

Leadership Practices #1: Create Opportunities for Meaningful Collaboration

A Taxonomy for Examining Collaboration

In examining teacher teams and their contribution to the productivity of schools, Little (1990) noted that “closely bound groups are instruments both for promoting change and for conserving the present” (p. 509). Little was interested in studying strong and weak ties amongst teachers and learning more about the degree to which collaboration resulted in changes in classroom practice. She noted: “We have very little in the way of close-up description of the *work* people do together versus what they attempt alone, or the *actual* decisions that arise from deliberately ‘participatory’ interactions. Rarely do we read the case history of a consequential decision.” Little (1990) distinguished forms of collegial relations in order to “account for the consequences felt in the classroom” (p. 512). Even though Little’s (1990) continuum of collegial relations was developed more than 25 years ago, it is still a useful tool today for examining collaboration in schools.

Storytelling and Scanning for Ideas

Storytelling and scanning for ideas takes place under conditions of nearly complete independence. Little (1990) noted that “teacher autonomy rests on freedom from scrutiny and the largely unexamined right to exercise personal preference; teachers acknowledge and tolerate the individual preferences or styles of others” (p. 513). Teachers gain information and affirmation in the quick exchange of stories, casual camaraderie, and friendships that occur at a distance from the classroom. In this case, teachers do not feel as if there were any problems to be resolved and they exercise personal preference in whom they talk with and how they use that information.

Aid and Assistance

Aid and assistance is described as help or advice seeking from one colleague to another. Questions asked are interpreted as requests for help and therefore matters of teaching are treated in a piecemeal fashion and do not lead to deep discussions about the practice of teaching. Individualism is sustained as teachers do not interfere in each other’s work in unwarranted ways. Examinations of practice are unlikely to result from these exchanges. Sometimes the expression of empathy even has the potential to dissuade teachers from more analytic examinations of practice.

Sharing

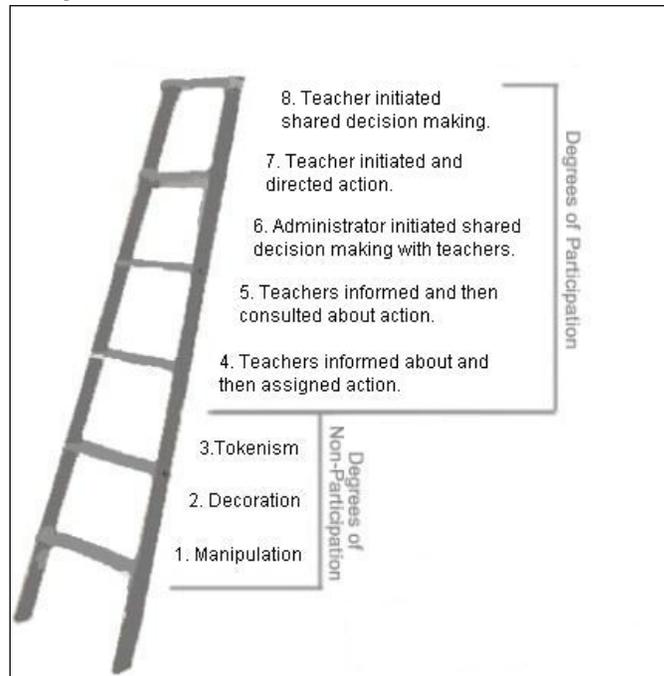
Little’s (1990) third conception of collegiality, sharing, is based on the exchange of materials, methods, ideas, and opinions. “Through routine sharing, teaching is presumably made less private, more public” (p. 518). By making their materials accessible, teachers expose ideas and intentions and the groundwork is laid for productive discussion and debate regarding professional practice. It cannot be assumed however, that through sharing teachers’ day-to-day practice will be influenced.

Joint-Work

Finally, Little (1990) described joint-work as teacher’s collective action and interdependence on each other. It is based on “teachers’ decisions to pursue a single course of action in concert or, alternatively, to decide on a set of basic priorities that in turn guide the independent choices of individual teachers” (p. 519). Motivation to participate is based on the fact that each other’s contributions are required in order to succeed in independent work. It includes the “joint deliberation over difficult and recurring problems of teaching and learning” (p. 520). Professional practices are examined publicly and open to scrutiny. Ideas are put on the table in the service of finding a ‘better way’. Common understandings regarding effective practice are built collaboratively as a result.

Little, J. W. (1990). The persistence of privacy: Autonomy and initiative in teachers' professional relations. *Teacher College Record*, 91(4), 509–536.

Leadership Practices #2: Empower Teachers



Degrees of Non-Participation – 1 being the lowest

1. Manipulation: Formal leaders use teachers to support causes by falsely claiming those causes are inspired by the staff.
2. Decoration: Teachers are used to help bolster a cause in a relatively indirect way: formal leaders do not pretend that the causes are inspired by teachers. Causes are determined by formal leaders and leaders make all the decisions.
3. Tokenism: Teachers appear to be given a choice, but in fact have little or no choice about what they do or how they participate.

Degrees of Participation – 8 being the highest

4. Assigned but taught: Teachers are assigned specific roles, but told how and taught why they are being involved.
5. Consulted and informed: Teachers give advice on projects or school-wide activities owned and run by formal leaders. Teachers are informed about how their input will be used but the outcomes are based on decisions made by formal leaders.
6. Administrator initiated, shared decisions with teachers: Projects, school-wide activities, and school improvement processes are initiated by formal leaders, but the decision-making is shared with teachers involved.
7. Teacher initiated and directed: Teachers initiate and direct projects, school wide activities, including professional learning and strategies for school improvement. Administrators are involved in a supportive role.
8. Teacher initiated shared decision-making with administrators: Projects and school wide activities are initiated by teachers, and decision-making is shared among formal and informal leaders. Teachers design and lead professional learning and school improvement strategies. These projects empower teachers while at the same time allowing them to access and learn from experience and the experiences of others.

Leadership Practices #3: Establish Goals and High Expectations

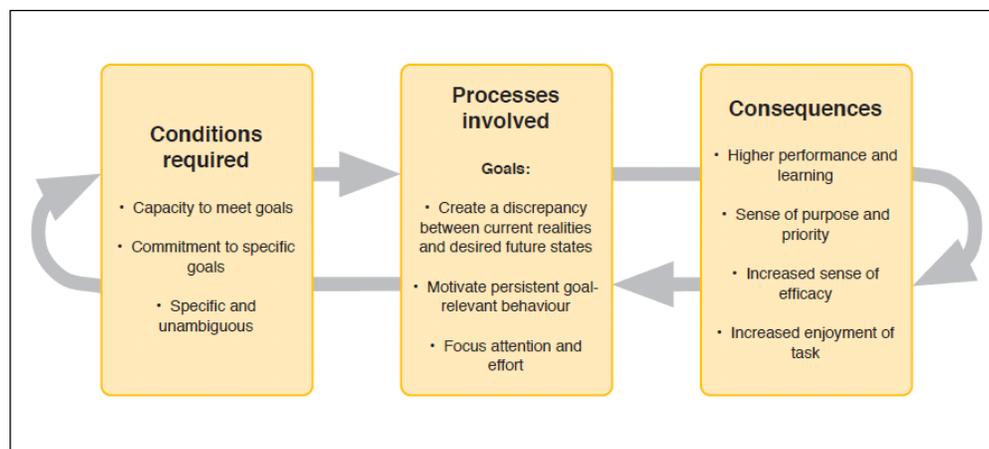
How Goal Setting Works

In the 1960's, psychologist Edwin Locke developed the Goal-Setting Theory of Motivation (Locke & Latham, 2006). The theory states that goal setting is linked to task performance. When teams set challenging goals and receive appropriate feedback, it contributes to better task performance. In other words, goals provide direction to educators (and students) about what needs to be done and how much effort is required to succeed. As long as the goal is not too far out of reach, challenging goals raise motivation for success.

Goal setting improves performance in the following four ways (Locke & Latham, 2002). Goals direct attention to the task at hand, keeping teams focused on what it is they are trying to accomplish. Secondly, goals mobilize efforts and teams work harder as a result of having goals. Thirdly, when teams have a specific goal they are more likely to persist and less likely to give up easily. Finally, goals promote the development of improved strategies. When teams recognize that their current actions are not helping them progress toward their goals, they devise better strategies to get them there.

The stronger a team's beliefs in their collective capability, the higher the goals teams set for themselves (Bandura, 1998). When collective efficacy is reduced however, teams show a significant reduction in goal setting and attainment.

Based on a synthesis of 31 research studies, Robinson et al. (2009) demonstrated how goal setting works (see figure below). The authors identified three conditions that must be met in setting goals. The conditions of effective goal setting required that: (1) the team had the capacity to meet the goals; (2) the goals were clear and specific; and (3) the staff was committed to the goals. In addition to the conditions required, the authors also outlined the processes involved and consequences of effective goal setting. When there is a discrepancy between a school's current situation and their desired future, the dissatisfaction experienced by the staff motivates them to take action to close the gap –as long as they are committed to the goal. In addition to consensus on school goals being a significant predictor of collective teacher efficacy (Kurz & Knight, 2003), goals help in focusing the staff's attention and result in determination and sustained effort. Performance and learning is enhanced. Psychological benefits include greater enjoyment of the staff's work and greater willingness to take on challenges. These benefits result from a sharper sense of purpose.



Robinson, V., Hohepa, M. & Lloyd, C. (2009). *School leadership and student outcomes: Identifying what works and why*. Best evidence synthesis iteration [BES]. New Zealand: Ministry of Education.

Leadership Practices #4: Help Teams Interpret Results and Provide Feedback

Donohoo, J., Hattie, J., & Eells, R. (2018). The Power of Collective Efficacy. *Educational Leadership*, 75(6), 40-44.

The Role of Evidence

So how do school leaders build collective efficacy? The primary factor is *evidence of impact*. When instructional improvement efforts result in improved student outcomes that are validated through sources of student learning data, educators' collective efficacy is strengthened. Evidence of collective impact, in turn, reinforces proactive collective behaviors, feelings, thoughts, and motivations. Bandura referred to this as "reciprocal causality" (Bandura, 1993), noting that collective efficacy is a social resource that does not get depleted by its use; it gets renewed.

It is essential, therefore, to help educators make the link between their collective actions and student outcomes. To understand collective impact, teams need to determine if changes in classroom practice positively influenced student outcomes by examining specific evidence of *student learning*. They need to hear from students about their learning, their progress, their struggles, and their motivation to keep learning. They need to examine student artifacts such as assignments, tests, portfolios, and other indicators of daily progress. They need to have others observe their teaching to help them see their impact on their students. What distinguishes this from teacher's regular routines is moving beyond the mere examination of student artifacts and classroom observations in order to determine student grades to making the link between teachers' actions and student outcomes explicit. It is about the importance of shifting attributions for students' progress and/or lack of progress from external sources (e.g., lack of parental involvement) to factors within teachers' collective sphere of influence (e.g., assessment and teaching strategies).

School leaders play a key role creating non-threatening evidence-based instructional environments. By promoting a culture of collaboration focused on "knowing thy collective impact," leaders have the potential to support school improvement in ways that positively influence teachers' collective efficacy beliefs and thus promote student achievement. Leaders do this by creating conversations about what impact and effort mean, about the difference between progress and achievement, and about the use of dependable evidence. These conversations help to shift educators' thinking from task-related concerns (for example, "How much of my time is x going to require?" or "How will I manage x as part of my daily routine?") to broader impact concerns ("What was the impact when I did x?" "How did x effect the students in my classroom?" "How can we work together to make x even better?"). Teachers can increasingly orient their work around outcomes: "Did the students gain the essential understandings and skills?" "How do we know?" "How can we use evidence of student learning to improve classroom instruction?"

Success lies in what team members *believe what sufficient progress means for all students in the school*. Confidence in each other's abilities and the belief in the impact of the team's work are key elements that set successful school teams apart. Publicly seeking evidence of positive effects on student learning does not happen serendipitously or by accident and neither does a sense of psychological safety. School leaders much work to build a culture designed to increase collective teacher efficacy, which will affect teachers' behavior and student beliefs. The power and promise of collective efficacy is that it can be influenced within schools, so focusing on it as a change point is a viable path to greater student achievement, greater commitment to learning, and seeing school as an inviting place to come and learn.

The greatest power that principals have in schools is that they can control the narrative. If the narrative is about bus timetables, tweaks in the curriculum, test schedules, this percolates through the school as the purpose of schooling – compliance to procedures. In such schools, students think learning is coming to school on time, sitting up straight, keeping quiet, and watching the teacher work. But if instead the narrative is about high expectations, growth in relation to inputs, what it means to be a 'good learner' in various subjects, and what impact means, then teachers and students will think about learning in a different way. They will believe that learning is about challenge, about understanding and realizing high expectations, and that setbacks are an opportunity to learn. Students will also believe that coming to school means investing energy into deliberate practice. The secret is the critical nature of collaboration and the strength of believing that together, administrators, faculty, and students can accomplish great things. This is the power of collective efficacy.

Enabling Conditions for Collective Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire

Directions: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about your school from **strongly disagree** to **strongly agree**. Your answers are confidential.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Teachers are entrusted to make important decisions on school-wide issues.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Improvement goals are established and understood by all faculty.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Administrators help us carry out our duties effectively.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. The staff holds shared beliefs about effective instructional approaches.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Teachers are provided authentic leadership opportunities.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I know about the classroom management strategies my colleagues use in their classrooms.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. There is consensus on school goals amongst staff.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. The staff agrees about what constitutes effective classroom instruction.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. The leaders show concern for the staff.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. There is a system in place to ensure high levels of success for all students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. The staff agrees about assessment strategies that are the most effective.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. There are systems in place for tracking and monitoring at-risk students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. I know about the feedback my colleagues provide to students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. The leaders protect the staff from issues that detract us from focusing on learning and teaching.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. Teachers have a voice in matters related to school improvement.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. Students meet with success because of interventions that are in place.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. I am aware of the teaching practices used by others on staff.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. Teachers actively participate in setting school-wide improvement goals.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Overall Score – sum of the scores for all 18 items divided by 18.

Advanced Teacher Influence: Sum of items 1, 5 and 15 _____ /3

Goal Consensus: Sum of items 2, 7 and 18 _____ /3

Teachers' Knowledge/Work: Sum of items 6, 13 and 17 _____ /3

Cohesive Staff: Sum of items 4, 8 and 11 _____ /3

Responsiveness of Leadership: Sum of items 3, 9 and 14 _____ /3

Effective Systems of Intervention: Sum of items 10, 12 and 16 _____ /3