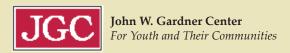# Youth
in the
Middle

A GUIDE
for **middle school leaders** interested in implementing a whole-school youth development effort.

Curriculum | *1st edition*

JGC **John W. Gardner Center**
For Youth and Their Communities

Youth in the Middle:

Envisioning and Implementing a Whole-School Youth Development Approach

A guide for middle school leaders

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

YiM CONTRIBUTORS

The following people were active participants in the research, development, and creation of the YiM model.

PROGRAM MANAGER/DEVELOPER

Christina O'Guinn

LEAD AUTHORS

Kristin Geiser
Christina O'Guinn

FACILITORS/WRITERS

María Fernández
Matt Giani
Mary Hofstedt

FACILITATORS/PROGRAM SUPPORT

Craig Baker
Kara Dukakis
Kasey McJunkin

RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

Sarah Miles
Karen Strobel

RESEARCH ASSISTANTS

Susan Biancani
Dabney Ingram
Ingrid Nelson
Daphne Ross

GRADUATE STUDENT CONTRIBUTORS

Matt Giani
Lauren Stevenson

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT CONTRIBUTORS

Amber Hampton
Jessica Yurkofsky

EDITORS/INTERNAL REVIEWERS

Katrina Brink
María Fernández
Kristin Geiser
Amy Gerstein
Milbrey McLaughlin

EXTERNAL REVIEWERS

Jan Christensen
Marie Crawford
Richard Miller
Sandra Portasio
Warren Sedar

PRODUCTION

Laura Ma (Administration and Design)
Laura Ortberg (Proofreading/Editing)

PHOTO CREDITS

Matt Giani
Mary Hofstedt
Mark Novelero
Christina O'Guinn and others

CORE PARTNER PARTICIPANTS
Kennedy Middle School/Citizen Schools
Ashley Barnes
Teresa Bergin
Nancy Bloomquist
Katie Brown
Jennifer Carleton
Sheila Chapman
Thea Dalvand
Nellie Diaz
Katie Fahrer

CORE PARTNER PARTICIPANTS
Kennedy Middle School/Citizen Schools
(CONTINUED)

Irma Figueroa
Carol Halverson
Brendan Hines
Ryan Knapp
Jaclyn Kordell
Chuck Krause
Janina Ledet
Judi Moss
Patsi Nelson
Carlos Nolasco
Mark Novelero
Kathy Parara
Patricia Pelino
Ann Rapacki
Janet Sanchez
Warren Sedar
Jerry Stabile
Laurie Stillmaker
Ann Williams
Cindy Wilson

Redwood City School District

Sandra Portasio

Cleo Eulau Center

Terese Brennan-Marquez
Jean Hamilton

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John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities
at Stanford University

JGC MISSION

The John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities at Stanford University partners with communities to develop leadership, conduct research, and effect change to improve the lives of youth.

JGC FOUNDERS

JGC was founded by Professor Milbrey McLaughlin in 2000. As the David Jacks Professor of Education and Public Policy at Stanford University's School of Education, Professor McLaughlin's research combines studies of K-12 education policy in the United States and the broad question of community and school collaboration to support youth development. The mission and vision for the JGC emerged from conversations between Professor McLaughlin and John W. Gardner, and their shared determination to create healthy and thriving communities.

THE JGC'S NAMESAKE, JOHN W. GARDNER[1] BELIEVED THAT:

- Healthy, thriving communities must actively support youth — through policies, programs, and services — to become contributing participants and leaders.

- Community leaders (neighborhood activists, mayors, council and board members, etc.) and youth-serving organizations (schools, recreation departments, youth clubs, etc.) all benefit when they are united in their efforts to serve both youth and community.

- Communities must invest in their youth in substantial ways. Most essential is the development of youth leaders, a community's immediate and future leaders.

John W. Gardner also believed that Stanford University, his alma mater, has the responsibility to address issues that affect the greater community. Therefore, as a center based at Stanford, the JGC also works with students, faculty, and staff to carry out its work to support youth leaders, the communities in which they live, and the broader field of youth development.

For more information on the JGC please visit our Web site: http://jgc.stanford.edu.

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[1] John W. Gardner (1912-2002) believed in the potential of individuals, their institutions, and society as a whole, and he chose to focus on challenges as possibilities rather than obstacles. He served as President Johnson's Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, and was a Founder of Common Cause and the Independent Sector. He was the author of numerous books and spent most of his life studying and writing about leadership and community.

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*The most valuable contribution the school can make is
to be a community in its own right.*

—John W. Gardner

MIDDLE SCHOOLS have the opportunity to positively impact the full development of young adolescents. Yet initiatives that promote schools' rigorous attention to specific academic outcomes can result in schools' lack of attention to other important and interconnected domains of adolescent development. How might middle schools intentionally situate academics within the broader frame of youth development? Youth in the Middle (YiM), a partnership between John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities (JGC) at Stanford University and Kennedy Middle School in Redwood City, California, has pursued four areas of work that are central to developing a whole-school youth development approach. This guide describes these work areas, offers preliminary evidence of progress that we are observing at Kennedy, and includes hyperlinks to tools that you can modify and adapt to support efforts to pursue a youth development approach in your particular setting.

INTRODUCTION

Young adolescents are in the midst of tremendous intellectual, physiological, emotional, and social growth and development. These domains are interdependent and interactive. Yet in the midst of national, state, and district initiatives that promote rigorous attention to a particular set of academic outcomes, it is easy to slip into discourse and practice that suggest we can attend to one domain (e.g., the intellectual domain) in isolation from other domains. For example, research shows that a focus on academic achievement often translates to significantly reduced time devoted to anything other than reading and math instruction (Center on Educational Policy, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2007; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2007; Teachers Network, 2007). In an effort to develop one domain, we tend to inadvertently betray what we know to be true about the link between multiple domains.

How, then, can middle schools attend to the important work of academic learning while leveraging growth in interdependent domains? This is what we at the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities (JGC) at Stanford University refer to as a youth development approach. For nearly three years we have had the privilege of working alongside the Kennedy Middle School staff as they have taken intentional steps to situate their goals—inclusive of a significant focus on academic achievement—within the context of a school-wide youth development approach referred to as "Youth in the Middle" (YiM).

This guide describes these work areas, offers preliminary evidence of progress that we are observing at Kennedy, and includes hyperlinks to information, resources, and practical tools that you can modify and adapt to support efforts to pursue a youth development approach in your particular setting.

KENNEDY MIDDLE SCHOOL

Kennedy Middle School is a Community School offering a wide range of services and opportunities to support the full development of its students. Kennedy serves close to 900 students from diverse racial, cultural, economic, and linguistic backgrounds. During the 2008-2009 school year, 73% of the students were identified by their families as Hispanic, 16% as white, and 11% as African-American, Asian, and Filipino. In the same year, 38% of Kennedy's students were identified as English Language Learners and 66% participated in the free and reduced lunch program. As a Community School, Kennedy is fortunate to have an on-site Family Resource Center which assesses family eligibility for and provides access to county social services, family and youth counseling services, parent leadership classes, and comprehensive after-school programs through partnerships with community agencies. Kennedy has a Community School Coordinator who oversees the Family Resource Center and its staff, coordinates community partnerships, and works in partnership with school administrators. Youth development by definition is core to the vision of Community Schools, yet even with these additional supports and resources in place, taking an integrated youth development approach whole-school requires intentional effort.

CORE WORK AREAS

This section describes four work areas central to developing a whole-school youth development approach at Kennedy and includes hyperlinks to tools and resources that you can download and manipulate to support similar efforts in your particular setting:

1. Engage Cross-Functional Expertise in Support of Youth

2. Situate Academic Learning and Achievement in the Context of a Youth Development Approach

3. Integrate Local and Research Knowledge

4. Cultivate Habits of Shared Responsibility for a Youth Development Approach

Work Area 1: Engage Cross-Functional Expertise in Support of Youth

Youth, families, teachers, after-school staff, administrators, and other school personnel all have important roles to play in supporting youth. As such, an important focus of YiM is to help adults in different roles understand, value, and ultimately seek the perspective and expertise of all who live and work in the school setting. YiM began with a visioning team of administrators, teachers, after-school staff, family engagement specialists, and community partners. During year one of the program, the sole purpose of this team was to develop a shared vision of a school that reflects a youth development approach. We found it very powerful to begin by focusing on participants' hopes for young people.

For example, the team's first meeting began with consideration of this question: *"Imagine your students in ten years…what would you hope to see?"* By entering into the work this way, participants:

1. Shared personally and authentically (and therefore began to feel invested in the process)

2. Realized that they had the same hopes for their students as school members in different roles (and therefore began to see others as allies)

3. Acknowledged that their hopes for their students aligned with a vision of youth development (and therefore saw the youth development approach as resonant with their goals)

Intentional efforts to engage diverse expertise through the project enabled the adults in the setting to develop a sense that they were all working toward the same goal and that their particular roles were interconnected and created a larger system designed to support young people. In years two and three, the involvement of after-school staff in small inquiry groups with teachers and administrators has led to intentional partnerships and connections between the regular school day and after-school. For example, after-school staff members have begun to observe classroom teachers and are beginning to integrate some classroom pedagogy and content extensions into the after-school setting.

Tools to Support Work Area 1: Engage Cross-Functional Expertise in Support of Youth

The following are core activities we used to support this Work Area:

*   **Hopes, Fears, and Forming Agreements**: A 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

Work Area 2: Situate Academic Learning and Achievement in the Context of a Youth Development Approach

Youth development often feels like an abstract idea rather than a very practical approach to teaching and learning. To address this, YiM encouraged the adults in the school setting to:

1. Revisit their understanding of the conditions that promote academic learning and achievement

2. Make the connection between the conditions that promote learning and those that promote youth development across multiple domains

3. See how their understanding of learning and achievement is supported and strengthened by a youth development approach

4. Identify the school's existing youth development-aligned practices and policies

5. Develop a plan for expanding these practices

Intentional efforts to position academic learning and achievement in the context of a youth development approach honored the settings' commitment to multiple domains of development and reinforced the importance that they succeed in supporting the intellectual domain. A youth development perspective interrupts the "either/or" conversation we often find in education. This perspective offers a "yes/and" alternative— yes schools need to be settings where youth thrive academically, and supporting students in all domains is critical to this goal.

Tools to Support Work Area 2: Situate Academic Learning and Achievement in the Context of a Youth Development Approach

The following are core activities and resources we used to support this Work Area:

- **Youth Development and Learning:** Applying a Youth Development Approach to Schools: An activity that helps school staff draw upon their prior knowledge to cultivate an understanding of a youth development approach and its importance to learning

- **Our School's Youth Development Strengths and Dreams:** A visioning activity that helps school members to identify and build on the youth development aligned practices and policies already practiced in their school

- **Identifying Youth Development Target Areas:** An activity to help guide school members find a starting point for their work within the broad arena of youth development

- **What is Youth Development?** A one-page overview of youth development

- **Educator Definitions of Youth Development:** Samples of participant interpretations of youth development for themselves and their settings

- **What Does Youth Development Look Like in Action?** A two-page overview of the different areas of youth development and examples of school practices and activities aligned with these areas

- **Youth Development Overview PowerPoint:** Three slides on the end goals of a youth development approach, connection to learning and a definition of a youth development approach

- **Youth Development Goals and Skills:** A one-page handout on the end goals of a youth development approach defined in more detail than the PowerPoint and linked to specific skills and assets youth will need

- **Youth Development Rubrics:** The following are rubrics that provide descriptors of schools at different phases in their process and can help schools identify where they are and where they'd like to be:

  - **Systems to Support School-Wide Youth Development and Shared Responsibility**

  - **Physical and Psychological Safety**

  - **Supportive and Caring Community**

  - **Support for Autonomy**

  - **Meaningful Skill-Building Experiences**

Work Area 3: Integrate Local and Research Knowledge

As Kennedy's YiM participants began to intentionally implement youth development throughout the school context it was essential to deepen site knowledge of their own practices (local knowledge) and what the field offers as best practices and research-based insight into young adolescent growth and development (research knowledge). This was accomplished by:

1. Tailoring professional development to identified school needs

2. Creating multiple opportunities to apply research knowledge in Kennedy's specific context

3. Providing opportunities to evaluate the impact of new practices

For example, in the early stages of the program, Kennedy expressed interest in understanding how it could better inspire students to engage deeply in learning. The staff (including after school staff and other school support staff) then participated in a day of learning with Stanford psychology professor Dr. Carol Dweck who presented her research on growth mindset (Dweck, 2007, 1986). After the presentation, participants considered what Dweck's framework would look like in practice. What would they see and hear that would be evidence of a growth mindset at Kennedy? Each participant then designed an action plan of specific practices she/he could implement the following week. Some of the teacher inquiry groups followed up further during their regularly scheduled collaborative meetings. The combination of immediate and ongoing space to follow up allowed participants to integrate their own local knowledge with academic research knowledge in ways that informed and, in a few cases, changed practice to reflect a youth development approach.

Tools to Support Work Area 3: Integrate Local and Research Knowledge

The following are core activities and resources we used to support this Work Area:

- **A Workshop Template for Integrating Research and Local Knowledge:** A workshop guide that helps participants to apply research to their unique contexts and teaching styles

- **Weaving Outside Ideas Into Our School:** An effective practice brief and observation tool that provides guidelines for selecting and assessing research, putting research into practice, and conducting an observation of another school

- **Building Supportive Relationships as a Foundation for Learning:** An effective practice brief that defines supportive relationships and their importance to youth outcomes, and describes specific research and practice-based relationship-building strategies for educators

- **Motivation to Learn: Igniting a Love of Learning in All Students:** An effective practice brief that defines motivation and provides specific research-based motivational strategies

- **Motivation Menu of Sample Strategies:** A summary document of the research and examples of research-based strategies connected to different motivational strategies This document is a more concise presentation of the content included in the Building Supportive Relationships as a Foundation for Learning and Motivation to Learn effective practice briefs.

Work Area 4: Cultivate Habits of Shared Responsibility for a Youth Development Approach

Throughout the implementation of YiM, the visioning team worked intentionally to grow the number of people in the school setting who understood, held, and moved intentionally toward a school-wide youth development approach. One core strategy that promoted shared responsibility was the development of an inquiry stance. For example, rather than mandate a school-wide effort to pursue a youth development approach, the leadership team framed their third year of YiM with the following question: "What practices (teaching strategies and school policies) can we use to create a more caring school community and motivate all students to learn?" Questions invite inquiry, curiosity, and engagement. Questions evoke a response. This question, in particular, reinforced the idea that "we,"—many across the setting—were invited and expected to respond. At different points in the process to date, cross-role collaborative teams formed their own sub-questions which led them to develop habits of inquiry, such as identifying priorities; forming authentic, researchable questions, reviewing relevant research and best practices, developing interventions, evaluating impact, and modifying practices in response to this cycle of inquiry. For example, one team took the idea of creating a more caring school community and honed in on the setting's discourse, or the way people talk to and about others in the school setting. Through this focus, school members have become more aware of how they speak about others, and staff have a growing sense that they are responsible not only for their own discourse, but also for engaging their colleagues in ways that invite more positive discourse. Another team has looked at student interactions and developed practices that acknowledged and celebrated caring actions between students.

Tools to Support Work Area 4: Cultivate Habits of Shared Responsibility for a Youth Development Approach

The following are core activities and resources we used to support this Work Area:

- **Inclusive Communication and Shared Decision-Making:** An activity guide for creating communication and decision-making processes

- **Renewing School: Productive Dialogue and Difficult Conversations:** An effective practice brief that provides guidelines for productively working through conflict through active listening, compassion, and a goal of collective understanding

EVIDENCE OF POSITIVE IMPACT

While Kennedy is still in the early stages of implementing YiM in concert with other important initiatives, there is preliminary evidence of progress in five areas[2]:

1. **A significant number of adults in the school setting have a working understanding of youth development.**

    One third of the staff report an increased understanding of youth development and they can articulate a youth development approach and its connection to learning.

    Our vision has been defined by looking at youth development…I have heard very positive feedback from the teachers like, 'Yes, we need this.' It's not 'we want it' it's 'we need it.'…We are all clear that even though it's the academics that are extremely important, our focus is on youth development and academics are part of youth development. (Administrator)

    If you have a good relationship with a student, they feel comfortable in your classroom and it helps the atmosphere for learning. They trust you. You can trust them. They can take risks. It lowers that anxiety or that wall for learning. (Administrator)

2. **Adults are reframing students as youth in the middle of multiple interactive settings.**

    Adults in the school are aware that their students are young people first—that "student" is but one part of their identity and "school" is but one part of their landscape. Adults are consciously building stronger relationships with youth and other adults and view them as partners in supporting youth.

    I have been trying to be very deliberate about making sure that I connect with the kids. I'm listening to them…to pick up on things that may be bothering them. (Teacher)

    I used to think that schoolwork wasn't as important as after-school activities. Now I have a more collaborative relationship with teachers. (After-school Staff Member)

    I have a greater understanding and appreciation for [after-school program] personnel. (Teacher)

    We are building more relationships. The kids, instead of only having one favorite teacher in the team, I'm hearing three or four favorite teachers in the team. (Teacher)

    I'm more conscious of [youth] perspectives and listen more. (Teacher)

    I speak to and engage students in informal discussion in a more caring manner. I listen more. Smile more. (Teacher)

    In addition to the multiple settings that intersect on the school campus, students' families and their unique norms, cultures, and circumstances also intersect with campus life. When a group of teachers and after-school staff surveyed youth to understand what motivated them to attend and do well in school, over 70% of the surveyed students reported they were motivated by their families. One teacher was quite surprised by this finding, noting that she had often assumed that parents were not doing their part to motivate and support their children. The data refuted this assumption and prompted this teacher to courageously shift her discourse and her practice in ways that acknowledged and built upon the assumption that parents did care and were essential partners in this work. It also reinforced the idea that youth sit in the middle of multiple, interactive settings—and that teachers can leverage these different settings to support intellectual development. For example, the next question this group asked was, "If we know parents care, how can we engage them as partners in supporting young people?" This creates an opening for collaboration that will directly benefit the youth in this setting.

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    [2]The evidence referred to in this summary has been collected primarily through JGC-administered participant surveys, interviews, and observations and participant-administered student and staff surveys and observations. This evidence was gathered from 10 participants during the 2007-08 and 21 participants during the 2008-09 school years.

3. **Practices are beginning to engage multiple domains of youth development in the service of intellectual development.**

While year one was designed to focus on planning and visioning, year two was designed to be an implementation year during which time participants were expected to intentionally try new practices either school-wide or in their individual settings. Throughout year two, many participants reported that they had implemented new practices that engaged multiple domains of youth development in the service of academic learning. The practices documented through observation and self-report fell primarily under two inter-related areas: motivational and relational.

- Motivation strategies focused on inviting, encouraging, and inspiring the middle school youth to engage (e.g., praising effort rather than just results, teaching youth how the brain learns, and other efforts designed to build intrinsic motivation).

- Relational strategies focused on explicit attention to getting to know one another (e.g., adults sharing more of their stories and their time with youth, adults intentionally trying to learn more about their young people's interests, adults showing care and connection by following up on these conversations and "checking in" in various ways).

Student data reveal that these motivational and relational strategies have had a positive effect on student effort. For example, young adolescents often long to be of value and demonstrate mastery but they are worried about making mistakes and looking foolish in front of their peers. One teacher's effort to intentionally connect to this longing had a profound effect on one eighth grade student:

At first I didn't know…how to write a sentence in parallel structure. I was worried… After you gave me that blue piece of paper that said, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again." I was challenging myself to try, try again. I kept trying and finally, I understood. I felt proud.

4. **Structures and habits promote shared responsibility throughout the school setting.**

Adults report that vision-focused, data-driven, collaborative structures and communication are building their capacity to partner around the support of our young people.

Participants reported that the protected, sanctioned, reflection time of their inquiry-driven small groups was a valuable use of time, inspired them to take collective action, and helped them to build community.

What has been rewarding has been… building the learning and the community amongst ourselves in the small group. That's something that's been lacking. We tend to work in silos at the school or historically had, so I think that's been a real positive thing. (Administrator)

Meeting monthly with colleagues helped me stay focused on our question in the face of so many competing demands on my time and attention. After each meeting, I was inspired to take specific action. It is so easy for this kind of learning and reflection to keep being put 'on the back burner' or repeatedly pushed down the 'to-do' list. Regular meetings were hard to get to mentally, but rewarding every time. (Teacher)

The whole process of being in my [small group] has inspired my development as an educator. I was initially apprehensive that I would not feel safe to express my true concerns or thoughts. I found the [small group] to be a sanctuary to develop my passion and work with others who had that same passion. I felt safe and productive. It was great to have successes and to have completed our research. I feel that we were able to create great recommendations that we otherwise would not have, if we had not gone through the process. (Community School/After-school Staff Member)

We also observed that these small groups led to participants increased use of youth data to inform practice.

I was afraid it would take a lot of time, but it really doesn't take long at all and the information is so valuable in learning about students and showing them that we care. (Teacher)

In addition, school leaders reported that vision-focused inquiry and communication helped them to guide collaborative processes toward a common goal and to confront actions not aligned with that vision.

Having a whole-school question…focused on strategies and policies to create a caring school community and how that relates to motivating students to learn. That's like a guide for everyone to follow…It's more tangible. (Administrator)

I was much more reflective and collaborative as a result of the YiM participation. I think previously I would move forward with a plan based on research/ best practices and not collaborate to develop the plan as much. (Administrator)

I think we're more intentional in dealing with the challenges. We're going straight to the person, or to the teacher, and trying to deal with the situation instead of kind of going around and pretending it never happened. (Administrator)

5. **Overall school climate is more conducive to youth development.**

   Adults in the school community report that the school climate and overall tone feel much improved and reflective of an environment that supports youth development.

   I think that coming into this year…on day one, week one, there was just a complete change in the environment. I think there were just happier people from staff to students. (After-school Director, referring to the shift between year one and year two of YiM)

   Youth in the Middle has improved the school climate and culture at Kennedy. We have happier students and happier parents. Without this, we cannot achieve academic outcomes and standards. It has made a significant difference. Now we need to take it to the next level and close our achievement gap using our instructional framework. (Superintendent)

The most significant change that we documented in the school climate could be described as the heightened awareness of, and positive shift in, the adult discourse. YiM invited the adults in the setting to see how their discourse—the ways in which they spoke with and about one another as well as their students—impacted the school climate and, in turn, impacted students' experience, learning, and achievement. During year two, it was not uncommon to hear adults reflecting on their discourse, making comments such as, "I'm interrupting," "I talk too much," "I shouldn't be so negative," or "I shouldn't have said that."

An administrator shared a situation when he was frustrated with a parent's approach to handling a particular situation. The administrator acknowledged that he began to feel frustrated, but then he stopped himself and began to ask himself why the parent might be acting this way. He commented that while it's hard to stop the behavior, he was aware that he had developed the habit of catching himself and intentionally seeking a perspective that is youth-centered. In year two of YiM, another administrator reflected on a similar shift:

Personally, I forced myself to listen more…[and I am] trying to be more 'youth-centered' and [am] 'confronting' 'non youth-centered' practices/comments as they arise.

What did this look like overall? Based on data collected during year one, more than three quarters of participants reported that they noticed changes in the way they interacted with other staff, noting specifically that they were intentionally listening to one another, being more positive and more thoughtful about building relationships. Similarly in year two, nearly half of second year participants reported a change in how they communicate with other school members by productively confronting and working through conflict, reframing how they talk about youth, families, and other staff members, listening more to one another and pushing each other's thinking. In addition, about a quarter of the participants in the second year of YiM increased empathy/respect for other school staff and families and improved relationships with school members.

CHALLENGES

Like any school change effort, the process of envisioning and implementing a school-wide youth development approach has been complex. While we have witnessed inspiring progress, we have also witnessed some of the challenges that have slowed, complicated, and at times, threatened the work. As you engage with this work in your own setting, you may experience some of these challenges yourself. In an effort to share with you what you might expect—and what you can plan to navigate—we offer three challenges that were particularly persistent in the context of YiM:

1. **Maintaining a professional, respectful, caring, and hopeful tone.**

   Those who live and work in a school setting care deeply about the youth they serve. An effort to intentionally translate this passion into our school culture necessitates difficult conversations. Furthermore, in settings where the needs are great and the resources are few, we tend to operate with a certain degree of anxiety. Some strategies that helped to maintain a professional, respectful, caring, and hopeful tone in the context of YiM included:

   - Clearly defining and frequently reviewing a youth-centered vision

   - Forming and frequently reviewing collective, vision-aligned agreements or norms

   - Engaging staff in data-driven inquiry that invites a collective and ongoing evidence-based conversation about school norms and practices that do and do not support the vision

2. **Finding meeting time for after-school staff and classroom teachers.**

   The inclusion of diverse constituents has been core to YiM—and yet, it is very challenging to find the time and space for collaborative meeting time. To address this challenge, we found it helpful to either provide substitutes for teachers and after-school staff or schedule meetings during non-school/after-school hours (early mornings, evenings, Saturdays). We also honored staff for their time by:

   - Paying teachers stipends for meetings held during non-school hours

   - Building the meeting around a shared meal off-campus

   - Ensuring that the meetings were purposeful and well planned

3. **Sustaining focus and momentum.**

   Like many schools, Kennedy is inundated by complex issues that require immediate attention. We found that frequent in-person communication and meetings were critical to sustaining both focus and momentum around the youth-development work. Specifically we found it helpful to:

   - Review the big picture—the vision, the process, and where we are in the process—at the beginning of every small group and staff meeting so that staff could reconnect to the purpose and focus of their work

   - Schedule frequent meeting times for both small group and whole staff meetings. This helped encourage action, collaboration, and established a sense of coherence and momentum.

   - Hold whole-staff share-outs during which staff shared their updates and progress. This promoted shared responsibility and reinforced that everyone is not only accountable to but also responsible for supporting and encouraging our community.

CONCLUSION

For over two decades, school reform literature has reminded us that we cannot mandate, force, or rush cultural or normative organizational changes (Fullan, 1993; Oakes, 2005). With this in mind, YiM focused on intentionally pursuing a school culture reflective of a youth development approach by focusing on four areas of work that would sustain and foster change over a long period of time. Evidence suggests that this program is fostering some changes to the school setting that will promote students' growth and development inclusive of, but not limited to, the intellectual domain. We are extremely encouraged by Kennedy's courageous effort to situate its attention to academic achievement and other core goals within the context of youth development, and we are heartened by the evidence that this approach can result in positive changes. The lessons shared in this article were learned through the hard work of incredible colleagues navigating a very difficult season in public education. This is but one snapshot of their long-term commitment to serving young people in their community. As we go to press, Kennedy's community is working tirelessly to sustain the good work that it has begun and to move through the next phase of the change process in ways that honor a youth development approach and effectively foster student learning and achievement.

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Tools to Support
Work Area 1

Engage Cross Functional Expertise in Support of Youth

WORK AREA 1

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 Agreements[1]

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.

2.   *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").

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

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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.

CLOSING: (15-30 MINUTES)

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.)

5. (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 health • No addictions • Happy 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	• Married • Kids & family • Good 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)

1. 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.

WORK AREA 1

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:

1. 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:

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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.
4. Switch roles.
5. Conduct second interview.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Warm Up Question: What is something that you enjoy doing? What activity makes you most happy?

2. (**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

5. 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?

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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:

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):

   ○ 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.

What struck us about the interview	Role	Wants to be appreciated for...

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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 Relationships[2] 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:

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.)

2. 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?

Notes:

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[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.

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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 Talk[3]

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.

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[3] Adapted from the National School Reform Faculty's Chalk Talk protocol in Smith.

ACTIVITY: (20 MINUTES)

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?

3. 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.
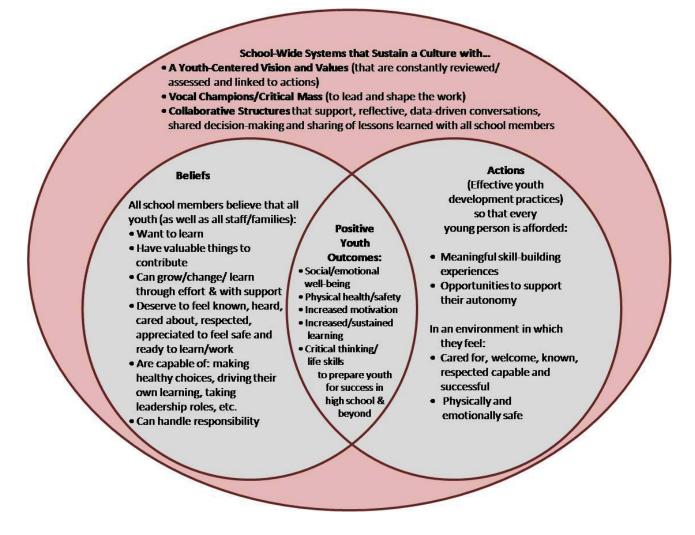
WORKS CITED

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

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.

School-Wide Systems that Sustain a Culture with...
- **A Youth-Centered Vision and Values** (that are constantly reviewed/ assessed and linked to actions)
- **Vocal Champions/Critical Mass** (to lead and shape the work)
- **Collaborative Structures** that support, reflective, data-driven conversations, shared decision-making and sharing of lessons learned with all school members

Beliefs

All school members believe that all youth (as well as all staff/families):
- Want to learn
- Have valuable things to contribute
- Can grow/change/ learn through effort & with support
- Deserve to feel known, heard, cared about, respected, appreciated to feel safe and ready to learn/work
- Are capable of: making healthy choices, driving their own learning, taking leadership roles, etc.
- Can handle responsibility

Positive Youth Outcomes:
- Social/emotional well-being
- Physical health/safety
- Increased motivation
- Increased/sustained learning
- Critical thinking/ life skills
  to prepare youth for success in high school & beyond

Actions
(Effective youth development practices) so that every young person is afforded:

- Meaningful skill-building experiences
- Opportunities to support their autonomy

In an environment in which they feel:
- Cared for, welcome, known, respected capable and successful
- Physically and emotionally safe

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?

WORK AREA 1

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.

Tools to Support
Work Area 2
Situate Academic Learning and Achievement in the Context of a Youth Development Approach

Tools to Support Work Area 2:

Situate Academic Learning and Achievement in the Context of a Youth Development Approach

Work Area 2 activities and resources help schools to build on their prior knowledge and existing practices to increase their understanding of learning in the context of youth development and to develop a plan that expands on existing youth development practices.

Key Questions When Working on This Area:

- How will you develop a shared youth-centered vision focused on positive youth outcomes?
- How will you create a shared understanding of the interconnection between youth development and learning?
- How might staff experience effective youth development practices themselves?

Key Questions To Reflect on Your Progress in This Area:

- How has staff understanding of youth development changed?
- How do staff members apply their understanding of youth development?
- What evidence is there of a connection between youth development and learning?

Activities

- Youth Development and Learning: Applying a Youth Development Approach to Schools: An activity that helps school staff draw upon their prior knowledge to cultivate an understanding of a youth development approach and its importance to learning
- Our School's Youth Development Strengths and Dreams: A visioning activity that helps school members to identify and build on the youth development-aligned practices and policies already practiced in their school
- Identifying Youth Development Target Areas: An activity to help guide school members find a starting point for their work within the broad arena of youth development

Resources

- What is Youth Development?: A one-page overview of youth development

- Educator Definitions of Youth Development: Samples of participant interpretations of youth development for themselves and their setting.

- What Does Youth Development Look Like in Action?: A two-page overview of the different areas of youth development and examples of school practices and activities aligned with these areas

- Youth Development Overview PowerPoint: Three slides on the end goals of a youth development approach, connection to learning and motivation and a definition of a youth development approach

- Youth Development Goals and Skills: A one-page handout on the end goals of a youth development approach defined in more detail than the PowerPoint and linked to specific skills and assets youth will need

- Youth Development Rubrics: The following are rubrics that provide descriptors of schools at different phases in their process and can help schools identify where they are and where they'd like to be:

  ○ Systems to Support School-Wide Youth Development and Shared Responsibility

  ○ Physical and Psychological Safety

  ○ Supportive and Caring Community

  ○ Support for Autonomy

  ○ Meaningful Skill-Building Experiences

WORK AREA 2

Youth Development and Learning: Applying a Youth Development Approach to Schools

Why is youth development critical to learning and what does it look like in instructional settings?

PURPOSE:

This activity develops an understanding of a youth development approach and its importance to learning.

AUDIENCE:

School staff (particularly teachers and administrators)

TIME:

45 minutes

OUTCOME(S):

As a result of this activity, we will have:

- An increased understanding of a youth development approach
- An increased understanding of how youth development is critical to learning and instruction

MATERIALS:

- A post-it pad for each table group
- Flip charts and markers for each table group
- A board or whole-group flip chart
- Youth Development Overview PowerPoint (slides 3 and 4)
- (Optional) Additional youth development handouts:
    - What is Youth Development?
    - What Does Youth Development Look Like in Action?
    - Motivation Menu of Sample Strategies
    - Youth Development Rubrics

INTRODUCTION: (10 MINUTES)

1. *Key frame*: While participants might not be familiar with the term "youth development" the principles and practices are related to things they already know are important to learning. Since schools are focused on learning, it's important to frame youth development within the context of learning and instruction.

2. Engage the participants in a self-reflection activity

    - Ask participants to think about an environment where they really felt engaged, ready, and motivated to learn.
    - Say: "Think about the characteristics of this environment that made you feel ready to learn. What was it about yourself? The other people in this environment? The structures/processes or resources that allowed you to be engaged, ready and motivated to learn?"
    - Ask participants to write each characteristic on a separate post-it.

WORK AREA 2

ACTIVITY: (25 MINUTES)

1. Share-out post-it ideas in small groups, going around and reading one post-it idea at a time until all ideas are exhausted. As post-it ideas are read, have participants post similar ideas together on a flip chart.

2. Have group members summarize each group of similar ideas into one summarizing statement on a new post-it.

3. Share out small group summarizing statements with the large group, by having each group share one summarizing idea at a time until all ideas are exhausted. Post similar ideas together on a whole-group flip chart or board.

4. *Key frame.* What young people need to be ready to learn is similar to our own needs.

5. Present the Youth Development Overview slide 3 that summarizes what we know young people need to be motivated to learn.

   In order to be engaged, ready and motivated to learn, young people need to feel:

   • Physically and psychologically safe

   • They belong, are known, cared about and supported

   • They are capable of achieving

   • They have control over their ability to achieve

   • Challenged and engaged by meaningful instruction

6. Present the Youth Development Overview slide 4 summarizing the different categories of a youth development approach:

   • Physical and Psychological Safety

   • Caring Community (Supportive Relationships)

   • Support for Autonomy

   • Meaningful Skill-Building Experiences

7. Help participants to see that a youth development approach is related to what they already know about:

   • Motivation

   • The importance of a caring and supportive school climate to learning

   • Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

   • Effective instructional pedagogy

• Adolescence as a vulnerable transition period—a time of critical brain development, emotional, social, and physical changes, when young people need to develop coping strategies and need to develop more say in their learning and learning environment.

• These aspects of instruction can fall by the wayside in high pressure/stressful times, but are critical to student learning and ability to achieve academically.

ACTIVITY CLOSING: (10 MINUTES)

1. Ask participants to compare their own grouped ideas to the youth development categories to see where they might fit.

2. Ask participants to identify characteristics that don't fit under these categories. (See sample table of how responses can be grouped into these categories.)

3. (Optional) Share the handout on "What is Youth Development?" and one or more of the following handouts which provide examples of youth development practices:

   • What Does Youth Development Look Like?

   • Motivation Menu of Sample Strategies

   • Youth Development Rubrics

Facilitator Tip

This activity can be done in many different ways. We also did this as a Chalk Talk activity with a small group of 10 participants who silently wrote what they need to be ready and motivated to learn on butcher paper and drew connections between their ideas.

This activity logically leads into a follow-up activity on the youth development practices schools already have in place and where they might strengthen their practices. The youth development rubrics can help in this analysis and planning.

WORK AREA 2

SAMPLE TABLE OF PARTICIPANT RESPONSES CATEGORIZED BY YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AREA

Area of Youth Development	Staff Responses Students learn when…
Physical and Psychological Safety	• They feel emotionally, socially and physically safe, and stress-free. Their basic needs have to be met. • There is an expectation of trial and error and mistakes are part of the process.
Caring Community (Supportive Relationships)	• They feel good about themselves, feel like they belong, and know they are liked and cared about by the teacher and others. • The environment is relaxed and fun. • There is better connection with the teacher, and students get individualized attention and actually know each other as people.
Support for Autonomy	• They own what is being taught • They have choice over what/how they learn.
Meaning Skill-Building Experiences	• A caring adult is encouraging and also pushing them to learn and has high expectations. • Content is meaningful, relevant, applicable, concrete, and has some connection to students, and they understand why they are learning it. Teachers tap into students' innate curiosity and mentor and guide this process. • There is a need to know the information/skill.

Our School's Youth Development Strengths and Dreams

What are we already doing that's aligned with a youth development approach and what else can we do?

PURPOSE:

This activity identifies existing youth development strategies upon which schools can expand.

AUDIENCE:

School staff

TIME:

1 hour 10 minutes - 1 hour 25 minutes

OUTCOME(S):

As a result of this activity, we will have a shared understanding of:

- Youth development strategies already being used in our school
- Ideas of how we can further expand our youth development approach whole school

MATERIALS:

- What Does Youth Development Look Like in Action? handout for participants
- Youth Development Strengths and Dreams at My School handout for participants
- Youth Development Strengths and Dreams Facilitator Directions handout for table facilitators
- A slide or flip chart of leadership-identified criteria for new policies/practices
- Flip charts for each small group
- Markers for each small group

OTHER PREPARATION:

Prior to doing this activity, it's important that participants have an understanding of youth development. We therefore, recommend that this activity follow the Dreams for our Youth (Work Area 1) and Youth Development and Learning (Work Area 2) activities.

This activity allows participants to practice shared decision-making, which is an important skill in a collaborative culture. It is helpful, therefore, for each small group to be facilitated by a group member who has experience facilitating collaborative decision making processes, if possible. It is also important that school administrators or leadership team identify key criteria for decisions ahead of time to help guide decisions to be aligned with the school vision, priorities and resources and ensure that new change efforts are effective. Some examples of criteria might be that all new policies/practices must:

1. Align with the school vision to ensure that all students are successful in high school, in life, and as democratic citizens

2. Be something that all staff can apply in their individual settings (e.g., the classroom)

3. Link to a specific measurable youth development goal

4. Be research-based

5. Be continuous and systemic rather than a one-time event

INTRODUCTION: (10 MINUTES)

1. *Key frame*: Many school members may not have thought about some of the strategies they use as youth development, but as explored in the Youth Development and Learning activity, they are likely already doing many things that are aligned with youth development. Just as a positive youth development approach seeks to see youth as assets and help build on their strengths, so too do we want to build on participants' strengths.

2. Review the different areas of youth development and what they mean using the What Does Youth Development Look Like in Action? handout.

3. Discuss any questions the group has about the youth development categories. Come to shared understanding about the meaning of the four categories and identify where the group needs additional information from outside experts or resources.

ACTIVITY: (35-40 MINUTES)

This activity develops an understanding of a youth development approach and its importance to learning.

1. Form small heterogeneous groups representing school members in different roles.

2. Assign a different youth development category to each small group.

3. Ask participants to individually use the *Youth Development Strengths and Dreams* at My School Participant handout to list existing practices, policies, traditions, or other rituals and additional dreams for their assigned category.

4. Have each small group identify a facilitator, recorder and reporter.

5. Ask facilitators to use the *Youth Development Strengths and Dreams Facilitator Directions* to guide their share out and consensus on one or two key practices or policies they'd like to see their school employ (By consensus, we mean that all members can live with and support the final decision).

CLOSING: (25-35 MINUTES, DEPENDING ON THE NUMBER OF SMALL GROUPS)

1. Share out small group proposed practices or policies. As they present, ask other groups to assess proposed ideas against the given criteria.

2. After each group has presented, invite two or three people to provide feedback using the following format:
   - One thing they liked about a presented idea in terms of how it aligned with the criteria
   - One question they have in terms of what they wonder about or are curious about that might need more clarification, particularly in how it aligns with the criteria

3. (Optional) Further narrow the proposed practices and policies, by taking the total number of suggestions and dividing this number by three as the number of votes each person is given. Alternatively, the administrators or leadership team can take the proposed whole-group list, assess it by the criteria and provide feedback to the whole staff on up to three policies around which they can commit resources, guidance and support.

Facilitator Tip

Rather than taking the problem-solution approach often used in strategic planning by focusing on organizational problems and trying to find solutions, we opted to use Appreciative Inquiry techniques. Appreciative Inquiry focuses on the strengths of individuals and their organizations and tends to generate positive energy toward making change. We found this approach to be particularly effective with teachers, who told us that they feel like professional development efforts often begin with a problem within their practice that needs to be "fixed." With YiM, however, teachers reported that the meetings were so positive that they left them feeling reenergized. These strengths-based activities also established participants' shared experiences as crucial to the learning of the whole group and engaged staff in different roles as equal partners, collaboratively creating a shared vision based on their individual and collective strengths. The following resources offer more information on Appreciative Inquiry.

- *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/*

Youth Development Strengths and Dreams Facilitator Directions

What are we already doing that is aligned with a youth development approach and what else can we do?

PURPOSE:

- To **build on our strengths** (in terms of youth development aligned practices and policies our school already has)

- To **identify additional practices and policies** that will help us be more intentional in taking a school-wide youth development approach

AUDIENCE: School staff

ACTIVITY SHARE OUT DIRECTIONS: (15 MINUTES)

1. Identify a group facilitator, recorder, and reporter. The following directions are written for the group facilitator.

2. Ask each small group member to share one current school practice that falls under your given youth development category in round robin fashion until all ideas of the group are exhausted. Ask the recorder to chart these ideas as they are shared.

3. Repeat this process for members' dreams for your category.

ACTIVITY CONSENSUS DIRECTIONS: (15 MINUTES)

In looking at the dreams, lead the group in coming to consensus on one or two key practices or policies you'd like your school to implement (By consensus, we mean that all members can live with and support the final decision). This can be done through the following suggested narrowing and decision-making process. Alternatively you can use other consensus-building strategies with which you are familiar.

1. **Clarification**: Ask if there are any ideas that participants need clarified. The person who offered an idea that needs clarification can then provide it.

2. **Grouping**: Ask the group if there are any ideas that can be grouped together, because they are similar in nature, and begin to narrow the list.

3. **Assess items next to the given criteria**: Ask the group to use the given criteria to assess the remaining items. Are there any items that don't meet the criteria that would either need to be changed or eliminated? (Before eliminating, give those who feel strongly about an idea the opportunity to advocate for their idea and to propose modifications to fit the given criteria.)

4. **Vote**: Ask each member to vote for two items they are most passionate about seeing occur in their school.

5. **Eliminate**: If there are any items that didn't get votes, ask if anyone disagrees with eliminating those ideas.

6. **Come to Consensus**: At this point, there are hopefully one or two ideas that stand out as having the most energy from the group based on the number of votes. Use a thumbs check to see if the group can come to consensus on presenting these top two ideas as the groups suggestions.

   - **Thumbs Check**: Participants put thumbs up if they strongly agree with and can support the decision. They put thumbs in the middle if they do not fully agree, but can live with and support the decision. A thumbs down indicates they cannot live with and support the decision. Anyone who puts their thumbs down needs to propose an alternative solution that they could live with and support. It could be that the group then agrees to either further combine ideas or propose three ideas as a compromise.

7. **Share Out**: Ask your reporter to present the agreed upon ideas to the whole group.

WORK AREA 2

Youth Development Strengths and Dreams At My School

What are we already doing that is aligned with a youth development approach and what else can we do?

ACTIVITY DIRECTIONS:

1. Focus on the one youth development area assigned to your table group.

2. List one or two strengths (reflection) your school has in this area.

3. List one or two dreams for your school you have in this area.

Youth Development Area	**Strengths**: What my school is currently doing to support this area… (Current practices, policies, traditions, rituals or celebrations on which my school can build)	**Dreams**: What else do I wish my school were doing in this area… (New practices, policies or strategies for intentionally taking a youth development approach whole school)
Physical and Emotional Safety		
Caring Community (Supportive Relationships)		
Support for Autonomy		
Meaningful Skill-Building Experiences		

Identifying Youth Development Target Areas

On what aspect of youth development should we begin?

PURPOSE:

This activity guides school members to find a starting point for their work.

AUDIENCE:

School leadership team (with administrator, community school, teacher, after-school, and, ideally, parent and student representation)

TIME:

1 hour 15 minutes - 1 hour 45 minutes

OUTCOME(S):

As a result of this activity, we will have:

- Agreement on the one to four key youth development areas of focus

MATERIALS:

- A slide or chart of the school vision/goal for this process
- Criteria for action as suggested in Our School's Youth Development Strengths and Dreams (from Work Area 2, if the group has created these)
- Compiled school member data organized by youth development category (See Kennedy Middle School sample and Other Preparation)
- Highlighter pens in two different colors for each participant
- A board or whole-group flip chart
- (Optional) Youth Development Outcome Ranking Sheet

OTHER PREPARATION:

Prior to doing this activity, school leaders will need to gather and compile data from other school members including representative parents, students, and all staff. These data should capture what other school members see as the greatest areas of need at the school. These data might include:

- School members' dreams for their school from Our School's Youth Development Strengths and Dreams (Work Area 2).
- School members' scoring of one or more of the Youth Development Rubrics (Work Area 2).
- Existing youth development results from existing surveys such as the California Healthy Kids Survey.
- Resulting themes from the Paired Interviews activity focused on A Collaborative Vision for Supporting Youth (Work Area 1).

These data can be collected formally and broadly or through informal representative focus groups. Ideally, there would be at least one meeting involving representative administrators, teachers, after-school staff, parents, and students where diverse school members jointly explore their dreams for their school, hear each others' perspectives, and collectively identify key areas of priority.

Examples of compiled data from multiple sources organized by youth development category are included at the end of this activity.

INTRODUCTION: (15-20 MINUTES DEPENDING ON THE SIZE OF THE GROUP)

1. Ask each participant to share one result they hope will come out of the visioning/strategic planning process.

2. Summarize the group's ideas into key themes.

3. Review the school's vision/purpose for engaging in this process in comparison with that of the individual participants. If the group has also created criteria for actions (as suggested in Our School's Youth Development Strengths and Dreams), review these also.

4. Remind the group of the visioning process they have engaged in thus far.

5. *Key frame*: Participants have increased their understanding of youth development and have collected data on diverse school members' perceived needs at the school. They can now reflect on these data and narrow their focus on one to four starting areas.

ACTIVITY: (45-60 MINUTES BUT THIS CAN VARY GREATLY DEPENDING ON HOW LONG IT TAKES TO COME TO CONSENSUS)

1. Ask school members to review their compiled data and highlight data points that strike them as important to address. Ask participants to use a different color to highlight **two** data points that meet the group's criteria for action and are issues they feel are of highest priority.

2. In Round Robin style ask each person to share their two selected data points and the reason they feel those two data points are critical to address.

3. Group similar ideas with agreement from participants to proposed groupings.

4. Ask the group to identify any items that do not meet their criteria for action. Eliminate these with consensus from the group.

5. Divide the number of total responses by three as the number of votes each person is given. If the number of responses is less than six, give everyone two votes. Ask participants to use dot stickers or checks to vote.
   Note: Voting is not decisive of the final outcome but only a method for showing the location of the group's energy. It is important that the group come to consensus on the final topics, as all will need to be passionate about the focus areas in order to persist through the difficult implementation phase. By consensus, we mean that all members can live with and support the final decision.

6. Allow participants to advocate for the importance of any topic that received few or no votes. (Listening to advocates may change others' feelings about the importance of those topics, or advocates may concede that other topics seem more important to the group. If the latter, you might be able to eliminate topics, if the group agrees to do so.)

7. Identify the top one or two topics that received the most votes and ask if anyone disagrees to these topics being included in the final areas of focus.

8. At this point, you may be able to propose one to four final topics of focus. Ask if anyone would object to focusing on those areas. (It's important to allow participants to advocate for ideas that might be eliminated to see if that changes the group's perceptions.)

9. Help the group come to compromise by combining ideas or expanding the areas of focus.

10. Assure that there is a true consensus in the group by doing either a five-finger or thumbs check:
    * **Five-Finger Consensus**: Participants hold up the number of fingers that show their level of support for the group's decision. A four or a five indicates that they strongly agree with and can support the decision. A three means they do not fully agree, but they can live with and support the decision. A one or two indicates that they cannot live with and support the decision.
    * **Thumbs Check**: Participants put thumbs up if they strongly agree with and can support the decision. They put thumbs in the middle if they do not fully agree, but can live with and support the decision. A thumbs down indicates they cannot live with and support the decision.
    * Anyone who holds up a one, two or thumbs down needs to propose an alternative solution that they could live with and support.

11. Continue this process until the group comes to consensus on a decision.

> *Facilitator Tip*
>
> *We did this activity at the end of one school year in preparation for the work of the following school year. The topics became the foci of small, inquiry-focused groups.*
>
> *When topic areas were brought to teachers at Kennedy as focal areas for their small groups, there was a group of teachers who felt strongly about focusing on a topic that was not previously identified. The leadership team allowed them to add this additional focus area so long as it met their identified criteria, and they could connect it back to improving student motivation (the mission for that year). This empowered the group to take action on something they felt was not being addressed and helped them to buy in to the process. We found that leadership's clearly defined criteria were critical in this process of allowing for school member ownership while guiding all toward a common youth-centered vision.*

WORK AREA 2

CLOSING: (25-35 MINUTES DEPENDING ON THE NUMBER OF SMALL GROUPS)

1. Discuss strategies for gaining buy-in from all school members to work on these focus areas. Some strategies we found helpful in this process include:
   - Describing the process used and show school members how their input was used.
   - Asking school members to rank the focus topic areas in order of priority to further assess priorities. (See the Sample of Final Topics and School Member Rankings at the end of this activity).
   - Asking staff members to choose one of the topics selected to work on collectively in small groups.
   - Allowing others to add focus areas that fit with the leadership-identified criteria and vision.
2. Identify clear next steps of who will do what by when to engage other school members.

SAMPLE OF COMPILED DATA

Note: The data in this sample handout are modified from Kennedy's data. They used these data to help narrow their focus. Data were pulled from the adult and youth focus group/workshop activities that are described in the Our School's Youth Development Strengths and Dreams activity in Work Area 2 and the Paired Interviews activity in Work Area 1 that focused on A Collaborative Vision for Supporting Youth. Data were also pulled from youth findings collected in previous years through the Youth Engaged in Leadership (YELL) program, which the JGC co-developed and ran with this school. Students in this program conducted action research around school or community issues about which they were concerned, collected data on this issue and made recommendations to school and community leaders based on their findings. All data herein are based on input from 16 staff, parents, and youth in 2008 focus groups unless otherwise noted.

FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

	Adult Focus Group/Workshop Data	Youth Focus Group/Activity Data
Systems to Support School-Wide Youth Development	• **Five** representatives voted to focus entire organization on a **single vision** • **Four** representatives voted for structures that increase **teamwork** • **Seven** representatives voted to improve **overall communication**	
Physical and Emotional Safety	• Parent focus group (n=5) expressed a need for **school security** • Five representatives voted to **improve equity** • School staff have expressed concern about **barriers between youth and adults** • School staff observed a **lack of unity**: divisions going on between teachers and students and between students • Three KMS representatives voted that **all staff need to be student centered**	• In 2004-05, YELL youth focused on **concerns about gangs,** and through 240 surveys, found that a majority of students are not in gangs, but know someone who is • In 2003-2004, YELL youth focused on **concerns around bullying** and found in a survey of 134 students, **65% of 6th graders, 48% of 7th graders and 50% of 8th graders** have been bullied at school • 2005-2006 YELL youth focused on **concerns about consistent enforcement** of dress code and lock out • In 2004-2005, YELL youth focused on **concerns about stereotyping and cliques**
Caring Community (Supportive Relationships)	• **Three** representatives voted to **strengthen relationships** • **Four representatives** voted to increase **communication with students** • School staff have expressed a **need** for **students to feel known** • School staff have expressed concern that some **school staff are focused on negative**	• **56%** of surveyed youth (n=68) agree that **adults** in the school **care** about them and their future. • **70%** of surveyed youth (n=41) agree at least **two adults know them well**. • **45%** of surveyed youth (n=68) agree that they **feel respected by their teachers**. • A 2008 **top recommendation** from youth involved in focus group (one of eight) is for **respect between all people**, because they feel it increases motivation to go to school, helps people feel good about themselves, and creates a more positive environment
Support for Autonomy	School staff expressed **a need for** more opportunities for **every student to have and feel ownership over the school**.	• **More than ½ (6 of 11)** of surveyed youth (n=11) in 2008 agree that **adults listen to them**. • Surveyed youth (n=11) said that what they are learning and doing at their school right now will help them to: ○ **Help others (10 of 11)** ○ **Get involved in their community (8 of 11)**
Meaningful Skill-Building Opportunities	School staff expressed a need for **more opportunities for youth to be involved in the community**	• A youth 2008 **top recommendation** (4 of 8) is for **opportunities to be involved in**: sports, foreign language classes, sex education and health classes and financial classes • **5 of 11** of 2008 surveyed youth (n=11) agree **their classes are interesting**. • In 2003-2004, YELL Youth found in a survey of 251 students, that **60%** believe there are **not enough after-school activities**. **65%** said they are **not involved in an activity after-school**. In 2004-2005, YELL Youth also recommended more after-school activities as a gang prevention strategy.

SAMPLE OF COMPILED DATA (CONTINUED)

The following are additional school sample data that can inform the process in identifying youth development target areas of focus.

PERCENT OF 7TH GRADE STUDENTS IN OUR SCHOOL WHO SCORED HIGH IN THE FOLLOWING ASSETS ON THE CALIFORNIA HEALTHY KIDS SURVEY

School Environment	2005	2007
Caring Relationships: Adult in School (Test items include: At my school, there is a teacher or some other adult ... who really cares about me; who tells me when I do a good job; who notices when I'm not there)	38%	43%
High Expectations: Adult in School (Test items include: At my school, there is a teacher or some other adult ...who always wants me to do my best; who believes that I will be a success)	58%	65%
Meaningful Participation (Test items include: At my school, there is a teacher or some other adult who listens to me when I have something to say. At school...I do interesting activities; I help decide things like class activities or rules; I do things that make a difference.)	13%	21%

HOW 7TH GRADE STUDENTS AT OUR SCHOOL RATED THE LEVEL OF SAFETY OF THE SCHOOL

School Environment	2005	2007
Very safe	25%	28%
Safe	36%	37%
Neither safe nor unsafe	27%	28%
Unsafe	7%	5%
Very unsafe	5%	3%

WORK AREA 2

Youth Development Outcome Ranking Sheet

Where is our energy around strengthening our youth development approach?

ACTIVITY DIRECTIONS

1. List the four or five youth development areas that your school has identified as being most pressing to address and aligned with your criteria for action.

2. Rank the order of importance of these areas from one to five according to our criteria for action and your perspective of the most pressing needs in our school.

OUR CRITERIA FOR ACTION

1. Must align with our vision to:_____

   _____

2. _____

   _____

3. _____

   _____

Rank (1-5)	Priority Youth Development Areas of Focus

SAMPLE OF FINAL FOCUS TOPICS AND SCHOOL MEMBER RANKING

After participants identified the following four areas of focus, they asked other staff and students to rank these four areas in order of importance to help identify one or more areas of priority.

	Ranked 1st	Ranked 2nd	Ranked 3rd	Ranked 4th
Building respect throughout the school (youth-adult, adult-adult)	21	8	5	4
Increasing student motivation	9	15	6	8
Strengthening relationships	5	11	11	11
Equity, increasing tolerance and broadening perspectives	5	4	15	14

WORK AREA 2

What is Youth Development?

Mary K. Hofstedt

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IS...

- The **processes and stages of growing up** - from pre-teen through to adulthood

- The **practices** that support youth to make healthy transitions to adulthood, and to become successful members of society

- An **area of scholarship** that seeks to understand adolescent's intellectual, emotional, social, and physical growth processes, and to identify practices and environments that support these processes in positive ways

WHEN SOMEONE IS 'DOING' YOUTH DEVELOPMENT, THEY ARE GENERALLY

- Focusing on the strengths of adolescents, rather than only addressing the risks or problems

- Enlisting youth as partners in learning, decision making, and their own personal growth

- Engaging youth as resources and fellow community members with important ideas/insights

- Collaborating with others to support youth across settings and giving them positive, consistent messages about their value and potential

Youth development seeks to understand how we as a society can best work together to realize what we want for our young people and their dreams for themselves. It is a field that unites social service providers, teachers, program leaders, artists, activists, civic leaders, parents, community organizers, and young people themselves under one unified umbrella. After all, one child may need prevention, enrichment, intervention, academic challenge, and personal support at different junctures in their development—and sometimes all at the same time!

WHAT WE KNOW

In 2002 the National Academy of Sciences published a report called "Community Programs that Promote Youth Development." This report is a review and synthesis of the available research on youth development and what practices best support their well-being. It is the definitive research publication in the field. In addition, the Search Institute identified 40 assets that help youth to thrive. There are many other resources, but these are two of the most commonly referenced. From the National Academy of Sciences we know that development happens across (at least) four domains: Physical, Emotional, Social, and Cognitive. In each area, individuals can develop strengths, or assets, that equip them to be independent, connected, and contributing people.

- Having more assets is better than having few. Although strong assets in one category can offset weak assets in another category, life is easier to manage if one has assets in all four domains.

- Individuals do not necessarily need the entire range of assets to thrive; in fact, various combinations of assets across domains reflect equally positive adolescent development.

- Continued exposure to positive experiences, settings, and people, as well as opportunities to gain and refine life skills, supports young people in the acquisition and growth of these assets.

- Environments that support the development of assets provide physical and emotional safety, opportunities to belong and participate, support for youth to matter and make a difference, positive relationships, positive social norms, appropriate structures, and integration of family, school, and community.

- After-school programs can expand the opportunities for youth to acquire personal and social assets.

- Adolescents who spend time in communities that are rich in developmental opportunities for them experience less risk and show evidence of higher rates of positive development. A diversity of opportunities in each community is more likely to support broad adolescent development and attract the interest of and meet the needs of a greater number of youth.

WORKS CITED

National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2002) *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development*. Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth. Eccles, J. & Gootman, J.A. (Eds.) Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Search Institute (2007) *40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents*. Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute. Retrieved December 4, 2009 from http://www.search-institute.org/content/40-developmental-assets-adolescents-ages-12-18.

WORK AREA 2

Educator Definitions of Youth Development

In order for a school to move toward a youth development approach, school members need to make their own meaning of youth development by putting it in their own words. Some schools might call it "teaching the whole child," for example. The following are examples of definitions that Youth in the Middle participants came up with for themselves.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IS...

- An approach to working with young people that is youth centered and focused on building relationships
- Understanding, awareness and knowledge of where youth are developmentally, emotionally, physically, and socially
- Supporting young people through a difficult time in their lives—listening to where they are coming from, and helping to make them better citizens
- Establishing a fair and respectful teaching environment by creating trust and listening to students so they are bought in and motivated
- Getting past the filter caused by anxiety, feeling unsafe, and self esteem that we all have and that prohibits/hurts learning
- About connections, respect, communication, collaboration and community involvement.
- About providing increased opportunities for student choice and voice:
  - Giving youth power, including them in conversations in decisions that affect them, and shared decision-making
  - Choice in how and what they learn
- Helping youth to believe in themselves
- Providing freedom to fail
- Multi-faceted: The approaches are diverse and the interpretation is varied
- Looks different in the classroom than after school
- Hard, messy and requires persistence
- Vital to the learning process: Students must feel emotionally and physically safe, a sense of connection, care, and belonging, and believe that they are capable of achieving and have control over their ability to achieve in order to be motivated and ready to learn
- Teaching young people Algebra as opposed to teaching Algebra — the focus is on learning instead of teaching.

WORK AREA 2

What Does Youth Development Look Like in Action?

Youth Development Area	What It Means...	What It Looks Like...	Examples of In-School Practices and Activities...
Physical and Psychological Safety	Youth feel safe from physical harm, confident that surrounding adults will protect them from harm and assist them if they are feeling threatened. Youth know that there are rules that govern behavior that will be consistently and fairly enforced. Youth feel safe to make mistakes without fear of teasing, harassment, or ostracism; that racial and cultural differences between individuals are embraced.	• Safe and health-promoting facilities	• Safety and emergency response plans known by entire school • All incoming youth have a "go to" buddy for support and guidance
		• Practices that increase safe peer group interaction and decrease unsafe or confrontational peer interactions	• Peer conflict resolution programs • All members of the school community pay attention to and address negative behavior (such as bullying) immediately • Adults and youth trained in facilitation skills conduct student and student-staff dialogues to safely share their thoughts
		• Limit setting, clear and consistent boundaries and expectations	• All members of the school community understand the school rules and enforce them fairly and consistently • Clear systems and processes are in place to provide clear, consistent, and respectful enforcement of rules • Staff are held accountable to the same rules of conduct as students
		• Age-appropriate monitoring	• Adults recognize the development stages of middle school students and provide supervised opportunities for guided exploration
Caring Community (Supportive Relationships)	Youth feel known and cared about by adults and other youth. Youth feel secure that they will be valued and accepted by the group; that they can participate fully and they will be treated with respect. Youth feel connected to their school and to the people in their school. Youth receive consistent messages from all adults.	• Opportunities for meaningful inclusion, regardless of one's gender, ethnicity, sexual identity, or disabilities	• Staff facilitate equal interactions between different groups and cooperative activities toward a shared goal rather than competition between groups • Adults address racism and engage students in productive conversations that raise awareness about racism/ discrimination
		• Communication and responsiveness	• Adults connect with students on school and non-school matters • Staff notice and respond to student needs • Adults explain to students the reasons behind a lesson or decision
		• Coordination and synergy among family, school and community	• Staff develop systems that support clear/consistent communication between all adults (family, after-school, school, community) • Engaged parents/caregivers in identifying strengths and expertise to contribute to student activities, projects and individual growth • School has one or more community program components

WORK AREA 2

Youth Development Area	What It Means...	What It Looks Like...	Examples of In-School Practices and Activities...
Support for Autonomy	Youth are empowered to be self-directed, make responsible choices about how to use their time and participate as group members in making decisions that influence the larger program or school climate. Youth feel a sense of belonging and ownership in the program, classroom or school and that their contributions are valued.	• Opportunities for meaningful inclusion	• Students involved in helping to define school rules that take into account the different experience and challenges students their age face • Youth conducting research activities with their peers to identify ways for all youth to feel connected to each other and to adults at the school
		• Practices that focus on improvement rather than on relative current performance levels	• Developing a broad definition of leadership with students that includes a broad array of "entry points" for service, formal decision making, event planning etc. where you are making a positive impact • Giving students choice, opportunities to learn from mistakes and praising effort instead of intelligence (linked to motivation)
		• Opportunities for problem solving, decision making, planning, goal setting and helping others	• Peer mentoring activities based on youth-identified "expertise" • Student involvement opportunities with clear roles and expectations for issues that affect them and for which they can see the results of their work
Meaningful Skill-Building Experiences	Experiences that give students the opportunity to develop life skills, that challenge them and are relevant . These experiences also increase their knowledge of and contribution to their community.	• Practices that support youth to make a real difference	• Opportunities for students to be involved in community projects
		• Opportunities to learn physical, intellectual, psychological, emotional, and social skills	• Providing numerous enrichment opportunities for students in sports, arts, foreign languages, financial management, health, goal setting, career planning and life skills during the school day and after school
		• Opportunities for social and cultural identity formation/cultural and bicultural competence	• Activities engaging all students in learning with their family and community and connecting it to classroom learning and sharing among peers • Structured dialogues between teachers and parents (and youth and parents, and others) regarding their values and definitions of success for their students/children
		• Activities that students feel is challenging and relevant and in which they believe they can be successful	• Classroom learning is connected to students' "real world" experiences, culture and interests • Students are engaged in deep cognitive thinking and activities that ask them to construct their own knowledge. • Adults differentiate instruction to meet the individual needs of students

WORKS CITED

National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2002) *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development*. Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth. Eccles, J. & Gootman, J.A. (Eds.) Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Youth Development Goals and Skills

GOALS FOR OUR YOUTH

- **Physical and Psychological Well-Being:** Whereby youth are experiencing safe, health-promoting facilities and safe, structured peer group interactions which support positive communications strategies and problem solving
- **Intellectual and Vocational Competency:** All youth should expect as adults to be able to support themselves and their families, and to have some resources beyond basic survival needs. They should have decent jobs and the education or access to education to improve or change jobs
- **Social Connectedness:** Young people should grow up to be physically and mentally healthy, be supportive parents if they have children, and have positive family and friendship networks
- **Meaningful Contributions:** Can take many forms, but we hope that our young people will look to do more than be taxpayers and law-abiders—to contribute at a level where they contribute to their community, however they define their community.

SKILLS/ASSETS OUR YOUTH WILL NEED

Physical and Psychological Well-Being	Intellectual and Vocational Competency	Social Connectedness	Meaningful Contributions
• Good health habits • Risk management skills • Positive self-regard • Social identity • Strong moral character	• School success • Knowledge of vocational skills • Critical thinking skills • Communication skills • Sense of responsibility	• Connectedness and trust with family members and peers • Self-confidence • Communication skills • Conflict resolution skills	• Attachment to community organizations • Sense of larger purpose in life • Strong moral character • Commitment to civic engagement • Leadership skills

Systems to Support School-Wide Youth Development and Shared Responsibility Rubric

PURPOSE OF THE SCHOOL-WIDE SYSTEMS RUBRIC

The following rubric attempts to describe the key indicators of the systems that are needed to support and sustain a school-wide youth development focus. They describe what the systems might look like at different stages of development to help gauge the current state as well as progress towards meetings your goals. Being able to track progress is important, as the work is hard and requires persistence. It's easy to fall back into old habits that are not aligned with your vision. In fact, it's important to realize that this process is not necessarily linear, as circumstances can lead to setbacks. We hope this tool can serve as a helpful reminder of where you want to be and help to maintain optimism and persistence in working toward that vision.

BACKGROUND	**Underlying Principles of This Rubric**

Why Do School-Wide Systems Matter?
The following rubric is based on the school-wide systems that are needed to support and sustain any school change effort. While not specific to a youth development approach, we do integrate principles important to community school change efforts (such as shared leadership) as well as research-based effective professional development and school reform efforts. These school-wide systems are vital to constructing the organizational supports necessary for building and sustaining whole-school change.
 	
Rubric Descriptors
This rubric attempts to describe what is happening at different stages of school-change: What you might see and what members might feel at these different stages. It does not, however, give specific strategies for achieving these changes because each school's unique conditions and populations will affect the process. Other parts of the guide provide research-based effective practices that might inform your school's strategies as well as activities your school might adapt or use as you work toward your vision.
 	
We suggest using this rubric in conjunction with the Caring and Supportive Community Rubric, which describes the development of skills in working productively through conflict and engaging in collaborative decision-making, critical to the success of shared responsibility systems.
 	
The descriptors are adapted from what we know from other school change efforts, such as the Bay Area School Reform Coalition (BASRC), the work of the Children's Aid Society, and the John W. Gardner Center's prior work on Stages of Development in Community School, as well as the current research on Professional Learning Communities.
 	
Definition of School-Wide Systems: School-wide systems are structures (e.g., schedules, buildings), infrastructure (e.g., new or refined collaborative or decision-making bodies); cultural norms (e.g., norms of behavior, values, and beliefs of school community members); and processes (e.g., how meetings are run, internal communication processes) that govern the interactions and decisions of all members of the school community (all staff, students, and parents).
	The school change principles underlying the following descriptors are:
	• The school change process takes time and persistence. Typically any organizational change effort requires at least three to five years before new norms and practices are operationalized.
	• School change is most effective when there is:
	  o Strong support from leadership and a number of vocal champions in the school
	  o A known sense of direction that is clearly and consistently communicated
	  o Structures, processes, norms and practices that are aligned with this vision
	  o A long-term commitment to work toward this vision in incremental, doable steps
	• When leadership is shared among school members who follow ideals rather than a person, individuals are self-motivated and self-directed in their work and perform at a higher level.
	• The use of data based on student outcomes and perspectives has helped schools to continually improve, build shared accountability, ensure the success of all students, protect effective practices/programs and improve or eliminate ineffective practices.
	
	In addition, some descriptors are also based on the following research-based youth development principles related to collaboration and shared responsibility:
	• Adult relationships and connections to one another affect youth:
	  o When adults feel connected and supported, they want to be at school and are more engaged in their work
	  o Adults are role models for youth and set the tone for the school
	• When youth see evidence that their voice or actions have an impact in their immediate settings (e.g., classroom, school, home, after-school program), they are more likely to be engaged and intrinsically motivated to learn and they develop important decision-making, communication and leadership skills necessary to becoming productive, contributing adults.
	• When youth are engaged in projects and activities tied to their personal interests and to their culture or background, they are more likely to be engaged in school and they develop important leadership skills and sense of belonging important in their growth into healthy adults.

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WORK AREA 2

Pre-Conditions to Change ➜	Trail Blazing ➜	Building Momentum ➜	Thriving
The following descriptors help to paint a picture of what a school might look like prior to a change effort or during times of stress when setbacks can occur.	At this stage, a group of leaders begins to form and define a vision for their school. Individuals in the school begin to experiment with changes in individual practices and school norms and practices.	At this stage, a critical mass (at least a third of school staff) act as vocal champions for the vision and begin to establish norms, structures, and processes that support this vision.	At this stage, norms of collaboration, community and care are operationalized as "the way we do business," and all members (students, all staff and parents) act and feel as described.

Shared Responsibility Around a Shared Vision

In the school, you see that: • A vision, school policies, practices, decisions, structures, and processes may be in place, but are established at the top with little or no input from others in the school community • Even if the vision includes the importance of meeting students' physical, emotional, and social needs, this vision is seldom communicated, and the school norms, structures, and strategies focus primarily on academic achievement with little or no attention to other areas of development • There are many methods of communication between different school members* (e.g., meetings, newsletters, events) but there is not a cohesive approach to communicating with all school members (all staff, parents, students) and communication is primarily one-way (top-down) In general, school members* feel they do not have input into school policies that affect them.	In the school, you see that: • At least one group of school leaders representing different school groups** begins to work together toward one cohesive, student-centered vision and measurable goals around some aspects of students' physical, social and emotional well-being as well as academic achievement. These leaders begin to identify the types of data that can best inform progress and effectiveness of strategies toward these goals. • Administrators and other school leaders begin to continuously communicate the school vision and how policies/activities connect to/support this vision • Administrators begin to seek input from some school members on policies that affect them • School leaders begin to analyze their existing communication mechanisms in terms of their purpose, audiences and flow and begin to define a more cohesive system that supports collaboration between all school members* In general, school members* feel they have some input into school policies and direction.	In the school, you see that: • A critical mass of school staff at all levels as well as parent and student leaders vocally and actively lead work toward one cohesive, student-centered vision and measurable goals around the physical, social, emotional, and academic well-being of all students. Staff are expected to also work collaboratively toward these goals. There are structures and supports (e.g., collaborative teams, professional development, materials, processes) in place to support staff in working toward these goals and school policy decisions are tied to this vision. • School staff collect and analyze data from multiple perspectives (including students and parents of all socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds) to measure progress on goals and to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies in working toward these goals • Most members of the school staff at all levels as well as many students and parents communicate the school vision and how school policies/strategies support this vision. This group knows the process for giving input into school decisions. • School leaders create and begin to implement a cohesive communication system that includes formal mechanisms for two-way communication among all school members* and clear, collaborative decision-making processes. In general, school members* feel they have some input into school decisions that affect them and can see how their input informs and improves school practices.	In the school, you see that: • Almost all school members* work together across different groups** to shape the school policies, practices, structures, and processes aligned with one cohesive, student-centered vision and measurable physical, emotional, social, and academic goals for all students • School members across groups collect, analyze and reflect on data from many sources to inform practices most effective in achieving shared goals. School members routinely adapt their strategies based on input and data and thus are able to meet the needs of a changing population. • There is a cohesive communication system among all school community members (students, all staff and parents) that includes formal mechanisms for all members to give input into key governance decisions and strategies and to be regularly informed of decisions and progress toward the school vision. In general, school members* including parents and students feel they have input into school decisions and see how their input affects school decisions.

Collaborative Relationships

In the school, you see that: • School members tend to work primarily in isolation or in teams of like roles (teachers, after-school, students, parents, administrators) • The primary connection between classroom, after-school, school events and home activities is teacher-defined homework • Staff must find time to collaborate outside of school time, and often this time is spent discussing problems with little plan for solutions	In the school, you see that: • Some individuals representing different groups** begin to work together to try to make connections between their respective settings. (e.g., classroom/after-school curricular connections; classroom activities that make family/cultural connections/involve family members) • School leaders begin to define different structures and processes for collaboration across school groups, which begin to explore the use of data to inform practices around student-centered goals	In the school, you see that: • School leaders identify or create collaboration time, structures and support that allow a critical mass of representatives of different groups** regular school time to collaborate on activities and strategies for meeting shared student social, emotional, physical and academic goals and that draw connections between student cultures and school activities/instruction • Different groups participate in events hosted by other groups	In the school, you see that: • Collaboration and reflection time is operationalized. There is regular, sanctioned and paid staff collaboration/reflection time as part of the normal school day. Staff use this time to collaborate/reflect and often involve parents/ youth as appropriate. • There are connections made between school members' passions, family, and cultures, and school activities and instruction • Different groups** co-host events together

* By "school members" we mean all administrators, staff, parents, students, and community partners with whom you interact

** By "groups" we mean different roles (students, parents, teachers, after-school staff, administrators) as well as other differences such as ethnicity, socio-economic background, ability levels, etc.

Physical and Psychological Safety Rubric

PURPOSE OF THE PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY RUBRIC

The following rubric describes the key indicators of what a safe school might look like at different stages of implementation. The intent of this tool is to help gauge the current state of the school, identify areas of focus, and track progress towards meeting your goals. Being able to track progress is important, as the work is hard and requires persistence. It's easy to fall back into old habits that are not aligned with your vision. In fact, it's important to realize that this process is not necessarily linear, as circumstances can lead to setbacks. We hope this tool can serve as a helpful reminder of where you want to be and help to maintain optimism and persistence in working toward that vision.

BACKGROUND

Underlying Principles of This Rubric

The research-based principles underlying the rubric indicators and descriptors are:
- Youth must feel physically and emotionally safe to be ready to learn
- Youth are intrinsically motivated to learn when they believe they can be successful and feel it is safe to make mistakes

Rubric Descriptors

This rubric attempts to describe what is happening at different stages of establishing a school-wide culture of safety. It captures the adult actions that you might see at each stage which take a school from a reactionary/instruction focused model to a preventative/whole child-focused model and related youth indicators.

The rubric does not give specific strategies for achieving these changes because each school's unique conditions and populations will support different solutions. However, the following is a short list of examples of specific strategies that could be used to address safety issues in a school, which might spark additional ideas for your school.

Examples of practices and policies that support a safe environment include:
- Safety and emergency response plans known by all school members
- Buddies for all incoming youth who provide support and guidance
- Peer conflict resolution programs
- School therapists, counselors, or outreach teachers who provide one-on-one and small group therapy sessions for troubled students
- A safe place where students who are misbehaving can go to "cool down" or talk through issues with trained support staff
- School-wide grading policies that reward effort by requiring teachers to provide feedback on homework and giving students the opportunity to correct and improve work

What are the Key Components of a Safe School?

This rubric is broken down into the following key components for building a safe school environment:
- Adult Actions to Create a Safe Environment
  - o Rules and Rule Enforcement
  - o Discipline
  - o Physical/Social/Emotional Well-Being
  - o Safety to Make Mistakes
- Student Actions and Perception/Experience of Safety

Since it is not possible to really know how safe students feel without asking students themselves, staff will likely want to collect student data to help inform the school safety plan/policies. This can be done through surveys, interviews, focus groups, or other data collection methods. The sample can be representative of the entire school population, as long as it truly represents all students. Data can also be drawn from existing sources such as the California Healthy Kids Survey.

Reacting to Problems ➔	Beginning a Safety Plan ➔	Preventing Safety Problems ➔	Culture of Safety
The following descriptors help to paint a picture of what a school that is not safe might look like prior to a change effort or during times of stress when setbacks can occur.	At this stage, school members begin to look critically at youth outcomes related to safety, question the adequacy of their safety policies, and develop new safety policies.	At this stage most staff work collectively on implementing the school safety plan, feel that their campus is safe, and are collecting data to improve these polices/practices.	At this stage, processes and norms of safety are operationalized by all school members as "the way we do business."

Adult Actions to Create a Safe Environment

Rules and Rule Enforcement

In general: • Rules, norms for behavior, and rule enforcement vary by location (eg., classrooms, programs, school yard) and are enforced inconsistently • There is a lack of clear behavior expectations for staff or the staff expectations are not enforced • School administrators feel that unsafe activity that occurs off of school property and after-school hours is not the concern of the school. • Most school members* report that they do not feel welcome or safe at the school • Police are called to punish students Many staff ignore or even participate in/encourage unsafe behavior.** Staff may: • Fail to step in when students are physically, verbally, psychologically or sexually harassed/bullied • Ignore rumors of unsafe behavior, etc. • Allow students to be excluded • Make discriminatory remarks about students to other staff, in front of other students or directly to students (eg., "These low kids aren't going to achieve anyway. They don't want to learn. Their parents don't care.")	School leaders and staff begin to: • Define what safety looks like at the school • Develop rules, norms for behavior, and rule enforcement for the school with student input • Work with school staff to teach and enforce these rules and norms • Develop norms for staff behavior at school-wide meetings • Model and enforce norms for staff behavior • Develop partnerships with police to begin to cultivate a safety plan for the school • Immediately stop unsafe student behavior** In general: • Rules may still vary between after-school programs and school-day contexts or between individual classrooms. • Staff begin to become more conscious of the things they say about students (and other school members) and begin to speak more respectfully of and to all students (and other school members)	Most school staff: • Enforce a consistent set of rules and norms for behavior in all school contexts developed by administrators, teachers, and after-school staff (eg., classrooms, after-school programs, school yard, etc.) • Use school-wide established systems and processes to enforce these rules • Are concerned about the safety of students to and from school as well as on campus • Agree to norms of behavior for staff and begin to hold each other accountable to these • Immediately stop unsafe student behavior** School leaders: • Investigate and work to resolve the conflicts that lead up to most of these unsafe behaviors • Regularly communicate with police to help ensure that students make it to and from school safely Police are seen as school partners and are regularly called in to help to prevent gang activity and see that students make it home safely.	Almost all school members* • Understand the school rules developed in partnership with all school members including students • Enforce them fairly and consistently using school-wide established systems and processes • Are concerned about the safety of students all hours of the day, whether they are on campus or not • Adults and students are held accountable to the same rules of conduct • Report that they feel welcome and safe at the school All staff immediately stop unsafe student or adult behavior** School staff also investigate and work to resolve the conflicts that lead up to these unsafe behaviors. Police are seen as school partners and work closely with all school members to help maintain safety for students and families at school and in their community.

Discipline

Many staff tend to discipline students by: • Publicly criticizing students • Yelling at students • Threatening to punish students • Providing rewards or consequences often inconsistently and publicly and as the primary discipline method	School leaders and some staff begin to: • Identify students who chronically disobey the rules and provide additional supports for these students • Develop stronger relationships with students and try to understand underlying causes behind misbehavior • Teach and recognize desired behaviors • Address behavior (not the person) with empathy and without judgment • Use private correction/ behavior improvement plans • Explain reasons for rules and consequences	Most school staff: • Develop relationships with students and families to understand individual student challenges and to connect students to community school supports • Work collaboratively to understand individual student challenges and to provide needed supports • Teach, model, and encourage desired behaviors • Privately discuss behavior choices and consequences with students without judgment • Privately praise/acknowledge student effort and positive behavior	Almost all school members*: • Work collectively to identify student strengths, provide needed supports and teach and model expectations within and across all contexts • Often communicate about student positive behavior/ accomplishments • Engage students to support each other's success • Guide students in developing strategies for working through conflict by mentoring them through choices, lessons learned, and how they might apply those in future

* By "school members" we mean all administrators, staff, parents, students, and community partners with whom you interact

** By "unsafe behavior" we mean all forms of bullying and harassment including physical intimidation/fighting, verbal harassment (teasing, discriminatory remarks, name-calling, threats), psychological harassment (spreading rumors, manipulating social relationships, non-verbal teasing/intimidation, exclusion), and sexual harassment as well as gang dress/activity and possession of weapons/illegal substances.

Reacting to Problems →	Beginning a Safety Plan →	Preventing Safety Problems →	Culture of Safety
Adult Actions to Create a Safe Environment			
Physical/Emotional/Social Well-Being			
Most staff: • Feel that their job is only to educate students • Tend to ignore physical, emotional or social concerns that they observe such as students who are hungry, angry, withdrawn, depressed, etc.	School leaders: • Connect students with obvious needs to appropriate school resources to address basic needs or emotional concerns • Make staff aware of available supports for students and referral processes Some staff begin to refer students to available services/ supports.	Most school staff: • Recognize student depression, anger, exclusion, and other concerns • Quickly address emotional concerns by showing care, referring students to available supports, and following up with support staff • Work to include students who are alone or excluded • Are available to students to talk through social challenges	Almost all school members*: • Work collaboratively to collectively address student emotional, social and physical needs • Are aware of and regularly use the supports available to students and the processes for accessing these supports
Safety to Make Mistakes			
In general: • Students struggle to acknowledge mistakes • Only students who know the right answer are called upon • when students are not paying attention or get an answer wrong, they are often publicly shamed or ridiculed	School leaders: Communicate the importance of effort and safety to make mistakes in order for students to learn Some staff begin to: • Consciously praise effort • Model learning from mistakes • Provide feedback to students on learning • Use low-stakes ways for students to show what they know (eg., Think/Pair/Share, one-on-one conversations)	School leaders: • Establish and enforce school-wide policies (e.g., grades, honor roll, participation in extra-curricular activities) that reward and celebrate effort Most school staff: • Establish classroom/program policies (e.g., homework, assignments, assessments) that reward and encourage effort and allow students to learn from mistakes • Reassure students that fear of failure/ inadequacy is okay and normal and feel safe to expose their own mistakes with students and staff in order to learn	Almost all school members*: • Show genuine appreciation for effort • Frame "mistakes" as valuable opportunities for learning and growth by asking youth why they think they got a particular result and what they might do differently next time. • Seek challenges for themselves and all students so that they can learn and grow • Trust that it is okay to make mistakes, to say, "I don't know," to expose weaknesses and receive feedback in order to learn
Student Actions and Perception/Experience of Safety*			
No school members: • Are aware of student perceptions about safety at the school Students tend to • Ignore, participate in, and encourage unsafe behavior**	School leaders and some staff begin to: • Collect data on student indicators of safety (such as discipline referrals/ suspensions/ expulsions) • These data are used to track progress but don't inform practice In general, students: • Follow the school rules • Refrain from engaging in unsafe behavior** • Alert an adult when they witness unsafe behavior	Many school staff: • Individually collect data on student perceptions of safety at the school • Use these data to inform and improve the effectiveness of safety policies/practices Most students: • Indicate that they feel safe at the school • Model behavior that is aligned with the rules, which they help to define • Discourage fellow students from engaging in unsafe behavior**	Almost all school members*: • Collectively use multiple data sources to track progress over time and constantly improve shared school practices and policies. • Indicate that they feel safe at the school and know what to do when they observe unsafe behavior.** Almost all students: • Model and enforce safe behavior with each other and with other school members. • Help define and improve school rules and safety policies.

* By "school members" we mean all administrators, staff, parents, students, and community partners with whom you interact

** By "unsafe behavior" we mean all forms of bullying and harassment including physical intimidation/fighting, verbal harassment (teasing, discriminatory remarks, name-calling, threats), psychological harassment (spreading rumors, manipulating social relationships, non-verbal teasing/intimidation, exclusion), and sexual harassment as well as gang dress/activity and possession of weapons/illegal substances

*** Student perceptions can be assessed using surveys, interviews, focus groups, or existing data already being collected such as the California Healthy Kids Survey.

Supportive and Caring Community Rubric

PURPOSE OF THE SUPPORTIVE AND CARING COMMUNITY RUBRIC

The following rubric attempts to capture the key indicators of what a "caring and supportive school community" might look like at different stages of development to help you gauge where you are today, where you would like to be at the end of the year and in years to come, and to track your progress as you move toward this goal. This is important, as the work you are doing is hard and requires persistence. It's easy to fall back into old habits that are not aligned with your vision. In fact, it's important to realize that this process is not necessarily linear, as circumstances can lead to setbacks. We are hopeful that this tool can serve as a helpful reminder of where you want to be and help to maintain optimism and persistence in working toward that vision.

BACKGROUND	Rubric Descriptors

What Is A Supportive and Caring School Community?
Thinking about your own life experiences, when have you felt most engaged and excited about your work as an adult or as a student at a school?
What was it about you and the people around you that made that possible?
What did they do and say that made you feel this way?
 	
When asked these questions, most tend to recall times when we worked as part of a collaborative team or group where we felt accepted, valued, supported, and cared about. From these experiences, we know how this sense of community affects our energy level and engagement in our work and how that, in turn, allows us to perform at our very best. This is true for adults and even more so for youth during the difficult transition of adolescence.
 	
Definition of Community: We are defining community as inclusive of all school members (students, staff, parents) who are committed to a common vision that they all collectively help to shape and carry out. Communities help define a school climate which doesn't rely on individual members and continues to thrive through transitions.
 	
Underlying Principles of This Rubric
The fundamental youth development research-based principles underlying these rubric descriptors are that:
• When youth are in a community where they feel cared for, known and supported by adults and peers, they are more likely to attend school and are more likely to be engaged and motivated to learn
• Adult relationships and connections to one another affect youth:
  o When adults feel connected and supported, they want to be at school and are more engaged in their work
  o Adults are role models for youth and set the tone for the school
	This rubric attempts to describe what is happening at different stages of community building—what you might hear, see, and what members might feel at these different stages. It does not, however, give specific strategies for how these behaviors are achieved, because this could look very different for each school's unique conditions and populations. Other parts of the guide provide research-based effective practices that might inform your school's strategies as well as activities your school might adapt or use as you work toward your vision. The descriptors come both from research and from our observations of the process at Kennedy Middle School.
	
	It is not possible to know if students feel cared about and supported without asking them. Therefore, staff will likely want to collect student data to help assess student feelings of care and support. This can be done through surveys, interviews, focus groups or other methods. The sample can be representative of the school population, as long as it truly represents all students. Data can also be drawn from existing sources such as the California Healthy Kids Survey.

WORK AREA 2

Pre-Conditions to Change ➔	Trail Blazing ➔	Building Momentum ➔	Thriving
A Caring School Community			

In the school, you tend to hear school members*:
• Use disrespectful language (swearing, offensive jokes, yelling at or belittling youth or other school members)
• Share personal information about other school members in public areas.
• Blame or complain about members in other groups**
 	
In general, school members feel:
• Alone, isolated, unwelcome, disrespected, unappreciated, afraid, like they do not belong, and/or like they are not capable of success
• Frustrated and that they lack control over addressing challenges in the school
• Unsupported and that there are very few or no other members of the school they could go to for support, advice, or needed resources. (Most students cannot identify a supportive adult to go to for help with school or personal matters.)
 	
In the school, you see that:
• When school members are in conflict, they tend to avoid interaction with one another, complain to others or attack each other
• When a school member says something disrespectful or points blame at another school member or group, other staff members agree, ignore or complain to others but do not confront the individual
• Accountability is primarily on an individual level. Individuals have personal goals, and everyone is only responsible for taking care of themselves
• There tends to be "cliques" of both adults and students from which others are excluded
	Some of the time, you hear school members*:
	• Begin to use more respectful and positive language
	• Consciously begin to question and test their own and others' assumptions about other groups, begin to respectfully confront disrespectful behavior in others, and work through differences using productive conversations or mediation.
	• Begin to talk about strategies they can control in their specific contexts.
	
	In general, school members feel:
	• That at least one other person in the school cares about them and understands their struggles/challenges
	• That they have at least one or a few others in the school that they can go to for support, advice or needed resources
	• They have an increased understanding/ appreciation of members of other groups**
	• Motivated to try new strategies
	
	In the school, you see:
	• Administrators and school leaders begin to model, communicate, encourage, and enforce norms of respect, collaboration, and holding each other accountable through productive conversation.
	• Some school members begin to intentionally try to connect with other school members, particularly of other groups. For example:
	  ο Adults begin to seek to understand the social and emotional challenges youth are facing
	  ο Individuals ensure that students who need additional academic support receive it
	  ο Staff begin to seek to understand parents'/other staff members' struggles and begin to problem solve together
	  ο Administrators check in with staff and begin to identify supports and resources staff might need to address challenges or to facilitate communication and collaboration
		Most of the time, you hear school members*:
		• Use respectful and positive language
		• Seek to understand members of other groups** by actively seeking their input and ideas in collaborative problem solving
		• Constructively work through conflict
		• Actively seek to understand the strengths, supports, challenges and needs of youth and parents of all socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds
		• Work collaboratively (across all staff roles) to meet the needs of all students
		
		In general, school members feel:
		• Connected to their school and to each other
		• Respected by members of other groups and that they trust each other
		• Supported and cared for and can identify at least one person they can go to in the school for support. (All students can identify at least one adult they can go to for support with school or personal problems and most students feel cared for, known and that they belong.)
		• Capable of being successful
		
		In the school, you see:
		• Shared agreements on how school members treat each other
		• Norms and processes begin to form for large groups (e.g., teams, committees, whole staff) to address and work through conflict productively and to make collaborative decisions
		• Staff and students tend to hold each other accountable to these norms and agreements
		• Supports (e.g., mediators, conflict resolution training) to help school members work through conflict and to practice and use new strategies
		• Processes begin to develop for all school members to seek needed support and resources
		• The beginning of systems for welcoming and supporting new staff and students
			Almost all of the time, you hear school members*:
			• Speak of members of other groups** with respect, appreciation, and admiration
			• Work collaboratively (across all staff roles, and in partnership with students and parents of all socio-economic backgrounds and ethnicities) to solve problems proactively and to come to consensus on important school policies/practices
			• Work through conflicts in a constructive way through productive conversations and mediation
			• Describe their school as a family
			
			In general, school members feel:
			• They are treated fairly and equitably
			• Welcome and supported at the school
			• That other school members really know them, and what's going on with them
			• That they have many different people they could go to for help. (All students can identify multiple adults that they can go to for support with school or personal issues.)
			• Confident in themselves and in each other
			
			In the school, you see:
			• Norms of respect, collaboration, productive communication, and conflict resolution are operationalized as "the way we do things here."
			• Processes and systems for supporting all school members and for welcoming and incorporating new school members are in place
			• That school members care for and have compassion for one another and are connected across groups
			• All school members go out of their way to help each other, are flexible, listen to all school members' perspectives and find compromises around a shared vision

* By "school members" we mean all administrators, staff, parents, students, and community partners with whom you interact.

** By "groups" we mean different school roles (students, parents, teachers, after-school staff, administrators) as well as other differences such as ethnicity, socio-economic background, ability levels etc.

Support for Autonomy Rubric

PURPOSE OF THE SUPPORT FOR AUTONOMY RUBRIC

The following rubric describes the key indicators of a school that embraces meaningful youth participation at different stages of implementation. The intent of this tool is to help gauge the current state of the school, identify areas of focus, and to track progress towards meeting your goals. Being able to track progress is important, as the work is hard and requires persistence. We hope this tool can serve as a helpful reminder of where you want to be and help to maintain optimism and persistence in working toward that vision.

BACKGROUND

What Is A Support for Autonomy?

When do you feel most engaged in your school? Most of us feel engaged in our school when we have input into the things that affect us and have some freedom to make choices about how to carry out the school vision. This is equally true for youth. Support for autonomy results when youth are given opportunities to make meaningful choices, to provide input or to take action that results in a noticeable impact on their personal development as well as their immediate environment.

A meaningful choice is one in which there are authentic differences between the options. For example, students may be given different ways to demonstrate competency in a particular concept through art, music, a written report, or oral presentation. A choice that is not meaningful is one in which the options are basically the same, such as writing a report or writing responses to questions. Admittedly, schools that face many demands and pressures because of test scores, may feel they don't have a lot of freedom to give choices. Given the importance of youth participation, it is important to look for where choices can be provided such as lunch-time or exploratory activities.

Why Does Support for Autonomy Matter?

Support for autonomy helps young people develop the skills and confidence to participate as productive partners in decisions affecting them individually and collectively. As a result, youth feel empowered, connected, and valued by adults, peers, and communities, and they develop life skills crucial to their development into healthy, stable, contributing adult citizens.

Underlying Principles of This Rubric

The research-based principles underlying the rubric indicators and descriptors are:

- When youth have meaningful choices in things that affect them and when they see evidence that their voice or actions have an impact in their immediate settings (e.g., classroom, school, home, after-school program, neighborhood), they are more likely to be engaged and intrinsically motivated to learn and develop important decision-making, communication, and leadership skills necessary to becoming productive, contributing adults.
- When youth are engaged in projects and activities tied to their personal interests and to their culture or background, they are more likely to be engaged in school and they develop important leadership skills and sense of belonging important in their growth into healthy adults.

Rubric Descriptors

This rubric attempts to capture the practices and policies that you might see at different stages of moving a school from an adult-led model to an adult-youth co-leadership model.

It is anticipated that while some individual staff members may already be using "Adult-Guided Youth Leadership" strategies or "Co-Leadership" strategies, it will take more time to move the majority of staff to these areas. Many of us did not grow up in a culture that valued and encouraged meaningful youth participation. As adults, we need to see successful examples of meaningful youth participation and to have opportunities to experiment with youth participation and to gradually move through the continuum on an individual level.

What Additional Youth Indicators Can Help Inform this Rubric?

To truly assess whether student participation and choice in your school is meaningful, it is important to hear from students. This can be done through surveys, focus groups or interviews. Data can also be drawn from existing sources such as the California Healthy Kids Survey.

WORK AREA 2

Adult Run →	Youth Input/Emerging Participation →	Adult-Guided Youth Leadership →	Youth/Adult Co-Leadership
The following descriptors describe what a school that provides little or no meaningful youth participation might look like prior to a change effort or during times of stress when setbacks can occur (The locus of control lies in adults).	At this stage, school members begin to collect youth data and seek youth perspectives to inform school programs, policies, and instruction and begin to intentionally provide increased opportunities for student choice and participation (The locus of control begins to shift to youth, but is still primarily with adults).	At this stage, members establish whole-school policies and guidelines for integrating meaningful choice and participation into most school instruction and activities and guided opportunities for choice/leadership with increasing levels of responsibility (The locus of control is primarily in youth with adult support and guidance).	At this stage, processes and norms of meaningful youth participation are operationalized by all school members as "the way we do business," and youth are represented in some school policy decision-making (The locus of control shifts between youth and adults depending on the activity).

Youth Choice

In general: • Students are given few or no meaningful choices* in class/ program/activities/ projects • If students are given choices, they tend to be choices of extra-curricular activities/school events or choices between essentially identical options • All students in a given class or program are given the same instruction, instructional support and assignments • Restrictions (e.g., physical barriers or rigid rules around activities) of school space and activities limit student choices during non-class times to one main area in the school. Student space is separate from adult space • The underlying message is, "Students are not capable of making good decisions about their personal behavior/ growth."	In their individual programs/settings, many staff: • Begin to give students meaningful choices* in some of the school/instructional/program activities/ projects, behavior rules or conflict resolution strategies • Provide general instructional variety and some teacher-selected choices to address different learning styles, personal interests or to connect to student culture or background. (e.g., teachers select cultures and representatives of those cultures to study) In general: • Students have more than one area on the school grounds available to them during non-class times and have a number of activities they can participate in, but some physical barriers still exist (e.g., some teachers may open their classrooms at lunch or after school). • The underlying message is, "Middle school students are capable of making some decisions when given limited adult-defined choices."	Most school staff: • Regularly give students meaningful choices* in school/ instructional/ program activities/projects, as well as behavior rules, behavior improvement strategies/plans and individual goal-setting plans • Work with students to assess their own individual needs, strengths, learning styles, personal interests, and cultural backgrounds and provide meaningful student-driven choices, differentiated assignments, and support that allow students to develop self awareness/personal interests and leverage their strengths (e.g., students choose cultures and cultural representatives to study). In general: • Students have many choices of spaces and activities in which they can engage during non-class time with other students and adults • The underlying message is, "Middle school students are capable of making decisions when given general guidelines and adult support."	Almost all school members**: • Regularly give students meaningful choices* in all facets of their learning including their teachers, classes, instructional pacing, and level of additional support based on their individual needs • Are aware of the passions, interests, strengths, cultural backgrounds, and learning needs of all students and work in partnership with students to help meet these needs. Students and adults share responsibility for student learning and growth. In general: • Students and staff co-habitate the school. The majority of the school grounds are open to students at all times, and students and adults regularly engage in conversation and fun activities together. • The underlying message is, "Middle school youth are capable of sharing responsibility for decisions affecting their personal development."

Youth Participation

In general:
 • Adults make all decisions about school rules, policies and activities without input from youth
 • When youth voice an opinion, it is ignored, discouraged or even belittled
 • The underlying message is, "It doesn't matter what middle school students think. Students should do what adults say, because adults are in charge and know what is best for students."
	In their individual programs/settings, many staff:
	 • Begin to seek youth data/input/perspective, but may not use these to inform rules/instruction/ policies or show youth how their input was used
	 • Begin to listen to youth voiced opinions and either validate that opinion as worthy of consideration or explain why a different decision was made
	 • Provide adult-directed youth leadership opportunities (e.g., student presentations/ performances, tutoring, or student aid opportunities)
	 • In general:
	   ο Leadership opportunities are provided after school or in special groups (student council)
	   ο The underlying message is, "Youth are worthy of respect and have valuable ideas to contribute."
		Most school staff:
		 • Regularly seek youth input and perspective, which is seen as essential in informing their practices and policies. Youth regularly see the impact of their input.
		 • Provide adult-guided youth leadership opportunities (e.g., students teaching small groups, writing/ directing school performances, planning/ implementing school events)
		 • In general:
		   ο The school has established school-wide norms, policies and processes for integrating youth input/involvement in school policies and practices. (e.g., youth representatives speak/give input at some staff meetings or a youth advisory board gives input on policies.)
		   ο The underlying message is, "Students' perspectives are essential in designing policies/practices to meet their needs."
			Most school staff:
			 • Involve youth in the co-development of school activities/ instruction/ practices and policies
			 • Provide independent or co-leadership opportunities for youth (e.g., co-teaching a lesson/activity, partner with adults, or work independently on school events)
			 • Actively seek ways to give every student leadership opportunities in and outside of class
			 • In general:
			   ο Youth are authentically engaged in decision-making in the school through established school-wide structures (e.g., youth representatives sit on school committees as appropriate; or student council has decision-making authority over some policies)
			   ο The underlying message is, "students are partners in leading our school."

* By "meaningful choice" we mean a choice in which there are authentic differences between given options. For example, students may be given different ways to demonstrate competency in a particular concept through art, music, a written report, or oral presentation. A choice that would not be meaningful would be one in which the options are basically the same, such as students calling their parents or a staff member calling their parents.

** By "school members" we mean all administrators, staff, parents, students. and community partners with whom you interact.

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Meaningful Skill-Building Experiences Rubric

PURPOSE OF THE MEANINGFUL SKILL-BUILDING EXPERIENCES RUBRIC

The following rubric describes the key indicators of a school that embraces challenging and engaging learning experiences at different stages of implementation. The intent of this tool is to help gauge the current state of the school, identify areas of focus, and to track progress toward meeting your goals. Being able to track progress is important, as the work is hard and requires persistence. We hope this tool can serve as a helpful reminder of where you want to be and help to maintain optimism and persistence in working toward that vision.

BACKGROUND

What Are Meaningful Skill-Building Experiences?

Think about a time when you were so engaged in learning that you didn't notice time passing—a time when you were motivated to hone a particular skill or understand a particular concept. What was it about that experience that made it challenging and engaging?

For many of us, we tend to be most engaged in learning, when we are interested in the subject/skill, when we see a purpose for learning the subject/skill and when we are challenged to think deeply and apply knowledge or skills. How often do we hear students complain that they are bored or don't understand why they need to know something? These are indicators that instruction is not challenging and engaging. As educators at schools facing pressures around standardized testing and budgetary struggles, this area may feel particularly challenging to address. Test preparation/lack of resources may cause schools to feel like they do not have a lot of latitude to teach content deeply or to help students apply concepts to real life. Yet when students are challenged to apply concepts to real-life situations and learn concepts deeply, they tend to be more motivated to learn and they retain knowledge during and long after testing, which allows them to build on this knowledge and apply it in their lives. This translates not only into improved test scores but also life-long learning.

Meaningful skill-building experiences also include a wealth of courses or activities that allow middle school students a chance to explore and develop different interests. During this exploratory time in their lives, it is important that middle school students have the opportunity to experience the arts, sports, and leadership as well as other life skills all crucial to the development of their personal identities and skills they will need as productive adults.

Underlying Principles of This Rubric

The research-based principle underlying the rubric indicators and descriptors is:

- When youth have the opportunity to explore their passions and develop new skills through a variety of challenging activities, particularly those that have real-world applications and/or contribute to their community, they are more likely to be engaged and intrinsically motivated to learn and they develop critical thinking skills important to their development as future citizens.

Examples of Meaningful Skill-Building Instructional Practices

The rubric does not give specific instructional methods because each school's unique conditions and populations will support different solutions. However, the following is a short list of examples of specific instructional strategies that could be used to provide challenging and engaging learning experiences in a school, which might spark additional ideas for your school.

- *General Instructional Practices:* Problem-based learning and project-based learning, collaborative learning, connection to current events, student interests, and community involvement
- *Science and Math Instruction:* Scientific inquiry, design challenges, discovery learning, hands-on
- *Social Studies Instruction:* Simulations, debates, role play
- *Language Arts Instruction:* Critical study of literature, self expression through writing/art/computer applications, etc.

Rubric Descriptors

This rubric attempts to capture the practices and policies that you might see at different stages of moving from a school that offers few opportunities for some students to participate in meaningful skill-building experiences to one that offers a wide variety of experiences to all students.

What Additional Youth Indicators Can Help Inform this Rubric?

To truly assess whether learning experiences in your program/class are meaningful and challenging, it is important to receive feedback from students. This can be done through surveys, focus groups or interviews.

WORK AREA 2

Pre-Conditions to Change ➜	Trail Blazing ➜	Building Momentum ➜	Thriving
The following descriptors describe what a school that provides little or no challenging and engaging learning experiences might look like prior to a change effort or during times of stress when setbacks can occur.	At this stage, school members begin to realize the importance of providing opportunities for youth to explore and develop life skills and personal interests and begin to integrate this into individual programs/instruction.	At this stage, school staff establish whole-school policies and guidelines for integrating challenging and engaging learning experiences into most school instruction and activities and for helping to involve students in a variety of after-school and exploratory activities.	At this stage, processes and norms of challenging and engaging learning experiences are operationalized by all school members as "the way we do business."
In general: • There are little or no opportunities for students to: ○ Make connections between the curriculum and students' experiences, prior knowledge, personal questions, interests or future life applications ○ Explore interests or develop skills in real-life applications (e.g., engineering, business, computer skills, civic engagement, etc.) ○ To explore personal interests/passions (e.g., art, music, theater, sports, leadership, etc.) ○ To develop physical, social, emotional, and life skills (e.g., goal setting, time/financial management, health, communication skills, critical thinking skills, etc.) • The overarching goal toward which the school culture is focused is test preparation evidenced by: ○ Standardized test data as the only form of evidence that informs instruction ○ Significant instructional time spent on test-taking strategies and factual knowledge ○ Significant meeting time spent on completing forms and requirements for testing ○ Communication/actions reflect general fear of punishment • Students receive little or no specific, individual feedback on how to improve their learning • Exploratory opportunities are primarily available after school and are not accessible to all students • Students report that they don't understand why they need to learn something and that they find school boring. In general, students do not show a natural curiosity about what they are learning, do not persist through challenges and do not show pride in their work.	In general: • There are some exploratory activities available through electives, lunch-time clubs/activities, and after school accessible to most students • The school forms and begins to communicate a vision around preparing students to be productive, contributing adults, and begins to shift toward this vision as evidenced by: ○ Some school staff begin to look at other data in addition to standardized test to inform instruction ○ Some instructional time spent on creatively bringing standards-based concepts alive by either starting with a student question and linking this to standards or starting with a standard and allowing students to explore that standard in directions of interest to them ○ Some meeting time spent on reflection on data and research to inform instructional practices ○ Communication/actions begin to reflect a growing trust between school members* who begin to de-privatize their practices, share their fears, and challenge each other's assumptions and beliefs • Students report that they have some opportunities to explore personal interest and skills they will need as adults, but that they would like to have more opportunities. In their individual programs/ settings, some school staff begin to: • Provide some individual feedback to students on how they might improve their learning, usually through written comments • Adjust instruction to the needs/levels of different students by providing more challenging assignments to students who quickly master a new skill or concept and additional supports or adjusted assignments for students who struggle with a new skill/concept • Encourage students who seem disengaged to explore personal interests through exploratory, lunch-time, or after-school programs	In general: • There are many exploratory activities available through electives, lunch-time clubs/activities and after school accessible to most students • The school regularly communicates a vision around preparing students to be productive, contributing adults, and engages all staff in this vision as evidenced by: ○ All school staff begin to look at other data in addition to standardized test to inform instruction ○ An increase in instructional time spent teaching standards-based concepts deeply, with an emphasis on connections to students' interests/life skills/prior knowledge and higher order thinking skills that will result in enduring understandings ○ Increased meeting time spent on reflection on data, research, and outside observations to inform instructional practices ○ Communication/actions reflect trust between most school members* who regularly challenge each other's assumptions with data and regularly try and share results of new practices • Students report that they enjoy a wide variety of engaging activities that allow them to explore their interests and that they feel that the things they are learning in school will help them in life IIn their individual programs/ settings, most school staff: • Provide individual feedback and guidance to students on improving their learning both verbally and in writing • Adjust instruction to the needs of students based on collaborative reflection with students, which results in accelerated learning and frequent adjustments or placements of students • Provide opportunities for students to explore personal interests and encourage and recognize these passions in their students	In general: • There are a wealth of opportunities for all students to explore personal interests/passions and to develop physical, social, emotional, and life skills through all of their classes as well as a wide variety of electives and after-school programs/activities • The overarching goal toward which the school culture is focused is preparing students to be productive adults as evidenced by: ○ Multiple forms of data inform instruction and adaptation of instruction to the needs of all students ○ Significant instructional time spent on enduring conceptual understandings and important skill development (e.g., communication, cooperation, critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, higher order thinking skills, etc.) through connections to students' interests/cultural background and experiences preparing them to perform well on standardized tests as well as in real-world applications ○ Significant meeting time spent reflecting on data/research/observations to inform instructional practices ○ Communication/actions reflect trust and safety between all school members* to take risks and find innovative solutions in supporting all students • Students regularly receive individual written and verbal feedback on learning, understand the need for learning each concept/skill, are aware of supports available to them, and actively seek help when they need it • Students have individualized goals and differentiated assignments based on these goals, which are frequently assessed and adjusted through student reflection on their progress in partnership with teachers • All school members actively encourage every student to pursue and develop individual interests. Students are recognized for their passions and talents, and allowed to explore and develop many different interests. • Students demonstrate their love of school through their steady attendance and high participation in after-school activities. They show a natural curiosity about the topics they are studying, show pride in their work, and work hard to learn tough concepts/skills because they see how it will help them in their life goals.

* By "school members" we mean all administrators, staff, parents, students, and community partners with whom you interact.

Tools to Support
Work Area 3

Integrate Local and Research Knowledge into Professional Development and Learning

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Tools to Support Work Area 3:

Integrate Local and Research Knowledge into Professional Development and Learning

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Work Area 3 offers an activity and resources that guides the integration of local and research knowledge into the implementation of a youth development approach.

Key Questions When Working on This Area:

- How will you introduce research-based content and principles to teachers and other staff?

- How will you facilitate the integration of research-based content with teachers' local knowledge?

- What structures will you use to support on-going reflection, research-based conversations, and sharing of lessons learned across contexts?

Key Questions To Reflect on Your Progress in This Area:

- What evidence is there of staff application of academic research knowledge to their practice?

- What evidence is there of staff application of local research to their practice?

- What conditions supported staff members' change in practice?

Activities

- A Workshop Template for Integrating Research and Local Knowledge: A workshop guide that helps participants to apply research to their unique contexts and teaching styles.

Resources

- Weaving Outside Ideas Into Our School: An effective practice brief and observation tool that provides guidelines for selecting and assessing research, putting research into practice and conducting an observation of another school

- Building Supportive Relationships as a Foundation for Learning: An effective practice brief that defines supportive relationships and their importance to youth outcomes, as well as specific strategies research and practice-based relationship-building strategies for educators.

- Motivation to Learn: Igniting a Love of Learning in All Students: An effective practice brief that defines motivation and provides specific research-based motivational strategies

- Motivation Menu of Sample Strategies: A summary document of the research and examples of research-based strategies connected to different motivational strategies. This document is a more concise presentation of the content included in the Building Supportive Relationships as a Foundation for Learning and Motivation to Learn effective practice briefs.

A Workshop Template for Integrating Research and Local Knowledge

How can we apply research knowledge to our unique context?

PURPOSE:

This activity applies research to unique contexts and teaching styles

AUDIENCE:

School staff (particularly teachers, after-school staff, and administrators)

TIME:

1 hour 45 minutes - 3 hours

OUTCOME(S):

As a result of this activity, participants will have:

• An action plan of research-based strategies we can apply in our school setting

MATERIALS:

• A slide or chart of the school vision

• Speaker background/bio

• Speaker presentation

• Applying External Research to Our School activity directions for each small group

• Flip charts and markers for each group

• A timer

OTHER PREPARATION:

When bringing in outside speakers, have a discussion with them prior to the workshop to help them understand your school's broader vision, your process, the workshop participants, your desired workshop outcomes and the speaker's role in the proposed workshop process. Come to agreement on the core content/areas of research that will be presented and the length of time the speaker will have to present. Ask to review their presentation and provide feedback based on how the content fits with participants' needs and prior knowledge. This tool can guide a conversation with the presenter.

INTRODUCTION: (15-20 MINUTES)

1. Remind participants of the broader vision toward which you are working, and identify progress the group has made so far.

2. Explain how the speaker's research fits into the broader vision and addresses specific areas of youth development on which staff are working.

3. *Key frame*: Every school setting is unique and, therefore, outside ideas and strategies must be adapted to these settings. It is critical to understand the underlying principles of a particular approach, but the application of these principles might look different in different settings. Given this, the purpose of the workshop is to understand youth development research findings and then reflect on the application of these principles to your unique school setting.

ACTIVITY: (1 HOUR TO 1 HOUR 30 MINUTES DEPENDING ON THE LENGTH OF THE SPEAKER'S PRESENTATION)

1. Introduce the speaker and have them present their research findings.

2. Ask participants to do the Applying Research to Our School activity in small groups.

WORK AREA 3

CLOSING: (30-60 MINUTES DEPENDING ON THE NUMBER OF GROUPS PRESENTING)

1. Ask each group to present their action plan (three to five minutes) and receive feedback on their plan from the visiting speaker based on research knowledge (two to three minutes).

2. Summarize key themes from different groups, and whole-school policies that might be applied.

3. Identify specific actions school administrators agree to take on for whole-school action plans, areas where staff need additional help and a specific time when staff will check in on their individual action plans and lessons learned.

Facilitator Tips

We recommend about 30 minutes for the speaker's presentation and at least 30 minutes for the activity. When we did this activity, participants wanted more than 30 minutes, but were able to do it in 30 minutes.

We also recommend using a timer for the share-outs if time is tight to ensure that every group has equal time to present and receive feedback.

It is critical to follow up with school members on the applications of their action plans, as once back in the realities of the school setting it is easy to fall back into old habits and forget lessons learned in the workshop. Even just a few minutes at the start of a staff meeting in which small groups share reflections of actions taken since a workshop can help remind staff of lessons learned and move them toward action.

WORK AREA 3

Applying External Research to Our School Facilitator Directions

What would a school that promotes a growth mindset look like?

PART I. A SCHOOL THAT APPLIES EXTERNAL RESEARCH:

Using Brainstorm Protocol (15 minutes)

PURPOSE:

To get as many ideas out as possible from all group members without positive or negative judgment or critique

PROTOCOL:

- During open brainstorming, group members call out their ideas as they think of them with one person recording responses on chart paper.

- Other group members refrain from making positive or negative comments about participant contributions.

- Outrageous ideas are welcomed as they may lead to innovative thinking.

- The group continues to brainstorm until time is up or until the group has nothing more to add.

DIRECTIONS:

1. Have your team's recorder record any/all ideas team members have about assumptions/beliefs aligned with the presented research on chart paper. The chart below provides sample prompts that can be used to get the group started.

2. Brainstorm messages, practices and policies that would be aligned with these assumptions and beliefs.

Assumptions and Beliefs	Messages	Practices/Policies
In a school that applies the presented research principles, what would school members assume or believe about : • Young people • How young people learn • What motivates young people to learn	Given these assumptions and beliefs, what would school members say to youth or to each other?	What policies/practices that are aligned with those assumptions/beliefs would be in place? Examples to think about: • What kind of feedback would students receive on their learning? On their behavior? • What would homework/grading policies look like? • What would discipline policies look like? • How would staff treat each other?

WORK AREA 3

PART II. A PLAN FOR ACTION:

Using Round Robin Protocol (15 minutes)

PURPOSE:

To allow all participants the opportunity to participate

PROTOCOL:

- Pose a question for response.

- 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 if they wish, but are not required to participate.

DIRECTIONS:

1. Ask each group member to look at the team's brainstorm and to consider from their role at the school:

   - What could they take and implement on Monday?

   - What would they need/want more support or help with in order to implement?

2. Have your group recorder record these ideas on a chart. (A sample template is provided below.)

3. Decide who will report this plan to the larger group. (Each group will have three to five minutes to present followed by a few minutes of specific feedback from the speaker.)

What We Can Start Implementing Monday...	What We Need More Help With or Have Questions About...

Weaving Outside Ideas Into Our School

Matt S. Giani and Christina M. O'Guinn

INTRODUCTION

As educators, we face the constant challenge of meeting the rapidly changing needs of our students as we welcome new generations into our schools who live in a different world than the one in which we grew up and who face different challenges than the students we saw just a few years ago. Given this, one of our biggest challenges is to build a school that can adapt to these changes to help every student reach their full potential. Peter Senge, in his highly influential book "The Learning Organization," describes the types of organizations able to succeed in a fast-paced, dynamic world as: "[Places] where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together" (Senge, 2006, p. 1).

In order to create settings where today's students can thrive, it's crucial for our school community to be innovative and adaptable. Building our school into a learning community in which we are in constant conversation about what is working or not working for our students based on evidence, we are taking the first step in building a common understanding and consistent implementation of effective practices across our school.

However, to truly operate as a learning organization and generate creative solutions to the challenges we face, it is crucial to also seek outside ideas and think critically about ways to apply those ideas to our unique contexts. When we rely on internal ideas alone, we tend to fall back into the same routines and solutions that may not always address the current, unique needs of the populations we serve. We also tend to forget why we do the things the way we do (which may no longer be applicable) and may never realize that there are other more efficient or effective ways of achieving our goals.

Outside ideas can come from many sources including research, observations of other schools, and attending conferences or professional development workshops. The following provides guidelines and tools for critically gathering, interpreting, and integrating new outside ideas into your school.

HOW CAN RESEARCH BE HELPFUL TO OUR SCHOOL?

Research can be thought of as the systematic and scientific exploration of relationships. For example, what is the relationship between the classroom environment and student engagement or between after-school activities/engagement and academic achievement? Researchers have come up with a variety of ways to study these relationships, and the work done by researchers has yielded innumerable intriguing and beneficial insights to the world of education.

The key benefit of research is the idea of systematic exploration. We often make judgments and decisions based on gut feelings, intuitions, or impressions of situations, but the goal of research is to produce strong and objective evidence that things operate in a given way. Through research, we get closer to understanding what is truly happening in the world and get further from misconceptions and incorrect assumptions. However, research is not flawless, so there are a number of cautions that need to be considered when reviewing research. Below are a few guidelines on seeking out and understanding research.

Selecting Research

There is no perfect process for discovering research that addresses your schools' unique challenges. However, the following techniques are general guidelines that can help you in finding research most appropriate and valuable to your particular situation.

- *Research Search Engines*: While much research online has to be purchased, there are a number of search engines that connect us with articles that are free to download. The most common are Google Scholar (www.scholar.google.com) and the Educational Resources Information Center or "ERIC" (www.eric.ed.gov). Not all of the articles are free, but after a diligent search you will probably be able to find some free articles relating to your topic of interest. If an article is only available by purchase, you may still be able to glean some ideas from the free abstract/brief summary that can inform your future searches.

- *University Syllabi*: Another way to find research that university faculty feel is current and valuable is to look for online syllabi, many of which contain lists of course readings. You can either search for the syllabus in Google by putting in the name of the university, "syllabus," and the topic of interest to you, or in some instances you can go to the university's website and find the page that contains all of the syllabi posted by professors. You might seek out university teaching departments, in particular, which will likely include school practice-focused research articles.

- *Key Terms*: One difficulty in looking for research is discovering the terminology that researchers are using to describe certain concepts or trends. As in any field, certain words and phrases may have very specific connotations, and it may be difficult to know which terms are relevant to your particular question until you begin to investigate. For example, when searching for research on motivation you will likely stumble across similar research related to engagement, locus of control studies, or self-determination theory, all of which are related to motivation but approach it from different angles. If specific terms come up repeatedly in your search, they may be ideas that are prevailing in the research community.

- *Institutions and Organizations*: Sometimes you can turn to specific institutions doing research of interest to you. Most research comes out of three types of institutions: governmental, academic, or non-profit organizations. Some governmental education agencies produce their own research, and others focus more on collecting and summarizing research produced by others. For example, the California Department of Education has a website devoted to research related to youth development. Universities such as Stanford, Columbia University Teachers College, Vanderbilt, and Northwestern often have institutes or centers on campus that produce educational research. Non-profit organizations like EdSource, the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL), RAND and SRI produce research as well.

  The following are links to a few organizations that produce research or research-based publications specifically on youth development:

  - John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities at Stanford University: http://jgc.stanford.edu/

  - Coalition for Community Schools: http://www.communityschools.org/

  - The Harvard Family Research Project: http://www.hfrp.org/

  - Chapin Hall: http://www.chapinhall.org/

  - Developmental Studies Center: http://www.devstu.org/home.html

  - WestEd: http://www.wested.org/cs/we/print/docs/we/home.htm

  - American Youth Policy Forum: http://www.aypf.org

  - California Department of Education: http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/yd/

  - United States Department of Agriculture: Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service: http://www.csrees.usda.gov

  - The Forum for Youth Investment: http://www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/

- *Journals:* You can also look to specific journals for research. One of the benefits of journals is the fact that they often serve as disseminators of the most recent and creative approaches to education. While governmental agencies often take a more conservative approach and wait for substantial evidence to accumulate before promoting certain ideas, journals seek out research that, by definition, is new and fresh in some way. Some well-known and reputable general education journals include the American Educational Research Journal, the Teachers College Record, and the journal of School Effectiveness and School Improvement. Additionally, journals on specific topics within education also exist, such as the Journal of Research in Science Teaching and the Research in the Teaching of English journal. For one list of education journals and their rankings based on the number of citations, visit www.edu.salford.ac.uk/her/documents/JournalsWOK.rtf.

Assessing Research

Once you've selected your research, it's also important to assess the quality and applicability of the studies to your particular question. The following are some additional strategies that may help in the evaluation of research once it has been found:

- *Sample*: In almost all research articles, there will be a section that describes the subjects of the research. Was it second grade students in a language arts class? African-American adolescents? Seventh grade algebra students on free-and-reduced lunch? While this may seem trivial, the sample is an extremely important element of research because findings generated from research with one group will not necessarily apply to another group. If researchers found that small-group instruction was effective in increasing achievement of high-school students, that does not necessarily mean that it will be effective for middle school students. When looking for ideas about a specific population (seventh grade English-Language Learners, for example), you will want to find research that has been conducted on populations similar in terms of gender, race, socioeconomic status, achievement levels, and other factors. If you cannot find studies that have examined the exact population of interest, you can still look at key findings in other settings and/or with other populations and consider how that might inform your own practice. However, you will want to be aware of population differences and how this could affect the ability to repeat these results.

- *Sample Size:* While the individuals in the study affect the ability to generalize to particular populations, the size of the sample affects whether or not the results can be generalized at all. For example, if researchers want to know if the use of new technology in the classroom will facilitate learning in a study conducted with only a few people, it would be difficult to see whether or not the effects are caused by the technology or just happened by chance. With larger samples, the probability of getting a result by chance becomes smaller. However, this issue pertains more to studies with quantitative or numerical data and analysis rather than qualitative research. There is value in understanding what researchers have found in their studies of large populations. There is also value in understanding the nuances of more qualitative studies that often focus on a much smaller number of participants. The large samples remind us of patterns, trends, and the "big picture," while the smaller (even case study) samples remind us of the complex nuances present in any social phenomenon such as teaching, learning, and human development. As teachers, it is important for us to consult both—the forest and the trees—without getting lost in and/or over-responding to either one.

- *Mediating Variables*: Unfortunately, researchers often make conclusions about the relationship between two things without thinking critically of other possible explanations for the findings. For example, researchers conduct a study to assess the effectiveness of a new math curriculum, and they find that students that used the new curriculum performed better than students who used the old curriculum. From this, they conclude that the new curriculum is more effective. But what are some other possible explanations? What if the researchers selected the most qualified teachers to introduce this new curriculum, because they thought it was too challenging for inexperienced teachers? What if the students were told that this new curriculum was "more effective" and the results were nothing more than a placebo effect? Whenever you're reading research, it is important to consider other possible explanations for the findings in order to prevent false conclusions.

- *Correlation vs. Causation*: This point is similar to the previous one, but it is directed more at the language that researchers use to explain their techniques and the warranted conclusions that can be drawn from those techniques. In many studies, in fact most research studies, the researchers will look at the correlation between two variables, such as income and student achievement or race and self-esteem. This correlation is usually indicated by an "r" and some number between -1 and 1, with -1 indicating a strong negative relationship between the two variables and 1 indicating a strong positive relationship between them. Researchers may in fact discover a relationship between these two variables, but it is important to note that correlation is not causation. For example, parental education level has been shown to be correlated with student achievement, but this does not mean that parental education causes student achievement to increase. What causes the increase in student achievement could be more time spent with the child, more encouragement to excel in academics, higher expectations of the student, or a number of other phenomena. If researchers report a strong correlation between two variables, therefore, it is important to not conclude that one thing is causing the other or vice versa. This is another place where qualitative research can be helpful—revealing what is happening behind these numbers.

- *Statistical Significance vs. Practical Significance*: Quite often in research you will come across a term called "statistical significance." This term refers to a statistical process that helps researchers conclude whether their findings reflect the actual relationship between the variables or whether this relationship happened by chance. For example, let's imagine that the group of students in the classroom with the new math curriculum scored five points better than the other group of students on the benchmark exam. Could the students have just scored better by chance? A "statistically significant" finding is one where the researchers are quite sure their finding did not happen by chance. Because of this, researchers will often get very excited about statistically significant findings and report them constantly throughout the article. However, just because a finding is statistically significant does not mean that it is practically significant. In the above example, let's say a new Student Achievement Test (SAT) preparation course results in increased student SAT scores by five points, and the researchers conclude that this is statistically significant. Is it practically significant? If the new SAT preparation course was extremely costly, would it be worth it for an increase of only five points? Even when researchers report statistical significance, it is important to ask yourself whether or not the finding has much practical importance. There is also the case where findings may be statistically insignificant, but because the "subject" is a human being, the finding may not have practical significance. Again, as teachers, we need to be clear about what the research says and what it means for our practice.

- *Replication*: One of the most crucial aspects of research is the idea of replication, or doing the study over and over and over again. In any single piece of research, any number of factors could have interfered with the results and caused the researchers to draw false conclusions. This makes it extremely important for studies to be conducted a number of times, and only when the results are found fairly consistently across studies can one conclude that the relationship is really there. Because of this, it is helpful to frame the findings of one study as "suggesting" X rather than "proving" X. This is also why it is important to seek multiple studies or literature reviews that summarize research trends and patterns, particularly when you are using research as a basis for making major school changes.

Putting Research into Practice

While discovering and analyzing research may be an intellectually stimulating endeavor in and of itself, keep in mind that the end-game of research is to improve practice. Because of this, when reading research it is helpful to always be thinking about what these ideas would look like in practice, and what the effects of these practices might be. Ingenious ideas can be lost in implementation, and as the old saying goes, "The devil is in the details."

There are a few additional strategies that may help you to effectively apply research to practice. First, it is important to have a solid understanding of the research results. Group study can help with this, for although we may be careful and critical, when we read research on our own we, as human beings, automatically translate information in ways that are familiar to us. It is, therefore, very helpful to check our understanding through conversation with others who have read the same research. Indeed, as we build a school community, it is important that we engage in a school-wide dialogue about effective practices based on research and evaluation of our practices so that we can come to a common understanding of the effective practices that work best in our unique contexts with our unique populations. Group study and discussions will also help you to implement these practices consistently across your school. Some questions that can guide this conversation are:

- What did you notice in the research that pertains to our question?

- What evidence supports this finding?

- How well would this finding apply to our school/population?

- Do others share this interpretation? Why or why not?

Furthermore, as you implement any new policy or practice, it is important to be clear about the goals of this implementation and to have a plan for how you will carry out this practice and assess its effectiveness. An implementation plan includes clear steps for implementing the new practice(s), and it includes a plan for understanding if and how these new practices have the intended impact on student learning and/or experience. Therefore, before implementation of any new practice begins, it is important to identify indicators of progress. What will we see and hear if we are moving in the right direction? When, realistically, would we begin to see these indicators? How will we collect this information? How will we use this information to inform our practice—to help us modify and/or strengthen our implementation plan?

HOW CAN SCHOOL OBSERVATIONS INFORM OUR SCHOOL?

Research is one source of outside ideas. Another possible method of discovering creative and useful thoughts on school improvement is through school or classroom observations. Observers can see exactly how theories and research are put into practice and can even see the effects of those practices in real time. However, just as with research there are some cautions that are important to consider before beginning observations. Below are some guidelines for conducting fruitful observations.

Pre-Observation Preparation

First, you will want to select a place for your observation. Since you are likely doing this to try to identify practices or policies that you or your school might adapt to your own school environment, you will likely want to select a classroom or school that you believe is doing well in the particular area you are seeking to improve. You might find other schools by talking to community partners who work with other schools, professional education organizations that serve your region, or through contacts at other districts.

Observations will often be the most fruitful when you, as observers, come in with specific questions and know what to look for. Observations need to be focused and specific, so the next step is to engage in thorough pre-observation planning that will likely result in informative conclusions. Before any observation, it may help to address the following questions:

1. What is the youth development question we are trying to answer in our small group/whole school?

2. What kinds of practices or policies could we observe in a classroom/school that will help us answer our question? (e.g., behavioral norms, discipline policies, homework policies, instructional practices)

3. What kinds of interactions do we need/want to observe to answer our question? (e.g., teacher-to-teacher, administrator to teacher, teacher to student, student to student, etc.)

4. Which school contexts do we need/want to observe to answer our question? (e.g., classroom, after-school, staff room, school yard, office, etc.)

5. What questions do we have about these contexts/interactions?

6. How will the answers inform our inquiry question? Are all our questions relevant? What do we need to change to better inform our inquiry question?

Observation

As you observe, ask yourself what evidence you see of positive youth outcomes, particularly in your target area of youth development. What interactions that you observe between students and staff members align with your vision for your school? What is the general tone of the school? What evidence do you have of this?

Then ask yourself what you notice about the practices and policies in each context that might lead to these positive youth outcomes. Are there discipline, homework, or other school policies in place that might contribute? What instructional practices, norms of behavior, or underlying assumptions and beliefs do you notice? You may need to ask specific questions of your host(s) to find out about specific practices and policies you observe. To assist in your observations, we've included some observation forms at the end of this document that might assist you during your observation.

Post-Observation Debriefing

The importance of individual reflection and group debriefing immediately after an observation cannot be overemphasized. No matter how strong your impressions during the observation may be and how confident you are that your observations will stick with you, they will probably begin to fade within twenty-four hours.

Individual reflection soon after the observation can help you connect the dots of your observations and develop a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics in the school, but group debriefing can be even more valuable. Everyone goes into an observation with their own personal lenses, so everyone will likely come out with different impressions, interpretations, and ideas about what they just saw. By bringing these different interpretations together, the group compiles a broader and fuller understanding. Following are some guidelines for productive group debriefing.

1. Give each group member five to ten minutes to read over their own observation notes (if they all participated in the observation) or copied notes of those who conducted the observation. As members read over these notes, they can think about sharing:

    •   One thing that really stands out or strikes you in terms of evidence of positive youth outcomes particularly as they relate to your small group/whole-school question

    •   Two policies or practices that you could see doing in your own context or school that fit with your small group/whole-school question

2. Have each person share these observations while someone charts these ideas, noting where common responses come up with check marks by these items for additional responses.

3. As a group, discuss the following questions, which may help you to further narrow policies or practices that might be particularly useful to your school setting. You may want to use symbols to mark each practice with a characteristic associated with each of the following questions as indicated.

    •   Are there any practices that align with other data we've collected either at our own school or in the research? (Draw a triangle by practices aligned with other data.)

    •   Which practices seem to have the greatest impact on the youth outcomes we want for our students? How can you tell? (Draw a star by practices with greatest impact.)

    •   Which practices would be the most practical (because of time/money or other requirements) to implement? (Label the most practical practices with a P.)

4. Decide as a group if there are specific practices/policies that individuals feel they can commit to trying out in their individual contexts before a given timeframe such as the next small group or staff meeting. Alternatively, the group can decide if there is one practice or policy that the entire group wants to begin implementing school-wide.

5. Ask the group to decide how they will assess these practices/policies to determine their effectiveness.

WEAVING A TAPESTRY OF UNDERSTANDING

No matter where you go to seek outside ideas, it is important to weave them into your collective understanding of effective practices for your school through constant discussion with your colleagues. Renowned educator and author Parker Palmer defines truth as "an eternal conversation about things that matter, conducted by passion and discipline."

We can only know what is true in terms of effective practices that work in our school settings by engaging in enduring, on-going conversations as a whole-school community with the passion of caring about our students and with discipline of using evidence to support our current understanding of effectiveness. As learners, this understanding is like a tapestry that we weave together. We all contribute new threads of knowledge to the tapestry. We may also remove threads as we gain new insights or understandings, so our tapestry is constantly changing and adapting as we continue to learn and adapt to the needs of our students.

WORK AREA 3

Observation Notes

The question we are trying to answer with this observation is:_____

_____

To help answer this question, it would be helpful to observe:

Who: Which school staff members/ interactions do we need to observe to answer our question?	**What**: What kinds of practices or policies do we need to observe that will help us answer our question?	**Where**: In which school contexts might we observe these interactions, practices and polices? (e.g., classroom, staff room, etc.)

What is the context? (classroom, school yard, etc.)	**Questions we have about this context?** What I wonder…	**Notes on positive youth outcomes:** What I notice… What I hear…	**Notes on practices and policies:** What I notice… What I hear…

WORK AREA 3

What is the context? (classroom, school yard, etc.)	Questions we have about this context? What I wonder…	Notes on positive youth outcomes: What I notice… What I hear…	Notes on practices and policies: What I notice… What I hear…

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Observation Notes Example

To help answer this question, it would be helpful to observe:

Who: Which school staff members/ interactions do we need to observe to answer our question?	**What**: What kinds of practices or policies do we need to observe that will help us answer our question?	**Where**: In which school contexts might we observe these interactions, practices and polices? (e.g., classroom, staff room, etc.)
• Teachers and students • School leaders and students • Students and students	• Instructional practices • Norms of behavior (particularly between staff and students)	• Classroom • After -school program

Observations

Context	Questions we have about this context? What I wonder…	Notes on positive youth outcomes: What I notice… What I hear…	Notes on practices and policies: What I notice… What I hear…
Example: After-school program	What makes students want to be here? What motivates students to do their homework?	I notice/hear that… • 75% of student population partici-pates in after-school programs (per CS coordinator) • Students seem very happy in their program activities and eager to show us what they are doing/learning • Students tease Community School Coordinator affectionately and he reciprocates • Students are mostly on task doing their homework, but are distracted by our visit. The teacher jokes with them a bit and then refocuses them on their work.	I notice/hear that… • The principal took the time to lead this observation • Both the principal and community school coordinator know the names and passions of every student we meet and encouraged them to teach us or perform for us • The Community School Coordinator said that it is their goal to get every student into an after-school activity to keep them out of gangs, and they work with students individually to match their passions with an activity • Students say they come to homework help voluntarily, because they want to do well in school and can get help from teachers there
Hallway			• The halls are very clean and have a lot of student work and positive, inspirational sayings on the walls

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Building Supportive Relationships As A Foundation for Learning

Matt S. Giani and Christina M. O'Guinn

INTRODUCTION

As educators, we have all experienced the power of connecting with students. We've enjoyed learning who they are, to what they aspire, and have felt some pride in supporting their journeys. We've noticed that strong relationships with students motivate students to learn, prevent and diffuse disruptive behavior and give us more energy and capacity in our work. While we may long for this connection with every student, it is a rare educator who achieves this. Still, we often wonder what it is about those connections we do achieve that allowed that to be possible so that we might experience those connections with more students. Indeed, both research and practice show us that an understanding and intentional application of the core principles behind supportive relationships can allow us to experience successful connections with more of our students. Furthermore, by strengthening connections with all school members (students, parents, all staff, and administrators), we can build a nurturing environment in which all members feel known, cared about, appreciated and capable.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS?

Researchers describe supportive adult-youth relationships as caring and supportive of autonomy while holding high, fair expectations. These are largely measured from students' perceptions of their relationships with adults and what seems to be most important to them as follows:

Caring and Respect: In supportive relationships, students feel that adults know them, care how they do in school, are friendly and warm and spend time with them. They feel heard and respected, even when they have failed to follow a rule or agreement. Rather than chastising, embarrassing, yelling at, or patronizing a student, adults speak privately to the student, focus on the behavior not the person, seek to understand the reasons behind the behavior and help to guide the student in making amends and seeing other ways they could act differently in the future. At the heart of this concept is the need to understand and diffuse power differences between adults and youth, between levels in the school power structure and between differences in class and race. Indeed, when educators come from different socio-economic or ethnic backgrounds than students, these relationships are marked by greater power differences and higher levels of distrust. Caring and respect of students helps to bridge these differences and communicates to students that they are valuable, capable and worthy of being heard.

Autonomy: Autonomy is an important element of supportive relationships, especially for middle school students. While treating students with respect is a necessary element of supportive relationships, it is insufficient if students are not also given the ability to make their own decisions. Providing students with authentic choices and a voice in their learning or learning environment prepares them to take hold of their own lives in the future and garners further respect between students and teachers.

Structure and Support: Because our students are not yet adults, they still need the structure and support to be able to use their autonomy wisely. By setting high, realistic expectations, we communicate to students that we believe they are capable. To help students achieve these expectations, it is our job to clearly and consistently communicate these expectations and to provide supports and scaffolding to help them achieve them. Support can include frequent and immediate positive feedback, explicit instruction and modeling of a new skill, guided reflection on progress, asking students what they need to help them achieve, or just listening without judgment.

The above list is not exhaustive, but rather serves as the basic foundation of supportive relationships. In the following sections we will provide specific strategies educators can use to strengthen these elements of their relationships with students. But first, we will review why supportive relationships are indeed crucial to supporting student success.

WHY ARE SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS IMPORTANT TO YOUTH OUTCOMES?

You may be asking yourself, "So what? Why are relationships important to youth and, most importantly, how do supportive relationships relate to students' academic outcomes?" While supportive relationships are important to the development of youths' social skills, a great deal of research has also shown that strong, supportive relationships between teachers and students have a positive effect on students' academic outcomes such as better grades and higher graduation rates. Below is a brief review of some of the potential impacts of developing supportive relationships with your students.

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In a number of studies, students' feelings of belonging and closeness with their teacher have been shown to be related to positive academic outcomes, such as working harder in school, spending more time on homework and receiving better grades (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Roeser, Midgley, & Urdan, 1996; Murray & Greenberg, 2000). Students who perceive their relationships with their teacher as close and supportive have more confidence in their academic ability, which in turn leads to more engagement with school (Roeser, Midgley, & Urdan, 1996). In addition, research has shown that student-teacher relationships can reduce behavior such as aggression and defiance of authority important to establishing a high level learning environment. In other words, when students are treated as if they are capable and competent enough to perform at a high level, they believe it, and this belief gives them the confidence and motivation to try harder and perform better (Murray & Greenberg, 2000). All of these effects of supportive relationships eventually lead to better academic outcomes.

Supportive relationships can be particularly important when there is a mismatch between the social, emotional, and academic skills or cultural background that students arrive with and the expectations and culture of the school. All students require caring, support, encouragement, safety, scaffolding, and explicit instruction to learn the skills and important social norms necessary for successfully navigating structures and norms established by the majority culture.

Alternatively, conflict and dependency between students and teachers have been found to lead to more negative student attitudes towards school, less academic engagement, and poorer academic outcomes for students (Birch & Ladd, 1997). Positive relationships, therefore, are a key ingredient in students' feelings of belongingness and adjustment to school, their confidence and motivation, critical life-skill development, and their overall academic performance.

WHAT CAN I DO TO BUILD SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH MY STUDENTS?

While we have discussed supportive relationships in an abstract way, you may still be asking yourself precisely what you can do to build supportive relationships with your students.

Know that your student relationships matter. The first step is to know and believe that your relationships matter and will make a difference. We know from research that teachers' beliefs about their own ability to affect student outcomes are strongly correlated to student achievement (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). When teachers believe that they are powerless to change their students' beliefs, attitudes, behavior, or academic performance, they are much less likely to do so. But when teachers believe that they can have a profound effect on their students, they have a much greater likelihood of making a positive impact on students. Researchers call these attitudes and beliefs "teacher efficacy," or the degree to which teachers believe they can affect outcomes/impact (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998).

When we are not experiencing a lot of success with students, our teacher efficacy declines. We recognize it in ourselves and others, when we begin to blame others: "These students are lazy. They don't want to learn. Their parents aren't disciplining them and don't care about their education. The administrators aren't doing enough to discipline students." What we are really saying is, "I feel like I've done all I know how to do, and nothing works, so I feel that I cannot make a difference." The reality for many of us is that the methods we used that were/are effective with some students don't necessarily work with all students, and so we have to be willing to try different strategies until we find ones that will work with all students. This can take a lot of creativity and courage, but when teachers begin to ask themselves, "What can I do to reach every student?" and begin to seek and try new ideas of strategies from others, they are on the path to increasing their efficacy and, in turn, student achievement.

Believe in your students. Just as your belief in your own ability to impact students is critical to your success, so is their belief in themselves, which you can influence. Self-fulfilling prophecy is very powerful. We recognize it when we hear a student say, "What's the point in trying. I'm just going to drop out anyway." If a student truly believes s/he can be successful, s/he tends to be highly motivated to learn. We have tremendous influence on these beliefs, for students can sense what we believe about them by the things we say and do.

Research has extensively shown that if teachers believe that students are "low achievers," "unmotivated" or "bad kids," even if previously the students were well-behaved and successful students, the students will begin to exhibit more behavior problems and perform worse in school (Brophy & Good, 1974). Alternatively, students are more likely to succeed if teachers perceive of them as smart and capable, even if they struggled in school previously (Ibid).

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Make your belief in and care for students intentional and transparent. Believing is just the beginning. We also have to communicate this belief to our students through our words and deeds, letting them know that we believe in them, care about them and know they can succeed. In other words, even if we believe that we truly care for students, our beliefs will be ineffective if students do not perceive that we care for them (Wentzel, 1997). The only way to know if young people perceive us as caring is to ask them. This could occur through surveys, one-on-one or in a focus group in which adults can ask students if they feel adults in the school care about them, how they know an adult cares, or what adults can do to help students feel cared for.

Below are some examples of actions that researchers and practitioners have found helpful in building supportive relationships with students.

- **Smile to set the tone**: This may seem self-evident, but a smile can be a powerful signal of your mood and attitude towards your students. Non-verbal signals, like smiling, have even been found to be more influential in positively changing student behavior than words alone (Kazdin & Klock, 1973). Even when you don't feel like smiling, a smile can set the tone and shift your own mood.

- **Make caring eye contact[1]**: When students are misbehaving or off-task, teachers often slip into the dreaded "teacher-stare" in an attempt to scare the student straight. While your eyes can communicate your disapproval, they can also communicate your care and concern. Try and make caring eye contact with all your students, but especially those you suspect to be struggling.

- **Stay calm**: To be sure, this is often not an easy task. If our students are being disruptive or disobedient, aren't performing as well as we know they can, or if we are just having a bad day, it is easy for us to lose our composure in the classroom. But even when students require discipline, doing so in a calm and tempered manner, while still being stern and forceful, shows students that we respect them even if we disapprove of their behavior.

- **Listen and show youth they've been heard**: Youth at this age often don't feel that they are heard or appreciated causing them to feel disconnected and disengaged with school. Ask students questions, not just about class material but about their opinions on life and things that they see around them. Show students that you've listened to them by restating their ideas and explicitly connecting their interests and input to instruction or to decisions made that they informed. Students feel empowered when they are taken seriously as knowledgeable and valuable participants in conversation (Hudson-Ross, Cleary & Casey, 1993), which motivates them to take ownership of their educational experience (Colsant, 1995; Sanon, Baxter, Fortune & Opotow, 2001).

- **Notice their strengths and provide encouragement**: Of course, school is not easy for all students and many of them will struggle from time to time and will need encouragement to persist through challenges. Keep your expectations for these students high and remember to tell them that you know they can succeed if they continue to work hard. Look for and recognize their efforts, their progress and their positive behaviors.

- **Provide support**: If students continue to struggle behaviorally or academically, work with them individually, help them to set personal near-term goals and check in on their progress regularly. This will show the student that you are invested in and care about their success, and will also allow you to build personal relationships with your students.

    While the above practices have been found to be successful in research studies, there is also anecdotal evidence from practitioners and what we hear from students themselves that certain actions help educators connect with students. Below are some examples.

- **Use humor**: This is an age where kids are very social and develop a strong sense of humor. They are often laughing at everything. Rather than get angry at students' goofiness, adults can laugh with youth as appropriate and build humor into instruction. However, certain forms of humor widely used among youth, such as insults and sarcasm, can be damaging to youth. Sarcasm, in particular, can lead to many misunderstandings, as some cultures do not have sarcasm, so students take comments literally and can feel insulted. Adults need to model and enforce appropriate humor particularly and avoid humor performed at the expense of other individuals or groups.

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[1] Eye contact should be used only when culturally appropriate. In some cultures, eye contact is considered disrespectful.

- **Share your own stories**: Youth are interested in you and who you are as a person other than a teacher or principal or staff member. They tend to share more of themselves when you do too, and they consistently tell us that they enjoy seeing you outside your normal role—having fun or sharing your passions. You are a role model, and they are watching you very closely, even though it may not seem like it. This is particularly important for students from different backgrounds than yourself—as things you reveal about yourself may help them to see similarities with you, and if you share your weaknesses/struggles, it will help them to realize that they can also overcome their own challenges. Let your students know what school was like for you, what you learned from your education and share other personal narratives that might be of interest to your students. It is also important to introduce students to role models of similar background to their own who have overcome significant challenges.

- **Listen and adjust**: Young people communicate very clearly what's going on with them. It's just not always done in a way adults might perceive as polite and doesn't always fit with our plan for the day, so we tend to ignore their feedback. To the degree we can listen and respond, we will better meet the needs of young people, form stronger connections with youth and experience more success and joy in our work with students. Youth often say what they are thinking (e.g. "This is boring," "I'm hungry," "I don't understand why we have to learn this.") They also show us what they are thinking with their body language or actions (e.g., squirming in their chair indicating that they have been sitting too long and need to move around, socializing with a neighbor or talking out in class indicating that they may need to process what they are learning through talking, not working or paying attention indicating they are not engaged or don't understand.) Oftentimes, when students act out and criticize the lesson or us, they are really telling us that they are frustrated or are unsure they can be successful. It's critical that we don't take their comments personally, but rather try to get at what is behind the message and help them to be more aware of what they are really feeling.

While it can be hard to respond to all these signals all the time, even quietly acknowledging to individuals that you notice they are struggling and you appreciate them hanging in with you can help, particularly if you show you are responsive other times. Some ways that you might adjust to these signals might include:

- **Building in physical movement:** Middle school youth are growing, and they need to be active. It is hard to sit all day, so even just having stretch breaks or activities that allow them to move around can help channel this energy and prevent frustration.

- **Allowing for social interaction:** Young adolescents are extremely social and need to talk. Research shows that conversation is an important way of processing new information, making connections and creating deeper understanding of content. This need for young people to talk can be leveraged by intentionally building in protocols such as "Think, Pair, Share," timed conversations or collaborative learning.

- **Practice active listening with youth:** When adults show that they are listening, youth will often shift from fighting you to working with you even when you can't grant their every wish. This is particularly effective when done one-on-one. When a youth complains, questions an activity or even starts to act inappropriately, try pulling him or her aside and asking from a place of genuine care and curiosity with the intent of understanding the messages behind his or her signals and how you can help. For example:

  o "I heard you say you were bored and I noticed you making inappropriate noises. Can you tell me what's going on? Is this activity too easy for you? Do you need more help with it? Do you need to move around a bit? What will help you to focus?"

  o You can show compassion and then share your perspective in the same respectful manner. "I hear you saying that you're struggling with this skill and you don't understand why you need to learn it. I can understand why you would be frustrated, and based on what you've told me, it sounds like I need to break down this skill a little more for you and explain why the skill is important. Does that sound right? Will that help?"

  o Finally, you can help improve respectful but open communication in future and work with youth to take more responsibility for their own learning by saying something like, "Thank you for telling me what you need. This shows that you are taking responsibility for your own learning and helps me to help you. I'm always available to you at lunch if you need to come get additional help."

- **Ask students what helps them connect with adults:** Practitioners have observed that just having a one-on-one conversation or surveying students, results in stronger relationships with students, because it communicates that you care about them and value their opinion. This is even more powerful when you show students how their input resulted in change. Adolescents who are part of an organization called What Kids Can Do (2005) have also released numerous publications to help adults better understand, listen to, and work with youth. In many ways, the words of youth are the most powerful, so we include some of their recommendations in their own words, which reiterate many of the strategies already described:

  - "We might act like we hate you, but we care what you say and do." (p. 1)

  - "We know what you really care about, because we watch what you say and do." (p. 1)

  - "If you push us too hard we might break, so give us room to figure things out." (p. 15)

  - "Your opinions really matter to us, but we have to decide things for ourselves."(p. 42)

  - "When you listen to me, show me you respect me by paying attention and not judging me." (p. 70)

  - "We already feel bad enough about our mistakes—don't make us feel worse." (p. 70)

  - "If you want us to do better, praise what we do well already." (p. 70)

  - "Respect what's important to us, and we'll respect what's important to you." (p. 70)

  - "When you tell us your problems and mistakes, it's easier to trust you with ours."(p. 87)

  - "If you treat us like we're little kids, we'll act that way—so don't." (p. 104)

  - "We'll cooperate with you better, if you can relax a little." (p. 104)

  - "If we don't agree, let's work out a compromise." (p. 104)

  - "If we see that you respect us, we'll accept your help." (p. 104)

  - "We need to take risks, so help us find ones that won't hurt us."(p. 104)

  - "We love doing things with you that puts us on an equal footing." (p. 139)

  - "We want to learn your skills, and we could teach you ours." (p. 139)

  - "We'll never forget the time you make to do something just with us." (p. 139)

WHAT IF MY STUDENTS DON'T SEEM INTERESTED IN CONNECTING?

While we have discussed some evidence showing the importance of positive student-teacher relationships and reviewed some promising practices related to building these relationships, a lingering doubt may still remain: What if my students just aren't interested in connecting? This concern is legitimate. Indeed, some studies have found that students begin to report stronger relationships with their peers and weaker relationships with adults during the transition to middle school (Linch & Ciccheti, 1997). Middle school students in general need more independence as they grow older and many place a higher value on peer opinions than adult opinions. Furthermore, students may have had bad experiences with past teachers, may feel unappreciated by adults, or may even be going through difficulties unrelated to your school environment that cause them to be disengaged. Additionally, we as educators must fill a difficult role in the lives of students. We are both allies and enforcers of discipline, supporters and restrictors of student behavior.

Yet while middle school students are more independent than elementary students, they still need support, care, and encouragement from their teachers in order to properly adjust to their new school environment and succeed academically. It's important to always keep the door open to all students for several reasons. First, while some students may seem unwilling to connect, most students not only desire but need supportive relationships with adults in order to succeed in school, and while they may not show it outwardly your opinion matters to them a great deal and can make a difference in how they perceive themselves during this formative time. Second, through patience, dedication, and unwavering support on the part of the teacher, even students that initially seem reluctant to open up and connect with their teachers can turn around, as many studies have shown. Third, even if students don't openly show their appreciation or how much your opinion of them matters, they do show us that our support matters by putting more effort into their work. Finally, we sometimes gauge the strength of our relationships with students by how often students confide in us or how much of their personal lives they share with us. While this may be a sign of a strong relationship, we should also be aware that students have a need for privacy just as we do. We should strive to be open and approachable without trying to force students to share information that they may be uncomfortable with sharing. In other words, supportive relationships with each student do not all look the same; we must listen and respond to the individual needs of each student.

DO ADULT RELATIONSHIPS AFFECT RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUTH?

Thus far we have only discussed student-teacher relationships as being important for youth outcomes, but adult relationships also have a strong impact on students. We often believe that what students don't see can't hurt them, or that our interactions with our colleagues have marginal, if any, impact on our students, but as former principal and current Harvard professor of education Roland S. Barth notes, "The success of a school... depends above all on the quality of interactions between teacher and teacher, and teacher and administrator" (Barth, 1990).

Barth stresses the importance of adults modeling the types of relationships that should be established between all members of the school community. Foremost in importance among these adult relationships, he argues, is that between the principal and the teachers. "If the teacher-principal relationship can be characterized as helpful, supportive, trusting, revealing of craft knowledge, so too will others," but if "teacher-principal interactions are suspicious, guarded, distant, adversarial, acrimonious, or judgmental, we are likely to see these traits pervade the school," (Ibid) and the effect will even reach our students.

Similarly, relational trust between all adult school members was found to be critical to school change success in Anthony Bryk and Barbara Schneider's study of twelve Chicago elementary schools engaged in school change efforts in the late 1980s. In this study Bryk and Schneider found that high levels of relational trust between principals, teachers, parents, and community leaders was linked to demonstrated gains in student achievement, while schools with low levels of relational trust saw virtually no improvement in reading or math test scores (Bryk 2002, pp 123-4). Indeed, even in schools that lacked resources for their school improvement efforts still saw gains in student test scores if relational trust was high. Bryk and Schneider theorize that this trust is crucial, because all adult members depend on each other in order to achieve success, and the nature of school success relies heavily on cooperative efforts around local problem solving. Furthermore, trust allows school members to feel safe to take risks, share their practices, challenge each other's thinking, overcome fears of data, work through conflict, and try new approaches in their school.

Indeed, the success of school improvement efforts relies heavily upon the relationships teachers have with each other. Barth argues that "the relationships among adults in schools...allow, energize, and sustain all other attempts at school improvement" (Ibid). If we as educators reach out to each other, share our practices with one another, and offer support and guidance to collaboratively find strategies to reach all of our students, we can create the type of safe and nurturing environment needed to ensure our students' success.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO SUPPORT RELATIONSHIP BUILDING BETWEEN ADULTS

- *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* by Patrick Lencioni

- *What Got You Here Won't Get You There* by Marshall Goldsmith and Mark Reiter

- *Difficult Conversations* by Douglas Stone et al.

- *Fierce Conversations* by Susan Scott

- *Crucial Conversations* by Kerry Patterson et al.

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WORK AREA 3

Motivation to Learn: Igniting a Love of Learning in All Students

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Matt S. Giani and Christina M. O'Guinn

INTRODUCTION

How many times have we as educators wondered why a particular student or group of students does not seem to be engaged in school? These students may not complete their school work or participate in class. They may put little effort into the work they do, complain about the work, or skip class altogether. On the other hand, we may have other students who work independently, stick with a task through challenges they face until they have mastered it, and who delight in taking on new challenges. We may ask ourselves, "What is going on with these individual students?" and "How can I ignite the wonder of learning in all of my students?"

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY MOTIVATION?

Motivation is directly tied to our focus on the whole child, for motivation consists of the physical, emotional, cognitive, and social forces that drive our desire for and commitment toward reaching a particular goal even when challenges arise. We are never unmotivated. We are simply more motivated toward certain goals at different times depending on our needs, interests, and our beliefs about our ability to be successful in achieving a particular goal. This means that motivation changes and evolves and can be influenced by the environments in which we find ourselves and by the people in those environments.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY MOTIVATION TO LEARN?

When we talk about motivation in schools, we are generally talking about whether students are motivated to learn. Researchers measure "motivation to learn" by the degree to which students are committed to thinking through problems and working through challenges to master a concept or gain a new skill. This goes beyond student enjoyment of an activity, as students must persist through obstacles.

We witness some of these obstacles when we try to spark the motivation to learn in students whose biological, emotional, or social needs are not fully met or in those students who believe that they cannot be successful because of the discouraging messages they have received in the past. We also know from research that as youth reach adolescence, it becomes more difficult to accept personal shortcomings or limitations and to persist through challenges, so motivation to learn tends to decline in middle school years. Yet applying lessons learned from research can help to set up an environment that has the greatest potential of igniting the desire to learn in every student.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN INTRINSIC MOTIVATION AND EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION?

Intrinsic motivation is the natural curiosity and desire to learn that we are all born with. We experience intrinsic motivation when we find ourselves seeking answers to a question that intrigues us or pushing ourselves to work hard to master a skill. Extrinsic motivation is when we work for an external reward or to avoid an external punishment provided by someone else.

Many of us grew up during an era where it was believed that the best way to motivate young people was through the use of extrinsic rewards and consequences. These practices came from a focus on reinforcing human behavior and were based on experiments done with animals in which animal behaviors could be increased by rewarding treats. Subsequently, many parents and educators have relied heavily on the use of extrinsic rewards such as gold stars, money, parties, praise, or other external incentives. When students are extrinsically motivated, they participate because they expect a desirable outcome like a reward or avoidance of punishment.

More recently, researchers have realized that people do not just passively respond to their environment and began looking at how our thoughts and beliefs influence our behavior. Researchers have found that intrinsic beliefs in our ability to be successful influence our level of motivation. Researchers also have found that people have an innate desire to learn for the sake of learning and that this intrinsic desire is connected to our engagement in learning new concepts or skills

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTRINSIC MOTIVATION VERSUS EXTRINSIC REWARDS?

Research shows that working on a task for intrinsic reasons rather than extrinsic influences is not only more enjoyable for the participant, but it also facilitates learning and achievement. Learning and intrinsic motivation are also mutually reinforcing; intrinsic motivation facilitates learning, and when students acquire new skills and observe their own growth, they feel more successful and their intrinsic desire to learn increases. Furthermore, when we are intrinsically motivated, we tend to:

- Prefer challenges that increase our learning over easy work that does not enhance our skills/knowledge;

- Be motivated by our own curiosity rather than to please others or to earn good grades

- Work independently and take responsibility for our learning rather than rely on others

- Use an internal gauge to inform our personal success or failure instead of relying on external criteria or comparisons with others (Stipek, 2001)

In fact, external rewards have been shown to actually decrease interest, motivation, and performance—particularly when an individual is already intrinsically motivated to perform a task and when the reward is continuous. Individuals who are rewarded for doing a task shift their interest to the reward instead of focusing on their desire to learn. They also do not perform as well on the task as those who are intrinsically motivated to complete the task.

Extrinsic rewards have been shown to be effective when used with students who were not intrinsically motivated, but only when rewards were given initially followed by increasingly longer periods of time in which no rewards were given to reinforce effort and persistence. Extrinsic rewards must be given immediately following the success, as people in general and middle school students in particular are not motivated by rewards that are too far in the future. Researchers have also found that extrinsic praise or positive reinforcement of behaviors such as effort or persistence rather than fixed traits such as intelligence can increase behaviors associated with motivation.

Most of us have used external rewards at one time or another because it can result in short-term improvement in student behavior. However, if our goal is to build life-long, independent learners, it is important to be aware of the dangers of extrinsic rewards and punishments, and to use them sparingly and carefully as a means to build intrinsic motivation in only those individual students who may need it. Indeed, instilling intrinsic motivation is a longer process that may use some external rewards but really focuses on self-improvement and helps students to shift from doing something for a reward or for a teacher or parent to doing something for themselves.

WHAT CAN I DO TO IGNITE THE INTERNAL DESIRE TO LEARN IN MY STUDENTS?

Research in both laboratory and classroom environments has identified effective practices that can be used to motivate students to learn. These practices are based on the basic assumptions that all students are capable of learning and that students are motivated to learn when they:

- Believe they can be successful

- See value in learning the material presented

- Feel supported and safe to make mistakes

Increasing students' expectations that they will be successful: None of us is likely to put in much effort if we believe the effort will not result in success. We can help students to believe that they will be successful by:

- **Scaffolding instruction**: When educators break instruction down into steps or short-term learning goals and provide clear directions and adequate support to complete each step, reaching a larger goal feels doable for students. For example, a large report can be broken down into smaller steps of choosing a topic, researching, outlining, drafting each paragraph/section, and rewriting a final draft. Reviewing pre-requisite concepts at the beginning of a new lesson also helps all students to be successful.

- **Focusing on strengths**: It is normal for middle school students to feel a lot of self-doubt. Identifying and reinforcing their strengths can help to build confidence important to persisting through challenges.

Helping students to see the value in learning the instructional material: We tend to put more effort into a task that interests us or that we find useful, especially when mastering a particular skill or concept that is challenging. Educators can increase student motivation by tying instruction to students' experiences, giving students choices in topics or types of projects they do, or by providing a variety of active and real-world instructional activities. Teachers can help to draw connections between themes in the curriculum and students' own experiences or current-day events and can help students to see how certain skills will be useful to them in their long-term goals. In supporting adolescents to improve their decision-making and leadership skills, it is particularly important to give youth opportunities to make choices about their work and to express their opinions and personal connections to the content they are studying. Finally, when students are engaged in authentic projects like writing their own stories, interviewing community members, or applying math and science skills in an engineering design challenge, they are much more likely to be interested in the task, to retain the concepts learned and to transfer the ideas they learn to tasks in the future.

Creating a supportive learning environment: Educators can create a supportive learning environment by:

- Focusing on the goal of learning rather than achievement: When educators focus on the goal of learning and improving over time rather than on the goal of performing well quickly or on the first attempt, students are more likely to be motivated to learn. In a supportive learning environment, grades reflect effort and progress toward learning goals and students are given clear evaluation criteria and specific, private feedback on what they accomplished well and what needs improvement.

- Emphasizing effort rather than intelligence: Students who believe that intelligence is an innate and static trait will naturally not be as motivated if they perceive of themselves as intellectually inferior. Convince students that there is no such thing as "smart" or "dumb" people but rather hard workers and not-so-hard workers and provide role models who have shown effort and persistence through challenges. Show students that our brains are always changing and growing and hard work will result in success. Also, when educators allow students to revise their work, they reward effort and encourage students to achieve deep learning rather than memorization of facts. For example, allowing a student to rewrite a term paper or redo a set of math problems after the teacher's feedback can help the student improve their work and feel like their effort contributes to a better grade.

- Focus on personal improvement rather than relative success: A practice which inevitably leads to some students feeling inferior is comparing students to one another. Try switching the paradigm from relative success or failure to personal improvement; not how students compare to others, but how they compare to their previous selves. Show students their own growth and they will begin to believe in their own learning and see that effort does equal results. Educators can also minimize competition and comparisons between students by featuring all student work on the walls of the classroom, rather than a select few, which can send the message that only a few can be successful and cause others to lose interest in putting forth effort.

- Encourage risk-taking and experimentation: When learning is the primary goal, students are encouraged to ask questions, experiment, and take risks in their attempts to approach and grapple with the material. Educators can do this by inviting students to express opinions and insights. "Mistakes" or incorrect answers can be reframed as valuable opportunities for learning and growth by asking students why they think they got a particular result or what they might do differently next time, rather than making students feel embarrassed for getting the wrong answer.

- Show care for all students: Particularly during adolescence, youth are motivated when they have social connections, feel accepted, and feel they belong. Research with middle school students has shown that students' perceptions of their teachers as "caring" predicted motivation, as well as social and academic achievement, even when prior motivation was controlled for. In other words, students performed better socially and academically when they felt cared for by their teachers, even when past experiences with school had reduced their motivation or they had previously struggled academically. The love and care of the teacher, as perceived by the students, was more influential in predicting future success for the students than their previous motivation. This study reinforces the point that teachers' attitudes and beliefs can have a profound effect on students. However, it is not the amount of care that teachers have per se, but how much care the students perceive teachers have. Our care for our students will only have an effect on student performance if they feel that care.

WORK AREA 3

HOW DO I SHOW MY STUDENTS THAT I TRULY CARE?

Focusing on effort, learning, and individual progress while acting on youth input and providing authentic choices as described above help contribute to supportive relationships with youth. The following strategies are additional approaches that convey care—when done with sincerity.

Make caring eye contact[2] and communicate caring and supportive messages: Young people respond to eye contact that is direct, sincere, caring, and encouraging, and they respond to sincere compassion. Young people also learn to internalize messages that encourage behaviors of persistence and effort associated with motivation.

Connect with students as individuals and encourage youth input: Students are more motivated when they feel that their teachers know who they are as individuals. Students feel respected when teachers make an effort to learn about their interests, beliefs, or opinions, take them seriously, and act on them. Research also shows that student persistence through difficult transitions such as to middle school or through adolescence in general can increase when students are told that the self doubts they are experiencing are normal.

Be passionate about your work: Your passion is infectious. If students perceive you as being highly motivated, this will not only rub off on the students as a norm of behavior and work ethic, it will also make it clear and known to the students that you truly care about them and their learning.

Be authoritative: Many studies, specifically in regards to parenting styles, have shown that authoritativeness increases academic performance, social competence, self esteem, and good behavior. Authoritativeness is defined as a combination of being demanding and responsive. Responsiveness in this context refers to the extent to which one is attuned, supportive, and acquiescent to a child's special needs and wants. Demanding refers to the standards set for the young person's behavior and the degree to which youth are held accountable for their actions. A lack of high behavioral standards in a young person's life often leads to problematic behavior in the future, and a lack of responsiveness stifles children and leads them to have lower self-esteem and social skills. A balance of both is ideal.

Use intrinsic motivation techniques to hold youth accountable: By shifting the locus of control from the adult to the youth, youth build communication, problem-solving, and leadership skills crucial for their development into independent adults. They also learn that they have control over their decisions, feel capable of handling problems, and learn to take responsibility for their actions. We can help youth to develop these skills and capabilities by engaging youth in dialogue about their behavior, rather than directing their behavior. The following is an example of what this could look like in practice:

- Check out assumptions with the youth about what led to the behavior or concern. Ask them for their perspectives on a particular issue or situation and how they want to deal with the situation before sharing your own perspectives and concerns.

- Allow youth to try their own strategies and reflect on what they learned and how they might apply those lessons in the future.

- Show appreciation for effort and ask youth what they learned or what progress they see themselves making.

HOW DO THESE TECHNIQUES APPLY TO ADULTS?

The above strategies also apply to adults. Just like youth, intrinsically motivated adults often perform better than extrinsically motivated adults and are more satisfied in their work. Extrinsic rewards and pressures such as directives, deadlines, and high pressure evaluations have been shown to decrease intrinsic motivation in adults. Adults who feel effective, supported, safe to take risks or try new things, and who see the value of their work are more intrinsically motivated in their work. For most school staff, this intrinsic motivation comes from our desire to connect with and make a difference for our young people. It is when we feel we are not effective at our work with young people and become frustrated that we find we are less engaged in our work and do not perform as well. In order to sustain the energy required to meet the demands of the school environment, it becomes even more crucial for us as school staff to tap into our passions for helping youth and to support one another as a community in achieving this vision.

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[2] Eye contact should be used only when culturally appropriate. In some cultures, eye contact is considered disrespectful.

While similar motivation principles apply to both youth and adults, research reveals a few specific characteristics that lead to intrinsically motivated adults:

Competence: Just as youth need to feel they can be successful, adults need to feel competent in their work. When we feel competent and capable at what we do we are more motivated to perform that task even without extrinsic rewards.

Autonomy: Giving adults voice, choice, and opportunities for self-direction and self-evaluation are related to intrinsic motivation. Environments that promote risk-taking and experimentation, as opposed to compliance to specific procedures and protocols, lead to greater feelings of autonomy and increased motivation.

Internalization: When adults feel ownership over the goals of the organization and see them as their own goals rather than imposed goals, this increases their feelings of autonomy and motivation. Adults who feel they have a voice in the vision or goals of their organization or how that vision is reached tend to internalize those goals as their own, and thus direct their own behavior intrinsically.

Educators also tend to feel more energized and motivated in their work if they are able to build more intrinsic motivation in students, as students will expend their own energy to push themselves, rather than educators feeling they have to extrinsically push students. Therefore, many educators find their own motivation and energy levels increase when they take the time up front to build relationships and a supportive, safe environment with students and explicitly teach, encourage, and support high expectations and develop individualized learning goals and plans with students.

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Motivation Menu of Sample Strategies

Motivation in the Classroom

Students' beliefs about themselves in general and their academic potential in particular, are critical precursors to educational success and staying on course for high school graduation. During the middle school years, students' motivation and sense of personal competence often declines (Wigfield & Eccles, 2002). This decline is especially troubling for low-income students and language minorities who are more likely to have underachieved during their elementary years (Brooks-Gunn & Aber, 1997). Teacher behaviors of clarity, lesson variety, enthusiasm, task orientation, and lack of strong criticism are features of an environment linked to student motivation (Oakes, 1985).

CONFIDENCE IN ACADEMIC POTENTIAL SAMPLE STRATEGIES

Growth Mindset Strategies (Emphasize effort rather than intelligence):

- Convince students that there is no such thing as "smart" or "dumb" people, but rather hard workers and not-so-hard workers

- Provide role models who have shown effort/persistence through challenges

- Show students that our brains are always changing and growing and hard work will result in success

- Reward effort and encourage students to achieve deep learning by allowing students to revise their work (e.g., rewrite a term paper after the teacher's feedback to improve their grade)

Individualize Instruction

- Individualized learning goals on specific skills/concepts (rather than performance goals focused on grades, etc.)

- Help individuals see their own progress as a result of effort

- Differentiate the same task for different levels

- Scaffold instruction

- Provide support for each step

- Give students clear evaluation criteria and specific, private feedback on what they accomplished well and what needs improvement

Hold high expectations

- Communicate that all students are capable of achieving

- Help students to set and see progress around individual learning goals

- Provide supports/encouraging feedback around achieving these goals

CHALLENGED TO LEARN SAMPLE STRATEGIES

Develop Life Skills:

- Give students opportunities to develop important life skills (e.g., critical thinking, communication, cooperation, problem solving, creativity, etc.)

- Give students open-ended, real-life projects connected to their interests/passions or current events

- Engage students in leadership and teaching opportunities in the classroom, school, and community

Goal Setting Around Student's Interests:

- Work with students to set realistic but challenging short-term and long-term individual learning goals on specific skills/concepts (rather than performance goals focused on grades or other external evaluation)

- Connect instruction to students' interests and passions and long-term goals

- Tap into students' natural curiosity about the world by allowing them to explore their own questions around a topic or unit

LEARNING FOR THE SAKE OF LEARNING SAMPLE STRATEGIES

Make instruction relevant

Connect curriculum to students':

- Interests

- Cultural background

- Long-term goals

- Current-day events

- Prior knowledge/experiences

Help students to see how certain skills will be useful to them in their long-term goals

Give students choice and voice

- Give students choices in topics or types of projects they do

- Provide a variety of active and real-world instructional activities

- Ask for and use student input in defining instructional activities/classroom environment

- Ask students questions, not just about class material but about their opinions on life

- Give students authentic choices and input into their learning and the learning environment

- Show students that you've listened to them by restating their ideas and explicitly connecting their interests and input to instruction or to decisions made that they informed

Supporting Research:

Students who believe that intelligence is an innate and static trait will naturally not be as motivated if they perceive of themselves as intellectually inferior (Dweck, 1986).

Although middle school students may act like they do not care what adults think, noticing and encouraging young adolescents' strengths and avoiding strong criticism builds self confidence during this critical transition time and has been linked to student motivation to learn (Oakes, 1985).

Research shows that working on a task for intrinsic reasons rather than extrinsic influences is not only more enjoyable for the participant, but it also facilitates learning and achievement. Learning and intrinsic motivation are also mutually reinforcing; intrinsic motivation facilitates learning, and when students acquire new skills and observe their own growth, they feel more successful and their intrinsic desire to learn increases. When we are intrinsically motivated, we tend to:

- Prefer challenges that increase our learning over easy work that does not enhance our skills/knowledge

- Be motivated by our own curiosity rather than to please others or to earn good grades;

- Work independently and take responsibility for our learning rather than rely on others; and

- Use an internal gauge to inform our personal success or failure instead of relying on external criteria or comparisons with others (Stipek, 2001).

In fact, external rewards have been shown to actually decrease interest, motivation, and performance, particularly when an individual is already intrinsically motivated to perform a task and when the reward is continuous. Individuals who are rewarded for doing a task shift their interest to the reward instead of focusing on their desire to learn. They also do not perform as well on the task as those who are intrinsically motivated to complete the task (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Additionally, students are more likely to be intrigued by problems that are realistic and challenging. In particular, their interest can be piqued when the skills they are developing will have real-world significance (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996).

Motivation through a Caring Classroom Community

(Student-Student Relationships)

Adolescence is a time when young people place great value on the opinion of their peers, and how students interact with one another can affect students' sense of safety, care, and belonging. A comprehensive study of secondary classrooms found that "more learning took place in classes with a greater degree of intimacy among all classroom participants and an accompanying lack of cliquishness and friction among them. Also important in student learning were a lack of perceived teacher favoritism and the existence of a generally democratic atmosphere" (Walberg & Anderson, 1972 in Oakes, 1985).

FEELING OF SOCIAL SUPPORT IN CLASS AND PROMOTION OF MUTUAL RESPECT SAMPLE STRATEGIES

Use Structures/Processes that Build Community:

- Involve all students in forming classroom agreements to meet the individual learning needs of all students

- Engage all students in taking collective responsibility for maintaining these agreements and helping all students to feel safe and supported in learning

- Use strategies that allow all students' to participate equitably in class discussions (Think/Pair/Share, Go-Round, etc.)

- Use cooperative learning and buddies to allow students to share ideas and help each other

- Hold class meetings to discuss and problem solve class issues as a whole class

- Use conflict resolution processes to resolve conflict between individuals

Build Unity Between Different Groups:

- Teach students listening techniques and validate different experiences and perspectives

- Celebrate diversity

- Engage students in courageous conversations when students make negative comments about other groups

- Unify students around common values/struggles (like those of adolescence)

- Give students opportunities to work in heterogeneous groups and emphasize supporting each other

- Use protocols to bring out the voices of those not heard (Think/Pair/Share, Round Robin, etc.)

Growth Mindset Techniques (Focus on personal improvement rather than relative success by minimizing competition and comparisons between students):

- Focus on personal improvement—not how students compare to others, but how they compare to their previous selves, so students see that effort does equal results

- Feature all student work on the walls of the classroom

Growth Mindset Technique—Encourage risk taking and experimentation:

- Encourage students to ask questions, experiment, and take risks as they grapple with the material

- Invite students to express opinions and insights

- Reframe "mistakes" or incorrect answers as valuable opportunities for learning and growth by asking students why they think they got a particular result or what they might do differently next time rather than embarrassing students for getting the wrong answer

Provide social-emotional support and guidance:

- Help students to become more aware of their behaviors and how these affect others

- Help them develop strategies for controlling emotions, working through conflict, and repairing relationships

Motivation Through Student-Teacher Relationships

While adolescence is a time when young people may place greater value on their peers opinions than adults, supportive and caring relationships with adults have been linked to positive developmental outcomes and a single supportive relationship with an adult can make a difference during this vulnerable time of identify-forming. Particularly during adolescence, youth are motivated when they have social connections, feel accepted, and feel that they belong. Research with middle school students has shown that students performed better socially and academically when they felt cared for by their teachers, even when past experiences with school had reduced their motivation. However, our care for our students will only have an effect on student performance if they feel that care. (Gambone, 2005; Noddings, 2005 & Wentzel, 1997).

FEELING CARE FROM TEACHERS SAMPLE STRATEGIES

Build Caring and Respectful Relationships:

- Make caring eye contact (when culturally appropriate) and communicate caring and supportive messages

- Connect with students as individuals and encourage youth input into learning/learning environment

- Show understanding/empathy for the struggles of adolescence

- Be passionate about your work

- Use humor

- Share your own stories and who you are as a person outside of your school role

- Be curious about what is behind student behavior, listen without judgment and adjust

- When addressing behavior, be clear that the behavior is the concern, but you still care about them as a person

- Use preventative measures, and punish students only as a last result. Know that every time a student is punished it damages your relationship and trust with that student which will need to be repaired.

- Show concern for students who are not engaged, are unhappy, or are not applying effort, and offer support

Teach, Communicate, and Encourage High Expectations:

- Explicitly teach and model a new skill/behavior expectation and engage students in understanding the purpose behind these expectations

- Remind students of these expectations and provide frequent and immediate positive feedback

- Notice student strengths and provide encouragement

- Provide additional support for those who need it

STUDENT VOICE SAMPLE STRATEGIES

Give Students Choice and Voice:

- Give students choices in topics or types of projects they do within the curriculum

- Provide a variety of active and real-world instructional activities

- Ask for and use student input in defining instructional activities/classroom environment

- Ask students questions, not just about class material but about their opinions on life

- Give students authentic choices and input into their learning and the learning environment

- Show students that you've listened to them by restating their ideas and explicitly connecting their interests and input to instruction or to decisions made that they informed

Use Intrinsic Motivation Techniques:

- Check out assumptions with the youth about what led to the behavior or concern

- Ask them for their perspectives on how they want to deal with a situation before sharing your own perspectives

- Provide suggestions/constructive feedback rather than direction

- Allow youth to try their own strategies and reflect on what they learned and how they might apply lessons in the future

- Show appreciation for effort and ask youth what they learned or what progress they see themselves making

- Emphasize the choices that students have made or are considering making. "What are your choices?"

Supporting Research:

Students are more motivated when they feel that their teachers know who they are as individuals. Research also shows that student persistence through difficult transitions such as to a middle school or through adolescence in general can increase when students are told that the self doubts they are experiencing are normal. Young people respond to eye contact that is direct, sincere, caring, and encouraging and to sincere compassion. Young people also learn to internalize messages that encourage persistence and effort associated with motivation.

Two longitudinal studies showed that supportive relationships with adults increased students' positive developmental outcomes as adults (productivity, connections to others and navigation) by 100% and decreased poor developmental outcomes by 56%. These studies also showed that unsupportive relationships actually resulted in 50% decrease in good developmental outcomes and 94% increase in poor developmental outcomes. These outcomes are further linked to the level of success students experience as adults in terms of economic self-sufficiency, healthy relationships, and contribution to their communities (Gambone, 2005).

Adolescence is a time when youth need to develop autonomy, need to have a safe environment in which to take risks, and try on increased responsibility. By shifting the locus of control from the adult to the youth, youth build communication, problem-solving, and leadership skills crucial for their development into independent adults. They also learn that they have control over their decisions, feel capable of handling problems, and learn to take responsibility for their actions.

Students feel empowered when they are taken seriously as knowledgeable and valuable participants in conversation (Hudson-Ross, Cleary & Casey, 1993), which motivates them to take ownership of their educational experience (Colsant, 1995; Sanon, Baxter, Fortune & Opotow, 2001).

Adolescents who are part of What Kids Can Do share the following messages for adults (Cushman, 2005):

- "We might act like we hate you, but we care what you say and do." (p. 15)

- "We already feel bad enough about our mistakes—don't make us feel worse." (p. 70)

- "If you want us to do better, praise what we do well already." (p.70)

- "Respect what's important to us, and we'll respect what's important to you." (p. 70)

- "When you tell us your problems and mistakes, it's easier to trust you with ours."(p. 87)

- "If you treat us like we're little kids, we'll act that way—so don't." (p. 104)

- "We'll cooperate with you better, if you can relax a little." (p. 104)

- "If we don't agree, let's work out a compromise." (p. 104)

- "If we see that you respect us, we'll accept your help." (p. 104)

- "We love doing things with you that puts us on an equal footing." (p. 104)

- "We'll never forget the time you make to do something just with us." (p. 139)

Effective strategies for establishing behavioral expectations and for managing problem behavior emphasize directly teaching social behaviors (Colvin, 2004).

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Tools to Support Work Area 4

Creating Conditions and Habits for Shared Responsibility

Tools to Support Work Area 4:

Create Conditions and Habits for Shared Responsibility

Work Area 4 offers tools that can support schools to build school members' capacity to lead and collaborate through structures, skills and habits.

Key Questions When Working on This Area:

- How will you work intentionally toward a cohesive youth-centered school vision?

- What structures will facilitate shared decision-making in your school?

- How will you help teachers develop collaborative skills and habits?

Key Questions To Reflect on Your Progress in This Area:

- How do staff habits, processes, and structures align with the vision?

- How do staff habits, processes. and structures support cross-functional collaboration and decision-making?

Activities

- **Inclusive Communication and Shared Decision-Making**: *An activity guide for creating communication and decision-making processes.*

Resources

- **Renewing School: Productive Dialogue and Difficult Conversations:** An effective practice brief that provides guidelines for productively working through conflict through active listening, compassion, and a goal of collective understanding

Inclusive Communication and Shared Decision-Making

How can we involve all school members in realizing our vision?

PURPOSE:

This activity helps define communication and decision-making processes involving all school members.

AUDIENCE:

School leadership team (ideally with a representative from all school members: administrators, community school, after-school staff, teachers, parents, students)

TIME:

2-3 hours (This could be done over multiple sessions)

OUTCOME(S):

As a result of this activity, we will have:

- A visual representation of a communication and/or decision-making process involving all school members.

MATERIALS:

- A Comparison of Classical Leadership and Shared Responsibility handout
- Inclusive Communication and Shared Responsibility Decision-Making Directions handout
- Flip chart paper and markers for each team

INTRODUCTION (45-60 MINUTES**)**

1. Ask participants to use A Comparison of Classical Leadership and Shared Responsibility handout to share some of the benefits and drawbacks of a shared responsibility model.

Some benefits might include:

- Ownership and buy-in and thus increased commitment by all members
- Increased trust between school members and likelihood that all adults are communicating consistent messages to students and collectively finding strategies to meet the needs of all students
- It's necessary that teachers have voice, if students are to have voice

Some drawbacks of shared responsibility might include:

- Collaboration takes time and coordination
- It can be difficult to come to consensus, particularly with large groups
- Emphasis on process can be frustrating for those who are results-oriented and can cause the group to lose sight of the purpose or focus

2. *Key frame:* Not all school decisions can be made using consensus or shared responsibility; however, if shared responsibility processes are used in a few identified areas, it can greatly increase school member commitment, cohesion, consistency, and investment in collectively carrying out the vision. Clear/frequent communication and transparent decision-making processes clarify how and when they can be involved in informing or shaping the school vision. (By consensus, we mean that all members can live with and support the final decision.)

3. *For both decision-making and communication*—Brainstorm the different school members and existing groups that might currently organize/represent these groups. (These might include existing teacher groups such as grade level or departments, parent groups, student council or other student groups, etc.)

4. *For decision-making*—Brainstorm the types of decisions that might be made though a shared responsibility process versus those that must be decided by the district or principal alone, such as personnel decisions or issues of compliance. (Alternatively, the principal could provide decisions s/he is comfortable opening to a shared responsibility process. Categorize these into major themes such as climate policies, instructional policies, safety policies, etc.)

5. *For communication*—Look at the categories of decisions and decide whether there is any additional vision-related information that might need to be communicated to school members or might require input from school members. Add these categories.

6. Go over the Inclusive Communication and Shared Responsibility Decision-Making Directions.

7. Divide the leadership team in half. Ask one half to focus on communication and the other on decision-making.

ACTIVITY (30-45 MINUTES)

1. Ask participants to design decision-making and communication processes in separate groups.

2. Participants should draw this process on flip chart paper and be prepared to explain the process.

CLOSING (1 HOUR TO 1 HOUR 15 MINUTES)

1. Ask each group to share their proposed process and hear feedback from the other group using the following round robin process. Ask each member to share:

   • One thing they like about the proposed process

   • Any questions or concerns they have about the proposed process.

2. Summarize benefits and concerns heard from the group.

3. Ask the group for proposed modifications to the proposed process to address concerns.

4. Check for group consensus on the process.

5. Decide on next steps for implementing the proposed processes and clear assignments of responsibility for these next steps.

Facilitator Tips

We had difficulties arriving at this activity. We found that school members were particularly attached to their existing structures and processes and had difficulty thinking about how to consolidate, streamline, or connect existing communication structures.

We found it more effective to have participants think about the different school members and the existing groups they might be currently organized into that could be connected to a process and how these groups might be involved in either communication or decision-making as separate processes.

As such, we suggest either tackling communication and decision-making in separate meetings or splitting up the group to focus on these separately.

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.

WORK AREA 4

Inclusive Communication and Shared Responsibility Decision-Making Directions

How can we involve all school members in realizing our vision?

PURPOSE:

• To define some communication and decision-making processes involving all school members.

AUDIENCE:

School leadership team (ideally with a representative from all school members: administrators, community school, after-school staff, teachers, parents, students)
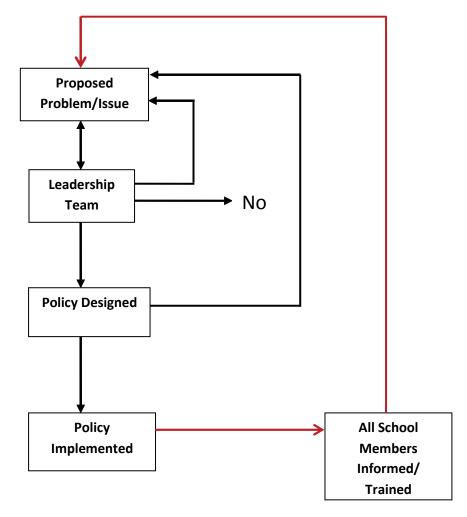
ACTIVITY DIRECTIONS (30-45 MINUTES)

1. Identify the type of process you are designing (communication or decision-making).

   (See examples on subsequent pages).

2. Thinking about the kinds of communication or decisions the whole group brainstormed, identify the core focus or goal of the process you are designing.

   Examples:

   ○ If it's a communication flow chart, the ultimate goal might be to communicate decisions-made/ lessons learned to all school members

   ○ If it's a decision-making flow chart, the ultimate goal might be to make decisions on new school policies

3. Thinking about the different school member groups that the whole group brainstormed (e.g., departments, classified staff, PTA, student council), discuss how each group will be represented in giving input on decisions or receiving and sharing information with others in their team.

4. Discuss and diagram a process for making a decision or communicating information to and from the school as it relates to the identified goal of the process. Use as few words as possible in your diagram. Detailed descriptions of the process should be completed separately from the visual.

5. On the decision-making chart, be sure to clearly delineate where input is asked for versus where decisions are actually made. Some additional questions to consider:

   ○ How will the decision-making body ensure parent and student input informs decisions affecting these school members?

   ○ How will decisions be made? (Consensus is recommended for greater commitment from school members and to truly encourage consideration of all perspectives. If consensus is used, those who cannot live with and support a decision are given the opportunity to voice concerns and propose alternative solutions they can live with before a final decision is made.)

SAMPLE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS #1

PURPOSE: This flow chart shows the process for making decisions about new school-wide policies

SAMPLE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS #1 EXPLANATION

1. Every school member has a representative on the leadership team.

2. Based on evaluation or other data sources, any school member can raise an issue to the attention of the leadership team through their representative.

3. The leadership representative brings these issues to the Leadership Team who uses criteria (e.g., alignment with the school vision, feasibility of addressing with available resources, level of priority, relevant existing structures that could be leveraged, etc.) to decide if the issue is one that needs to be addressed or not and how it should be addressed.

4. The proposer is given feedback on their proposed issue on whether to go forward or not and with whom. (They may be given criteria to follow and directed to work with an existing committee or to pull together representatives of appropriate school members, to gather additional data etc.).

5. Once the policy is designed, it is brought to the Leadership Team again who reviews it and provides feedback for revision.

6. One the policy is revised to something the Leadership Team members all agree to support, it is implemented and communicated to all school members who are affected by the policy. If training is required that is also provided.

7. The policy is assessed for effectiveness and may bring up new issues that would then be directed through the process.

WORK AREA 4

SAMPLE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS #2

Issues and ideas originate from:
Staff/ Parents/ Students

↓

Leadership Team
Reviews issues to decide if fits criteria
for creating new policy

↓

Advisory Team:
*(administrator, teacher, parent and
student representatives):*
Reviews issue/idea and directs to
appropriate group to develop policy

↓

Site Council	Student Council
Principal	Committee
Departments	District Office
Parent Club	Community

↕

Advisory Team:
Reviews policy and provides feedback
for revisions or approves policy

↓

New policy
communicated to all school members

SAMPLE COMMUNICATION PROCESS #1

PURPOSE: To gather input from all school members on important school policies and to share information on the results of this input with all school members.
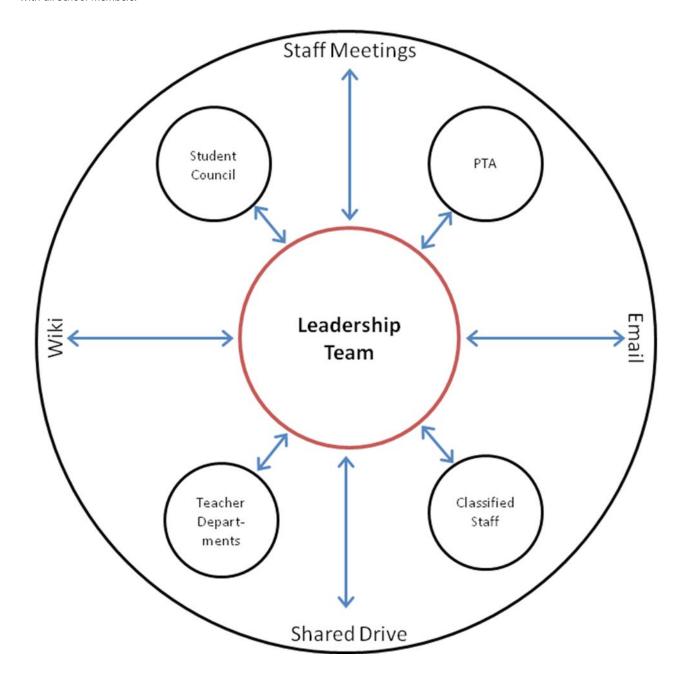

_____

[1] The green circle above represents the group of people who would be part of the staff meeting/email - ALL administrators/teachers, some staff, parents, and students.

WORK AREA 4

SAMPLE COMMUNICATION PROCESS #1 EXPLANATION

- Every staff member belongs to a group.

- Parents and students have representatives on parent and student committees.

- Every group has a representative on the Leadership Team and at staff meetings. Representatives are expected to communicate with all members of the group for which they are representing.

  1. The Leadership Team initiates the need for a new or revised policy based on issues raised by representatives.

  2. The Leadership Team either delegates the working of the policy to a committee or works on it within the Leadership Team.

  3. Input for ideas is invited from all school members (or representatives of school member groups) at staff meeting, group meetings, or via email.

  4. The Leadership Team (or committee) uses input to design the new policy.

  5. Feedback on the proposed policy is invited through email, team meetings, or staff meeting.

  6. New policy is shared with all school members at staff meeting, via email, and on the Web site.

SAMPLE COMMUNICATION PROCESS #2

PURPOSE: To gather input from all school members on new structures/processes and to share information on these structures as they develop with all school members.

SAMPLE COMMUNICATION PROCESS #2 EXPLANATION

- Every school member belongs to a group.

- Every group has a representative on the Leadership Team.

    1. Leadership Team representatives raise issues heard from groups at Leadership Team meetings.

    2. Leadership Team members rotate facilitation of staff meetings focused on a particular issue/problem to gather staff ideas.

    3. Leadership Team members take ideas and work on a proposed solution.

    4. Leadership Team members bring proposed solution to their groups for input (or by email or on the Wiki).

    5. The Leadership Team revises solutions, posts them on the Shared Drive and emails staff.

Renewing School: Productive Dialogue and Difficult Conversations

Christina M. O'Guinn, Matt S. Giani and Kristin Geiser

We must enter, not evade, the tangles of teaching so we can understand them better and negotiate them with more grace, not only to guard our own spirits, but also to serve our students well.

- **Parker Palmer, The Courage to Teach**

INTRODUCTION

As we collectively work to help our students reach their full potential in all facets of their development and to create a school environment that will foster this success, the way we talk with one another will necessarily change. In fact, to renew our school in ways that support youth to thrive, we will need to engage in a specific form of talk. We will need to engage in dialogue that (1) deepens understanding among all involved in the school change process, and (2) makes positive changes for youth in our setting.

What does this look like? How can we move from where we are—our current habits of collaborative conversations—to where we need to be? And how do we handle conversations that are particularly difficult or tense?

WHAT DOES PRODUCTIVE DIALOGUE LOOK LIKE?

In the context of moving toward a youth development focus in a school setting, productive conversations are often characterized by:

- **Shared understanding of the big picture.** Participants know or are working toward developing a shared understanding of what they are working for as a community. They understand the context in which their work—including a conversation—sits. They see each conversation as an opportunity to move closer to or further from their big goal and they choose to engage in ways that move closer to the goal.

- **Mutual respect among participants.** Participants truly value the perspectives, voices, stories, ideas, and experiences of one another. Participants know that their own experience is one of many and they will only promote youth development when they are able to hear more from their colleagues and/or other constituents who know the experiences of youth.

- **Clarity of purpose.** Participants understand and agree with the purpose of the conversation. They know what they are working toward—and what the outcome of the conversation needs to be. They work together toward that goal, naming related topics, subjects, or questions as they come up; knowing when to engage those new ideas and when to save them for a later date.

- **They know what they know…and what they don't.** Participants are honest about what they know—and how they know it (e.g., they acknowledge when they are speaking from personal experience and when they are quoting others). They use evidence to support their concerns, but also understand that they have blind spots and partial understandings. They recognize that they need others' knowledge and perspectives. They frequently say, "I don't know," and they know when to seek more information or expertise.

- **Opportunity for deepening understanding.** Time is allotted—and respected—for listening carefully, asking clarifying questions, and sitting with new knowledge. Structures and/or norms are in place to ensure that there is time for listening and learning without any pressure to place value on the ideas, to make decisions, or to draw conclusions.

- **Opportunity for making positive changes.** Participants hold themselves accountable to identifying next steps and for articulating how those actions will directly result in a setting that supports youth to thrive. It may be a "long chain" between the action and impact, but the participants are able to articulate the link(s) and question their assumptions in order to tune their theory of action.

- **Plan for follow-up.** Participants agree to the next conversation(s) that need to happen, with whom and how/when those will happen. They also clarify how they will follow up on anything that came up during this conversation (e.g., find expertise or information on a topic). Participants acknowledge that either they need a concrete follow-up plan or they need to let something go; they are in the habit of making this an intentional choice rather than a default decision.

WORK AREA 4

HOW DO WE MOVE FROM WHERE WE ARE TO WHERE WE NEED TO BE, IN TERMS OF OUR HABITS AROUND CONVERSATION AND DIALOGUE?

In any school change process, there are several different types of change that are being pursued. Some changes are "structural" or "technical" changes, such as changing the bell schedule. There may be a tremendous amount of work done that leads to the changing of the bell schedule, however, the actual change itself requires resetting the bells. It's a technical change. Once the bell schedule has been reprogrammed, the bell schedule will change. Examples of other structural changes are physical like new paint colors or buildings.

Other changes are "infrastructure" changes, which may be necessary in order to allow different people to talk and work together in different ways as they jointly engage in change. These might include the creation of new processes or systems like Learning Action Communities or other collaborative teams or new decision-making bodies/processes that may replace or supplement existing infrastructure. These can also include the use of new processes in existing teams or the integration of similar efforts (such as separate homework clubs) into a single, school-wide program. The nature of infrastructure changes is that they can and should be dynamic and changing with the needs of the school community.

Another type of change is "cultural" or "normative" such as the essence of the school, the feel of the school, and the deep values or beliefs that permeate the school. There may be a tremendous amount of work done that leads to a new school culture or school norms but, unlike structural changes, the work is not done once the shift has happened. Cultural changes happen over time and are sustained or deepened over time by developing new habits. It's a lot like improving one's level of fitness. It doesn't happen just because you make a decision to be more fit; it happens as a result of the consistent practice of new habits that have demonstrated results. It is essential that these habits be practiced in informal conversations (school hallways, school parking lots, staff lounges) as well as formal conversations (staff meetings, school events, parent/teacher conferences). The following describes habits that apply to both settings, but are particularly relevant to informal settings.

WHAT ARE THESE HABITS?

*   **Speak up.** If something is on your mind, ask for conversation around it. Initiate the meeting. Invite people into your room or a common space for a dialogue. Do not wait for someone else to start the conversation.

*   **Slow Down.** Take the time to intentionally notice where others are at, to really listen, and to work together to address core issues that are affecting our goals for our youth. Because of the immediacy of so much of our work in schools, we have developed habits of dealing with what feels urgent but not necessarily what is important. If comments are made or processes are in place that make it hard for youth to thrive, it is imperative that we slow down long enough to reexamine such ideas or practices. If conversations tend to be fast, fragmented, and covering multiple topics, create space and ask to stay on one topic longer in order to work it through. On the other hand, if conversations tend to be quiet and few are participating, open up the conversation by asking for everyone to weigh in with a simple prompt (e.g., thumbs up, thumbs down, and thumbs in the middle). The simple act of authentically pursuing better understanding of someone/something will shift the normal flow of talk in many school settings and is vital in becoming a proactive, collaborative school community.

*   **Affirm.** When you see normative change happening in ways that benefit youth, affirm those who are involved. Name it. Acknowledge what is going well. We need powerful examples to remind us what we are working toward, and to show us that it is possible. Highlight these.

WHAT ABOUT CONVERSATIONS THAT ARE PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT OR TENSE?

Difficult conversations are those conversations that we are often afraid to begin—times when we've thought about whether it would be worth it to approach someone about a concern, a remark, or action that bothered us or a decision that we didn't understand. Perhaps we found it easier to ignore it or to complain about it to someone else rather than speak directly to the person. Conversations in which we find ourselves having some sort of physical response (e.g., strong feelings, increased heart rate) usually signal that we are entering into a difficult conversation. In school settings, difficult conversations are often those around our practice, our effectiveness, and/or our students. Some of the most difficult conversations are those that go even deeper and require us to critically and honestly examine the relationship between our ideas or assumptions, our practices, and our students. Indeed the core of successful conversations is to slow down enough to truly understand where someone else is coming from and to develop empathy for that person.

Keep in mind that the purpose of engaging in a difficult conversation should be the same as the purpose of engaging in any school conversation. To come out on the other side better equipped (individually and collectively) to support youth to thrive. To that end, it is essential to clarify the heart of the conversation. "What is it that we are talking about here?" or "What is it that we see that concerns us?" This reminds us that

we need to be able to articulate our question or concern in terms of youth development —and if we cannot, the chances are that we are talking about something that is too far removed from our larger goals and therefore perhaps better to table or discuss in another setting.

Unfortunately, we can't table all of the difficult conversations—in fact, we need to lean into them. Change involves growth; growth involves disequilibrium. And so we need to enter into these difficult conversations—conversations where we experience disequilibrium—as signposts that we are moving in the right direction.

SO HOW MIGHT WE GO ABOUT HAVING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS?

Having these conversations is an art, not a science. There are a number of guidelines you can follow as a framework to initiating and managing these conversations in a safe, productive way. It might be helpful to think of these principles as a means of re-framing the conversation, or a way to turn a really difficult conversation into a less charged, more productive conversation.

- **Assume good intentions.** When you're listening to your colleagues, remind yourself that they have good intentions and that we all want what is best for our youth. Assume that they want to serve all youth, that they are doing their best, and that it is possible to engage in a productive conversation with them.

- **Cultivate curiosity.** Step back into a place of wonder. Consider what you want to know. Cultivate curiosity. What do you wonder about? (e.g., What is the person feeling? What led them to a particular conclusion or opinion? What is the story behind the comment? Does the person know how their comment affected others?) When you are genuinely curious, then begin—and ask clarifying questions that invite dialogue.

- **Remember that we are human.** It's very possible that the person's statement or action doesn't reflect what the person really values or believes but came out of frustration or a misunderstanding. We all say things that do not fully reflect our character. We would not want to be labeled or categorized or written off for one offense; we need to extend this same courtesy to others.

- **Remember that we are in process.** One of the riskiest things we can do is grow, because it necessitates acknowledging that we didn't have it right or that we didn't have it all together. We are often aware that we are in process. Our beliefs, ideas, and opinions are constantly being refined and transformed. Keep in mind that this is true for those around you.

- **Be honest about what feels difficult.** If you find yourself in a difficult conversation, it may help you and others if you say out loud what feels difficult to you (e.g., "I'm feeling attacked right now, so it's really hard for me to engage in this thoughtfully. Could someone help me see this differently so that I don't feel so defensive?" or "I'm afraid that if we talk about race, I am going to be accused of being a racist. How can we do this in a way that I will not feel attacked?") Share these with humility and with an honest effort to communicate your fear and your desire to engage.

- **Model that you are open to change yourself.** If you hear something that feels new or different to you —or even something familiar that is sitting differently this time—be sure to say this out loud. Share your process (e.g., "I hadn't thought of X before, so now I really want to think about how I do Y." or, "I appreciate hearing your story about X because it is so different from my experience. It makes me realize how much I don't know about this topic." or, "I would like to hear more of your stories, because I think that will help me serve my students better.")

- **Move from black/white to gray.** It is easy to slip into debate mode, into a conversation where we force complex ideas and experiences into categories of either/or and right/wrong. In difficult conversations, it is important to move away from this dynamic and to explore the complexities and subtleties of a situation, considering that multiple sides may be of value.

- **Move from I/You to "We."** Move the conversation from a difficult interaction between two or a few people to clarify what you are learning that is important for everyone involved in the process of school renewal (e.g., "I'm hearing that we are really concerned about the ways we connect with parents. If we're really serious about youth development, it seems like we might need to pay attention to this. Is this something we would like to ask the staff to talk about together?").

- **Have patience.** While conflict is necessary and healthy to our growth and development as a school community, the issues that come up are complex and not easily resolved. It is important to be committed to long-term struggles and to continuously hold and revisit the topic in order to reach long-term solutions. Even if a conversation doesn't go exactly as planned and perhaps turns into an argument instead of a healthy discussion, you may want to give it some space until you are both ready to come back to the discussion again. If a conversation becomes heated or personal and listening is no longer happening, you might also consider asking a third party to act as a neutral mediator or facilitator of the discussion.

SO, HOW DO WE START THESE CONVERSATIONS?

These conversations require courage and can be difficult to begin. Successful conversations tend to occur when we have taken a step back to pause and center ourselves so that we can engage from a neutral, non-judgmental, curious place, rather than a place of emotion. It helps tremendously to truly assume good intentions in the other person and to think about how to communicate concerns in a way that others can hear it. You can find templates and processes for preparing for difficult conversations in numerous books, such as educational coach Jennifer Abrams 2009 book Having Hard Conversations. We've slightly adapted Abrams' format for a difficult conversation as it relates to issues of youth development:

- **Set the tone:** Convey authentic respect for the other person, the sincere belief that the other person cares about and wants what is best for all students and may not be aware of how their behavior or actions may not be aligned with the school vision or what we know is most effective for students (e.g., "I know this is a challenging time, we are all under pressure and sometimes act from a place of frustration. I also can tell by the way you talk about your students in the lunch room that you really care about them and want them to be successful, so I'm sure you'd never want to do or say anything to them that might harm them.").

- **State the issue:** State the issue clearly, concisely and without judgment, using professional language and citing a specific school agreement, principle, etc. that has not been followed (e.g., "Your students need to be treated with respect and support, as we stated in our school values.").

- **Give specific examples:** Give one or two specific, vivid examples that illustrate the behavior of concern (e.g., "I overheard you yelling at several of your students when they did not know the answer to a question.")

- **Describe the impact of this behavior on others:** Assume that your colleague is not aware of the consequences or social implication of their behavior on others and share this information without judgment (e.g., "What I remember from the research article we read and the workshop we attended is that students tend to be motivated when it is safe to fail and they can learn from their mistakes. When you yelled at your students, they felt humiliated and like you were saying they were stupid. This can actually de-motivate students who may stop trying, if they believe they are not capable.").

- **Offer support and indicate a wish to dialogue:** Just as our students need support in changing their behavior, so do adults. Offer specific support you can offer to help your colleague and invite their thoughts/input (e.g., "I'm happy to talk through other strategies you could try, if that would be helpful to you. Does this make sense? What are your thoughts?").

You might practice in a safe place like with a trusted colleague or with your Learning Action Community (LAC). You could bring up a concern you had about something that was said by that colleague or in that group or you could practice how you might start a conversation with someone outside the group. Even if time has passed, you might still approach someone and ask them if you could talk to them about something the person said or did that you wanted to understand better. While challenging, this core issue lies at the heart of building a school community that models and collaboratively builds a supportive, nurturing environment for our young people.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **Peninsula Conflict Resolution Center**, http://www.pcrcweb.org/ provides resources and support on conflict resolution and prevention for youth and adults.

- **National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation**, at http://www.thataway.org, serves as a hub for dialogue (and deliberation) for facilitators, conveners, and trainers and houses thousands of resources on these communication methodologies.

- **6 Seconds: The Emotional Intelligence Network**, http://www.6seconds.org/ has numerous resources, readings, and tools regarding dialogue and collaboration for youth and adults and for creating positive change.

- *The Adaptive School: A Sourcebook for Developing Collaborative Groups* by Robert J. Garmston and Bruce M. Wellman is a very helpful guide for school change leaders and facilitators on developing collaborative norms, conducing productive conversations, using conflict as a resource and developing collaborative groups as part of school change efforts.

- *The Essential Conversation* by Sarah-Lawrence Lightfoot is a helpful resource on teacher/parent conversations.

- **Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning (YELL) Curriculum** http://jgc.stanford.edu/resources/yell_curriculum.html includes tools, protocols, and other resources for running effective meetings with youth.

WORK AREA 4

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON RUNNING EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

• *Making Meetings Work: How to Get Started, Get Going and Get it Done* by Ann M. Delehant.

• Chapter 5 "Conducting Successful Meetings" and Chapter 7 "Designing Time-Efficient and Effective Meetings" from *The Adaptive School: A Sourcebook for Developing Collaborative Groups* by Robert J. Garmston and Bruce M. Wellman

ADDENDUM FOR FACILITATORS OF PRODUCTIVE CONVERSATIONS

HOW DO WE CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT AND FACILITATE THESE KINDS OF CONVERSATIONS?

An environment of safety is necessary for having productive talks with both youth and adults that result in increased understanding. A safe environment is one in which all perspectives are truly heard and valued, participants feel they can take risks to be honest about issues pertaining directly to the school's shared vision, and the goal is a common understanding that gets us closer to that vision.

Facilitation (whether done by a formal facilitator, a team leader, or even a team member) can help create a safe environment for these kinds of conversations. The following are techniques that can help to maintain a safe environment for productive conversations:

• **Listen to all voices.** All group members need to feel heard, so providing space for everyone to give input, provide their view point, and feel heard is important. Facilitators can slow down a conversation and help participants to hear each other by paraphrasing what they heard, charting what participants contribute, or noticing when someone might look puzzled, upset, or isn't contributing and asking for their perspective. Acknowledging feelings can also help a member feel heard. For example, you might say, "I'm hearing that you are frustrated with this change, because you feel that you will have to give something else up to accommodate it. Is that right?"

• **Ask the group.** When a group member gives a perspective that differs from the current direction of the group, after providing space for that idea to be heard and paraphrasing what you heard, ask the rest of the group to share their feelings on that new idea. Do others agree? Have others had the same experience? What new assumptions have been introduced? What evidence would help us test those assumptions? How does the group want to proceed with that new perspective? This allows space for others who share this sentiment to be heard, or for the person who raised the issue to hear a different viewpoint held by others. It also reinforces group decision-making.

• **Seek win-wins.** If space is kept open for members to collectively and collaboratively decide new strategies, even seemingly contradictory viewpoints can find common ground. Facilitators can reframe different viewpoints to help move toward consensus. For example, "I heard some people say that grouping students by lower achieving versus high achieving can facilitate teachers' ability to directly address and teach to students' needs. But I also heard some of you say that we have to pay attention to the perils of 'tracking' and that all students need to receive equally rigorous instruction. Are these two points mutually exclusive, or can we work to find a way to address both these needs and realities?" Once again, this could keep the focus on unity and collective decisions, as opposed to debate and mutually exclusive ideas.

• **Check in on how change is affecting group members.** Even if the conversation is about a decision that participants cannot change, it can help members to accept the change if they feel heard and supported. Be clear about where the decision came from, how and why it was made and what aspects of implementation of the decision participants do have input into. Ask participants about the benefits they see from the change as well as the concerns they have, and ask them if there is additional information, support or resources that they need to help implement the decision. The goal of listening is to help group members come to common understanding, not necessarily common agreement.

• **Continue the conversation.** Because these ideas are complex, resolution is not likely to be reached in a single conversation. As facilitators, you will likely need to end a conversation before resolution. It can be helpful to point out the importance of starting the conversation and beginning to share ideas but that because of the complexity of the issue you need to bring the conversation to a close. However, it is important to let participants know that you will help them revisit the issue again in future to continue the conversation.

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Kennedy's Process

Every school change process will be tailored to your unique context. This Appendix describes Kennedy's process as one example that might inform your own.

Kennedy's Process

A FLEXIBLE, CROSS-FUNCTIONAL TEAM

The composition of Kennedy's team changed year to year, but always included teachers, administrators, community school, and after-school staff. It was also helpful to have an external partner who was not completely embedded in the school to help provide perspective, outside ideas, and to help sustain movement toward the vision. For other schools, this external role could be played by a partner school, a thoughtful community partner or skilled coach.

PHASE I: VISIONING

Our process can be described in two phases spanning two academic years 2007-2009. In the first year, we held a series of six meetings with a team of teachers, after-school staff, the Family Engagement Specialist, and the Principal and Community School Coordinator (Table 1). Participants all volunteered to participate and teachers received stipends for the meetings they attended outside of regular school hours. To recruit teachers this first year, the Community School Coordinator presented the opportunity at a staff meeting and followed up with those who expressed interest.

The first-year meetings were focused on increasing understanding of youth development and envisioning an integrated youth development approach across the school day. In addition, we held a separate series of meetings with youth and parents to gain perspective from all school members on envisioning a school that teaches the whole child. During this first year, participants were not expected to implement any strategies and there was no commitment required beyond the first year of meetings. We found that participants were eager to get to action this first year, so other schools might consider moving to implementation earlier.

Table 1 Kennedy meetings held during year 1 (2007-2008)

Participants	Fall (Sep-Nov)	Winter (Dec-Feb)	Spring (Mar-May)
Staff	• 2-hour dinner visioning meeting/ introduction to youth development	• Full day professional development (PD)/visioning on supportive relationships • 3.5-hour dinner visioning meeting • 4-hour dinner PD on supporting youth autonomy and visioning meeting (with youth and parent reps)	• 2-hour after-school implementation planning meeting • 3.5-hour dinner meeting summarizing youth development lessons and identifying focus areas for year 2 • Recruit teachers for year 2
Parents		• 2.5-hour dinner focus group with parents • Participation in dinner on supporting youth autonomy (with staff and youth)	
Youth	• 2-hour after-school visioning meeting	• Three 2-hour after-school visioning meetings • Participation in dinner on supporting youth autonomy (with staff and parents)	

PHASE II: IMPLEMENTING

At the end of this first year, Kennedy Middle School moved into the implementation phase. First year teacher participants recruited 12 teachers to participate and the after-school director recruited two full-time after-school teaching fellows to join the after-school director, all three administrators, the Community School Coordinator, Youth Development Coordinator, and the school counselor in developing an implementation process.

The 21 participants formed five inquiry-driven small groups focused on areas identified during the visioning year: motivation, engagement, respect, relationships, and equity. These groups formed over the summer and met monthly (Table 2). Two groups focused on classroom or after-school strategies to improve motivation. Two focused on whole-school practices and policies to improve school member engagement and respect. One group served as an over-arching body that worked on governance issues, communication structures, and an overall systemic plan for taking a whole-school youth development approach in 2009-2010. These inquiry groups were facilitated by community partners and district personnel during the first half of the year. During the second half of the year, participants volunteered to facilitate with support from the original facilitators. Both years we worked with outside experts to provide supplementary professional development workshops on supportive relationships, motivation, community building, and facilitation of inquiry-driven groups.

Inquiry groups require a significant time commitment and may not be the right solution for every school. While we were only able to meet monthly for an hour, this was often felt to be insufficient, and the time between meetings made it difficult to maintain momentum. While inquiry groups were a core part of the process Kennedy chose, it's important to find a process that fits with your existing structures and constraints.

Table 2 Kennedy meetings held during year 2 (2008-2009)

Summer (Jun-Aug)	Fall (Sep-Nov)	Winter (Dec-Feb)	Spring (Mar-Jun)
• 2-day PD on inquiry-driven groups (form groups and questions) • 1-day small group agreement forming, data planning and PD on supportive relationships	• 1-hour monthly inquiry group meetings/ facilitator debriefs	• 1-hour monthly inquiry group meetings/ facilitator debriefs • ½-day PD on motivation and first group share-out	• Monthly inquiry group meetings/ facilitator debriefs • ½-day PD on Community, Diversity and Conflict and year 3 planning meeting • 1-hour before school, year 3 planning meeting • 1- hour staff meeting: visioning a caring community • 1- hour staff meeting group share-outs

APPENDIX A

THE WORK CONTINUES

At the time of publication, we are mid-way through the third year of this effort. Kennedy is involving all teachers, all administrators, the Community School Coordinator, three after-school staff and several specialists (Resource Specialists, English Language Development specialists, school counselor, etc.) in inquiry-driven groups focused on a shared vision of creating a supportive and caring community in which all students are motivated to learn. They have formed seven small groups focused on:

- Student voice

- Caring student-teacher relationships

- Mutual respect

- Creating a supportive classroom community (student-student relationships)

- Family engagement

- Motivation in the classroom (growth mindset techniques)

- School-wide sense of care (relationships between staff and all school members)

In addition, the leadership team (composed of all three administrators, the Community School Coordinator and After-School Director) has formed their own small group focused on creating, communicating, measuring and celebrating the school vision. This group also resolves issues that arise through the other small groups, provides support to these groups and connects lessons learned across the school.

Volunteer teachers and after-school staff are facilitating these groups. These facilitators were recruited by leadership team members and receive stipends for their summer facilitation training and monthly debriefs. These small groups are scheduled to meet monthly for one hour and will also meet as a whole staff for two share-outs during the year to share their updates and lessons learned. In addition, facilitators and the leadership team participated in a two-day facilitation training during the summer and in 1-hour monthly debriefs following the small group meetings (Table 3).

Table 3 Kennedy meetings held during year 3 (2009-2010 in progress)

Summer (Jun-Aug)	Fall (Sep-Nov)	Winter (Dec-Feb)	Spring (Mar-Jun)
• ½- day small group planning meeting • 1-day Leadership Team Retreat • 2-day small group Facilitation Training	• 1-day staff retreat: form inquiry groups/ questions • Monthly inquiry group meetings/facilitator debriefs	• Monthly inquiry group meetings/facilitator debriefs • 1-hour staff meeting group share-out	• Monthly inquiry meetings/ facilitator debriefs • 1-hour staff meeting group share-out

In addition, Kennedy continues to work on several other initiatives including on-going equity professional development and a much stronger emphasis on instruction.

Throughout this process, Kennedy staff members have found it helpful to be reminded that challenges and set-backs are normal in school change efforts and thus require patience and persistence. It was also helpful to constantly recognize their efforts and celebrate their small wins toward achieving their vision.