Tools to Support Work Area 1

Engage Cross Functional Expertise in Support of Youth



Tools to Support Work Area 1:

Engage Cross Functional Expertise in Support of Youth

The activities included in Work Area 1 support schools to engage diverse constituents in a collective visioning process that leads constituents to understand, value and ultimately seek the expertise of other school members.

Key Questions When Working on This Area:

- Who are all of your school constituents and how will you include them all in this process?
- When and where will these school constituents interact, and what will their purpose be?
- How will you create the norms/conditions for different school constituents to interact in a way that equalizes power differences and values all perspectives?

Key Questions To Reflect on Your Progress in This Area:

- How have staff beliefs or perceptions about other school members changed?
- How have staff practices with students and other school members changed?
- How have school members' perceptions of their relationships with youth and other school members changed?

Activities

- Hopes, Fears and Forming Agreements: A process guide for building community, and establishing collective ownership for meeting the needs of all group members
- Dreams for Our Youth: Creating a Shared Youth Development Vision with All School Members: A guide that helps all school
 members develop an understanding of the goals of youth development and brings diverse school members together around
 common dreams for youth
- Paired Interviews: An effective technique for developing an understanding of others' perspectives while identifying individual and school strengths
- School Culture Chalk Talk: A guide for sharing diverse perspectives and surfacing school members' core beliefs and assumptions regarding school culture
- Round Robin Questions: Opening meeting questions that help participants reconnect with the vision, establish a norm of equal participation, and increase understanding of diverse perspectives

Hopes, Fears and Forming Agreements¹

How can we collectively share responsibility for meeting the needs of al school members?



PURPOSE:

This activity establishes collective ownership for meeting the needs of everyone in the group.

AUDIENCE:

School staff (can be adapted for other audiences)

TIME:

1 hour to 1 hour 20 minutes (depending on size of the group)

OUTCOME(S):

As a result of this activity, participants will have:

- A shared understanding of the hopes and fears of all group members
- Shared meeting agreements
- An increased sense of trust among group members

MATERIALS:

- Paper
- Pens
- Chart paper
- Markers

INTRODUCTION: (10 MINUTES)

- 1. Review the overall vision or goal toward which the group is working.
- Key frame. While we are embarking on a new endeavor, it is normal for us to have our own unique hopes and fears about our approach to pursuing our goals. If we take the time to understand these different hopes and concerns, we will be better equipped to collaborate effectively.

ACTIVITY: (45-60 MINUTES DEPENDING ON THE NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS)

- 1. Ask participants to write down one hope and one fear they have about embarking on this new endeavor.
- 2. Ask each person to introduce him/herself and share what he/ she has written. Chart responses of the group in a t-chart, noting hopes in one column and fears in another column.
- 3. Have the group identify themes in the charted responses.
- 4. Ask the group, "Going forward, what agreements could we make that would make it likely that our process reflects our hopes and does not reflect our fears?
- 5. Ask participants to break into pairs or trios to discuss their ideas and identify one or two agreements.
- 6. Have each group share suggested agreements.
- 7. Combine agreements that are similar in meaning and see if you can organize them under larger themes/norms. For example many specific agreements (e.g., "cell phones on vibrate" and "no side conversations") can fall under one larger theme (e.g., "Being fully present").

¹ Adapted from the Hope and Fears protocol in McDonald et al. (2007)

CLOSING: (5-10 MINUTES)

- 1. Ask if anyone feels they cannot maintain or abide by the agreements. If there is disagreement, ask the group member to explain her/his concern and ask her/him how to modify the agreement.
- 2. Confirm agreement.
- 3. Review these agreements frequently, particularly in the beginning of the process, until the agreements become the norm of the group.



Facilitator Tips

If you have a group that is larger than 20 or 25 participants, you can modify this activity by having participants share their hopes and fears in small groups and then share out core themes from each group, rather than from individuals. You could also ask participants to write their hopes and fears on note cards at one meeting, then collect and summarize them as a starting point for group agreements at the next meeting.

Some of the hopes and fears participants shared during our process included:

Hopes:

- We'll have a clear sense of what our learning communities/vision looks like.
- We'll create lasting change that is noticeable to students.
- We will build relationships/ connections with each other.
- We'll learn and be rejuvenated.

Fears:

- I won't feel safe to express myself.
- There won't be enough buy-in/commitment.
- It will take a lot of extra time.

Some examples of agreements that participants defined to address these hopes and fears included

- Assume good intentions in others/ no judgment.
- Be honest about what you can and cannot commit to.
- Step up if you typically don't participate and step back if you tend to dominate.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

A resource for creating agreements with youth: Unit 1 Communication, Session 5 Rights and Responsibilities in *Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning (YELL) 2nd Edition*, pp. 42-43. http://gardnercenter.stanford.edu/resources/yell_curriculum.html

WORKS CITED

McDonald, J.P., Mohr, N., Dichter, A. and McDonald, E.C. (2007) *The Power of Protocols: An Educators Guide to Better Practice Second Edition*, New York: Teachers College Press. pp. 23-25

Dreams for Our Youth: Creating a Shared Youth Development Vision with All School Members

What do we dream for our young people?

PURPOSE:

This activity develops an understanding of the goals of youth development and helps diverse school members come together around common dreams for youth.

AUDIENCE:

All school members (we did this with parents and youth separately, but imagine that it could be much more powerful if done jointly.)

TIME:

45-60 minutes

OUTCOME(S):

As a result of this activity, participants will have:

- An increased understanding of the goals of youth development
- A shared understanding of our collective dreams for our young people

MATERIALS:

- Flip charts and markers for each table group
- A wall to post flip charts from each table
- Youth Development Overview PowerPoint
- Youth Development Goals and Skills handout

INTRODUCTION: (5 MINUTES)

- 1. Group participants by like role (e.g., Students, teachers, parents, after-school, administrators, etc.).
- 2. Ask participants to take a deep breath, close their eyes and imagine it is five to ten years in the future.
- 3. Key frame. Our young people are young adults. What do you hope/wish for them (or for yourselves)? What do you see them (yourself) doing? Where are they (you)? What's important to them (you)? Who are the people in their (your) lives? When we say we want our youth to be successful, what do we mean by this? What does success look like?

ACTIVITY: (25 MINUTES)

- 1. Ask participants to share their dreams for their youth (or youth will share what they wish for themselves) in small groups.
- 2. Ask them to chart their responses on a flip chart and label it with their school member category.
- 3. Have all groups post their flip charts on a common wall for a gallery walk.
- 4. Share out dreams of all groups and identify common themes and differences.





- 1. Engage participants in a whole group discussion about what they noticed during the gallery walk:
 - What are some common themes that came up across all groups?
 - What were some differences that participants noticed?
 - What most surprised group members? Why?
- 2. Share the Youth Development Overview PowerPoint slide 2 of the four goals of youth development that responses typically fall under:
 - Physical and psychological well-being
 - Intellectual and vocational competency
 - Social connectedness
 - Meaningful contributions
- 3. (Optional) Share the Youth Development Goals and Skills handout.
- 4. Ask participants if there are any dreams they listed that don't fit under these categories. (See sample table of how responses can be grouped into these categories.)
- (Optional) Have participants work in mixed groups to craft a vision statement for their school based on their dreams.



Facilitator Tip

When we did this activity, there were many common themes, although different group members used different language (as seen in the sample chart).

There were also some differences. For example parents specifically said that they wished their children would be proud of their family and culture, as well as wishing that they would overcome stereotypes or discrimination that they as adults were facing.

The discussion around surprises is important for surfacing school members' assumptions about each other. Parents were surprised and touched by their children's dreams, and school staff were surprised that parents value education.

We wonder if this activity would have been even more powerful if families, youth, and school staff had done it together—perhaps through paired interviews or in separate groups that then came together and shared out.

SAMPLE TABLE OF PARTICIPANT RESPONSES CATEGORIZED BY YOUTH DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Youth Development Goal	Youth	Parents	School Staff
Physical and Psychological Well-Being	Good healthNo addictionsHappy life	Proud of himself/herself	"I want them to be happy and satisfied, feel they have been successful." "I want them to like themselves." "I hope they are happy and healthy, doing stuff they are interested in—that makes them feel alive."
Intellectual and Vocational Competency	 Being rich Owning a home Supporting my family economically Money to help my mom pay rent High school degree College degree Own a company A job I enjoy 	 Good economic status Graduated 	"I hope they are working and living in their own place, not their parent's place." "I hope they have a career/ profession that makes them happy."
Social Connectedness	MarriedKids & familyGood friends	 Good family relations Respectful Values, kindness, culture, family's roots 	"That they have learned from their choices, feel connected to their community, to their family, that they belong."
Meaningful Contributions	 Doing something important for the world Helping other people Being involved in the community Helping dogs Helping people 	 Helping in their community, environment Break racism's barriers 	"I hope they are contributing something to themselves so they can contribute to the community."

Paired Interviews

How can we build upon our collective strengths and experience in working toward our vision?

PURPOSE:

This activity develops relationships between school members and identifies individual and school strengths.

AUDIENCE:

All school members (Pair school members in different roles)

TIME:

1 hour to 1 hour 30 minutes

OUTCOME(S):

As a result of this activity, we will have:

- A shared understanding of our collective strengths
- Increased trust between school members

MATERIALS:

- Paired Interview Participant Directions handout for participants/facilitators (modify from sample Paired Interview directions)
- Paired Interview Share Out Directions handout for participants/facilitators (modify from sample Paired Interview Share Out directions)
- (Optional) Handouts of any research or background related to the topic to be shared with participants such as:
 - Building Supportive Relationships as a Foundation for Learning (from Work Area 3).
 - A Comparison of Classical Leadership and Shared Responsibility
 - S4 Readings INFED Article: Session 4 Shared Leadership in The Basics: Building, Assessing, Sustaining, and Improving Community Schools (under "Readings" at the bottom of the page) http:// johnwgardnertestsite.pbworks.com/Shared-Leadership
- Two pads of 3X5 post-it notes of different colors for each group of four to five
- Space for pairs to spread out and interview each other privately
- Flip charts for each small group
- Markers for each small group
- Area for a gallery walk (for a large group)



INTRODUCTION: (5 MINUTES)

- 1. Key frame. Trust between different school members is foundational to the success of school change efforts.(Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Listening is foundational to trust, and paired interviews provide a protocol for practicing active listening. Paired interviews are an Appreciative Inquiry strategy. This philosophy is aligned with positive youth development approach and comes from the belief that the more we focus on strengths, the more success we breed. This is counter to the traditional approach of focusing on only problems, which tends to breed more problems.
- 2. Ask the group to maintain confidentiality as requested by their partner.

ACTIVITY: (30-40 MINUTES DEPENDING ON LENGTH OF THE INTERVIEW)

- Review the paired interview protocol guidelines and specific topic of focus.
- 2. Ask participants to pair up with someone who is in a different role than they are (e.g., adults with youth; teachers with after-school staff; parents with school members, etc.).
- 3. Give participants time and space to spread out for private conversations. (They will need at least 20 minutes for this activity.)

ACTIVITY DISCUSSION: (30 MINUTES ON AVERAGE, BUT VARIES BY LENGTH OF INTERVIEW/SIZE OF GROUP)

- 1. Ask pairs to gather with other pairs in small groups of four to eight people.
- 2. Ask each person to share something that really struck them about their partner's story and key themes they heard.
- 3. Ask small groups to summarize key small group themes on post-its and post these on the whole-group chart paper.
- 4. Read the post-its from all groups asking for clarification where necessary. Group key themes together.

CLOSING: (10-20 MINUTES)

- 1. Summarize the key themes for the whole group.
- 2. (Optional) Introduce a summary of the research or a relevant article to the group for comparison with the group's experiences. Ask the group how this research aligns with their personal experiences. Chart any new information gained from this research.
- 3. This list of themes may be used to further inform next steps or additional strategic activities or may become a list of core principles the group wants to remember and review.

Facilitator Tips

This activity is written very generally so that it can be used for any topic. We used it for several different topics including: supportive relationships, brainstorming consistent youth-centered messages from all school members, building trust across power differences, and envisioning a collaborative team. The sample activity worksheets at the end of this activity come from these activities.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- A resource for practicing active listening with youth:
 Unit 1 Communication, Sessions 1-3 Active Listening in Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning (YELL) 2nd Edition,
 pp. 34-39. http://gardnercenter.stanford.edu/resources/yell_curriculum.html
- Appreciative Inquiry resources: Appreciative Inquiry Commons is a worldwide portal for resources, research and practical applications of Appreciative Inquiry http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/
- An organization that uses Appreciative Inquiry (AI) with schools: Positive Change Core partners with schools and youth to build on the best of what already exists and create the brightest, most imaginative future possible. They offer AI workshops, a listserv and conferences to delve deeper into this approach. http://www.positivechangecore.org/
- Additional readings on Shared Leadership: Session 4
 Shared Leadership in The Basics: Building, Assessing, Sustaining, and Improving Community Schools (under "Readings" at the bottom of the page) http://johnwgardnertestsite.pbworks.com/Shared-Leadership

WORKS CITED

Bryk, S. and Schneider, B (2002). *Trust in Schools: A Core Resource for Improvement.* New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Community Network for Youth Development (2001). Relationship Building: Cookie Lady. In *Youth Development Guide: Engaging young people in after school programming* (p. 79). San Francisco, CA: Community Network for Youth Development.

Nemerowicz, G. and Rosi, E. (1997) *Education for Leadership and Social Responsibility* (p.16) London: Falmer Press.

Shared Responsibility

Shared Responsibility Paired Interview Participant Directions

How can we build trust and work collaboratively to carry out our school vision?

PURPOSE:

- To practice listening
- To build relationships/trust with others
- To identify core strengths upon which we can build

AUDIENCE:

School leaders (we did this activity at an administrative team retreat with the principal, two vice principals, community school coordinator and after-school director)

ACTIVITY DIRECTIONS: (30-40 MINUTES)

- Each person has 15-20 minutes to be interviewed. (It's important to watch time so there is equity of participation.)
- The interviewer practices active listening by asking the interview questions or clarifying questions and repeating the answers to confirm that they heard the interview correctly.
 The interviewer does not share their own stories, comments, etc.
- Listen and take notes on a striking story, quote, or idea and general themes to share with the group.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

 Often power differences can make trust more difficult to build. Power differences can exist because of supervisorial or organizational hierarchical roles, age differences (adults vs. youth), socio-economic status, dominant culture vs. minority culture or gender differences. But the fact remains that we do experience these power differences.

Think about a trusting relationship you've had with someone despite power differences. Ideally, this was with someone who had more power than you. It might have been when you were a young person and formed a trusting relationship with an adult or perhaps in your career with a supervisor.

Suggested probing questions:

- Tell the story of this relationship. Who was it with? How did it come to be?
- How did you know you had trust? What did that look like?
- What was it about you that allowed them to trust you?
- What was it about the other person that allowed you to trust them?
- What was it about the circumstances (the situation, the environment, organizational structure, etc.) that allowed this trust to form?

Notes:	

Shared Responsibility

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (CONTINUED):

- 2. Now thinking of our leadership team and imagining a team with trust and shared responsibility, what do you most wish for this team? What will make it successful?
 - In particular, what do you see as the role or purpose of the leadership team in carrying out the school vision?
 - What decisions should this team be responsible for making?
 - What might be important for successful communication between team members?
 - What might be important for successful communication between this team and all school members?
 - What else will help our leadership team to be successful?

NOTES:

Purpose of the Leadership Team	Types of Decisions
Characteristics of Communication for Success	Other Characteristics that Will Ensure a Successful Team

Shared Responsibility Paired Interview Share Out Directions

How can we build trust and work collaboratively to carry out our school vision?

DISCUSSION 1: BUILDING TRUST ACROSS POWER DIFFERENCES (30 MINUTES)

- 1. Each person has one minute to briefly summarize their partner's story (round robin).
- 2. As people share, take individual notes on themes.
- 3. After all stories are told, make a list of all the trust themes in the stories. Look for high points, life-giving moments, and ideas that struck participants.
- 4. List these themes on chart paper.
- 5. Summarize themes for the group.
 - So it sounds like for this group, we feel like the following are important factors for building trust, particularly across power differences.
 - Does anyone disagree with this? Is there anything missing?
- 6. Compare individual experiences with research such as Trust in Schools (Bryk, 2002). How does this compare to participants' personal experiences? Is there anything else they think might be important to add to their list?

DISCUSSION 2: SHARED RESPONSIBILITY TEAM THEMES (30 MINUTES)

- 1. Go around and ask each person to share one idea they heard from their partner in terms of what will make our administrative team a success?
 - Share ideas that haven't been shared yet.
 - After we go around once, we'll go around again until all ideas have been recorded.
- 2. Record ideas as they relate to the following categories:
 - Purpose of the Team
 - Types of Decisions
 - Characteristics of Communication for Success
 - Other Characteristics for Success
- 3. Looking at A Comparison of Classical Leadership and Shared Responsibility, is there anything else that you think we should add to our lists?

Characteristics and Circumstances that Allow for Trust Across Power Differences Qualities of Supportive Contexts

A COMPARISON OF CLASSICAL LEADERSHIP AND SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Classical Leadership

- Leadership determined by a person's position or title in a group
- Leadership evaluated by whether the leader solves problems
- Leaders provide solutions and answers
- Distinct differences between leaders and followers: character, skill, etc.
- Communication is often formal
- Can often rely on secrecy, deception and payoffs of various kinds to garner the support of others within the organization

Shared Responsibility

- Leadership determined by the quality of people's interactions rather than their position within the group
- Leadership evaluated by how people are working together toward a common vision
- All members of the group work to enhance the collaborative process and to make it more fulfilling
- People are interdependent—all are active participants in the process of leadership
- Communication is crucial with an emphasis on conversation
- Values democratic processes, honesty and shared ethics - seeks a common good

Drawing from material in Gloria Nemerowicz and Eugene Rosi (1997) *Education for Leadership and Social Responsibility*, London: Falmer Press. Page 16.

A Collaborative Vision for Supporting Youth Paired Interview Participant Directions

How can all school members work collaboratively to support all youth?

PURPOSE:

- To practice listening
- To build relationships/trust with others
- To identify core strengths upon which we can build

AUDIENCE:

A representative sample of all school members paired with members of different roles from their own (youth, parents, after-school staff, family center staff, teachers, administrators, etc.)

ACTIVITY DIRECTIONS: (40 MINUTES)

- 1. Take 20 minutes for each interview.
- 2. Decide who will be the first interviewer.
- 3. Conduct interview, using active listening and questions below.
- Switch roles.
- 5. Conduct second interview.

INTERVIEW OUESTIONS:

- 1. Warm Up Question: What is something that you enjoy doing? What activity makes you most happy?
- (To Adults) Think about an experience you've had interacting
 with or working with one or more children/youth in your
 particular setting (in the classroom, after-school, whole
 school, or at home), where you felt really supportive and
 valuable to a specific child/youth in your life.
 - What was the story of how this happened?
 - How did you feel?
 - What did you do or say that added value or support to the child/youth? Be specific.

(**To Youth**) Think about a time when you felt really supported, encouraged, and valued by a specific adult.

- Who was the adult and what was their role?
- What was the situation? What did the person do and say that let you know that they valued and supported you? Be specific.
- What did the person do and say that let you know that they valued and supported you? Be specific.

- 3. (To School Staff) What is one thing that you wish others better understood or appreciated about you in your professional role?
 - (**To Parents**) What is one thing that you wish others better understood or appreciated about you as parents?
 - **(To Youth)** What is something about you that you wish the adults around you better understood or appreciated about you?
- 4. **(To Adults)** What message do you wish your students/children received from every adult in their lives?
 - (**To Youth**) What message do you wish you would hear from all of the adults in your life?

Interactions Across Settings

- Imagine it is five years from now and your school has achieved all that you dream and hoped for in terms of interaction, communication and collaboration between all adults that touch students' lives (administrators, community school personnel, teachers, after-school leaders, parents, etc.).
 - What do you see? What does it look like?
 - What is happening that is new and different?
 - How have these changes had an impact on youth?
 - What did you do to help this happen? What did others do?
- 6. How do we get from here to there?
 - List the things that you feel need to happen.
 - From your list, what three things (if started, strengthened or stopped) would most help to improve communication/ collaboration between adults?

Collaborative Vision

NOTES:

What struck me about this interview:	What they wish others understood or appreciated more:
What was the message they wish youth received?	Three things they would change or recommend:
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A Collaborative Vision for Supporting Youth Paired Interview Share Out Directions

How can all school members work collaboratively to support all youth?

DISCUSSION 1: INDIVIDUAL STRENGTHS DIRECTIONS

(10 MINUTES)

- 1. Assign a note-taker and a time-keeper
- 2. Each person has one minute to share the following about your interview (round robin):
 - o One thing that struck you about the interview
 - What your partner wished others appreciated about them
- 3. As people share, take notes on flip charts.
- 4. What do you notice about the responses of the group? Are there any themes that stand out?

NOTE: There will not be a report out, so it is important that people can understand the group's ideas from what is written on flip charts.

Role	Wants to be appreciated for
	Note

DISCUSSION 2: IMPROVING COMUNICATIONS/COLLABORATION DIRECTIONS

(10 MINUTES)

- 1. Each person has one minute to share the following about your interview (round robin):
 - What was your partner's message that they wish youth would hear from all adults?
 - What three things does your partner feel would most help to improve communication/collaboration between adults?
- 2. As people share, take notes on flip charts.
- 3. What recommendations seem to come up the most? Which does the group feel are most important to highlight for the entire group?
- 4. Post all flip charts on the wall.

The messages we wish youth heard from all adults:	What will most improve communication/collaboration between adults:

GALLERY WALK DIRECTIONS (10 MINUTES)

- 1. Walk around the room and read what others have written.
- 2. As you read the recommendations for improving communication/collaboration:
 - Write a check by the things you agree with .
 - Write an X by the things you disagree with.
 - Comments are also welcome.
- 3. Return to your charts and see how others responded to your ideas.
- 4. Get three dots and vote for the three things you would most like to see happen.

Youth/Adult Supportive Relationships² Paired Interview Participant Directions

How can we build trust and work collaboratively to carry out our school vision?

PURPOSE:

- To practice listening
- To build relationships/trust with others
- To identify core strengths upon which we can build

AUDIENCE:

Notes:

Representative school members paired with someone in a different role than themselves (We did this with after-school staff, teachers, family center staff and administrators)

ACTIVITY DIRECTIONS: (10 MINUTES)

- 1. Each person has five minutes to be interviewed. (It's important to watch time, so there is equity of participation.)
- The interviewer practices active listening by: asking the interview questions or clarifying questions and repeating the answers to confirm that they heard the interview correctly. The interviewer does not share their own stories, comments, etc.
- 3. Listen and take notes on a striking story, quote or idea and general themes to share with the group.

INTERVIEW QUESTION:

Think of yourself when you were in middle school or high school and think of a person during that time that impacted you positively. If you didn't have a person like that, think about who that person might have been for you.

Suggested probing questions:

- Tell the story of this relationship. Who was it with? How did it come to be?
- Describe some of the characteristics of this person. What did they do to support you? How did they impact you? How did you feel?
- What made this situation possible—not just the individual qualities, but also context, what were you doing, what were the qualities of the environment?
- What themes do you notice about the qualities of a supportive relationship and what makes supportive relationships possible?

² This activity is adapted from Community Network of Youth Development (2001) Relationship Building: Cookie Lady. In Youth Development Guide: Engaging young people in after school programming (p. 79). San Francisco, CA: Community Network for Youth Development.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION (10-15 MINUTES)

- 1. Assign a note-taker and a time-keeper
- 2. Each person has one minute to share the following about your interview (round robin):
 - A short description of the person who impacted your partner.
 - What struck you as characteristics of this relationship that made it supportive? What do supportive relationships look like? (qualities of supportive relationships)
 - What was it about the circumstances that made the supportive relationship possible? (qualities of supportive contexts)
- 3. As people share, write qualities of supportive relationships on green post-its and write qualities of supportive contexts on pink post-its.
- 4. Choose two or three post-its for each category to post on the large group flip chart.

LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION (10 MINUTES)

- 1. One person from each group reads their post-its as they post them.
- 2. Notice themes for the whole group.
- 3. Point out that these are the same qualities we need to have with our young people.
- 4. Compare personal experiences with what the research says about supportive practices. (You might want to reference the Building Supportive Relationships as a Foundation for Learning effective practice brief.)

Qualities of Supportive Relationships	Qualities of Supportive Contexts

School Culture Chalk Talk³

What is our current school culture?

PURPOSE:

This activity allows all participants to take part in the conversation while helping them explore some of their core beliefs and assumptions regarding their school culture.

AUDIENCE:

School staff (but can be easily adapted for other audiences)

TIME:

45 minutes

OUTCOME(S):

As a result of this activity, participants will have:

 A shared understanding of some of the current beliefs, values and norms of our school culture

MATERIALS:

- One long table covered with butcher paper for every 10 participants
- Thin markers
- Large post-its
- Copies of or a slide of the current school vision and values or of youth development beliefs in A framework for moving toward a youth development-focused school culture found in the Introduction section of the YiM Guide.

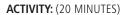
INTRODUCTION: (5 MINUTES)

- 1. *Key frame*: School culture is defined as "norms, values, beliefs, rituals and traditions that make up the unwritten rules of how to think, feel and act in an organization" (Peterson, p. 108). It's important to examine these norms, beliefs and rituals to make sure they align with what we say we want for our young people. The Chalk Talk protocol encourages full participation of all members (particularly those who might be more reluctant to participate), equalizes power differences and encourages a different kind of listening.
- 2. The Chalk Talk guidelines are that participants:
 - Remain silent.
 - Respond to the question and to others ideas by writing questions or comments on the butcher paper.
 - In writing, participants can:
 - Ask questions
 - Make statements
 - Make connections
 - Draw visual representations
 - Facilitators may also respond in writing.

WHAT IS YOUTH
DEVELOPMENT?

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 $^{^3}$ Adapted from the National School Reform Faculty's Chalk Talk protocol in Smith.



- 1. Ask participants to respond in writing to the question or questions written on the butcher paper. These might include:
 - What is our current school culture? How do we know?
 - What might you see or hear at our school?
 - What does our school celebrate? How?
 - What are important rituals, traditions, slogans, etc at our school? What do these say about what we believe is important?
 - How do people feel in our school? How can you tell?
- 2. Write questions or other responses to participants' comments, particularly in terms of using data or evidence to draw conclusions or helping participants to link actions to underlying beliefs. These might include:
 - How do you know?
 - What evidence do you have of that?
 - Given these practices, what seems to be important to your school?
 - Given this action/ statement, what seems to be the underlying belief that school members have?
- When it seems like the conversation is coming to completion, break the silence and ask participants to read what others have written.

CLOSING: (15-20 MINUTES)

- 1. Ask the group to share themes. What are some adjectives they would use to describe their current school culture? Write these on big post-its and stick them on the butcher paper.
- 2. Have the group compare their summary description of their school culture with their published school vision and values or with youth development values and beliefs. What do they notice about the alignment of their school culture with what they say is important to them?
- 3. What are some key next steps the group wants to take to continue this conversation with other school members?

Facilitator Tip

This activity may surface sensitive issues in the school. Some members may become defensive. If this occurs, it's important to help all group members to understand that the culture of a school is created by all school members and their circumstances. If a school culture is particularly negative or blaming of other school members, that is a symptom of underlying issues such as staff members who have exhausted all strategies, are not experiencing success and are unsure what to do next. It can also be symptomatic of the huge and very real pressures schools feel around high-stakes testing.

Depending on the group, some school members may be eager to take action while others may be in denial or need to process their feelings of guilt. Whatever their response, the group needs to be given space and time and should be encouraged to take the time to continue the dialogue with other school members in a productive way. It may help them to identify key next steps that will allow them to continue the conversation by holding a climate meeting or a staff meeting to further address any issues that come up for them.

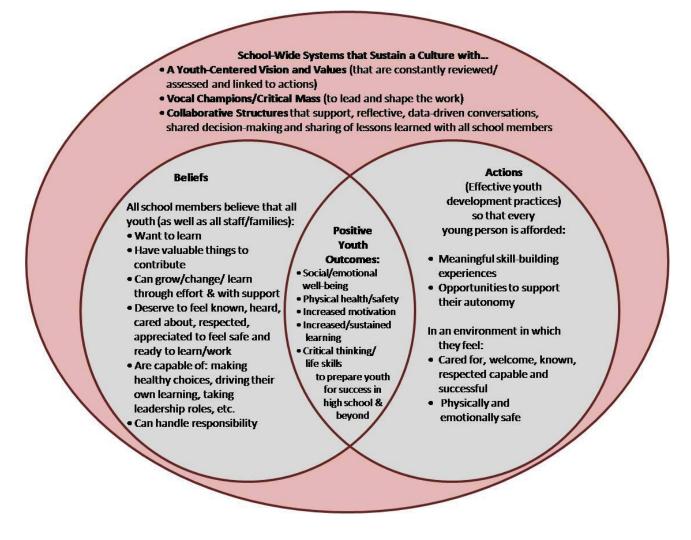
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Peterson, Kent. D. *Shaping School Culture: Excerpts from an Interview with Dr. Kent Peterson.* Retrieved October 15, 2007 from http://www.smallschoolsproject.org.

Smith, H. *Chalk Talk*. Foxfire Fund. Adapted by Wentworth, M. National School Reform Faculty. Retrieved September 30, 2009 from http://www.nsrfharmony.org/protocol/doc/chalk_talk.pdf

A FRAMEWORK FOR MOVING TOWARD A YOUTH DEVELOPMENT-FOCUSED SCHOOL CULTURE

This broad framework serves as a general goal of the overall work and captures what we believe are the essential features of a school that supports movement toward a youth development approach. From research on school change efforts, we know that for these efforts to be sustained, the school culture must be aligned with the underlying principles of the change effort, for "absent knowledge about why they are doing what they're doing, implementation will be superficial only, and teachers will lack the understanding they will need to deepen their current practice or to sustain new practices in the face of changing contexts" (McLaughlin & Mitra, 2001). Therefore, this framework recognizes that the success of this change effort relies on the alignment of school members' beliefs and actions with a youth development approach and that these beliefs and actions are influenced through: 1) A youth-centered vision and values, 2) Collaborative structures that allow school members to share perspectives and reflect on data in working toward this vision, and 3) School champions who work intentionally and persistently to support all school members in realizing this vision.



WORKS CITED

McLaughlin, M.W. & Mitra, D. (2001) Theory-Based Change and Change-Based Theory: Going Deeper, Going Broader. *Journal of Educational Change*, Vol. 2, 301-323.

Round Robin Questions

How can we build trust around our collective experiences tied to our vision?



PURPOSE:

Opening questions help build trust and establish a norm of equal participation and a positive tone at the start of a meeting.

AUDIENCE:

School staff (but can be easily adapted for other audiences)

TIME:

5-20 minutes (depending on the size of the group)

OUTCOME(S):

As a result of this activity, participants will have:

An increased sense of trust and connection between group members

MATERIALS:

• A clock or timer to keep time

INTRODUCTION: (1 MINUTES)

Review the Round Robin guidelines:

- Ask participants to keep responses to two sentences or one minute.
- Each participant has the opportunity to answer the question or pass.
- Other participants listen without comment or interruption.
- Those who passed are offered a second opportunity to answer at the end, but are not required to participate.

ACTIVITY: (5 MINUTES DEPENDING ON THE SIZE OF THE GROUP)

Give participants a question to respond to that is related to your school vision or an aspect of youth development on which you are working. Examples of questions we used include:

- What most excites you about working with youth?
- When you were young, what one adult really made an impact on you? Name one key quality of that adult that made the difference.
- Think about a youth who had an impact on you. Maybe they
 made you think differently about something, taught you
 something or impressed you by something they said or did.
 Share with the group what this youth did that made an impact
 on you.
- What has been positive or are you excited about regarding school? What are you excited about or see as valuable participating in this process?
- What has been hopeful or exciting to you about this project so far?
- When you were a youth, what was a time you remember when an adult respected you? What did this mean to you?
- Share one thing that happened since last time we met that made you feel hopeful/positive about your work.
- Why did you decide to join this group and how does it compare to the expectations you had for this group? I wanted to be part of this, because_____. Now, three months into the process, I feel_____. Is it working for you? Where are you?

ACTIVITY (CONTINUED):

- Share one positive story that relates to motivation something from your students; something that has motivated you as a teacher or something that motivated you when you were a student.
- What motivated you when you were a young person?
- What does "mutual respect" mean to you?
- How would you rate your level of engagement at our school and why?

CLOSING: (1-2 MINUTES)

Summarize general themes you heard from the group that might inform their thinking about their group or their group's goal.

WORKS CITED

Peterson, Kent. D. *Shaping School Culture: Excerpts from an Interview with Dr. Kent Peterson.* Retrieved October 15, 2007 from http://www.smallschoolsproject.org.

Smith, H. *Chalk Talk*. Foxfire Fund. Adapted by Wentworth, M. National School Reform Faculty. Retrieved September 30, 2009 from http://www.nsrfharmony.org/protocol/doc/chalk_talk.pdf



Facilitator Tip

It's important to be firm about the guideline of not engaging in conversation but really listening to each other. Otherwise this activity can end up taking over the whole meeting.

We found that when facilitators used questions that were not connected to their group or group goal/vision (e.g., "What did you do last weekend?"), groups tended to lose focus.