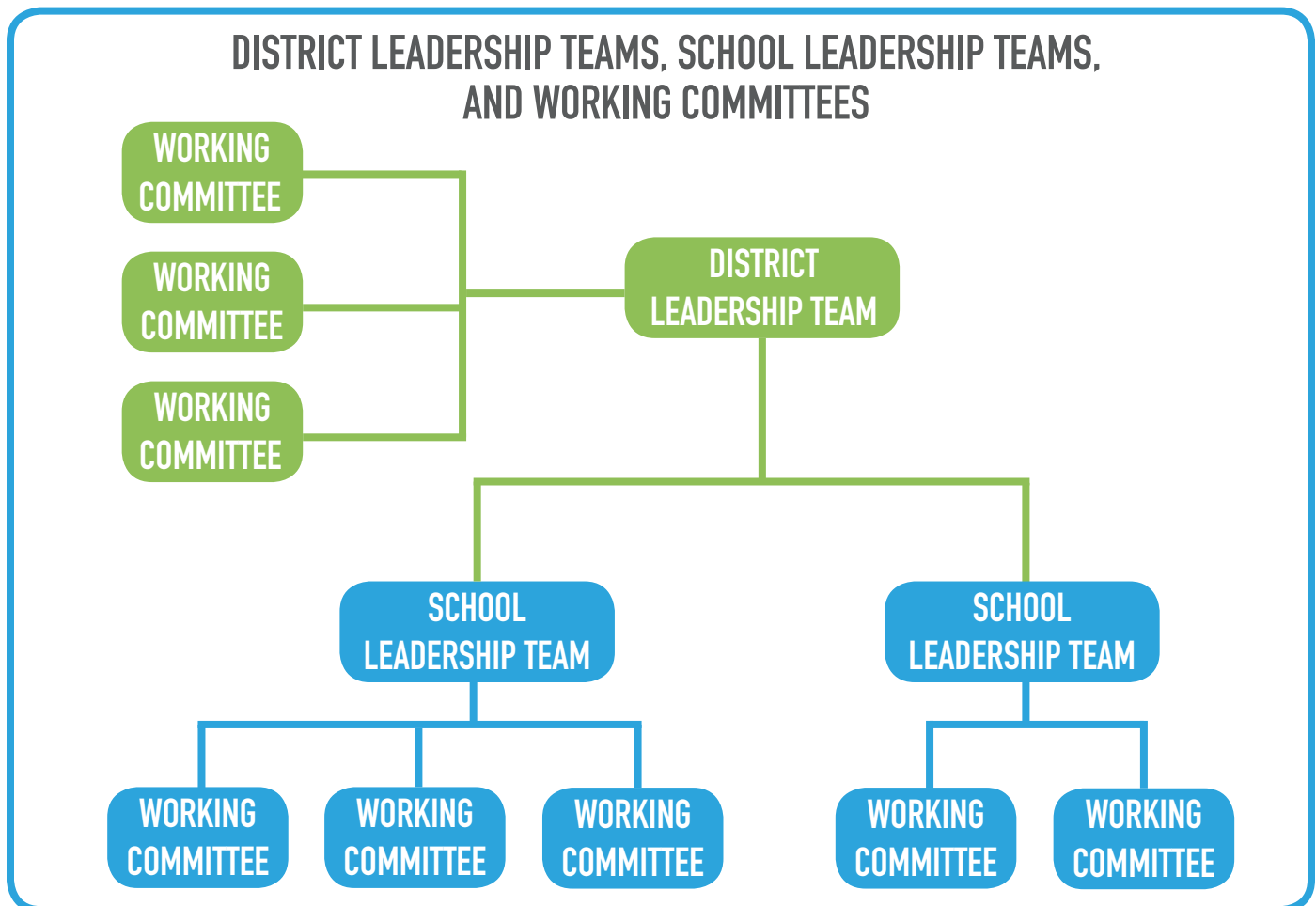
Note that these teams and committees are examples of organizational structures that have worked for others using collaborative practices. We understand that a fledgling partnership may not have all of them in place at the outset of their work; however, it is instructive to examine a comprehensive view of a collaborative partnership's potential support structures. These

structures can be intentionally and incrementally built over time while doing the collaborative work. Having such a structure in place is not a prerequisite to the work. As always, we encourage teams to *start somewhere*. Figure out which of these structures you already have, and build from there. Do you already have professional learning committees in your schools? If so, can those be used as working committees to address specific issues? Do you already have School Leadership Teams advising principals? If so, take a look to ensure that all of the necessary stakeholders are included on those teams, and repurpose them to serve a coordination and support role for working committees.

District Leadership Team

The District Leadership Team (DLT) is typically comprised of district and school administrators and association/union and teacher leaders who work together on district-wide problem solving and guide the integration of school-based collaboration efforts with district initiatives. It provides opportunities to model and support a culture of collaboration where all stakeholders are engaged in building a system focused on continuous improvement. The DLT learns together and listens to and reflects on the school-based work in order to improve teaching effectiveness and student learning. In particular, the DLT might:

- Model and support a culture of collaboration
- Encourage active engagement of the education association/union, district, and school communities
- Identify and diagnose needs
- Form project-based working committees to address district-level projects
- Commission, empower, and support School Leadership Teams (SLTs)
- Monitor and advise SLTs on project progress and collaboration skills
- Track and monitor overall progress and document lessons learned
- Jointly broadcast system-wide communications about accomplishments, challenges, opportunities for improvement, and lessons learned

The DLT is usually co-chaired by a district administrator and an association/union leader. District representation typically includes representatives from major district departments such as curriculum and instruction, human resources, and/or students support services. Association/union representation may include executive committee members, negotiations committee members, and members from other committees focused on improving professional practice. School-level representation may include principals, assistant principals, teachers, association/union leaders, and support professionals. DLT membership should include representatives from the SLTs to facilitate integration and communication. Team appointments should be made jointly by the administration and the education association/union.

Establishing a leadership team is often an early step in establishing a productive partnership. Although, it sometimes goes the other direction: joint education stakeholder task forces or working committees get established to address a specific problem or issue, and their success breeds a desire to continue working together in more systemic, lasting ways, thus spawning a

new leadership team to coordinate future efforts. Either way, over time, trust is established between the education association/union, district administrators, and other stakeholders through building a history of promises kept. This allows the structures that solidify this trust and support long-term, sustainable collaboration to be expanded and codified.

As an example, the following graphics show the framework for district-level collaboration in the ABC Unified School District, located about 25 miles southeast of Los Angeles. The ABC Unified School District and its union, the ABC Federation of Teachers, have been pioneers in collaborative education partnerships and their successes have provided much research data. They call their collaboration "PAL": Partnership between Administration and Labor. It has withstood several superintendent and union president changes over the years, because the collaboration structures are codified into lasting agreements and because the partnership fostered such a culture of working together that both the education association/union members and the school board intentionally seek out collaboratively-minded individuals when hiring or electing their leaders.

ABCUSD–ABCFT PAL COUNCIL AND FOCUS GROUPS

PAL COUNCIL

Administrative Cabinet	Superintendent & Union President	Union Executive Board

DISTRICT LEVEL WORKING COMMITTEES
(comprised of principals, admins, building reps and other educators)

Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools	Adult Education	Special Education	Child Development

FOCUS GROUPS AND TASK FORCES
(comprised of principals, building reps and their designees)

topics as needed	topics as needed	topics as needed

UNION COMMITTEES

COPE & State Committees	Union Social Committee	Other Union Committees

The ABC partnership calls their DLT structure the PAL Council. It is made up of the superintendent and her administrative cabinet, and the union president and his executive board. The PAL Council established district-level working committees on six key focus areas within their academic services: elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, adult education, special education, and child development. Additional district-level committees are created as needed,

ABCUSD–ABCFT AREAS OF SHARED INTEREST

Academic Services
- Professional Learning
- CA State Standards
- Smarter Balance Assessment
- PROPS (Proactive Prob. Solving)

Human Resources
- Negotiations
- Recruitment & Retirement Fairs
- New Teacher Orientation
- Personnel Issues

COLLABORATIONS

Business Services
- Insurance Benefits Committee
- Budget Workshops
- Finance and Audit Committee

School Services
- Liaison w/Principals - COMPASS
- Positive Behavioral Supports
- Interventions & Support
- PAL Survey Committee

on a variety of topics. The partners have agreed to routinely collaborate on several large areas of shared interest, including academic services, human resources, business services, and school services.

In addition, ABC's PAL includes a set of standing meetings between role-alike individuals across labor and management. The superintendent and union president meet weekly. The ABC Federation of Teachers organized its executive board roles to match those of the district superintendent's cabinet, so it is clear who the union counterpart is for each key administrator in the district. These individuals meet regularly. Between their meetings, the union leaders gather input from the building representatives and other educator-leaders, so they are knowledgeable about the opinions and experiences of the workforce and can have productive, timely conversations.

PARTNERSHIP STANDING MEETINGS
(AN EXAMPLE FROM ABC UNIFIED)

District Administration		Association/Union
SUPERINTENDENT	⟷	UNION PRESIDENT
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER	⟷	CHIEF NEGOTIATOR
ASST. SUPERINTENDENT, HR	⟷	UNION PRESIDENT & CHIEF NEGOTIATOR
ASST. SUPERINTENDENT, ACADEMIC	⟷	PASS COORDINATOR & VP ELEM
CURRICULUM & PROFESSIONAL DEV.	⟷	VP HS & VP MS
SPECIAL EDUCATION	⟷	VP SPECIAL ED. & SPECIAL ED. ADVISORY CMTE.
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	⟷	UNION PRESIDENT
COORDINATOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT	⟷	VP. CHILD DEVELOPMENT
DIRECTOR OF SCHOOLS	⟷	RECORDING SECRETARY
ABC MANAGEMENT	⟷	ALL LABOR UNIONS
DISTRICT CABINET	⟷	ABCFT EXEC. BOARD
PRINCIPALS	⟷	SITE REPS

Creating standing meetings between association/union leaders and district administrators responsible for multiple aspects of educators' lives is a good starting point because it helps ensure that communication flows freely. These meetings complement the collaboration occurring in the DLT, SLT, and committees. Where possible, contract or agreements can be established to codify these communications.

School Leadership Team

The School Leadership Team (SLT) is comprised of the school principal and assistant principal or other administration leaders, representatives from grade levels and content areas, association/union representatives and professional support staff. In some cases, it also includes students, parents, and community members. The SLT identifies school environment and student learning goals and implements strategies that support students, staff, and families. The SLT is the agent for school change. It collects and analyzes student learning data, aligns curriculum and instruction to student learning goals, and establishes methods to share progress with other stakeholders, including the DLT. It provides support to the school-level working committees, who are actively building solutions to issues raised by educators at the school.

> "Collaboration is not just compromising by agreeing to some middle points between two positions, but expanding possibilities by adding other parties with different perspectives who can help find new and creative solutions."
>
> *- Marietta, D'Entremont and Kaur (2017): Improving Education Together: A Guide to Labor Management Community Collaboration*

In particular, the SLT:
- Establishes and communicates a shared school vision
- Engages broad and deep participation from stakeholder groups to solve problems, develop strategies, and carry out and realize goals
- Sets the direction for the school, consistent with school and district goals, and communicates progress.
- Learns about collaboration's benefits, structures, and processes
- Identifies projects and priorities to bring about school success
- Forms project-based working committees to address the priorities of the school-level stakeholders and to oversee implementation of district-level policies and programs at the school
- Increases school employee participation in committees and on school improvement projects
- Monitors and advises committees on project progress and collaboration skills

Working Committee

Both the DLT and SLT guide the work of committees tasked with improving teaching and learning, either at the district or school level. At the school level, working committees are usually comprised of grade level or subject level classroom teachers, instructional leaders, and professional support staff. District-level working committees may include additional district and association/union leader participants. Depending on the issue being addressed, working committees at any level may also include students, parents, and/or community representatives.

In particular, the working committee:

- Establishes a shared teaching and learning vision
- Works together to realize specific goals
- Communicates with the SLT, other working committees, and the DLT about the progress of their work
- Strives to realize all project deliverables within designated timeframes
- Understands how to measure and recognize success in achieving student-centered goals

(The information in this chapter was adapted from materials provided by ABCFT at its West Coast Institute, and from the Consortium for Educational Change's Labor-Management Collaboration Resource Guidebook. Used with permission.)

TURN LEARNING TO ACTION

There are multiple groups of people that comprise a robust and comprehensive collaborative partnership. District Leadership Teams are usually comprised of the superintendent, association/union president, and other key leaders from district administration, the education association/union, and the community. School Leadership Teams are usually comprised of the principal, building representative, and other educators that they select jointly. These leadership teams oversee the partnership and the working committees' progress, established to work on selected issues.

While this comprehensive structure is helpful to create, support, and sustain collaborative processes at all levels of your education system, stakeholders at the beginning stages of their partnership may not have developed such a widespread network of collaboration at the outset. No matter. Start somewhere! Determine which structures you already have, and repurpose them toward collaborative processes. Then build the rest of the structure around them.

To apply what you have learned in this chapter, answer the questions:

- What committees or other working groups already exist in my system, and at what levels?

- How can we ensure that all the necessary stakeholders are included in our existing committees, and refocus their work toward collaborative problem solving?

- What additional teams and committees should we create over time, either at the leadership/oversight level or at the working/implementation level?

The resources and tools in the next section provide an opportunity to extend your learning and get started on this step of the framework.

TOOLS TO HELP YOU SET UP COLLABORATIVE STRUCTURES

ABOUT THESE TOOLS

The tools in this section will help you examine the collaborative structures you may already have in place. They can also help identify where new structures may be warranted to help ensure that your partnership has included all relevant stakeholders and positioned them for shared leadership toward your shared goals.

TOOLS

- The **Collaborative Structure Worksheet** helps partners understand what existing collaborative structures are present in the system, how those existing structures might be better used or repurposed for collaboration on student-centered goals, and where new working groups should be formed (district or school level).

- The **Standing Meeting Worksheet** helps district administrators and education association/union leaders explore possibilities for aligning the leadership structures between the partners and establishing regularly scheduled meetings between key individuals throughout the system, beyond just the superintendent and association/union president.

COLLABORATIVE STRUCTURE WORKSHEET
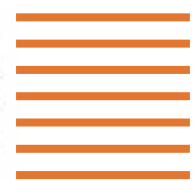
PURPOSE

Strong partnerships create space and opportunity for collaborative work to occur. This tool helps you identify the existing structures, such as teams and committees, in your system that support collaborative practices, analyze if these structures are sufficient to meet your goals, and consider additional structures that you and your partners may want to create.
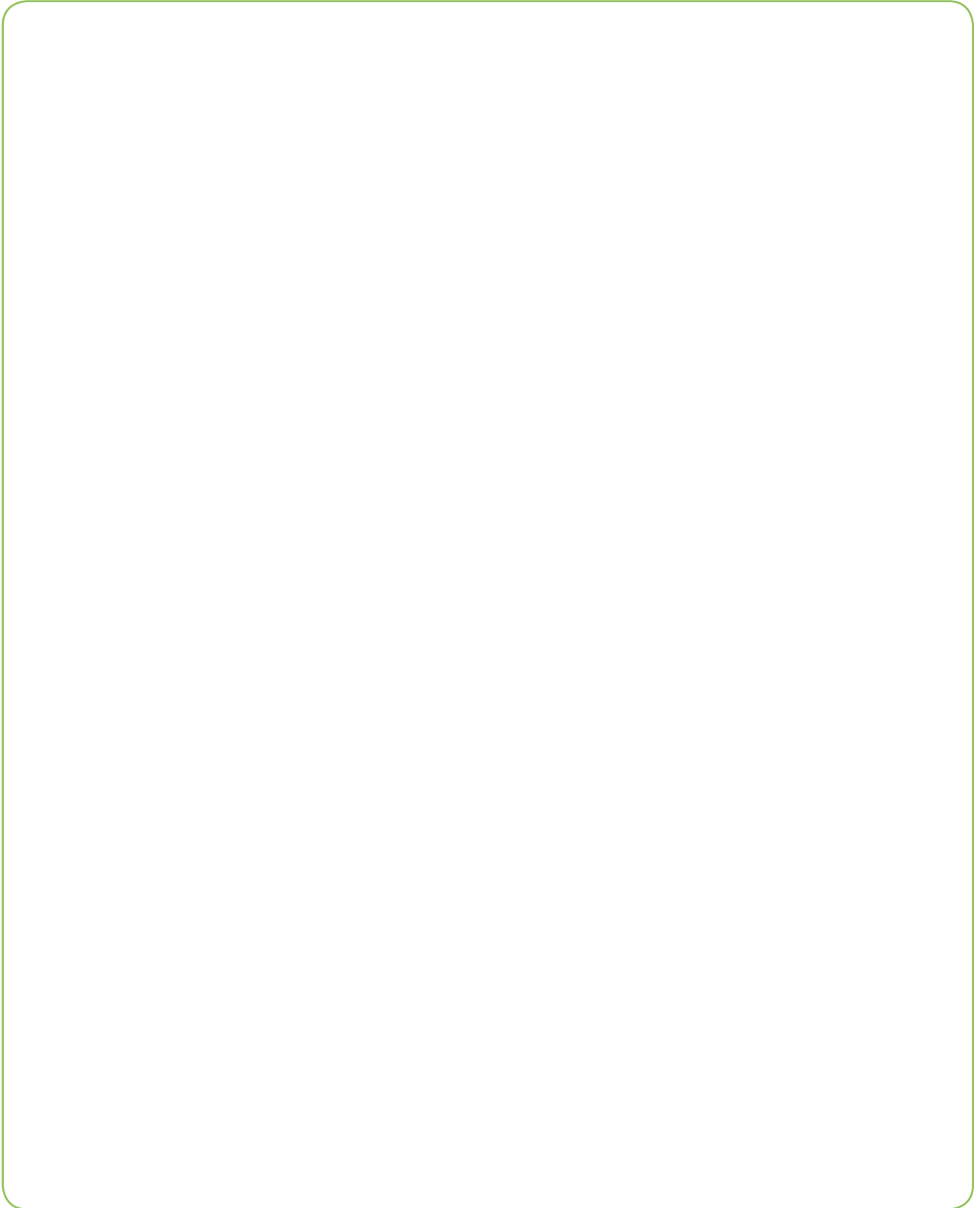
PART 1 INSTRUCTIONS:

A sample organizational chart of collaborative structures is shown below. Use this to draw a chart of your existing structures, then consider what additional teams or committees you might want to establish. On the following page, make your own chart, with placeholders for desired/future teams and committees.

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP TEAM

- DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR
- CURRICULUM HEADS
- UNION LEADERS
- SCHOOL-LEVEL REPS

WORKING COMMITTEE
FOCUS AREA: SPECIAL EDUCATION

WORKING COMMITTEE
FOCUS AREA: EARLY CHILDHOOD

WORKING COMMITTEE
FOCUS AREA: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

What do your current structures look like?

How can you enhance them?

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAM

- PRINCIPAL AND/OR ASST. PRINCIPAL
- UNION REPS
- CONTENT & GRADE LEVEL REPS
- PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT STAFF

WORKING COMMITTEE
FOCUS AREA: SPECIAL EDUCATION

WORKING COMMITTEE
FOCUS AREA: EARLY CHILDHOOD

WORKING COMMITTEE
FOCUS AREA: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ACT: IDENTIFY COLLABORATIVE TEAMS AND FUNCTIONS

Now draw your own!

COLLABORATIVE STRUCTURE WORKSHEET (cont'd)

PART 2 INSTRUCTIONS:

Now that you've drawn your own structures, use the table below to consider the topics they address, which stakeholders are included, and if any modifications are needed. As you fill out the table, are there gaps in the structures that come to mind? Note them on your drawing on the previous page.

Existing Structure	Topics Addressed	Who is Included?	Modifications?

COLLABORATIVE STRUCTURE WORKSHEET (cont'd)

Existing Structure	Topics Addressed	Who is Included?	Modifications?

STANDING MEETING WORKSHEET

INSTRUCTIONS

The following page is an example of some of the standing meetings between the ABC Unified School District administrators and their union counterparts in the ABC Federation of Teachers. Review the example and brainstorm how you might align structures to create standing meetings that allow for open two-way communication between district administrators and association/union leadership. Use the space below to get started.

HOW MIGHT YOU SET UP STANDING MEETINGS?

District Administration		Association/Union
	⟷	
	⟷	
	⟷	
	⟷	
	⟷	
	⟷	
	⟷	

PARTNERSHIP STANDING MEETINGS
(AN EXAMPLE FROM ABC UNIFIED)

District Administration		Union/Association
SUPERINTENDENT	⟷	UNION PRESIDENT
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER	⟷	CHIEF NEGOTIATOR
ASST. SUPERINTENDENT, HR	⟷	UNION PRESIDENT & CHIEF NEGOTIATOR
ASST. SUPERINTENDENT, ACADEMIC	⟷	PASS COORDINATOR & VP ELEM
CURRICULUM & PROFESSIONAL DEV.	⟷	VP HS & VP MS
SPECIAL EDUCATION	⟷	VP SPECIAL ED. & SPECIAL ED. ADVISORY CMTE.
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	⟷	UNION PRESIDENT
COORDINATOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT	⟷	VP CHILD DEVELOPMENT
DIRECTOR OF SCHOOLS	⟷	RECORDING SECRETARY
ABC MANAGEMENT	⟷	ALL LABOR UNIONS
DISTRICT CABINET	⟷	ABCFT EXEC. BOARD
PRINCIPALS	⟷	SITE REPS

ACT: ESTABLISH SUPPORT RESOURCES

IDENTIFY COLLABORATIVE TEAMS & FUNCTIONS

ESTABLISH SUPPORT RESOURCES

&

DEFINE CONTENT FOR COLLABORATION

DEFINE PROCESS FOR COLLABORATION

IMPLEMENT COLLABORATION

This chapter describes useful supports that leadership teams can provide for the teams and committees in your school system as they implement the collaboration process.

Including:
I. **Leadership Teams: Support Responsibilities**
- o Partnership Goal Setting
- o Initiative Oversight
- o Facilitation
- o Implementation Support
- o Communications

II. **State and Regional Support for District Leadership Teams**

III. **Tools to Help You Establish Support Resources**
- o Overarching Goals Template
- o Support Tracking
- o Support Resources
- o Communication Plan Template

LEADERSHIP TEAMS: SUPPORT RESPONSIBILITIES

Within a structure of leadership teams and working committees, it is important to understand how leadership teams offer support and guidance to committees to facilitate the collaboration process.

An effective collaborative initiative includes oversight, facilitation, implementation support, and a communication plan. Often, the School Leadership Team (SLT)and the District Leadership Team (DLT) provide these support mechanisms for the initiative. As explained in the previous chapter, one of the key roles of the leadership teams is to support the working committees. However, the leadership teams also need to manage and monitor initiative progress and establish support mechanisms for their own work.

> "I'm starting to think this world is just a place for us to learn that we need each other more than we want to admit."
>
> *- Richelle E. Goodrich,*
> *Smile Anyway*

Some of these same concepts are also addressed in the *Act: Defining Process* chapter, although that chapter focuses on how they are applied in working committees. As previously noted, it's important that all collaborative committees and teams, regardless of which level of the partnership they're on, have access to meaningful supports to ensure sustainable and replicable processes.

Partnership Goal Setting

Collaboration involves many participants working together towards a common goal. It's important for collaborative groups at all levels - from DLTs to working committees - to set goals and objectives for their work. A goal is what you hope to achieve within a designated timeframe. It tells you where you want to go with your partnership. These goals can be relational, addressing the establishment and growth of collaborative teams and committees, or they can be content-related, addressing the issue that you and your partners have committed to work on.

For example, a relational goal for your partnership might read, "By the end of next year administrators and educators will be able to say they are meeting collaboratively each month as part of their designated focus groups." A content goal might read, "By the end of next year, educators will report that they are able to schedule at least six hours of professional development time during regularly scheduled school hours."

Initiative Oversight

To keep movement focused toward the goal – with purpose and on course – the DLT or SLT provides initiative oversight. In this role, the leadership teams provide guidance for disparate initiatives or projects across multiple committees. This allows for a cohesive set of operational values and supports, and provides a hub for communication and sharing of ideas, successes, and lessons learned. Leadership teams should be careful to provide advice and support, while ensuring that the teams closest to the work set their own project direction and make their own decisions about designing and implementing their projects. As such, the leadership teams' oversight role is not intended to be evaluative for the purpose of accountability; rather, effective oversight enables the leadership teams to know what's going on and offer timely and helpful support when groups steer off course.

Initiative oversight includes many support mechanisms and plans which need to be managed so that they are accessible to all participants, effectively applied to group efforts, and provide the assistance that participants need. Three such mechanisms are facilitation, implementation support, and communications. Each of these is detailed in the sections below.

Facilitation

Some collaborative teams are self-facilitating. They are jointly led by administration and association/union representatives, and grounded in both strong relationships between the two individuals and a history of promises kept between the association/union and the district leadership. Self-facilitated teams work well when all parties are fully committed to sharing decision-making authority with others in the group. The trust required for truly shared decision making should not be underestimated. If that trust is not present at the outset of collaboration, for whatever reason, then the team might benefit from a neutral, independent facilitator to guide it through the collaboration process. Such facilitators are typically consultants with expertise in collaborative processes. As trust is built and collaborative skills are developed over time, the facilitator can step back. It is usually only practical to engage an external facilitator at the district level, to work with District Leadership Teams and district-level working committees. School Leadership Teams tend to be self-facilitating, because there are so many of them in any given district and facilitation resources are limited.

Facilitation can take several different forms, including relationship-building and training ex-periences. Often, the first step in executing collaborative work is for partners to participate in training to learn the foundations of collaborative processes and how to use and execute the tools contained in this guidebook. Training might occur before you even begin to define your content or processes, or it might occur in parallel. Regardless, participant training is a valuable part of the collaboration process. Facilitators, skilled in collaborative process methodologies, are often the ones to deliver participant training.

After an initial training, some teams are left to self-facilitate, and the facilitator might serve as a mentor, checking in periodically and offering support but otherwise stepping back. Or, the facilitator might remain intimately involved in the team's projects. Facilitators can set agendas, handle logistics, lead and manage meetings, and more. It is up to the DLT to determine what sort of facilitation is best for the individuals and task at hand. Although third-party facilitators are common, ideally states and districts will begin to cultivate their own facilitators from within so that they can support and sustain the collaboration process.

Implementation Support

Once the initial training is complete and the committee begins its work, initiative and com-mittee support continue. Implementation support refers to the leadership teams providing additional training, technical assistance, access to content expertise, process tools, and other supports to meet participants' needs as they implement their work.

Working committees might need refreshers on group norms, project planning, decision mak-ing and other components of collaboration. They might ask for help in better understanding the research base or best practices that relate to their chosen topic, or need technical support accessing content experts, curricular materials, or other resources. SLTs might need to review the collaboration process and framework to maintain the collaborative spirit or practice col-laborative techniques of group leadership (some of which are described in the *Act: Defining Process* chapter in this guidebook) to prevent themselves from falling back into old roles and hierarchies.

Facilitators might be called upon to help leadership teams monitor and support the initiatives underway, and leadership team members might be called upon to help working committees implement the collaboration process and attain their goals. As you launch your partnership efforts, it is important to plan for the types of support you anticipate and for the resources best suited to deliver that support to both leadership teams and working committees. You should also have a mechanism to discover and address those support needs that were not initially anticipated and planned for.

A tool to help organize the implementation supports offered to various collaborative teams in a district is provided at the end of this chapter. Other support resources can be found in the *References and Bibliography* section at the end of this guidebook, which offers a com-prehensive list of reading materials that committees or teams can explore together to dis-

cover additional frameworks, processes, exercises, and tools that may be useful in helping teams progress.

Finally, one of the most common strategies to support collaborative teams is to connect them with others who have used similar processes. Connecting teams within your system, or to collaborative teams elsewhere, is a useful strategy for leadership teams to employ.

Communications

As you have learned, collaboration involves many participants and stakeholders, and occurs at multiple levels, so it's important to develop a plan that details communication channels and frequencies throughout the initiative. The need for knowledge about each team's or committee's work goes beyond the borders of that group. Perhaps there are other working committees tackling related issues, and certainly there are leadership teams who are tasked with overseeing committee work. And, each participant should communicate with their internal stakeholder group about the group's work and progress. In any case, each group has a responsibility to communicate its work, progress, and insights to other stakeholders.

A communication plan helps collaboration teams and committees determine when, why, and how to communicate with other stakeholders. It provides participants and stakeholders with a schedule and format to receive and distribute information. The goal of a communications plan is to share and publicize the work so that both those involved with the work and those outside of your collaborative are informed of and inspired by your collaboration. Ideally, the communication plan considers key milestones and project plan deliverables so that stakeholders receive a consistent message. The plan might be informal and consist of a weekly update emailed to stakeholders, or it might include a formal series of update topics with varying content that is distributed via multiple mediums to multiple audiences.

There are two types of communications that are particularly important in education partnerships: joint communications that come from the partners together to the broader community, highlighting shared decision making and results; and role-specific communications that come from each partner individually to their own constituency or members, reflecting increased voice on issues important to the constituents or members. Both types of communication should occur on a regular basis.

At its best, communication flows two ways. Communication flows out, as teams and committees share what they're doing and learning with one another and with their communities. And, communication also flows in, as teams and committees gather information about the needs, wants, and aspirations of the stakeholder groups. Be thoughtful about planning both directions of communication flow.

A thorough communication plan includes the following components:

- **Communication type:** Is this communication vehicle a newsletter, analytical report, "breaking news" update, etc.?
- **Target audience:** To whom is the information being directed?
- **Content:** What information will be included?
- **Sources:** Where will the information come from?
- **Distribution method(s):** How will it be distributed? email? Hard copy? Web page? Multiple mediums?
- **Distribution schedule:** How often and when will the information be distributed?
- **Point of contact:** Who is responsible for the communication?

STATE AND REGIONAL SUPPORT FOR DISTRICT LEADERSHIP TEAMS

What do you do when the leadership team itself needs support? What resources are available to help ensure you have the skills and tools you need to support the working committees and other collaborative teams in your system? It is important to remember that you are not alone in establishing an education partnership and using collaborative processes to work together on the issues impacting your schools. First, your partners likely have skills, expertise, and connections you do not. You can and should lean on them for support. There are also likely content experts, such as universities and education non-profit organizations, that could offer advice and resources to help address specific problems. And, there are other teams just like yours throughout the country engaging in similar work. Your state-level education association/union may be a resource to connect you to them. There are also state and regional consortia for education partnerships, which offer opportunities to practice collaborative processes and network with others. The tools at the end of this chapter can help you explore the resources available to support you in the oversight role.

When collaboration is most effective, systemic support structures are forged at every level:

- State and/or regional consortia support districts engaged in collaboration
- District-level structures are formed for shared decision making and to support school collaboration
- School-level structures are formed for shared decision-making that supports school improvement

While education challenges, approaches, and solutions vary across state and local contexts, it is valuable to build connections with other education partnerships working on similar projects for sharing and mentorship. It is easy to get so wrapped up in our own projects that we fail to pop our heads out of our burrows to look at the changing landscape around us. Good ideas abound, and our learning multiplies when we intentionally seek out sharing opportunities with others doing similar work. Connecting with other collaborative teams is energizing to the people involved, and it aids in the spread of innovative ideas from site to site, district to district, and beyond.

District teams engaged in collaborative processes often find it useful to connect with other districts engaged in similar processes. Opportunities for district teams to come together for cross-district learning and sharing help increase the quality of collaboration and help spread innovative ideas across district boundaries. As described in the NLMP's *2018 Call to Action* (myschoolmyvoice.nea.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/NLMP-2018-Call-to-Action.pdf), partnerships between state-level education associations/unions, administrators' associations, and school boards associations in several states have created state-level consortia in support of districts engaged in education partnerships. The New Jersey Public Schools Labor-Management Collaborative, for example, supports districts from all around the state by offering training, mentoring, networking, and online resources in support of their collaborative processes. Similarly, with the support of the California Labor-Management Initiative, the ABC Unified School District and ABC Federation of Teachers hold an annual training for stakeholder teams from other districts who want to learn about their PAL process and implement something similar.

The Consortium for Educational Change, an Illinois-based nonprofit, also offers training and support for education stakeholder teams through the regional TURN (Teachers Union Reform Network) meetings. TURN meetings offer districts opportunities for networked learning at a regional level, regardless of the presence of a state consortium. They are facilitated by experts in collaborative processes.

Even if a state-level consortium does not exist in your state, your team is likely not alone in establishing an education partnership. Dr. Saul Rubinstein (Rutgers University) calls the education association/union "a boundary-spanning network." By that he means that the association/union, with its democratic structure of building reps and elected leaders at school, district, state, and national levels, is an asset to any partnership's ability to scale and spread the learning that comes from collaboration. Do not hesitate to ask for the state education association's/union's help in connecting you with your regional TURN or with other teams in your area.

Connecting your group's, school's, and district's work with others doing similar work not only offers you the chance to learn from or mentor others, but to promote the importance and efficacy of collaboration as a strategy for continuous school improvement and transformation on behalf of the nation's students.

TURN LEARNING TO ACTION

An effective collaborative initiative includes oversight, facilitation, implementation support, and a communication plan. DLTs and SLTs are responsible for providing these supports to the working committees who are implementing new initiatives.

It is often useful for education stakeholder teams engaged in this work to connect with one another across districts. Several state-level partnerships have emerged to meet this need. There are also periodic convenings for educational stakeholder teams offered through the regional TURNs, which provide networking, training, and support opportunities for districts engaged in collaborative processes.

To apply what you have learned in this chapter, answer the questions:

- How will you monitor each initiative's status, challenges, and successes? Who will do this across leadership teams and working committees?

- What type of facilitation will work best for the collaborative teams you've established? Will your teams be self-facilitated, or would they benefit from an external facilitator?

- How will you support working committees during the initiative(s)? Can you anticipate what support they might need? What about unexpected needs that come up; how will you respond?

- How will you let others know about the work you are doing? How will your leadership teams know what supports the working committees might need? Do you have internal and external stakeholders to update? How will you spread the good news about effective initiatives?

The resources and tools in the next section offer you an opportunity to extend your learning and get started on this step of the framework.

TOOLS TO HELP YOU ESTABLISH SUPPORT RESOURCES

ABOUT THESE TOOLS

The tools in this section can help leadership teams at district and school levels (DLTs and SLTs) plan the supports they will offer to working committees throughout the district.

TOOLS

- The **Overarching Goals Template** helps leadership teams identify the overarching goals of their partnership (which may include multiple initiatives/committees). These partnership goals often include both relational goals and content goals.

- The **Support Tracking** tool helps leadership teams keep track of the multiple initiatives being undertaken in their school system, and monitor the support needs of the groups doing the work.

- The **Support Resources** worksheet helps you identify your available resources to support both process and content questions, as well as issues that arise during your collaborative process.

- The **Communication Plan Template** helps guide the communications norms in your partnerships, ensuring that stakeholders are informed of your progress. This tool is for leadership teams to detail how, when, and where information will be distributed.

OVERARCHING GOALS TEMPLATE

PARTNERSHIP GOALS

A goal is what you hope to achieve within a defined timeframe. It tells you where you want to go. A goal is stated in terms of the desired outcome within the designated timeframe.

For example, a relational goal for your partnership might read, "By the end of next year administrators and educators will say they are meeting collaboratively each month as part of their designated focus groups."

A content goal might read, "By the end of next year, educators will report that they are able to schedule at least 6 hours of professional development time during regularly scheduled school hours."

Write your overarching partnership goals here and identify if they are relational or content-based...

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

SUPPORT TRACKING

INSTRUCTIONS

Use the table below to organize your leadership team's thinking around the support needed by the various groups implementing initiatives, and how best to provide that support. Fill out the table by asking: What committees are involved? What issues/projects are they working on? What support might they need? How will we provide this support?

Committee	Issue/Project	Support Needed	Method of Support

SUPPORT RESOURCES

This tool helps you identify sources of support for the collaborative teams and committees in your partnership, both for issues related to collaborative processes and for issues related to your initiative's content.

INSTRUCTIONS

Consider the available resources for both collaborative processes and your initiatives' content. If your partners are not working well together, how can you repair strained relationships and get back on track? If you lack the content expertise to solve the problem at hand, where will you go to learn more? Use the chart below to brainstorm points of contact who can help with these questions.

COLLABORATIVE PROCESSES RESOURCES

POINT OF CONTACT:

AREA OF EXPERTISE:

POINT OF CONTACT:

AREA OF EXPERTISE:

POINT OF CONTACT:

AREA OF EXPERTISE:

INITIATIVE CONTENT RESOURCES

POINT OF CONTACT:

AREA OF EXPERTISE:

POINT OF CONTACT:

AREA OF EXPERTISE:

POINT OF CONTACT:

AREA OF EXPERTISE:

COMMUNICATION PLAN TEMPLATE

INSTRUCTIONS

Use this tool to determine how you will share updates about the project as it goes along. Keep in mind the two kinds of communications: **joint** (what we all share together to our community) ; and **role-specific** (what/how we individually communicate to our own stakeholder group). For each, indicate the communication's content, audience, method/mode, and frequency.

JOINT COMMUNICATION PLANNING TEMPLATE

Content Shared	Audience	Method/Mode	Frequency
Professional development	Educators & education support professionals	email newsletter	Monthly

ROLE-SPECIFIC COMMUNICATION PLANNING TEMPLATE

My role:

Content Shared	Individual Stakeholder	Method/Mode	Frequency
Personnel issues	Assistant Superintendent Human Resources	Face-to-face meetings	Bi-weekly

ACT: DEFINE CONTENT FOR COLLABORATION

| IDENTIFY COLLABORATIVE TEAMS & FUNCTIONS | **&** | DEFINE CONTENT FOR COLLABORATION | → | IMPLEMENT COLLABORATION |
| ESTABLISH SUPPORT RESOURCES | | DEFINE PROCESS FOR COLLABORATION | | |

This chapter describes how working committees (at district or school levels) can set attainable and measurable goals and objectives and develop a project plan to meet them.

Including:
I.   **Deciding What to Work On, Exactly**
   o Determining Goals and Objectives
II. **Designing Your Initiative**
   o Creating a Project Plan
III. **Tools to Help You Define Content**
   o NEA's Opportunity Audit
   o Root Cause Analysis: Fishbone Diagram
   o Goals & Objectives Template
   o Project Plan Template

DECIDING WHAT TO WORK ON, EXACTLY

At this point, your leadership team has explored its shared priorities and outlined broad, over-arching goals for the partnership. This chapter focuses on the working committees who will take that broad goal and hone in on a specific aspect of it that is meaningful and attainable for the group. Knowing which student-centered topics were a priority for your school or district allowed you to choose committee members who had the experience, subject matter expertise, and passion to be on your team. Now that your committee is formed, it's time to delve deeper into the discovery process to hone your topic and choose a specific element of the shared student-centered goal for your work. For instance, a school-level working committee to address student literacy achievement may want to focus on grades one through three reading curriculum goals and milestones.

Throughout this guidebook, we've used the phrase *start somewhere* to refer to the notion that there is no exact recipe for collaboration, so you take stock of who and what is available to you and just begin, knowing you will learn and develop and grow over time. At this stage of the collaborative process, you begin narrowing your focus on a goal that is locally impactful and attainable. Collaborative groups need to start their work on something that is within their reach and capacity. Simply put, you *start somewhere* - the starting point can be any issue that is meaningful to team members and under the team's control.

Determining Goals and Objectives

A first-time working committee should not try to solve all the woes of the district, but rather tackle a local issue that affects their students and that is aligned with the leadership team's overarching goal. Even better is when new committees can start with a non-controversial issue and already have administration's support. It is always a good idea to set yourself up for success, especially if this is your first time using shared decision-making processes among education stakeholders. Remember, education partnerships are not only about the issue or content, but are also about the process and the journey the team takes to resolve that issue.

If an overarching goal exists for your work, use it as the starting point to narrow the topic to an issue that is meaningful, attainable, and manageable for your working committee. To do this, it is often useful to conduct a root cause analysis or other diagnostic exercise to determine what your committee feels are the most important factors that contribute to the issue in your context. Only by exploring why you think a problem exists will your team be able to decide which of these contributing factors you want to focus on and address. A tool for exploring root causes is provided at the end of this chapter.

Once your committee has decided upon a narrow issue to address, it's time to take that issue and document your purpose – the goals you'd like to achieve as a result of your committee's

work – and the criteria you'll use to determine if you have realized those goals.

A goal is a desired result that your team hopes to achieve within a certain amount of time. It tells you where you want to go. All team members should agree that the goal is important and each member must be willing to work towards the goal. The team's goal should align with visions your school, administration, and district have to support student success. A goal is stated in terms of the desired outcome within the designated timeframe. For example, a working committee might know that their district wants to address the issue of teacher turnover. The committee might have looked at data showing that the highest teacher turnover is among third and fourth-year teachers, and decided to focus on increasing support for this group. Their goal might read, "By the end of the year, at least 80% of third and fourth grade teachers will have been offered extended mentoring opportunities."

> "We cannot solve our problems with the same level of thinking that created them."
>
> *- Albert Einstein*

Objectives are the measurable criteria you'll use to determine whether you have achieved your goal. This is where the action truly begins. What steps will your committee take to achieve your goal? What changes do you want to make to the way things have been done in the past? What new, innovative ideas do you have?

If goals tell you where you want to go, objectives tell you exactly how to get there. Well-written objectives specify what you must do, the timeframes in which to do them and your available resources for the work. Because objectives are measurable, they are used to evaluate progress towards goal achievement.

When writing objectives, try to make them:

- Specific – clearly identify what will be done, and what you want to accomplish
- Pertinent – the objective is based on current conditions and needs
- Realistic – ensure that the results can realistically be achieved given available resources
- Data-informed – ensure your result can be evaluated against a standard, in terms like quantity, quality, frequency, etc.
- Time-bound – specify when the result(s) can be achieved

Below and on the following page are examples of leadership team goals along with associated working committee goals and objectives:

Leadership Team's Overarching Goal: Increase the number of fourth-grade students in targeted schools performing at or above language arts standards on next year's state test to meet the district average.

Working Committee's Goal: By the end of this year, we will have selected a new language arts instructional program to be implemented next year in targeted schools.

Objectives:
- Create a language arts committee at each targeted school by the middle of the school year
- By April of this year, committees will have reviewed their existing and other potential language arts curricula and decided upon a program and other changes to the language arts instruction at their school
- Develop a plan and calendar to offer professional development on the language arts program to fourth-grade teachers in targeted schools by April of this year

Well-articulated objectives also help teams monitor their groups' status and progress, because they detail the steps needed to realize the goal. At any point along the journey, the group can evaluate its work compared to its objectives to understand where they are in their work. Teams should also set milestones, or points when a certain activity or set of activities should occur. If the team has not met a milestone by the designated date, they should either make adjustments to accelerate their work or adjust their objective.

And perhaps one of the most important reasons for objectives is to tell us when our work is complete. Once the team has met all of its objectives, it is likely that it has realized its goal. Perhaps there were adjustments along the way, but in the end, the team held itself and each member accountable to achieving a vision and improved efficiency by clearly defining the road to get there. Goals and objectives are the roadmap for a successful collaborative team journey.

DESIGNING YOUR INITIATIVE

A working committee's primary responsibility is to design and implement a project or initiative that helps achieve its goal, in ways that move the partnership closer to the overarching goal.

Creating a Project Plan

A project plan helps the group identify the activities, tasks, resources, milestones, and timeframes needed to accomplish goals and objectives. The project plan should include the goal and measurable objectives discussed in the previous section. A set of activities and tasks are grouped under each objective. Each task should include the resources needed to do the task, the timeframe to accomplish it, and any output or metrics associated with the task. Together, completing the tasks ultimately realizes the objective.

The project plan helps you monitor group progress and determine when certain buckets of work have been completed. Often, a particular group member is tasked with managing the plan and reports progress to the leadership team at scheduled intervals. It is important to note

that the project plan not only sets expectations at the project's beginning, it should also reflect changes to the project as it moves along. It should be flexible and adjusted by the group as needed when unanticipated factors affect the original plan. Keep a copy of your original project plan so that later, you can use it as a baseline to evaluate plan modifications.

EXAMPLE PROJECT PLAN

Goal: Next year, over 90% of educators will report that the district-provided professional development during in-service days was "very helpful" and aligned with their needs.			
Objective: By the end of 3rd quarter, identify educators' self-reported professional needs			
	Resource	Due Date	Output
Task: Determine target audience & survey requirements	JP	Dec 1 - Dec 15	Outreach plan
Task: Create survey tool	JP	Dec 16 - Dec 23	Survey instrument
Task: Schedule survey implementation	JP & MK	Jan 6	Survey schedule
Task: Communicate survey intent and schedule	JP & RT	Jan 6 - Jan 10	Joint letter to all staff
Task: Administer survey	JP & JH	Jan 12 - Jan 20	Distribution list
Task: Collate results	JH	Jan 20 - Jan 30	Survey data set
Task: Analyze results	JH	Feb 1 - Feb 15	Survey analytics report
Task: Publish findings on professional needs as reported by educators	JP	Feb 20	Findings report
Task: Professional needs as reported by educators has been completed	JP	Feb 20	Milestone

TURN LEARNING TO ACTION

Once the education partnership participants determine what issues they want to work on, and establish the teams and committees to work toward shared goals, it is time for the working committees to focus in on the exact goals and objectives of their collaborative work. Committees should first choose exactly where within a broad topic they would like to begin their work, and establish a goal and objectives around it. Collaborative teams are encouraged to select a project that is considered "low-hanging fruit:" something of limited scope, low-risk, with a high likelihood of success. Successes built from small projects can be scaled up, and more challenging problems can be addressed as the partnership matures.

To apply what you have learned in this chapter, answer the questions:

- What specific issue will we address?

- What is our goal? How will we know if our solutions were successful?

The resources and tools in the next section offer you an opportunity to extend your learning and get started on this step of the framework.

TOOLS TO HELP YOU DEFINE YOUR CONTENT

ABOUT THESE TOOLS

These tools can be used by working committees to hone in on the exact areas within a broader topic they want to address, and to set related goals and objectives.

TOOLS

- **NEA's Opportunity Audit** (online only at myschoolmyvoice.nea.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Opportunity-Audit-Guide.pdf) can help you evaluate both the accessibility and effectiveness of policies, programs, and budgeting that allow you to create the quality learning environment necessary for all students to succeed. The audit's results will help your team prioritize where it wants to start working to transform your school. The audit is aligned to the Opportunity Checklist tool provided in a previous chapter, but is much more detailed, allowing your committee to focus on more specific priorities and to plan projects aligned to those priorities.

- The **Fishbone Diagram** is a root cause analysis tool that helps working committees brainstorm and understand the causes for the problems they are seeing in their system, and to determine the most significant causes. The *5 Whys* technique can be used to dig into each potential cause and get to the root of the issue.

- The **Goal and Objectives Template** guides the creation of initiative goals and measurable objectives. Working committee members should use this template to develop and document goals and objectives for the initiative.

- The **Project Plan Template** is for working committees (at any level) to help design and implement their collaborative projects. It provides a way to outline objectives, the change ideas toward those objectives, and the tasks involved.

ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS: THE FISHBONE DIAGRAM

PURPOSE

This tool can help a collaborative group define an initiative for their work by better understanding the underlying causes for or contributing factors to the issue at hand, and by helping prioritize which cause(s) to address. Fully understanding contributing factors and their significance helps groups prioritize the initiatives that will most impact desired outcomes.

INSTRUCTIONS

Write the issue you want to investigate at the head of the fish. Brainstorm the contributing causes and write a cause at the end of each "fishbone." As a group, evaluate the causes by asking "if we fixed THIS, how many other things would fall into place?" Then rank each cause, with 1 being the biggest driver or most significant cause, 2 being next most significant, etc. Write the ranking in the associated circle.

Beginning with your number one cause, use the *5 Whys* method to help you drill further down into the root causes. This method is simple, but powerful. For each identified cause, ask why it's happening, and then ask why that sub-cause is happening, and so on, until you've asked and answered Why? five times.

If you identify more than one answer to the "why" questions, add additional fishbones on the right side of the spine to explore alternative root causes. This is a good way to capture different answers to "why" that are equally valuable or correct.

The Pareto principle states that for many occurrences, 80% of the results come from 20% of the causes. By concentrating on the root of your most significant cause, you'll maximize the impact of any changes you make. Concentrate on the last Why? of your #1 cause. Is this root cause something your working group is capable of addressing? Are there realistic and attainable methods to try to solve it? If not, move on to your #2 cause.

ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS: THE FISHBONE DIAGRAM (cont'd)
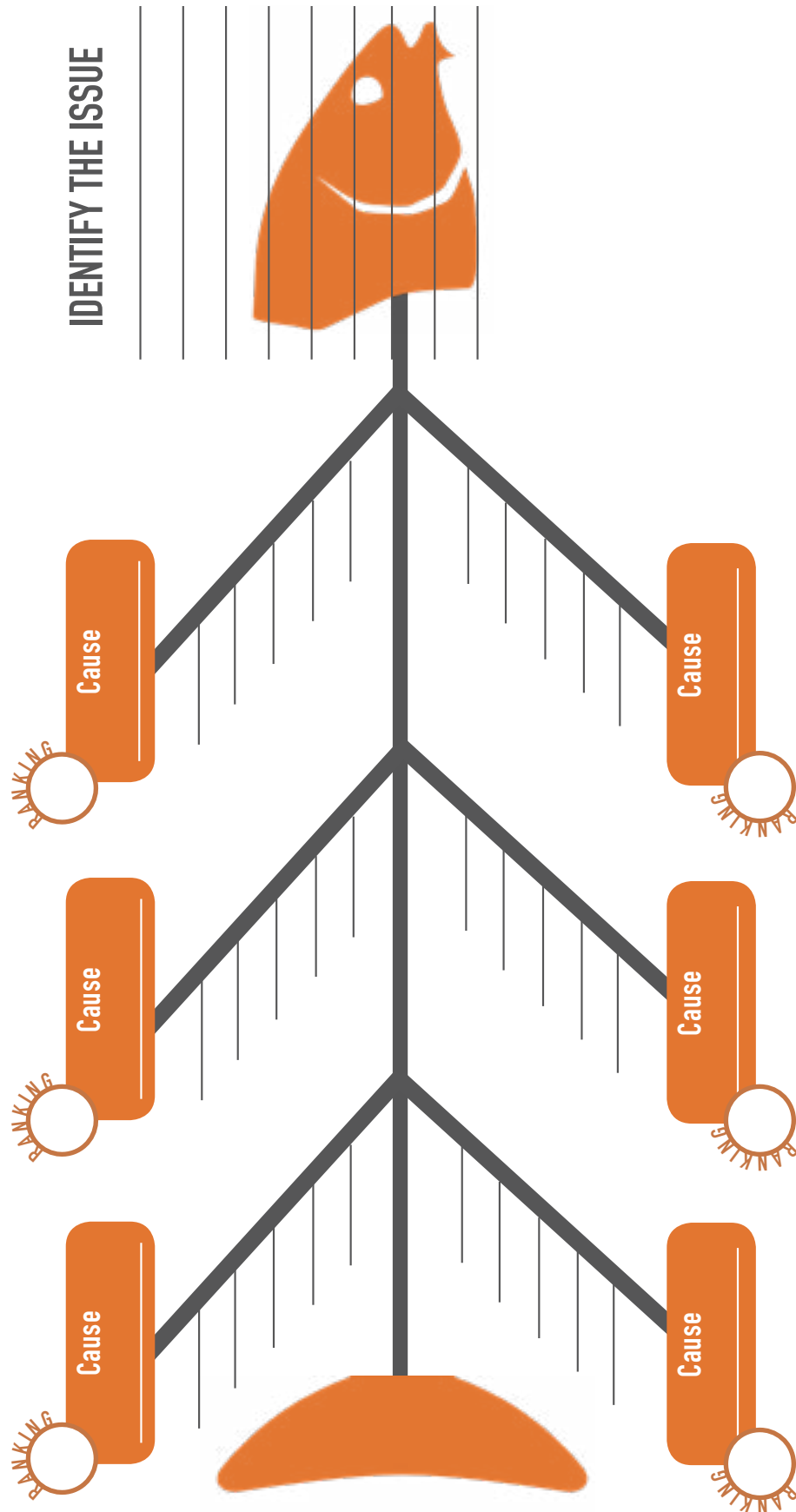
IDENTIFY THE ISSUE

Cause

Cause

Cause

Cause

Cause

Cause

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES TEMPLATE

PURPOSE

This tool can help collaborative groups select a goal for their work, and identify objectives toward that goal.

INITIATIVE GOAL

A goal should be stated in terms of your desired result and a designated timeframe. It should align with the leadership team's overarching goals. For example, a goal related to language arts achievement might read, "By the end of this year, we will have selected a new language arts instructional program to be implemented next year in targeted schools."

Write your initiative's goal here...

INITIATIVE OBJECTIVES

If goals tell you where you want to go, objectives tell you exactly how to get there.

Objectives specify what you must do to achieve your goal in the associated timeframe, being realistic about available resources. Because objectives are measurable, they are used to evaluate progress towards goal achievement.

When you set and achieve objectives, you will have achieved your related goal!

Remember, well-written objectives are:

- Specific
- Pertinent
- Realistic
- Data-informed
- Time-bound

ACT: DEFINE CONTENT FOR COLLABORATION

INITIATIVE OBJECTIVES

Objective 1:

Objective 2:

Objective 3:

Objective 4:

Objective 5:

THE PROJECT PLAN TEMPLATE

Use this template to create your project plan with the goals, objectives, tasks, and subtasks related to your group's work, according to your project's size, scope, and requirements. (Remember, some tasks require subtasks too!)

Goal			
Objective			
	Lead	Due Date	Product/Output/Metrics
Task			
Task			
Subtask			
Task			
Goal			
Objective			
	Lead	Due Date	Product/Output/Metrics
Task			
Task			
Task			
Task			
Task			

ACT: DEFINE PROCESS FOR COLLABORATION

IDENTIFY COLLABORATIVE TEAMS & FUNCTIONS	DEFINE CONTENT FOR COLLABORATION
ESTABLISH SUPPORT RESOURCES	DEFINE PROCESS FOR COLLABORATION

&

IMPLEMENT COLLABORATION
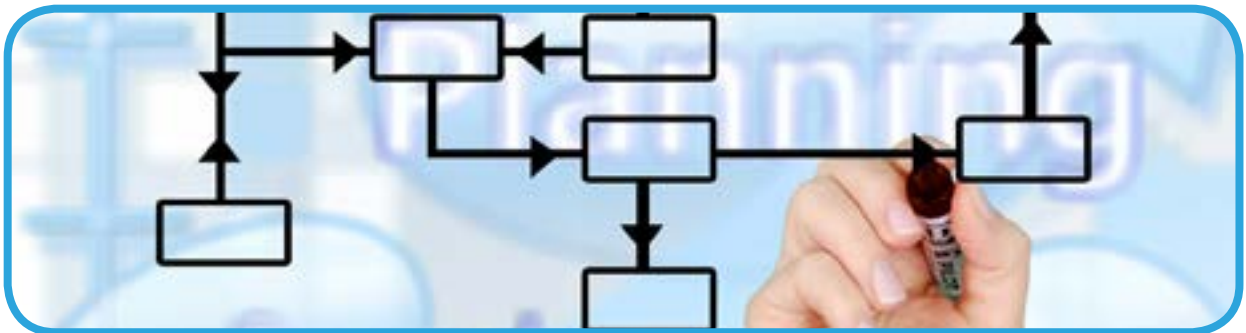
This chapter introduces concepts related to the collaborative processes your group will use throughout your partnership. After reading this chapter, you will understand the value of setting group norms, the need to protect participants' psychological safety, and the importance of clarifying the level of collaboration involved in making decisions. You'll also understand the processes needed to manage a collaborative group and be able to create plans and norms based on those processes.

 Including:
I.   Establishing the Processes for Collaboration
  o Group Norms
  o Psychological Safety
  o Decision Making
II.   Tools to Help You Define Collaborative Processes
  o Group Processes Activity
  o Decision-Making Check-In Tool

ESTABLISHING THE PROCESSES FOR COLLABORATION

Once your committee has decided exactly what you want to work on, and developed a project plan to go about it, it's important to return your focus to the processes and norms that support a collaborative relationship. As previously discussed, education partnerships have both content and process aspects. This chapter describes the behavioral norms that working committees establish to support successful collaboration. Understanding the norms associated with collaboration will lead to more effective structures and outcomes.

Group Norms

Group norms are behavioral guidelines that provide order and consistency for group activities. They can include things such as: meeting times, agenda items, decision-making protocols, and communication plans. Groups who define such norms reduce ambiguity that can be inherent with many individuals work together. Ideally, group norms should be established by group members collectively, and all group members should abide by them.

Group norms should be established on the following topics:
- **Meeting logistics:** Document expectations around meeting times, tardiness, absences, meeting cancellations, meeting location and time and any other meeting details
- **Participation:** Set parameters to ensure that all team members feel comfortable and heard when they participate, have an equal voice, promote active listening, discourage interruptions, and support the collaborative process
- **Record-keeping:** Determine how the agenda will be compiled, how notes will be recorded, and if there will be any kind of exit activity for each meeting
- **Decision making:** Ensure that a method for making group decisions is defined, allows for inclusive decision making, and addresses conflicts (see below)
- **Expectations:** Determine how the group will hold members accountable for upholding group norms
- **Communication:** Determine how and how often you will communicate about your team's activities with stakeholders outside of your team

Psychological Safety

Psychological safety occurs when each team member believes they are respected and accepted by the group and the group provides a safe environment for risk taking. Research shows that individuals who do not feel psychologically safe often refrain from speaking up and sharing ideas in a group because they fear being judged harshly. In contrast, when team members feel safe in a group, the group members tend to be more engaged, innovative, and successful. In fact, in a large-scale internal study, Google recently found that psychological safety was the most important distinguishing factor of its most successful teams. (Source: businessinsider.com/google-explains-top-traits-of-its-best-teams-2015-11)

     nea

The construct of psychological safety was introduced by Harvard Business School professor Amy Edmonson in 1999. Edmonson's 2014 TEDx talk outlined three important pieces of advice to increase psychological safety for members of work teams that include both managers and workers:

1. Frame your work as learning problems, as opposed to execution problems
2. Acknowledge your own fallibility
3. Model curiosity by asking a lot of questions

Read more from Edmonson here: iacmr.org/Conferences/WS2011/Submission_XM/Participant/Readings/Lecture9B_Jing/Edmondson,%20ASQ%201999.pdf.

Similarly, the Impraise blog cites research that shows "creating an environment in which people feel comfortable to take risks is key to fostering innovative workplaces. Have you ever been in a meeting where no one voiced their opinions, there was no discussion and people simply went along with what their manager said? A truly great team is able to bounce ideas off each other, strengthen action plans, help solve issues and provide support." Impraise also suggests the following four steps to foster psychological safety:

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

- Ask for upward feedback
- Acknowledge your mistakes
- Make an effort to take on board opinions that differ from your own
- Be approachable and encourage others to ask questions

ENCOURAGE ACTIVE LISTENING

- Leave phones at the door during meetings
- Show understanding by repeating what was said
- Encourage people to share more by responding and asking questions
- Actively ask those who rarely speak to share their opinion

CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

- Don't allow people to interrupt each other
- All ideas should be accepted equally and never be judged
- Never place blame
- Encourage out of the box and off-the-wall suggestions, as they often lead to innovation

DEVELOP AN OPEN MINDSET

- Help your team become comfortable receiving feedback from each other
- Teach them how to first listen, then respond to input from others
- Rather than a criticism, encourage your team to see feedback as a way to strengthen their ideas

Based on information from: impraise.com/blog/what-is-psychological-safety-and-why-is-it-the-key-to-great-teamwork

Decision Making

A key aspect of any team, and one that greatly contributes to psychological safety, is collaborative decision making. Collaborative decisions are made by the team, on behalf of the team, and no individual is tasked with making the decision alone. It is important that such decisions are "owned" by the team, and, once made, all team members support them and take accountability for them. It is important to psychological safety that no team member is "thrown under the bus" by others who badmouth a team decision after it has been made.

Not all decisions are made the same way, however. Sometimes, a decision's risks, impact, and importance affect how collaboratively it can be made. Quite frankly, not all decisions are appropriate to be shared. Sometimes the skills, influence, and experience of decision makers factor into the decision-making equation. No matter the circumstances, it is important for teams to understand how decisions are made and to set expectations around that process.

Dr. W. Patrick Dolan from the Consortium for Educational Change studied how decisions are made and developed a scale to measure the degree of collaboration involved in the process. The scale depicts the extent to which a decision made between two people (or two stakeholder groups, such as district administration and the education association/union) are shared. Of the seven decision-making steps on the scale, steps one and seven represent authoritarian decisions that are made solely by one party. Not all decisions are appropriate to be shared; some decisions will always remain in the purview of one party or the other, such as the daily pedagogical decisions that classroom teachers make to help their students learn a given lesson, or the governance decisions a school board makes as required by its policies. However, as one superintendent involved in a collaborative education partnership noted, making the choice to move a decision from a one to a three is worthwhile because "even if the decision is solely mine to make, I will make a better one if I have input from others on my team." As you move towards the center of the scale, each step moves a degree closer towards the true col-

DECISION–MAKING CONTINUUM
from W. Patrick Dolan

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
MY DECISION	*MY DECISION, BUT I WILL INFORM YOU*	*MY DECISION AFTER "CONSULTING" WITH YOU*	*WE WILL MAKE THE DECISION*	*YOU WILL MAKE THE DECISION AFTER WE CONSULT*	*YOU'VE GOT THE DECISION BUT WILL INFORM ME*	*YOUR DECISION, YOU WILL ASK ME IF YOU NEED ME*

> "If you can't describe what you are doing as a process, then you don't know what you're doing."
>
> *- W. Edwards Deming*

laboration represented by step four. The more decisions that can be made at step four, the stronger the collaborative relationship becomes.

This scale can be extrapolated to include more than two parties, which can be useful in setting decision-making expectations in a group. If a decision will be made by one actor alone, others need to understand that and the reasons for it. When participants expect a decision to be made collaboratively, only to find that one party sees themselves as the "decider," trust erodes. As an example, you and the superintendent may both be members of a District Leadership Team or district-level working committee. Your group may come to a decision point that includes confidential information to which only the superintendent is privy, but it also represents a crucial milestone in realizing your goals. To further the work of the group, the superintendent might decide to listen to group ideas and opinions and consider those thoughts when they make the final decision (step three). In this scenario, it's important that the superintendent discuss the decision-making process with the group and set the expectation that the superintendent will make the final decision after considering input from the team. Being clear from the outset about where a decision lies on the continuum helps avoid conflict.

You can view Dr. Dolan describing his continuum here: turnweb.org/videos/patrick-dolan-learning-to-live-together-building-a-culture-of-collaboration-focused-on-improving-teaching-and-learning/.

TURN LEARNING TO ACTION

This chapter helped clarify the ways that groups establish and uphold collaborative decision-making processes. Participants in education partnership teams and committees should develop group norms that clarify the logistics of their partnership's collaborative time together such as meeting times, agenda setting, recordkeeping, etc., as well as the behavioral guidelines the group will adhere to. All participants should share in "owning" the group norms. Ideally, the norms maximize the number of decisions that can be shared in a given initiative, and help maintain the psychological safety necessary for individuals from all stakeholder groups to meaningfully contribute.

To apply what you've learned in this chapter, answer the following questions:

- What types of decisions can be truly shared by our collaborative team?

- What types of decisions fall more to the outsides of the continuum?

- What are the meeting logistics that will position our team to maximize shared decision making?

- What are the behavioral guidelines we can set that will maximize the every participant's psychological safety?

The following section contains tools to help establish group norms and to help a team clarify the level of collaboration involved in a decision to be made.

TOOLS TO HELP YOU DEFINE COLLABORATIVE PROCESSES

ABOUT THESE TOOLS

These tools can help leadership teams and working committees establish the collaborative norms that support a collaborative culture within their group.

TOOLS

- Use the **Group Norms Activity** to guide the development of group norms and support participants' psychological safety throughout the collaboration process.

- The **Decision-Making Check-In Tool** helps team members evaluate their decision making expectations in various group situations.

GROUP NORMS ACTIVITY

PURPOSE

This tool can help guide development of agreed-upon group norms to build trust and ensure participants' psychological safety throughout the collaborative process.

INSTRUCTIONS

Give participants color-coded sticky notes for the six categories below. Distribute copies of the category descriptions, or project them on a screen. For 10 minutes, have each participant brainstorm words and phrases they want to include in the group norms, ensuring everyone has at least one idea for each category. Then, use the sticky note responses to fill out the group norms commitment template on the next page.

MEETING LOGISTICS

Document expectations around meeting times, tardiness, absences, meeting cancellations, meeting location and time, and any other meeting details

- *When and where do we meet?*

RECORDKEEPING

Determine how the agenda will be compiled, how notes will be recorded, and if there will be any kind of exit activity for each meeting

- *Who's in charge of making agendas and taking notes?*
- *What format is most useful?*

PARTICIPATION

Set parameters to ensure that all team members have an equal voice, promote active listening, discourage interruptions and support the collaborative process

- *To ensure equal voice, what commitments will we make to each other?*

DECISION MAKING

Ensure that a method for making group decisions is defined, allows for inclusive decision making, and addresses conflicts

- *To minimize conflict when making decisions, what commitments will we make to each other?*

EXPECTATIONS

Determine how the group will hold members accountable for upholding group norms

- *How will we hold each other accountable to these norms?*

COMMUNICATION

Determine how you will communicate about your group activities with stakeholders outside of your group

- *What words, tone, and attitudes will we use when we talk about our partnership with others? What information gets shared, and what stays among the group?*

GROUP NORMS ACTIVITY (cont'd)

Our meeting logistics:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Our records and notes from the meeting will be kept by:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

To ensure maximum participation from everyone, we agree to:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

When our team is faced with a decision, we will:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

To hold one another accountable for these processes, we will:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

When describing the partnership to others, we will:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

DECISION-MAKING CHECK-IN TOOL

PURPOSE: This tool helps participants in an education partnership clarify the decision-making process that will be used for a given decision.

Dolan's 7-Point Decision-Making Continuum, shown below, illustrates that some decisions are made by an individual alone, some by an individual with input from others, and some are truly shared.

All collaborative group members need clarity about where a given decision falls on the continuum. When one person believes the decision is theirs to make and another believes that decision making is shared, it leads to disappointment, frustration, and mistrust. Refer to this continuum during group conversations to ensure that all group members know what sort of decision-making process is being used.

THE 7-POINT DECISION-MAKING CONTINUUM (from W. Patrick Dolan)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
MY DECISION	MY DECISION, BUT I WILL INFORM YOU	MY DECISION AFTER "CONSULTING" WITH YOU	WE WILL MAKE THE DECISION	YOU WILL MAKE THE DECISION AFTER WE CONSULT	YOU'VE GOT THE DECISION BUT WILL INFORM ME	YOUR DECISION, YOU WILL ASK ME IF YOU NEED ME

ACT: DEFINE PROCESS FOR COLLABORATION

ACT: IMPLEMENT COLLABORATION

IDENTIFY COLLABORATIVE TEAMS & FUNCTIONS

DEFINE CONTENT FOR COLLABORATION

&

ESTABLISH SUPPORT RESOURCES

DEFINE PROCESS FOR COLLABORATION

IMPLEMENT COLLABORATION

At this point in the framework, you'll create and implement ideas for positive change within your system. After reading this chapter, you will understand how the extensive planning, structure building, and relationship building have prepared you to implement your team's ideas. You will learn what you need to monitor along the way, and the importance of communicating your work to others.

Including:
I.   Implementing Your Initiative
        o Monitoring Your Initiatives
        o Communication
II. Tools to Help You Implement Your Initiatives
        o Monitoring Plan Template

IMPLEMENTING YOUR INITIATIVE

Much of the preliminary work you have done up to this point has prepared you and your collaborative group to work in an organized manner where all group members understand the expectations of the group and of themselves. As you embark on your collaborative journey, it is time to put all the plans you have made into action.

You have already done quite a bit of preliminary work to set your group up for success. You have established collaborative committees or teams who are positioned and authorized to begin working toward shared goals. You have thought through the ways that team participants can better understand collaborative problem solving and get support along the way. You have determined the broad area of shared interest, and have created goals and objectives around your chosen topic. You have developed a project plan to meet your goals and objectives, including specific ideas that have been detailed as tasks in your plan. You have delineated the group norms that will support your collaborative work. The only thing left to do is implement your team's good ideas.

> "Plans are only good intentions unless they immediately degenerate into hard work."
>
> *- Peter F. Drucker,*
> *The Essential Drucker*

Your team's planned tasks are intended to improve something about the system. Hopefully, the work you have done thus far has put the necessary stakeholders in place to quickly authorize and get support for these ideas so they can be implemented and tested. The type of outcomes you're seeking – greater efficiency, greater effectiveness, higher participation, higher satisfaction, etc. – will depend on the issue(s) you've chosen to tackle and the ideas your team has come up with. As you go, you'll evaluate the results of the tasks so that you can evaluate if your work gave you the results you intended.

It is common in collaborative teams for roles to emerge for participants on the team. Sometimes these roles are formally stated, and other times people's team contributions naturally place them into certain roles. Perhaps you will need a scribe to take notes during meetings; a project plan manager to keep on top of deliverables and milestones and to make adjustments to the project plan; a designated communications leader to guide internal and external communications; a facilitator or mediator to guide group processes; a designee to manage the evaluation process; or a collaborative processes expert to help with the overall methodology. Or perhaps there are additional roles that emerge based on your team's needs. There are no hard and fast rules, as long as your team is making progress toward your goal and strengthening your partnership.

Remember, not only are you trying to resolve a student-centered issue, but you're trying to follow the principles of collaboration within an education partnership. It is important that you constantly monitor your progress in both areas.

Monitoring Your Initiatives

There is a lot to manage and monitor as you implement your work, and it can feel daunting. Set a schedule and designate a process to periodically review your project plan. You may want to designate a team member or members to manage this monitoring role. At this stage, monitoring is not about assessing results, outcomes, or objectives. That comes in the *Reflect* stage of the framework. Monitoring is a way to keep track of whether the tasks in your project plan are being implemented as planned, and to shed light on any unforeseen challenges that have prevented successful task results, so that your team can seek support where needed and mitigate challenges promptly. Learn and grow from both your team's successes and the challenges, and adjust as needed. Project plan monitoring should be open, transparent, and routine.

Communication

Just like for your monitoring tasks, you must remember to communicate effectively and follow your communication plan as you and your team implement your work. Make sure that communication is regular, timely, and informative. Solicit feedback from stakeholders along the way to make sure they are getting the information they need. Ideally, a team member or members will volunteer to manage communications.

Your collaborative efforts should generate learnings can to shared with partnership stakeholders and to the community at large - all who care about the children you serve. Whatever form this sharable learning takes – whether it be a written report or a presentation to the school board or a workshop delivered at an education conference - be sure that it gets adequately distributed and that stakeholders have a means to ask follow-on questions.

TURN LEARNING TO ACTION

This chapter described how your planning has prepared you to plan for monitoring your team's work and progress toward your goals and objectives. It asked you to consider how you'll monitor whether the tasks are being implemented with fidelity; if they are not, your team will identify the challenge that prevented your work from proceeding as planned, and seek support to address that challenge. Your team will also need to periodically refer to your communication plan, ensuring that stakeholders are kept apprised of your team's progress.

In applying what you have learned in this chapter, answer the following questions:

- Who will monitor progress for your team, and what does that monitoring look like? How often will progress be reported, and to whom?

- How will you handle challenges that arise? What supports might you seek out to deal with those challenges?

- How will you communicate with stakeholders as your initiative(s) unfold?

The template in the next section offers you an opportunity to learn more and to get started on this step of the framework.

TOOLS TO HELP YOU IMPLEMENT YOUR INITIATIVES

ABOUT THESE TOOLS

As your collaborative team implements your initiative's tasks, your team will need to monitor how this implementation is unfolding so that you stay on track to meet your goals and objectives. The tool in this section provides a way to monitor how well your team is adhering to its project plan.

TOOLS

- The **Monitoring Plan Template** can help collaborative groups (either leadership teams or working committees) as they implement their initiatives. It offers a way to monitor progress toward the objectives listed in the project plan.

MONITORING PLAN TEMPLATE

INSTRUCTIONS

Take a moment to consider your work and objectives, and think about important milestones. *A milestone is a significant event or accomplishment that brings you closer towards your goal.* Monitoring milestones allows you to see progress towards your goal and make adjustments as needed.

When creating your monitoring plan, write down the milestones that indicate you're getting closer to your goal. Then ask yourself the following questions: What feedback data will you gather to show that this milestone has been met? How frequently will you monitor the feedback data? Where will you get the data? Use the following table to help with your planning. Also use your communications plan to communicate your progress to others.

Milestone	Feedback Data	Frequency	Source

REFLECT: EVALUATE PROCESS & CONTENT OUTCOMES

EVALUATE PROCESS & CONTENT OUTCOMES

→

SUSTAIN AND EXPAND THE EFFORT TO COLLABORATE

This chapter helps leadership teams and/or working committees determine how well their initiatives have gone, and evaluate the health of the collaborative partnership. It can help you understand how to gather data, evaluate both issue resolution and the strength of the collaborative partnership, and provide feedback and lessons learned. You can learn from your initiative's results to guide future work. Your results and insights should be shared with both internal and external stakeholders.

Including:
I.   **Evaluation**
      o Evaluating Your Work
      o Evaluating Issue Resolution
      o Evaluating the Health of Your Partnership
II. **Learning and Celebrating**
III. **Tools to Help You Evaluate Your Results**
      o Results Analysis Template
      o Strengthening Partnerships Reflection Exercise
      o Lessons Learned Discussion Template

EVALUATION

Throughout this guide, you've seen tools to help make the collaborative process more efficient, accessible, and successful. Many of these tools have helped you to collect information your team needed to implement your work; now it's time to evaluate the data and understand what aspects of your work went well and which aspects were more challenging.

The evaluation phase does not come at the end of a project; it begins at the start of the part- nership. When you defined your goals and objectives; identified tasks, resources, and time- lines; and developed collaborative norms, you were defining the criteria you would use to measure your success. How well did you do at resolving the issue? How well did your team collaborate? What processes are repeatable? What were your great successes? Where is there room to improve? How can you share your lessons learned with others? This chapter explores these questions.

Evaluating Your Work

Each task your team implemented was intended to bring about one or more of your objectives, and each objective was intended to get your team closer to your goal. The data to evaluate in your initiatives are ones related to the ideas you tried, to help your team determine how well they worked. Did your work result in positive changes, or not? After accomplishing your tasks, are you closer to your objective? Only by asking yourselves those questions and figuring out the answers (including how you know, based on the evidence in front of you) will your team know whether you're making progress.

Data analysis results in a choice: What are you going to do about what you've learned? The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching describes the options in this choice as threefold: adopt, adapt, or abandon. If the completed task led you to your objective, it's likely a strategy worth keeping. In this case, determine how to repeat it or make it a permanent part of how your district/school handles similar issues, perhaps changing an official policy or proce- dure to do so. If the task(s) you completed resulted in some positive change, but not enough to get you to your objectives or goal, it makes sense to adapt your strategy and try again. What tweaks can you make to your planned tasks that might result in a better outcome? The beauty of trying something and coming up short is that this is where the most learning occurs. It en- ables your team to take a close look at the conditions that either enable or hinder the success of new ideas. At its heart, evaluation is a learning and inquiry cycle; challenges are an accepted part of the process. Finally, if implementing your a task did not get you closer to your objective and/or resulted in negative unintended consequences, it might make the most sense to simply abandon that idea entirely and move on to other ideas.

You can read more from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching here: carnegienetworks.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/230497548-Start-and-Run-a-Guided-PDSA- Plan-Do-Study-Act-.

Evaluating Issue Resolution

The results of your initiative's tasks can help you under-stand whether the tasks helped you meet your objectives. Your issue is not ultimately resolved until you've addressed the needs identified in the needs assessments you conducted during the *Prepare* stage of the collaborative framework, and until you've met the goal established in the *Act* phase. To determine this, examine impact data as well. Whereas the outputs or process data from your tasks helped you document your implementation process, impact data show the outcome of your collaborative work (Mintrop, 2016).

Your initiative's goals were ideally written in a format that makes it easy to determine how well the team met them. For example, the goal "By 2022, our voluntary teacher retention rate in high-poverty schools will increase to 90%" lends itself to clear data needs: the team needs to know the

> "Follow effective action with quiet reflection. From the quiet reflection will come even more effective action."
>
> *- Peter Drucker*

number of teachers in its targeted schools that remained in their teaching placement from one year to the next. It is important to plan how you will collect the required data, and to schedule this data collection in the rhythm of your team's collaborative work. For example, data on teacher retention are readily available from human resources departments, and usually coincide with a district's hiring calendar, which ramps up each year around April or May, and concludes at the start of the following school year. This lends itself to a natural data collection period (once yearly, in September). You want for your objectives to have been met in ways that moved the needle on your goal, and in time for you to collect the impact data to show your goal has been met.

It is also important to periodically review the project in its entirety. Review the needs assessment results and compare them to your project plan. Were all stakeholders' priorities represented in your plan and stakeholder communications? Review your project plan and the changes you made to it along the way. Were you able to address all aspects of your topic? Review your final results and communication plan. Were all stakeholders informed of your outcomes? Use your internal listening structures to ensure communication about the results of your work flows into your collaborative team, as well as out from it. Were the stakeholders satisfied with your results, and do they agree that your work met their needs and wants?

Evaluating the Health of Your Partnership

Your team's success isn't defined based only on issue resolution, but also how you got there. You and your team embraced the essential format of an education partnership to tackle a student-centered issue where everyone on the team had a voice. You started by learning about collaboration, understanding partners' roles in the collaboration process, discovering shared goals, forming teams, and defining group norms and processes.

You may have contributed to a District or School Leadership Team who provided oversight, guidance, facilitator training or community input. Perhaps your working committee was one of many in your district or the first. No matter how you participated, you worked to implement change by collaborating with others.

Now, it's time to review your team's commitments to one another as partners. In the *Prepare: Commit to Collaborate* chapter, we introduced the attributes and skills that support collaboration, and asked you to co-create commitments to one another, writing the guiding principles and guiding behaviors that served as your partnership's foundation. We also introduced the *Key Components of Strong Education Partnerships*, so all partners were on the same page about your partnership. Use the tool at the end of this chapter to help you reflect upon those components, and how successful you were in implementing them.

LEARNING AND CELEBRATING

After your collaborative team has collected its insights into both your partnership's health and the results of your initiatives, you and your partners should be able to clearly state the lessons learned from the partnership thus far. Taking time to reflect on the lessons you've learned, both about the issue you set out to resolve and about the relationships, structures, and processes you built to resolve it, positions you to better scale and spread your successes (which is further explored in the next chapter).

Don't forget to celebrate and communicate your successes! Within your team, take some time to jointly celebrate and congratulate each other. For those outside your team, use your team's communication plan to make sure all of your target audiences know that individuals from various stakeholder groups are working together to enhance student success, and the recent results you've seen. This is also a good time to think beyond your regularly-scheduled communications to include things like a press release to the local paper or a feature for an education website. You can also share your lessons learned to inform or mentor others embarking on an education partnership.

Measure Success	Celebrate Your Achievements	Grow & Share
Monitor progress toward your objectives. Monitor the health of the collaborative relationship.	Celebrate and share your progress with key stakeholders in your community and beyond!	Understand your challenges and share lessons learned to help grow and spread your progress.

TURN LEARNING TO ACTION

In the previous section of the framework, your team implemented a collaborative initiative to meet your shared goal(s). Now it's time to evaluate how that implementation went, and determine whether the changes you made achieved your objectives. It's also time to evaluate the health of your partnership, reflecting upon the relationships you built and the structures and processes you established, and determine the facilitators and barriers in your working relationships so that you can decide how to strengthen your partnership in the years to come.

In applying what you have learned in this chapter, answer the following questions:

- Were the goals and objectives of the partnership's initiatives met?

- How healthy is your partnership? Is it characterized by strong relationships, with supportive structures and shared decision-making processes?

- What lessons have you learned through the process of collaboration that are worth sharing with your internal and external stakeholders?

The tools in the next section offer you an opportunity to learn more and to get started on this step of the framework.

TOOLS TO HELP YOU EVALUATE YOUR RESULTS

ABOUT THESE TOOLS

The tools in this section help a collaborative group evaluate their successes, both toward the shared student-centered goal(s) and toward building a healthy and thriving partnership.

TOOLS

- The Results Analysis Template offers collaborative teams a way to keep track of the work they conducted to meet their objectives, and the corresponding results. Results of the team's efforts help the team determine next steps.

- The Strengthening Partnerships Reflection Exercise asks you to reflect upon the commitments you made to build each of the key components of a strong education partnership, and how you have exhibited or built those components during your collaborative initiative thus far.

- The Lessons Learned Discussion Template presents a way for collaborative teams to evaluate both issue resolution and development of the collaborative relationship among stakeholders.

RESULTS ANALYSIS TEMPLATE

As a team, fill out a copy of this form for each major task (or group of related tasks) your team attempted, to help you gain clarity about how it went and what you want to do about it.

WHAT DID WE DO?

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WHAT WERE THE RESULTS? (HINT: USE DATA!)

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BASED ON YOUR RESULTS, CHOOSE HOW TO PROCEED:

ADOPT
It worked! Standardize this idea by putting it into official policies or processes.

ADAPT
It almost worked! Make tweaks to what we did and try again to get even better results!

ABANDON
It didn't work! Ditch this idea and move on to a better one!

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

PURPOSE This tool can help your leadership team reflect on the strength of your partnerships by reviewing the key components below and considering how to continue strengthening those components.

KEY COMPONENTS TO A STRONG EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP

An agreement between administration and association/union leadership to work together with local stakeholders on plans to improve schools, and **a pledge not to let each other fail.**

A commitment to *start somewhere*. Identify shared student-centered goals, and then work collaboratively and share decision making in the improvement processes to achieve them.

A **rich web of communication and collaboration structures among stakeholders at all levels** of the local school system (e.g., regular meetings between district department leaders and educators appointed through their association/union; district- and school-level leadership teams; working committees; and professional learning communities).

Planning tools and defined goals and objectives, so that everyone involved in collaboration understands expectations of the group members, the work to be done, and so that progress can be monitored and managed.

Training and ongoing support in collaborative processes, relationship building, and subject matter expertise.

Connection to other education partnerships working on similar projects, or in a similar context, for sharing and mentorship.

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS: A REFLECTION EXERCISE (cont'd)

REFLECT: HOW DID YOU DO?

An agreement between administration and association/union leadership to work together with local stakeholders on plans to improve schools, and a pledge not to let each other fail.

☐ STRONG   ☐ ADEQUATE   ☐ NEEDS WORK

WE EXHIBITED THIS COMPONENT BY...

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A commitment to *start somewhere*: identify shared student-centered goals, and then work collaboratively and share decision making in the improvement processes to achieve them.

☐ STRONG   ☐ ADEQUATE   ☐ NEEDS WORK

WE EXHIBITED THIS COMPONENT BY...

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STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS: A REFLECTION EXERCISE (cont'd)

A rich web of communication and collaboration structures among stakeholders at all levels of the local school system (e.g., regular meetings between district department leaders and educators appointed through their association/union; district- and school-level leadership teams; working committees; professional learning communities)

☐ STRONG   ☐ ADEQUATE   ☐ NEEDS WORK

WE EXHIBITED THIS COMPONENT BY...

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Planning tools and defined goals and objectives, so that everyone involved in collaboration understands the work to be done and so that progress can be monitored and managed.

☐ STRONG   ☐ ADEQUATE   ☐ NEEDS WORK

WE EXHIBITED THIS COMPONENT BY...

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STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS: A REFLECTION EXERCISE (cont'd)

Training and ongoing support in collaborative processes, relationship building, and subject matter expertise.

☐ **STRONG**   ☐ **ADEQUATE**   ☐ **NEEDS WORK**

WE EXHIBITED THIS COMPONENT BY...

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Connection to other education partnerships working on similar projects, or in a similar context, for sharing and mentorship.

☐ **STRONG**   ☐ **ADEQUATE**   ☐ **NEEDS WORK**

WE EXHIBITED THIS COMPONENT BY...

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LESSONS LEARNED DISCUSSION TEMPLATE

PURPOSE

This tool can help you facilitate a lessons-learned discussion with your collaborative group.

Select a facilitator randomly – anyone on the team should be comfortable leading the discussion using this template. Elect a scribe and fill out the reflections during the discussion, projected for all to see or using a shared document format that updates in real time, such as Google Docs or Microsoft Online.

GROUP PROCESSES

- Facilitator and scribe roles rotate among group members
- We adhere to the allotted time for each section, so that the meeting can be accomplished in 60 minutes
- We seek each other's viewpoints
- All viewpoints are incorporated in the reflection notes

REVIEW OBJECTIVES AND IMPLEMENTATION (Time: 10 min)

- What did our group set out to accomplish?
- What new ideas did we try?
- Were the ideas implemented with fidelity? Why/why not?
- Were we able to monitor progress throughout implementation? Why or why not?

REVIEW RESULTS (Time: 20 min)

- What results did we see?
- Look at evidence (project plans, survey results, student achievement data, other artifacts)
- Did we achieve our goals? Did we make progress toward them?
- Were the results what we anticipated or hoped for? If not, what are the likely causes for falling short?

REVIEW PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES (Time: 20 min)

- Were most decisions shared during project design and implementation? What inhibited or facilitated shared decision making?
- Did our group abide by the group norms? Why or why not?
- How effective were our communications?
- Did the DLT/SLTs provide support to the working committees?

LOOK FORWARD (Time: 10 min)

- Where are the areas for continued improvement toward our objectives? (If objectives were met, what higher goals can we work toward next?)
- What can we do to improve our working relationship for next time?

REFLECT: EVALUATE PROCESS AND CONTENT OUTCOMES

REFLECT: SUSTAIN AND EXPAND
THE EFFORT TO COLLABORATE

**EVALUATE PROCESS &
CONTENT OUTCOMES**

**SUSTAIN AND EXPAND
THE EFFORT TO COLLABORATE**

This chapter addresses how to sustain the collaboration process in your school and/or district. First, you'll consider how your team's successes from your initiative(s) can be scaled and spread across the district. Next, you'll consider the partnership itself and determine how to strengthen it for the years to come, to put you and your partners in a good position to collectively solve whatever challenges are facing your system. Finally, you'll consider how to share your story with others, becoming part of the nationwide movement to collaborate with education stakeholders for student success.

Including:
I.   **Sustaining and Expanding the Collaborative Approach**
         o Scaling Your Initiatives' Successes
         o Reinforcing Sustainable Structures
         o Sustaining and Spreading Effective Processes
II. **Joining the Collaborative Movement**
III. **Tools to Help You Sustain and Spread Collaboration**
         o Where Are You Going Next?
         o Sustaining Collaborative Structures
         o Identifying Repeatable Processes

SUSTAINING AND EXPANDING THE COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

In any kind of improvement life cycle, such as the one represented in this guidebook, sustainability is achieved by embedding your successes deeper into your system, creating and sharing repeatable processes, reinforcing sustainable collaboration structures, and strengthening the partnership. The likelihood of your team being able to sustain its success was increased by taking the time to develop plans and work those plans in collaborative ways, not rushing headstrong into problem solving. As you come to the end of the improvement life cycle's first round, your team will first choose how your lessons learned might be used in new places or in new ways, scaling successes through and beyond your school system. Your team will also reinforce the collaboration structures you've built to support the processes moving forward, and by doing so will fortify the partnership that got you to the collaboration table in the first place. And, it is our hope that you will foster even more opportunities for collaboration and spread the good word to others who are interested in collaboration.

Scaling Your Initiatives' Successes

In the previous section, you evaluated both implementation and impact data, which shows your progress toward your initiative's goals. You evaluated your results and determined the lessons you learned along the way. You used those lessons to decide whether to adapt, adopt, or abandon the ideas you tried. Now it's time to consider some important questions that will help you make decisions about what to do next:

- Do you need to test whether what worked in one context will work in another?

- Do you need to scale up, and implement similar interventions across a broader population of staff or schools?

- Do you need to set a more ambitious goal and try for even greater success on the same topic?

- Or is this issue fully resolved everywhere within your system, indicating that it's time to move to other needs? If this is the case, perhaps it's time for a new needs assessment to re-evaluate the most pressing needs in your system.

Whatever comes next for your team related to the student-centered goals you worked towards, the collaborative structures you built are lasting, there at the ready for you to use, and the collaborative processes your team used are fully repeatable. Ways to reinforce these structures and sustain these processes are discussed below.

Reinforcing Sustainable Structures

Your partnership's structures are the "spaces" you built for collaboration to take place – the teams, committees, regular meetings, etc. Whether you formed District and School Leadership Teams, working committees, or both, it is important to continue the work of these collaborative teams beyond the initial project's scope. These structures allowed for regular communication and joint problem solving toward your partnership's first shared goal, fortifying the relationships among the adults in your school system. These structures can also be useful beyond the initial short-term projects and used for continuous improvement efforts.

> "Each problem that I solved became a rule, which served afterwards to solve other problems."
>
> *- Rene Descartes*

Did you and your partners set overarching goals for establishing collaborative structures? Reflect with your partners about the teams and committees you established, and the extent to which they improved collaborative decision-making processes compared to before your partnership began. Did you have both working committees to conduct the projects and leadership teams to support the working committees, or were these one and the same in your partnership? Did your structures work well? Why or why not?

Expand joint decision-making structures wherever possible, to include district-level committees on a variety of issues, as well as School Leadership Teams. What additional teams and committees might you establish moving forward? What other ways can you and your partners sustain and spread collaboration throughout the district? If you have not already, establish standing meetings between administrators and educator-leaders at district and school levels, with each pair of leaders co-chairing working committees on the topic that matches their area of expertise.

If applicable, include collaborative leadership roles and collaborative partnerships in contract language and/or district and school charters. Use agreements or contracts to codify the collaborative structures so that they are sustainable beyond personnel changes and represent a culture shift toward collaboration. Also, consider how to amend school board policies to support collaborative efforts.

And don't forget to include parents and the local community as team members and in your communication plans. They possess the longevity beyond most education system stakeholders and the influence to elect collaboration-minded individuals to school boards and other administrative positions. When parents and community understand the positive impact that collaborative decision making has on their children's education and on their community, they will ensure that it endures. If you did not meaningfully include parents and community in your partnership during this improvement cycle, consider how you might be more inclusive moving forward.

Sustaining and Spreading Effective Processes

If you've read this far, you are already well on your way in your collaboration journey. You have established your partnership, creating space and time to work together in collaborative ways, explored an issue in depth, and tried new ideas to address it. Perhaps this guidebook was the basis of a collaboration toolkit used in your school or district to usher in education partnerships. Perhaps you used another collaborative framework or discovery process that worked better in your context than the one in this guidebook. Or perhaps you created your own guide. Regardless of how closely you did or did not adhere to the framework offered here, it is important to document your process, share your learnings, and update your documentation as you become more experienced in collaborative processes. When your processes have been committed to paper, they become much easier to repeat, improve, and share.

PREPARE

- Were all team members able to abide by the group norms you established at the outset, and did they allow for equitable member voice and psychological safety?
- Did your decision-making guidelines help set proper expectations and move the team along its journey?

ACT

- How did implementation of your collaborative initiative go?
- Were you able to monitor your work and adjust your project plan to reflect the needs of the team?
- Were you able to complete all the tasks on your plan with the designated resources and within the prescribed timeframes?

REFLECT

- Were you able to effectively communicate group insights, progress, and outcomes within your team and to external stakeholders?
- Use the lessons your team has learned about its own collaborative process to improve upon and expand the use of the effective practices within your system.

What practices did your team use at different stages of your collaborative process? Using the framework as a guide, reflect on the norms and practices you used to make decisions, noting the ones that worked well (so you can sustain them) and the ones that did not (so you can make a different choice moving forward).

JOINING THE COLLABORATIVE MOVEMENT

By this point, your partnership has come a long way. Perhaps you began with a single working committee. The processes and tools that worked well for this committee are learnings that can be used to set additional collaborative teams up for success. Perhaps you started with a single School Leadership Team, and you're ready to establish similar structures at other schools. Or perhaps you started with a District Leadership Team, and you are able to take what you learned to foster the same structure and collaborative processes at the school level. New teams need not start from scratch; your team now has a role to play in expanding knowledge about collaborative processes throughout your system.

Your team has learned a great deal about how to meaningfully operate within an education partnership, and now is the time to share your knowledge and mentor others in your district or state who are embarking on the education partnerships journey. You received support and guidance as you progressed through your journey; how might you be able to support others as they begin their quest? Partnerships become self-sustaining as the facilitators for new partnerships are developed and grown within the system: "Our experience has been that this is a self-sustaining model: As facilitators from within the system are trained to support other schools and districts, they return to their own schools and districts with renewed energy and effort to collaborate" (McCarthy & Rubinstein, 2017).

Take a moment to think about how you can spread the word and recruit others to embark on this marvelous journey. How can you scale your work so that greater numbers of collaborators can start working on partnerships and collaborative efforts? Perhaps you will consider creating a website for your materials so that others can access them. Maybe you will automate some of your tools so they become more accessible to more stakeholders entering the process. Perhaps you will share your positive outcomes at education conferences, or jointly submit an article to your state education association's/union's and state administrators' association's monthly publication. Perhaps you will elect a collaboration ambassador to become a spokesperson for the movement, help spread the word, and garner influence in your district, state, and beyond.

It is our hope that creating a lasting education partnership has afforded everyone in your school system the benefits of collaboration, and that these benefits continue to serve your students and community for years to come.

TURN LEARNING TO ACTION

At this point, you have come full circle in the collaborative and discovery processes – both having implemented and reflected upon progress toward your student-centered goals AND having built a strong partnership using collaborative processes that support jointly problem solving. In the previous chapter, you reflected on that progress. Now it's time to decide what to do with your learnings moving forward.

In applying what you have learned in this chapter, answer the following questions:

- What is your plan to scale and spread the successes from your student-centered projects?

- What changes would you like to make to your collaborative processes and structures to make them even stronger moving forward?

- How might you share your partnership and its successes with others in your system, and beyond?

The tools in the next section offer you an opportunity to learn more and to get started on this step of the framework.

TOOLS TO HELP YOU SUSTAIN & EXPAND

ABOUT THESE TOOLS

These tools can help collaborative groups plan their next steps. They can help prepare your team to scale and spread both the positive results from your student-centered initiative(s), as well as the collaborative structures the team built and the effective shared decision-making processes used.

TOOLS

- The **Where Are You Going Next?** tool asks your team to identify its successes and consider your next steps.

- The **Sustaining Collaborative Structures** tool helps you evaluate your existing structures and begin to think about additional structures you would like to establish to sustain your work.

- The **Reflecting on Your Collaborative Process** helps you reflect on the usefulness of the various practices you used throughout your collaborative process during this project, and decide which ones to sustain and which ones to change in your next project.

WHERE ARE YOU GOING NEXT?

This tool is intended to encourage you and members of your collaborative group to reflect on lessons learned, consider how to grow and expand your successes, and to co-create the next iteration of your collaborative efforts.

Reflect upon the issue(s) your collaborative team addressed. Consider your results and lessons learned, and use this tool to brainstorm your group's next steps.

How close did you get to your goal?

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How might you scale up to spread your successes?

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What are your next steps?

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SUSTAINING COLLABORATIVE STRUCTURES

PURPOSE

This tool helps you evaluate your existing structures and begin to think about additional structures you would like to establish to sustain your work.

Consider the structures you've built to support your collaborative efforts. A structure can be anything formally created to encourage collaboration to occur (example: teams, committees, meetings).
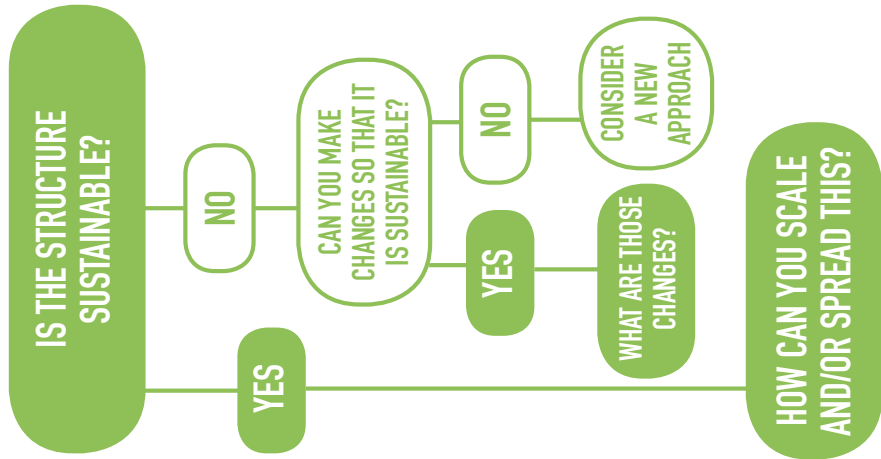
STRUCTURE	SUSTAINABLE?	CHANGES NEEDED TO MAXIMIZE FOR IMPACT?

LIST NEW STRUCTURES TO ESTABLISH

IS THE STRUCTURE SUSTAINABLE?

NO

YES

CAN YOU MAKE CHANGES SO THAT IT IS SUSTAINABLE?

NO

YES

CONSIDER A NEW APPROACH

WHAT ARE THOSE CHANGES?

HOW CAN YOU SCALE AND/OR SPREAD THIS?

🔄 IDENTIFYING REPEATABLE PROCESSES 🔄

This tool will help you reflect on the processes you used at different stages of your collaboration, how helpful they were, and what you might want to change, if anything, for the next iteration of the collaborative work.

Make a list of the processes you implemented during the various stages of collaboration (PREPARE, ACT, and REFLECT). Which ones were helpful and how can you repeat them for future success? Which ones weren't as helpful? What can you change to improve them for future use?

Process	Was it helpful?	If yes, how can you repeat for the future? If no, what can you change for next time?

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