Problem Solving - Part 1:
Coaching Teams for Effective Data Use & Planning

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Three Things to Remember from this...

- Effectiveness of problem-solving is dependent on team constructs and communication patterns.
- Teams are not “bad” or “scary” - but some are more functional than others for efficient/effective data use.
- Effective teams depend on a culture of data value and openness to change.

Team-based, Data-driven, Collaboration...

Characteristics of Effective teams

- Effective Teaming Practices
- Data System Procedures & Infrastructure
- Leadership & Data Culture
- Data Coaching Practices & PD
- Educator Beliefs, Skills & Knowledge
- Effective Data-based Decision-Making
Having “experts” is not enough!

• Show of hands: How many of you solve at least one problem every day at work?

• We all function as “problem-solvers”

• But, we do so in different ways that interfere with our teamwork.

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FIVE GROUP CONSTRUCTS

THE VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE GROUP
Yvonne Agazarian and Richard Peters

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STRUCTURE

WHAT YOU ALREADY KNOW

Frameworks that the group uses to organize and communicate information

- Meeting agenda
- Individuals invited to meeting (members)
- Amount of time set for meeting
- Specific problem solving models used by the group
- Datawise
- 4-step Problem Solving (RtI)
- Team Initiated Problem Solving (TIPS)

BUT, CONSIDER THIS...

Correcting weak structure is one of the easiest and most common group constructs to address, however...

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STRUCTURE: PROBLEM SOLVING PROCESS

- Guided question format to guide data selection and use
- Provide structure for meeting agenda’s
- Provides team members with clear markers for when info is relevant to share.
- Different models: important that your teams use the same one.
A struggling PLC group is coached by an administrator to use the Datawise data analysis process. The administrator trains the group in the model. Within three weeks the PLC stops meeting altogether because of time constraints and conflicts within the group.

**STRUCTURE: Consideration**

... ADDRESSING STRUCTURE ALONE IS TYPICALLY NOT ENOUGH TO ASSIST WITH GROUP DEVELOPMENT

**STRUCTURE: Recommendation**

- Meeting structure is clear and relevant
- Agenda/notes
- Time
- Action items
- The information structure is well understood, supports the work of the group, and can be used with some level of skill by all members
- Structure is addressed in concert with all other constructs

**NORMS**

WHAT YOU ALREADY KNOW

Determines the range and type of behavior that the group considers 'acceptable'

BUT, CONSIDER THIS...

Every group norms
- Intentionally
- Unintentionally

**NORMS: Consideration**

At the start of the school year, a grade-level PLC adopts a set of norms that one of the members saw at a training she attended during the summer, and the group never looks at them again for the rest of the year.

NORMING IS NOT AN EVENT- IT IS AN ONGOING PROCESS THAT TAKES PLACE IN EVERY GROUP

**NORMS: Recommendation**

... ADDRESSING NORMS ALONE IS TYPICALLY NOT ENOUGH TO ASSIST WITH GROUP DEVELOPMENT
NORMS: Recommendations

- Intentional and continuous consideration
- Representative of and unique to the current group
  - A cookie-cutter, one-size-fits-all approach misses the point
- Established through discussion and consensus of all members
- Monitored and reviewed regularly

GOALS

WHAT YOU ALREADY KNOW

Describes the intended outcomes of group interactions

BUT, CONSIDER THIS...

Two types of goals are always in place

- Explicit Goal
  - The goal the group says it has
- Implicit Goal
  - The goal the group acts like it has

GOALS: Consideration

A PLC meets to common assessment data. However, the group spends its time expressing frustration with district expectations

EXPLICIT GOAL: process information to assist campus development

IMPLICIT GOAL: support one another around frustration

IMPLICIT GOALS OUTWEIGHT EXPLICIT GOALS
- Without alignment it is unlikely explicit goals will be met

GOALS: Recommendations

- Pay attention to implicit goals (how the group behaves) in relation to explicit goals (why the group says it has come together)
- The closer implicit goals align with explicit goals the more likely the group will involve itself in productive work
**ROLES**

**WHAT YOU ALREADY KNOW**
Specific types of behavior associated with members within a group.

**BUT, CONSIDER THIS...**
Members in a group typically occupy more than one role at a time.

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**ROLES: Consideration**

The Department Chair functions as the PLC group facilitator and typically organizes and summarizes all the data for the committee members.

- **GROUP ROLE:** Department Chair, PLC Facilitator
- **PERSON ROLE:** Caretaker

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**ROLES: Recommendation**

- **GROUP ROLES** should be clear and relevant to the work of the group.
- **PERSON ROLES** should support group development.

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**COHESION**

**WHAT YOU ALREADY KNOW**
The strength of bonding within the group system.

**BUT, CONSIDER THIS...**
Cohesion, or lack of cohesion, can be clearly seen and heard at the close of meetings.
COHESION: Consideration

Members have been waiting for the PLC lead to close the meeting. They already have gathered their things together and ready to go. As soon as the PLC lead acknowledges the meeting is over, members rush out of the door.

AN UNCOHESIVE GROUP IS A SIGN THAT THE GROUP NEEDS ATTENTION

Canary in a coal mine!

COHESION: Take Away

- Commitment to the task-at-hand
- Energy of members to do the work
- Support for each other's efforts
- Sense of development/moving ahead

Profile of Problem Solving Groups

Stereotypical Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONSTRUCT</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NORM</td>
<td>Emerge through trial and error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOAL</td>
<td>Alignment of implicit to explicit is weak or non-existent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROLE</td>
<td>Unclear and/or do not support the development of the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRUCTURE</td>
<td>Doesn’t exist, isn’t well understood, not used with skill or is the only construct that gets addressed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| COHESION  | Weak or nonexistent  
  - people can’t wait to get out of the meeting and on to what they want to do outside of the group |
High Functioning Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONSTRUCT</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NORM</td>
<td>Focused on and unique to the current group; regularly monitored and regularly reviewed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOAL</td>
<td>Aligned: the group interacts (implicit) in accordance to the stated reason for coming together (explicit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROLE</td>
<td>All roles support the development of the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRUCTURE</td>
<td>Clear, well-understood, well-used and facilitates the flow of information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COHESION</td>
<td>Energy exists within the group to stay with the work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Group Facilitation Misconceptions

1. Facilitator is synonymous with trainer or presenter
2. Facilitation is a buzzword for interactive presenting
3. Facilitation is easier than presenting
4. Facilitation methods are magic

Two Sides of Teaming/Collaboration

1) Interpersonal Relationships & Group Dynamics
   - Human Emphasis (*Feelings Matter!*)

2) Content & Problem-Solving Framework
   - Task Emphasis (*Process Matters!*)

***Both are Necessary, but Neither is Sufficient***
Effective Facilitation of Teams Requires...

Human Emphasis

1 ➔ 10

Task Emphasis

1 ➔ 10

Group Communication

WHAT DOES A PROBLEM SOLVING GROUP SOUND LIKE?

“Any statement we make is relative to our position and perspective, our project and purpose. No statement is exempt from the particularity of experience.”

- Joanna Macy
- The Dharma of Natural Systems

Types of Communication

- FIGHTING - blame, defense, complaint
- INDIVIDUALIZING - personal experience, personal beliefs
- OBSCURING - joking around, social/polite talk
- FACT FINDING - facts and figures, broad and narrow questions
- COMPETING - discount, interrupt, yes-but
- RESONATING - inner feelings
- RESPONDING - paraphrase, summarize, answer question
- INFLUENCING - opinion, proposal
- INTEGRATING - agreements, build on others ideas
- FACT FINDING - facts and figures, broad and narrow questions
- RESPONDING - paraphrase, summarize, answer question
- INFLUENCING - opinion, proposal
- INTEGRATING - agreements, build on others ideas

Interpersonal Process: (Human Emphasis)

- Collaborative Relationship
- Active Involvement
- Trust/Confidentiality
- Voluntary
- Non-Judgmental
- Decision-Making Rules
- Roles and Responsibilities
Identifying Driving and Restraining Forces

CONSTRUCTS
- Norms
- Goals
- Roles
- Structure
- Cohesion

COMMUNICATION
- Influencing
- Integrating
- Fact Finding
- Responding

Two Sources of Information to Consider Coaching Teams

PROBLEM SOLVING GROUPS

Norm
Goal
Cohesion
Structure
Role

INFORMATION IS ACCESSED AND USED
AMBIGUITIES AND CONTRADICTIONS ARE RESOLVED
REDUNDANCIES ARE MINIMIZED

FACT FINDING
INFLUENCING
INTEGRATING
RESPONDING

INFORMATION

Leading Teams

Leading Teams: J. Richard Hackman

“BAD” COACHING
Identifying a team’s problems and telling members exactly what they should do to fix them

“GOOD” COACHING
Helping a team develop a task-appropriate strategy
Groups that Approach Success or Avoid Failure

Avoid Failure
Approach Success

Groups Trying to Avoid Failure

- Evade concerns of either failure or success
- Seek means to sidestep unfavorable consequences
- Stick to same goals/expectations (status quo), or lower them
- Evaluate their group with low approval; less attracted to their own group
- Activities/tasks associated with goal deemed less important
- Judge the group in relation to past performance rather than on future goal attainment
- Gladly abandon the practice of setting aspiration levels
- Dismiss or discount data

Groups Trying to Approach Success

- Perceives that the future promises a greater likelihood of success
- Raise their anticipated level of aspiration
- Develop feeling of pride in their group
- Assign favorable evaluation to their group’s performance
- Attribute greater value to future success
- Develop a disposition to seek future success
- Perceive their group to be attractive
- Become committed to the process of setting future goals
- Clarify data points for better understanding in order to build and improve performance

"Use Data" vs. "Used by the Data"

"Many of these [school] improvements were possible because teachers trusted that data were used for school improvement. This is important in light of research that shows teacher suspicion of data (Ingram, et al., 2004); principals in this study ensured that data were used for diagnostic purposes that were seen by teachers as beneficial and non-threatening. We may characterize this by suggesting that practice was improving because these schools were helping teachers use data rather than be used by data."

In Closing...

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