

Figure C4.1 Islands Activity Guide

A Narrative for the “Good Intentions Aren’t Enough” Case

TEAM GOAL: To develop an Algebra II curriculum that is aligned throughout the department. It must be differentiated, address students’ needs, and raise the achievement level of all students in heterogeneous classrooms.

ACTIVITY: Identify individual Islands of Strength that could, if appropriate bridges were built, support the goal of an aligned curriculum.

ACTIVITY GOAL/OUTCOME: While individual teams are stronger or weaker than others, all teams have inherent strengths (Islands of Strength) that could help them achieve identified team goals.

Engaging in this activity can help you and your team build self-awareness in order to uncover *your* team’s strengths that will allow the formation of an action plan similar to the one that could have helped the team in Case 4.

1. The Islands

Each person on this team is an island—an Island of Strength. The islands are surrounded by rough water with few bridges between them. Most of the islands are disconnected from one another, as far as their strengths are concerned, but some bridges are in place.

Lisa: An 8-year veteran teacher who develops rigorous curriculum for all students

Strengths: Has created a rigorous, innovative curriculum; has also developed new lessons

Liliana: A new, young teacher who has tried lessons from Lisa’s curriculum

Strengths: Is enthusiastic, energetic, and willing to try new things; has enjoyed success trying new curriculum

Meryl and Shirley: A long-functioning, well-respected duo who work collaboratively with their lessons aligned

Strengths: Expert teachers familiar with existing curriculum; are using an aligned curriculum; have already written a curriculum that other teachers find acceptable

Meryl: Very supportive of Lisa; wants to add several of Lisa’s projects throughout the year so that all the teachers can do them

Shirley: Wants to give all students a solid background in algebra, raise scores for SATs

Frank: A 15-year veteran who likes Meryl’s idea for trying several of Lisa’s ideas; wants to build in real-world applications

Strengths: Good content knowledge, highly qualified; will do whatever the group decides

Alfonso: The long-time math department chair

Strengths: Respects the collaboration of Meryl and Shirley as well as the creative, rigorous work of Lisa

2. Team Strengths

In addition to individual Islands of Strength, some strengths are shared; they’re owned by the team as a whole.

- Three teachers have written curricula acceptable to all members.
- One teacher has extended the existing curriculum with new lessons and specific projects.
- All teachers have content knowledge.
- The team has a significant number of combined years of teacher experience.
- The teachers are willing to work together.
- The team has a novice teacher who is enthusiastic.

3. Existing Bridges

Lisa to Liliana: A mentor-mentee relationship with mutual respect and Liliana’s willingness to try Lisa’s curriculum.

Lisa to Meryl: Meryl wants to add several of Lisa’s projects throughout the year to benefit all the students and teachers.

Lisa to Meryl and Shirley: Shirley is willing to follow Meryl’s lead in adopting Lisa’s initiatives.

Using data from the case, do you see where the team could have used opportunities to build other bridges?