

SREB

Developing Effective Interdisciplinary Focus Teams

Focus Teams Guide

Southern
Regional
Education
Board

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Using Focus Teams for Improvement

SREB’s Making Schools Work school improvement initiative¹ is based on the simple belief that most students can achieve academically through effort and hard work. Making Schools Work is an effort-based model founded on the belief that most students can master rigorous academic and career and technical education studies if schools create an environment that motivates them to make the effort to succeed. Making Schools Work believes that students are motivated to achieve at high levels when:

- Students not only have the opportunity to learn a **rigorous academic core** combined with a challenging, personalized pathway of academic or CTE courses, but their teachers also use engaging instructional strategies that help students see the relevance of what they have been asked to learn.
- Students enjoy supportive relationships with caring adults that focus on their unique social and emotional needs. These relationships involve teachers, parents and students working together to ensure that students set goals and take the right courses to prepare them for the next step. These relationships also involve providing students with the necessary supports to meet challenging course standards and make successful transitions from the elementary grades to the middle grades, from the middle grades to high school, and from high school to postsecondary studies and careers.

Making Schools Work encourages students to take active ownership of their learning and use their voice and choice to help create a learning environment in which each student recognizes that school matters to their future.

School leaders who have used the Making Schools Work design to improve student achievement credit the use of **teacher-led focus teams** that involve teachers and school and district leaders in working together to ensure that key school and classroom practices form the foundation for school improvement.

Making Schools Work defines a *focus team* as a group of individuals with different responsibilities and interests who share a common purpose — to make school engaging, relevant and relatable for all students. Each team focuses on a particular aspect of school improvement or a specific problem of practice and leads actions to address those specific needs or problems. Making Schools Work has found at least eight essential conditions for creating effective focus teams.

1 As a truly K-12 initiative, Making Schools Work encompasses the original High Schools That Work model and has been broadened in scope to address needed changes in the middle grades (Making Middle Grades Work), career and technology centers (Technology Centers That Work) and the new Making Schools Work framework for the elementary grades. Each framework has a unique set of key school and classroom practices that provide a vision for changes that focus teams may implement.

Essential Conditions for Effective Focus Teams

- 1. Shared Goal** — Focus team members enjoy a shared sense of agency or ownership, have a common goal and know what that goal is: improved student achievement. The goal is clearly stated and regularly addressed.
- 2. Interdependence** — What each focus team member does affects the others, and what the team does affects each member. Team members rely on each others' knowledge, expertise, actions and resources. A sense of trust, equity and inclusion are present. Four formal leadership positions exist within each focus team: leader, facilitator (co-leader), recorder and timekeeper.
- 3. Norms for Interactions and Processes** — Norms govern communication, conflict resolution, punctuality, leadership styles and accountability and also help ensure equity. Generally, norms develop over time as members establish their positions in the group and as trust develops. Focus team leaders suggest that norms be intentionally set so that each member of the team is clear about expectations and work.
- 4. Variety of Skills and Perspectives** — The best focus teams are interdisciplinary and inclusive. They are made up of individuals representing a variety of experiences and responsibilities and represent various academic and CTE teachers, including teachers of fine arts, foreign languages and physical education. In addition, teams may include administrators, counselors, community leaders, postsecondary representatives, parents and students. Members contribute information, advice and ideas based on their unique experiences and professional training.
- 5. Parity of Members** — Interdisciplinary focus teams give equal value and power to fellow team members. The team leader works for the group, is part of the group and keeps the team on course toward its goal. The leader is accessible and helps provide for the social and emotional needs of the team.
- 6. Awareness of Membership** — Each focus team member knows that he or she is part of the team; all team members perceive each other as part of the team.
- 7. Time to Meet** — Opportunities for professional collaboration are typically few at any grade level. But a focus team structure establishes a period of quality time for the thoughtful exchange of ideas necessary to create and implement substantive changes.
- 8. A Sense of Transition From One Level to the Next** — Because focus teams often have to work across school lines, it is critical to define a functional mission to prepare students for making a successful transition to the next level of education and a career.

Encouraging Acceptance, Ownership and Achievement

Teamwork Generates Acceptance

When people are involved from the beginning in the change process, they have a deeper understanding of what needs to change and why, and how change can best be accomplished. Focus team members examine data, identify challenges, come to a consensus on the need to change and recommend actions. By participating in decision-making, they come to an acceptance of change firsthand rather than having it imposed on them.

- A focus team structure builds consensus for change.
- People feel empowered to act.
- Members understand and can communicate the reason for the change.
- A focus team structure provides the focus on what is best for students.

Teamwork Creates Ownership

Ownership follows acceptance. Within a focus team structure, more people have a voice in plans for improvement and a stake in the outcome. When teams are empowered, members feel more in control; they own the improvement effort. From ownership comes commitment and meaningful personal involvement.

- A focus team structure provides a way to involve more people.
- People buy in to the change process when they are involved.
- People are committed to making the changes work.

Teamwork Improves Communication

Focus teams expand the lines of communication. By having multiple people involved in researching and developing plans, new lines of communication become prominent and all-encompassing.

- A focus team structure takes advantage of interpersonal relationships to expand communication.
- Focus teams continue to use a formal structure of agenda and minutes as internal and external communication tools.
- Focus team members conduct research that includes active communications with other teachers and leaders to garner ideas.

Why focus teams?

Studies in psychology have taught us our thoughts determine our beliefs; our beliefs determine our actions and our actions determine our future. To change an individual, you must address the thoughts they think. From an organizational perspective Peter Senge, in his book *The Fifth Discipline*, points out that to “change an organization for the better, you must give people the opportunity to change the way they think and interact.”

Focus teams, as described in this document, give people the opportunity to “think and interact” in a structured approach to addressing problems of practice that exist. The process changes the culture on a campus or in a district from “they need to solve this” to “we can solve this.”

Creating Effective Focus Teams

An effective focus team attains its goals and produces high-quality products (e.g., action plan, policy statement, a program of study catalog). When school and teacher-leaders are asked what makes a team effective, the most common responses include the following:

A Thorough Orientation to the focus team process is essential. Orientation includes establishing meeting procedures, gaining consensus and following timelines.

Clear Goals are critical and must be in writing. All focus team members understand the specific goals and duties of the team. They mark progress toward their goals and revise actions when necessary to meet them.

Clear Roles for team members are necessary. Members of effective focus teams know their roles and the roles of other team members. Roles may shift as focus teams engage in different activities and as teams mature.

A Team Culture evolves. Members see themselves as a team. One site coordinator said, “Our team members leave their differences at the door.” But what does “team culture” mean?

- Members feel a sense of trust and security. They admit freely to needing more information or making a mistake.
- Members respect each other’s opinions.
- Team members boost each other’s morale.

Team Accountability means that focus teams show proof of their actions.

- Members document their efforts, maintain meeting minutes and submit documentation to their team leader or an administrator.
- Members check in with a partner between meetings to track their progress toward the completion of tasks.
- Members report on their actions to the rest of the team via email days before the next meeting.

Diverse Membership results in a range of talent and experiences and provides the potential for equity, creativity and quality. Members spend time explaining, questioning and learning to understand unfamiliar approaches and ideas. There is a balance of:

- *Positives and negatives* — One site coordinator suggested, “have two positive team members for every negative one. That way you involve those who may not support a new program with those who are most enthusiastic.”
- *Academic and CTE teachers* — Put both on every focus team. Avoid the “we and they” trap.
- *School and business community* — Leaders from several sites were adamant that business, industry and community leaders be involved in meaningful ways from the very beginning.

Clear Communication among focus team members and between the team and other constituents is perhaps the easiest thing not to do well. Simply put, effective teams engage in the right kind of communication at the right time.

- Memos, texts or emails remind members of meeting times; team members acknowledge receipt of communications.
- Face-to-face interactions without distractions or conflicting messages promote clear communication.
- Communication is both formal and informal, depending on the situation.
- Members listen to each other and ask for clarification when needed.

- Members think about their patterns of communication and change patterns that inhibit clear communication. Asking these questions can address:
 - What “noise” do we have in our meetings? How can we reduce or eliminate it?
 - What non-verbal cues do we send when others are speaking? Do we provide appropriate feedback to the speaker?
 - Are we sending conflicting messages at the same time?
 - When we use email or other forms of messaging, do we later find our messages were not received?
 - In a group, do all members feel comfortable expressing the need for clarification?

Active Administrative Support means advocacy for school improvement. Administrators reward the focus team approach, act as cheerleaders for team actions and recognize the accomplishments of teams. Administrators form teams by asking these questions:

- Will teachers choose the focus team on which they serve?
- Will individuals be assigned to teams based on their known talents?
- How can regular times be set up throughout the year for teams to meet?
- How can administrators provide time for teams to meet? If teams are not set up based on common planning periods, administrators allow release time, provide substitutes, allocate teacher workdays for team meetings and/or adjust the school calendar to create non-classroom time for teachers. Administrators hold teams accountable for meeting regularly and reporting their progress to the leadership team and district leaders. The principal may serve on a focus team, but he or she does not need to serve on each of the school’s teams.

A Commitment and Permission to Act enables focus teams to meet and move forward with their actions.

- During meetings, focus team members spend time brainstorming, discussing issues, problem-solving and making decisions.
- Between meetings, individuals complete tasks and share information, electronically if possible, so that valuable meeting time is not spent listening to reports.
- Action plans, timelines and deadlines for interim steps are ways to track team actions and evaluate progress.

Good Team Leadership incorporates strong skills for:

- summarizing opinions or ideas expressed at meetings
- facilitating equal participation in discussions
- acknowledging the value of members’ contributions
- sharing leadership when appropriate

Time for Reflection, Improvement and Attention to Group Processes helps the focus team consciously decide if it needs to change any aspects of its working relationships. The team pays attention to:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ● membership (e.g., orientation, change, participation, diversity) | ● brainstorming and contributing ideas |
| ● decision-making | ● shared leadership |
| ● performance and progress evaluation | ● creating and implementing action plans |
| ● communication methods and styles | ● accountability measures |
| ● meeting logistics (e.g., time, place, duration) | |

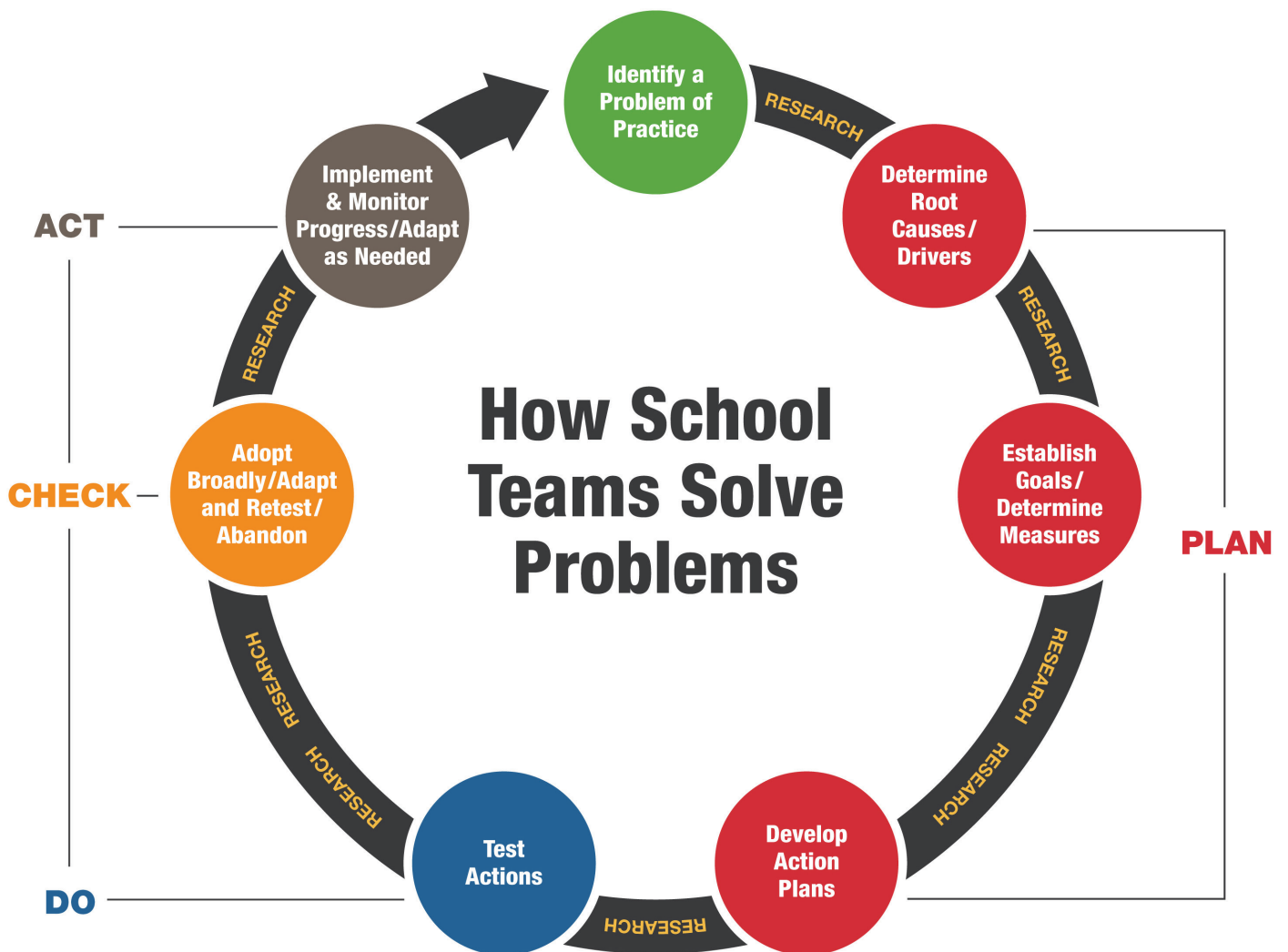
Focus Team Charge

Focus teams follow a structured process for addressing their problems of practice. The Making Schools Work Problem-Solving Process serves as the guide for each step of the focus team’s work. Teams work together, with the help of leadership, to clearly define the problem of practice that will be the focus of the work.

After this problem of practice is clearly defined, a root cause analysis process guides the focus team to deeply understand the root causes of the problem. Team members are led to discover the most influential causes of the problem and begin a research phase in which they learn best practices associated with addressing root causes. Members make phone calls, do internet searches, read reviews of research in professional journals and conduct surveys or interviews to learn as much as they can about how to effectively address the issue.

The focus team should then set goals that clearly define what outcomes are desired, select appropriate strategies gleaned from the research phase and develop a formal recommendation that will be presented to the leadership team for approval. All plans should be based upon researched best practices and not implemented until formal approvals have been made.

Making Schools Work Problem Solving Process



Based on the work of J. Edwards Deming, the Making School Work Problem-Solving Process provides a structure for focus teams to use as they develop plans to address problems. Each step has independent benchmarks but are all connected by the teams conducting research to identify actions and to modify plans. Steps include:

Planning Phase

- 1. Identify the Problem of Practice** — This initial step seems obvious but is often overlooked. Focus teams should clearly define the problem they will address. The more succinctly this occurs, the more smoothly the following steps take place.
- 2. Determine Root Causes/Drivers of the Problem** — The most often skipped step, this work is vital to developing a quality action plan. Too often focus teams jump to actions and fail to address the true root causes. Focus teams use multiple root cause analysis tools or driver diagrams to guide the work in this phase.
- 3. Establish Goals and Determine Measures** — Once the problem and root causes are identified, the focus team should identify clear goals for their work. Teams may use SMART Goals or other templates for this aspect of the work. It is critical to identify both process (implementation) and achievement (product) goals and the metrics accomplishing them. Team members will also begin their research during this step, to ensure they understand best practices, learn what works and discover the best possible solutions to address the causes of the identified problem.
- 4. Develop an Action Plan** — This step may require multiple iterations as the team develops clear plans for implementation. Plans should include professional learning, implementation steps and clear guidelines for implementation.

Do Phase

- 5. Test Actions** — This step (and the next) were not a part of earlier versions of the Making Schools Work Problem-Solving Process. The Test step is exactly as named. The focus team, if needed, tests the plan and its actions on a small scale. It may be one department, a subset of teachers, a grade-level team or other small group that agrees to test the plan. In doing so, they agree to collect data on the success of the plan's implementation and outcomes. The test phase may vary greatly in length depending on the complexity of the Action Plan.

Check Phase

- 6. Adopt, Adapt or Abandon** — This step uses the results of the Test Actions step to make decisions. Should the plan be adopted broadly? Should the focus team adapt the plan based upon results of the test, or should the plan be abandoned and a new plan developed? These are the questions the team must address. If adopted or adapted, this step also includes developing the rollout of the entire plan.

Act Phase

- 7. Implement and Monitor and/or Adapt the Plan** — This final step involves both implementing and monitoring. Too often the launch of a plan or initiative is considered a success. For the problem-solving process to be successful, monitoring of both implementation and outcomes is critical. Focus teams use the goals and metrics established in step four to monitor progress.

Although each step above is listed independently, the process often has multiple elements taking place at the same time.

Learn more. SREB's School Improvement staff have deep experience as school, district and state education leaders and can assist focus teams as they progress through this problem-solving process. For information, contact msw@sreb.org or 404-879-5613.

Focus Team Resources

Focus Team Roles and Responsibilities

(Focus Team Name)

Each focus team should have an effective team leader, facilitator, recorder and timekeeper.

The team leader plans, informs, directs, supports and evaluates the team’s progress toward its goal(s). To be effective, a leader must first know what the goal is and communicate it to others. Effective leaders are stewards, motivators and recruiters. Team leaders, with input from the group, set the agenda for each meeting.

Simply put, the team leader is the “keeper of the vision” who plans, informs, directs, supports and evaluates the progress of the team’s mission and establishes and articulates the purpose of the meetings.

Our team leader is _____

The facilitator keeps the discussion focused and moving along, intervenes if a discussion fragments, prevents anyone from being dominant or passive, and brings discussions to a close at the end of the allotted time. See “Questions a facilitator can ask.” The facilitator acts as the co-leader and is available to lead meetings when the leader is not available.

Our facilitator is _____

The recorder writes minutes of each meeting and provides enough detail so that those not present know what took place regarding the work. Minutes record decisions reached, tasks assigned, deadlines for task completion and names of individuals assigned to tasks. The recorder distributes minutes to all focus team members and anyone else tracking progress. Minutes should be maintained and housed in an accessible online document available for others to see.

The recorder may also handle technical aspects of meetings, such as sharing screens if the meeting is virtual.

Our recorder is _____

The timekeeper keeps track of the allotted time on the agenda and makes sure the group begins and ends on time.

Our timekeeper is _____

Focus teams may identify additional, informal roles for team members.

Roles often overlap, and most focus team members assume more than one role. Some informal roles include:

Initiator: An individual who brings new ideas to the table, suggests activities and takes initiative. This person can clarify, define and state issues in ways that challenge and spark discussions with other focus team members.

Fact Seeker: An individual who wants the facts, is realistic and separates fact from opinion.

Challenger:* An individual who candidly shares views about the focus team's work even when views are contrary to the majority. This person asks "why?" and "how?" He or she pushes the team to set high ethical standards for work and to take well-conceived risks.

Communicator:* An individual who listens to all viewpoints, recognizes and praises others, summarizes discussions, proposes a possible consensus, introduces humor and helps members become familiar with each other. This person realizes that progress depends on differences of opinion and tries to have all sides heard. He or she steps in to reduce tension and resolve conflict.

Collaborator:* An individual who helps the team establish long-term goals, clarify interim objectives and establish milestones. This person ties the team's work into the overall work of the school. He or she offers assistance to others and discourages negative remarks about others.

Contributor:* An individual who freely shares relevant information and opinions with others and who makes clear, concise and useful presentations. This person completes all tasks assigned and serves as a mentor for new members. He or she pushes the team to set high standards and achieve top-level results.

* Adapted from Parker, G. M. (1996). *Team Players and Team Work: The New Competitive Business Strategy*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Addressing Ineffective Team Behaviors

Some behaviors and actions diminish the effectiveness of the focus team. Leaders or other members of effective teams do not tolerate these behaviors and seek interventions that actively create a positive team culture.

INEFFECTIVE BEHAVIORS	INTERVENTIONS
Joking, making wisecracks, showing disinterest, preventing work from being accomplished	Target individuals' areas of interest and solicit their personal experiences
Acting aggressively, ridiculing, questioning or attacking other team members	Call out and reprimand acts of aggression and recognize only legitimate objections
Monopolizing discussions and excluding others	Recognize this person's contribution; make the point that others also have valuable opinions.
Seeking undue recognition, demanding special attention and showing unwillingness to accept responsibility	Ask individuals to summarize all points, thank them for their help and actively solicit other opinions
Expressing negativity, pessimism or a bad attitude without legitimate cause or not understanding the issues at hand	Ask negative individuals to write down their reasons for objection for discussion after the meeting and solicit others to help them understand issues
Digressing from the topic or making irrelevant comments	Redirect conversation to the issue at hand so the team can accomplish its immediate goal, while thanking the team member and tabling the digression to a later time
Holding side conversations, whispering with neighbors, creating confusion and discomfort	Call out and actively invite non-contributing team members to share their thoughts with the team
Not contributing even though they usually have good thoughts, only voicing ideas after meetings	Call on quiet team members with direct questions you are sure they can answer or ask them for agreement on the discussion

Questions a Focus Team Facilitator Can Ask to Improve Discussions

To open discussion:

- Could we clarify this topic?
- What do you think the general idea or problem is?
- Would anyone care to offer suggestions on facts we need to better understand the problem or topic?

To broaden participation:

- Now that we have heard from a number of our members, would others who have not spoken like to add their ideas?
- How do the ideas presented so far sound to those of you who have been thinking about them?

To limit participation:

- We appreciate your contributions. Would some of you who have not spoken care to add your ideas to those already expressed.
- You have made several good statements, and I am wondering if someone else might like to make some remarks?

To focus the discussion:

- Where are we now in relation to our goal?
- Would you like for me to review our discussion to this point?
- Your comment is interesting. However, I wonder if it is on target for this problem.

To help the group move along:

- I wonder if we have spent enough time on this phase of the problem. Should we move to another aspect?
- Have we gone far enough? Should we shift our attention and consider other areas?
- Given the question before us, should we consider the next question?

To help reach a decision:

- Am I right in sensing agreement on this point?
- Since we tend to be moving in the direction of a decision, should we consider what this will mean if we decide the matter in this way?
- What have we accomplished in our discussion up to this point?

Addressing Common Challenges of Focus Teams' Work

CHALLENGE	POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS
<p>“We have no time to meet.”</p>	<p>Examine the content of faculty meetings. If much of it is informational, communicate it in a weekly memo or email. Save meeting time for teamwork.</p> <p>Have mini faculty meetings during planning periods and leave time for focus team meetings during the regularly scheduled faculty meeting time.</p> <p>Eliminate duplication of effort. Only one group or person should be responsible for a task.</p> <p>Make use of volunteers. Parents are more likely to help if opportunities are specified, tasks have a beginning and end, and parents know they can do the work from home or in the evenings. Make sure parents are trained to do the work and feel confident they can succeed.</p> <p>Get administrative support in arranging planning periods, workdays, retreats, substitutes and/or release time. Administrators should sanction the time found for focus team meetings and protect the time from interference.</p>
<p>“We seem to disagree on how to do things so nothing ever gets done.”</p>	<p>Realize that conflict can be a source of creativity; allow and acknowledge it.</p> <p>Cognitive conflict often promotes debate on the merits of alternatives and leads to better decisions.</p> <p>Accommodation may be appropriate if it is important to show goodwill and if the issue is much more important to the other individual.</p> <p>Controlling to resolve conflict may be useful when issues of basic rights or safety are at hand but it is usually detrimental to the future functioning of the focus team.</p> <p>Avoiding conflict is appropriate if the issue is trivial and will distract attention from more important issues, if confronting the issue has high potential for damage or if it is necessary to temporarily evade the problem while individuals gain composure or gather more information.</p>

Addressing Common Challenges of Focus Teams' Work (Continued)

CHALLENGE	POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS
<p>“We seem to disagree on how to do things so nothing ever gets done.”</p>	<p>Compromise can be useful for managing conflict when the goals of both individuals are not critically important or when confrontation would result in mutually destructive arguments. Compromise can be used effectively for temporary agreements or when agreement is driven by time constraints.</p> <p>Collaboration to resolve conflict is used when both individuals' concerns are too important to be compromised. It also allows the parties to merge perspectives, work through negative emotions and come to an understanding of others' views.</p>
<p>“Our team makes plans that are shot down by the administration.”</p>	<p>Have an administrator explain school policies or laws that may prohibit proposed actions.</p>
<p>“We talk a lot but don't get anything done.”</p>	<p>Establish firm deadlines for the completion of action plans.</p> <p>Provide examples of quality action plans so the focus team knows what they are to do.</p>
<p>“Everyone is on so many teams.”</p>	<p>Before creating any new focus teams, look at what is already in place. Use the same committees you have to assume the charges of the school focus teams or eliminate some committees.</p>

Meeting Norms

Note: The following norms are only suggestions. Focus teams should establish and adopt their own set of norms. They should be specific to the group and supportive of the team's mission.

1. Everyone is equal in discussions.
2. Decisions reached are by group consensus.
3. Maintain focus and pace (e.g., no sidebars, cell phones, etc.).
4. Produce the work together and share in team successes.
5. Everyone thinks strategically.
6. Everyone engages in constructive disagreement.
7. School Improvement Teams, Principals, Superintendents or the School Board make the final decisions.
8. Support the team, school and district decisions.

Effective, Time-Efficient 30-Minute Meetings*

Before the Meeting

Agenda: Focus team members should arrive at the meeting prepared to discuss and refine the goal-focused strategies or actions the team has identified or identify new areas of concern. The meeting consists of brainstorming to address such issues. A sample agenda outline is included.

Tools: An appropriate room should be designated with a chalkboard, a flip chart and/or a computer to record brainstorming ideas. Ensure that all participants bring reports of achievement and progress. Continue to use data.

Roles: Appoint a leader/coach, facilitator, recorder and timekeeper. These positions can be assumed on a rotating basis.

During the Meeting

The focus team leader should establish and articulate the purpose of the meeting. What are the desired outcomes? The general purpose for these meetings is to identify major concerns and strategies to promote better results for an agreed-upon goal. All participants should stay focused on the following:

- What strategy are we currently working on? Is it working? How well?
- What successes or frustrations are we experiencing?
- What are assessments and data telling us?
- How can we refine the strategy to promote better results?
- If satisfied with progress in an area, what is the next most urgent area of weakness to identify and discuss?

End of the Meeting

Everyone should leave the meeting knowing:

- the team's common focus
- the designated strategies selected to address the area of opportunity or weakness
- the task to implement before the next meeting

Next Meeting

Dates, times and locations should be established.

After the Meeting

The focus team leader distributes a memo documenting the team's focus before the next meeting.

Summary

Meetings enable every team member to share and understand the team's goal and strategic focus, take advantage of each member's expertise, and quickly and efficiently take steps to meet the team's shared goal and focus.

* Adapted from Schmoker, M. (1999). *Results: The Key to Continuous School Improvement* (Second Edition). Arlington, VA: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development.

Meeting Tips

The Three Most Common Complaints About Meetings:

- The meeting continues even though it is no longer necessary.
- No decisions are reached at the meeting.
- The meeting ends late.

Basic Conditions for Effective Meetings:

- an accessible meeting room
- ample, comfortable seating
- table space for all
- refreshments, if the focus team determines they would be desirable
- a sign on the door saying, "Important meeting in progress"
- sufficient copies of any printed materials for each focus team member and guest

12 Key Points for Better Meetings:

1. Have an agenda focused on your mission.
2. Limit discussion time on each subject.
3. Train team members.
4. Don't feel you have to cover every issue at one meeting.
5. Postpone unplanned topics until another time.
6. Have a master calendar of meetings.
7. Make sure action and team members are assigned to each issue. Include timelines for completion and a method to determine effectiveness.
8. Clearly identify followup items in a post-meeting memo that describes who is to do what, when, where, how and with whom.
9. Use followup phone calls or memos to determine if help is needed for the completion of any project.
10. Have a backup plan.
11. If unclear, don't hesitate to send a recommendation back to committee.
12. Keep minutes. Administration should request and review these meetings. Post minutes in lounges, workrooms or on the website and/or email them to staff.

Focus Team Agenda – Initial Meeting Items

School _____

Focus Team Meeting _____

- **Why are we here?** *Example:* To develop expertise in work-based learning and senior projects as they pertain to transitioning from a traditional school setting to a small learning community setting.
- **Our purpose and focus.** *Example:* Ultimately, we will compare our current practices related to work-based learning and what the literature describes as best practice in a small learning community environment. Then we will decide what changes should be made to best support this small learning community environment at our school and the success of our students.
- **The Process and Timeline.** *Example:* The principal would like to have recommendations by the end of April. Explain that the focus team’s recommendations will be made to the leadership team and that the chair, along with other focus team chairs, will become a part of the leadership team to discuss and determine what recommendations are approved and acted on.

Focus Team Meeting Agenda and Minutes Form _____

Subject		Date	
Facilitator		Time	
Location		Scribe	
Attendees			
Next Meeting			

Agenda

Item #	Time	Topic	Discussion Leader	Desired Outcome
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				

Action Minutes

Item #		Person(s) Responsible	Date Due
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			

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School
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JULY 2021