Strengthening Professional Communities

Throughout the day we'll examine what teams can do to foster collective teacher efficacy and facilitation skills that support impactful professional learning in schools.

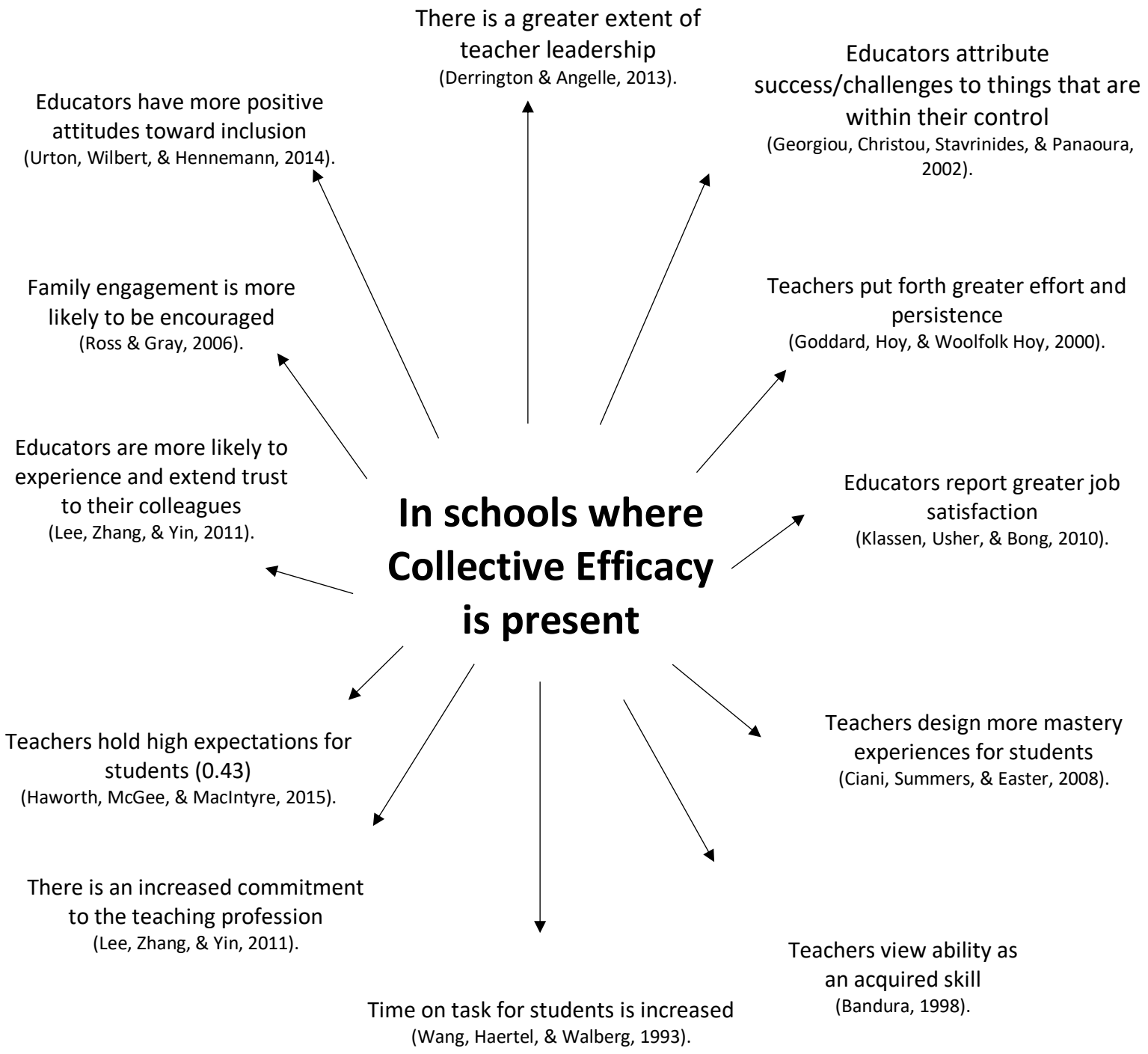
Learning Intentions
Participants will:

- know what collective efficacy is, why it's important for school improvement, and the sources that influence a team's interpretation of their effectiveness;
- examine ways to foster efficacy beliefs through four research-based practices;
- deepen their knowledge and skills for supporting/facilitating collaborative inquiry as a high-quality professional learning design.

Success Criteria
Participants will:

- identify the characteristics of an efficacious team;
- name and describe the consequences that occur in places where collective teacher efficacy is present and where it is not;
- explain the four sources that shape efficacy beliefs;
- identify 1-2 efficacy enabling conditions in which to focus their efforts;
- identify challenges and opportunities for enacting leadership practices to foster collective efficacy and strengthen professional communities;
- consider common pitfalls of collaboration and determine how to overcome barriers;
- self-assess facilitation skills and select 2-3 areas for purposeful practice;
- assess protocols that can be used to enhance cycles of inquiry (if time allows).

Consequences of Collective Teacher Efficacy



How are collective efficacy beliefs formed?

Read the descriptions below and with a partner, determine the corresponding label. Match the description (by adding the corresponding number) with the correct label listed below.

1. Mastery Experiences
2. Vicarious Experiences
3. Social Persuasion
4. Affective States

Description	
Just as teacher efficacy is enhanced by observing successful models with similar characteristics, so too do organizations learn by observation. Replication of successful educational programs by schools aspiring to achieve similar success is one example.	#_____
When a performance has been successful and the team attributes that success to factors within their control, they come to expect that their performance will be proficient in the future.	#_____
An example of this is when a high level of distress debilitates a group's performance by diminishing member confidence in the group's capability.	#_____
An example of this is when an effective group organizer or leader convinces group members of their collective capability.	#_____
Perceived collective efficacy is enhanced by observing successful organizations, especially those that attain similar goals in the face of familiar opportunities and constraints.	#_____
Past school successes build teacher's beliefs in the capability of the faculty, whereas failures tend to undermine a sense of collective efficacy.	#_____
This might entail encouragement or specific performance feedback in order to inspire action.	#_____
This is described as levels of either anxiety or excitement – experienced by organizations as they react to stress (e.g. past performance on state mandated tests).	#_____

How are collective efficacy beliefs formed?

Predict the contextual factors that contribute to collective teacher efficacy. Where a school staff shares the belief that together, they are capable of meeting the needs of all students including those who are disengaged and disadvantaged– what would have to be in place within the environment/culture of the school?

_____ _____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____ _____

Enabling Conditions for Collective Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire

Directions: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about your school from **strongly disagree** to **strongly agree**. Your answers are confidential.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Teachers are entrusted to make important decisions on school-wide issues.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Improvement goals are established and understood by all faculty.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Administrators help us carry out our duties effectively.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. The staff holds shared beliefs about effective instructional approaches.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Teachers are provided authentic leadership opportunities.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I know about the classroom management strategies my colleagues use in their classrooms.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. There is consensus on school goals amongst staff.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. The staff agrees about what constitutes effective classroom instruction.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. The leaders show concern for the staff.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. There is a system in place to ensure high levels of success for all students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. The staff agrees about assessment strategies that are the most effective.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. There are systems in place for tracking and monitoring at-risk students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. I know about the feedback my colleagues provide to students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. The leaders protect the staff from issues that detract us from focusing on learning and teaching.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. Teachers have a voice in matters related to school improvement.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. Students meet with success because of interventions that are in place.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. I am aware of the teaching practices used by others on staff.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. Teachers actively participate in setting school-wide improvement goals.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Overall Score – sum of the scores for all 18 items divided by 18.

Advanced Teacher Influence: Sum of items 1, 5 and 15 _____ /3

Goal Consensus: Sum of items 2, 7 and 18 _____ /3

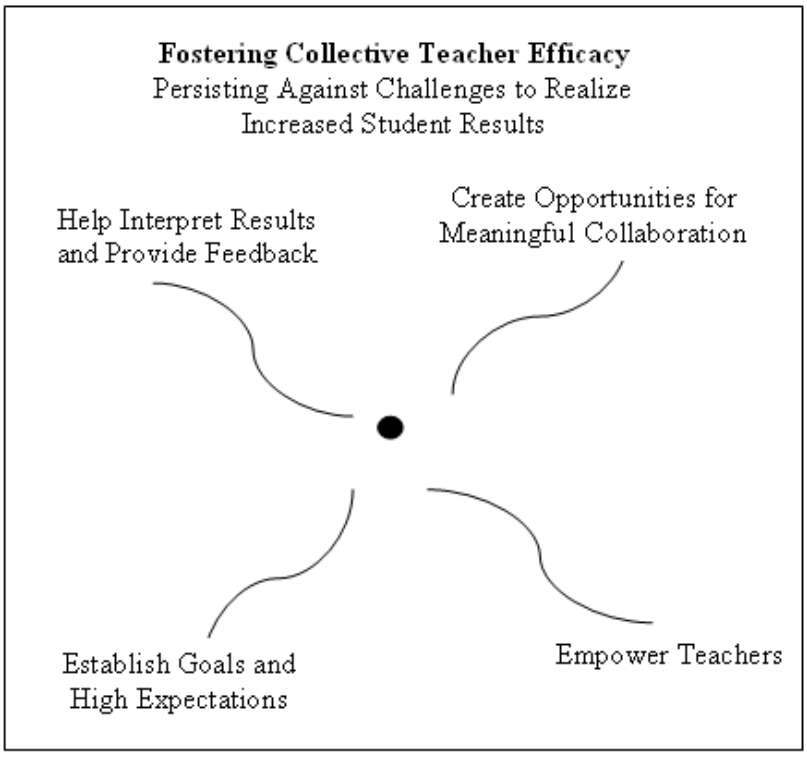
Teachers' Knowledge/Work: Sum of items 6, 13 and 17 ____ /3

Cohesive Staff: Sum of items 4, 8 and 11_____ /3

Responsiveness of Leadership: Sum of items 3, 9 and 14 _____ /3

Effective Systems of Intervention: Sum of items 10, 12 and 16 _____ /3

Fostering Collective Efficacy



Four As Protocol

What do you agree with?
What do you argue with?
What assumptions are contained in the text?
What do you aspire to?

Purposeful Practices 1: Create Opportunities for Meaningful Collaboration

A Taxonomy for Examining Collaboration

In examining teacher teams and their contribution to the productivity of schools, Little (1990) noted that "closely bound groups are instruments both for promoting change and for conserving the present" (p. 509). Little was interested in studying strong and weak ties amongst teachers and learning more about the degree to which collaboration resulted in changes in classroom practice. She noted: "We have very little in the way of close-up description of the *work* people do together versus what they attempt alone, or the *actual* decisions that arise from deliberately 'participatory' interactions. Rarely do we read the case history of a consequential decision." Little (1990) distinguished forms of collegial relations in order to "account for the consequences felt in the classroom" (p. 512). Even though Little's (1990) continuum of collegial relations was developed more than 25 years ago, it is still a useful tool today for examining collaboration in schools.

Storytelling and Scanning for Ideas

Storytelling and scanning for ideas takes place under conditions of nearly complete independence. Little (1990) noted that "teacher autonomy rests on freedom from scrutiny and the largely unexamined right to exercise personal preference; teachers acknowledge and tolerate the individual preferences or styles of others" (p. 513). Teachers gain information and affirmation in the quick exchange of stories, casual camaraderie, and friendships that occur at a distance from the classroom. In this case, teachers do not feel as if there were any problems to be resolved and they exercise personal preference in whom they talk with and how they use that information.

Aid and Assistance

Aid and assistance is described as help or advice seeking from one colleague to another. Questions asked are interpreted as requests for help and therefore matters of teaching are treated in a piecemeal fashion and do not lead to deep discussions about the practice of teaching. Individualism is sustained as teachers do not interfere in each other's work in unwarranted ways. Examinations of practice are unlikely to result from these exchanges. Sometimes the expression of empathy even has the potential to dissuade teachers from more analytic examinations of practice.

Sharing

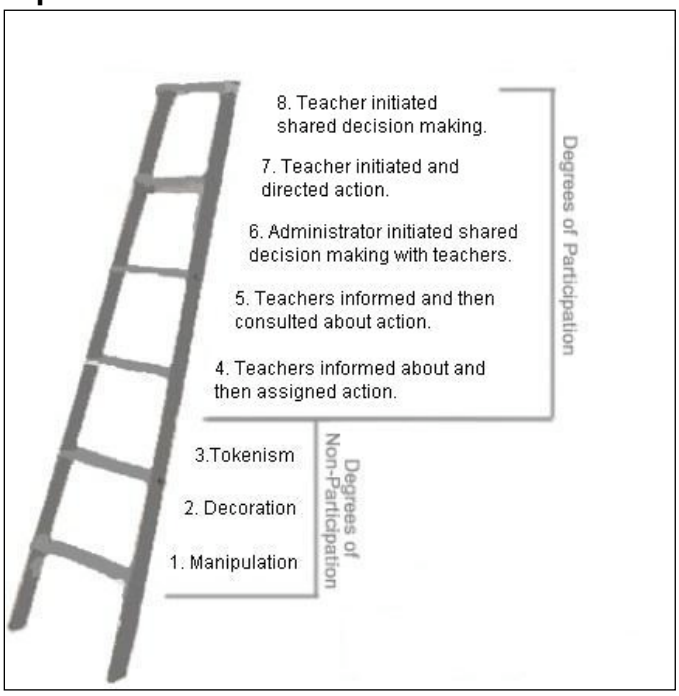
Little's (1990) third conception of collegiality, sharing, is based on the exchange of materials, methods, ideas, and opinions. "Through routine sharing, teaching is presumably made less private, more public" (p. 518). By making their materials accessible, teachers expose ideas and intentions and the groundwork is laid for productive discussion and debate regarding professional practice. It cannot be assumed however, that through sharing teachers' day-to-day practice will be influenced.

Joint-Work

Finally, Little (1990) described joint-work as teacher's collective action and interdependence on each other. It is based on "teachers' decisions to pursue a single course of action in concert or, alternatively, to decide on a set of basic priorities that in turn guide the independent choices of individual teachers" (p. 519). Motivation to participate is based on the fact that each other's contributions are required in order to succeed in independent work. It includes the "joint deliberation over difficult and recurring problems of teaching and learning" (p. 520). Professional practices are examined publicly and open to scrutiny. Ideas are put on the table in the service of finding a 'better way'. Common understandings regarding effective practice are built collaboratively as a result.

Little, J. W. (1990). The persistence of privacy: Autonomy and initiative in teachers' professional relations. *Teacher College Record*, 91(4), 509–536.

Purposeful Practices 2: Empower Teachers



Degrees of Non-Participation – 1 being the lowest

1. Manipulation: Formal leaders use teachers to support causes by falsely claiming those causes are inspired by the staff.
2. Decoration: Teachers are used to help bolster a cause in a relatively indirect way: formal leaders do not pretend that the causes are inspired by teachers. Causes are determined by formal leaders and leaders make all the decisions.
3. Tokenism: Teachers appear to be given a choice, but in fact have little or no choice about what they do or how they participate.

Degrees of Participation – 8 being the highest

4. Assigned but taught: Teachers are assigned specific roles, but told how and taught why they are being involved.
5. Consulted and informed: Teachers give advice on projects or school-wide activities owned and run by formal leaders. Teachers are informed about how their input will be used but the outcomes are based on decisions made by formal leaders.
6. Administrator initiated, shared decisions with teachers: Projects, school-wide activities, and school improvement processes are initiated by formal leaders, but the decision-making is shared with teachers involved.
7. Teacher initiated and directed: Teachers initiate and direct projects, school wide activities, including professional learning and strategies for school improvement. Administrators are involved in a supportive role.
8. Teacher initiated shared decision-making with administrators: Projects and school wide activities are initiated by teachers, and decision-making is shared among formal and informal leaders. Teachers design and lead professional learning and school improvement strategies. These projects empower teachers while at the same time allowing them to access and learn from experience and the experiences of others.

Purposeful Practices 3: Establish Goals and High Expectations

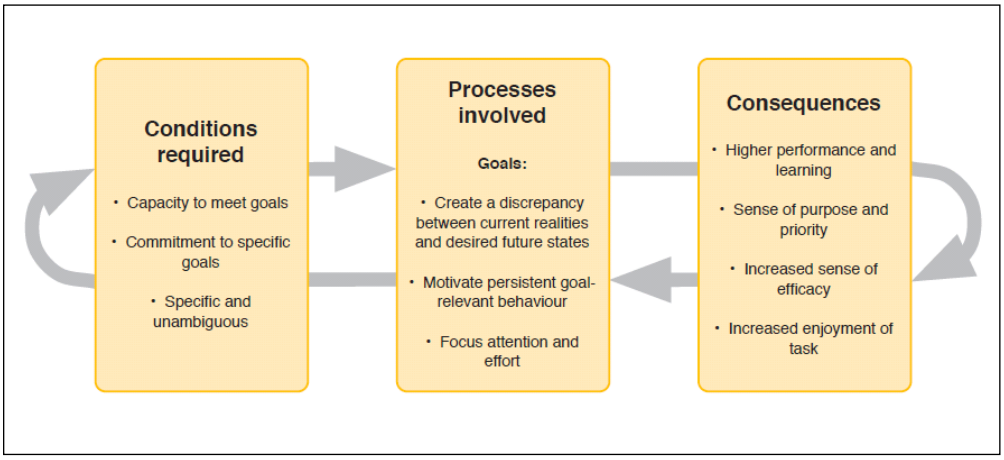
How Goal Setting Works

In the 1960's, psychologist Edwin Locke developed the Goal-Setting Theory of Motivation (Locke & Latham, 2006). The theory states that goal setting is linked to task performance. When teams set challenging goals and receive appropriate feedback, it contributes to better task performance. In other words, goals provide direction to educators (and students) about what needs to be done and how much effort is required to succeed. As long as the goal is not too far out of reach, challenging goals raise motivation for success.

Goal setting improves performance in the following four ways (Locke & Latham, 2002). Goals direct attention to the task at hand, keeping teams focused on what it is they are trying to accomplish. Secondly, goals mobilize efforts and teams work harder as a result of having goals. Thirdly, when teams have a specific goal they are more likely to persist and less likely to give up easily. Finally, goals promote the development of improved strategies. When teams recognize that their current actions are not helping them progress toward their goals, they devise better strategies to get them there.

The stronger a team's beliefs in their collective capability, the higher the goals teams set for themselves (Bandura, 1998). When collective efficacy is reduced however, teams show a significant reduction in goal setting and attainment.

Based on a synthesis of 31 research studies, Robinson et al. (2009) demonstrated how goal setting works (see figure below). The authors identified three conditions that must be met in setting goals. The conditions of effective goal setting required that: (1) the team had the capacity to meet the goals; (2) the goals were clear and specific; and (3) the staff was committed to the goals. In addition to the conditions required, the authors also outlined the processes involved and consequences of effective goal setting. When there is a discrepancy between a school's current situation and their desired future, the dissatisfaction experienced by the staff motivates them to take action to close the gap –as long as they are committed to the goal. In addition to consensus on school goals being a significant predictor of collective teacher efficacy (Kurz & Knight, 2003), goals help in focusing the staff's attention and result in determination and sustained effort. Performance and learning is enhanced. Psychological benefits include greater enjoyment of the staff's work and greater willingness to take on challenges. These benefits result from a sharper sense of purpose.



Robinson, V., Hohepa, M. & Lloyd, C. (2009). *School leadership and student outcomes: Identifying what works and why.* Best evidence synthesis iteration [BES]. New Zealand: Ministry of Education.

Purposeful Practices 4: Help Teams Interpret Results and Provide Feedback

The Role of Evidence

So how do school leaders build collective efficacy? The primary factor is *evidence of impact*. When instructional improvement efforts result in improved student outcomes that are validated through sources of student learning data, educators' collective efficacy is strengthened. Evidence of collective impact, in turn, reinforces proactive collective behaviors, feelings, thoughts, and motivations. Bandura referred to this as "reciprocal causality" (Bandura, 1993), noting that collective efficacy is a social resource that does not get depleted by its use; it gets renewed.

It is essential, therefore, to help educators make the link between their collective actions and student outcomes. To understand collective impact, teams need to determine if changes in classroom practice positively influenced student outcomes by examining specific evidence of *student learning*. They need to hear from students about their learning, their progress, their struggles, and their motivation to keep learning. They need to examine student artifacts such as assignments, tests, portfolios, and other indicators of daily progress. They need to have others observe their teaching to help them see their impact on their students. What distinguishes this from teacher's regular routines is moving beyond the mere examination of student artifacts and classroom observations in order to determine student grades to making the link between teachers' actions and student outcomes explicit. It is about the importance of shifting attributions for students' progress and/or lack of progress from external sources (e.g., lack of parental involvement) to factors within teachers' collective sphere of influence (e.g., assessment and teaching strategies).

School leaders play a key role creating non-threatening evidence-based instructional environments. By promoting a culture of collaboration focused on "knowing thy collective impact," leaders have the potential to support school improvement in ways that positively influence teachers' collective efficacy beliefs and thus promote student achievement. Leaders do this by creating conversations about what impact and effort mean, about the difference between progress and achievement, and about the use of dependable evidence. These conversations help to shift educators' thinking from task-related concerns (for example, "How much of my time is *x* going to require?" or "How will I manage *x* as part of my daily routine?") to broader impact concerns ("What was the impact when I did *x*?" "How did *x* effect the students in my classroom?" "How can we work together to make *x* even better?"). Teachers can increasingly orient their work around outcomes: "Did the students gain the essential understandings and skills?" "How do we know?" "How can we use evidence of student learning to improve classroom instruction?"

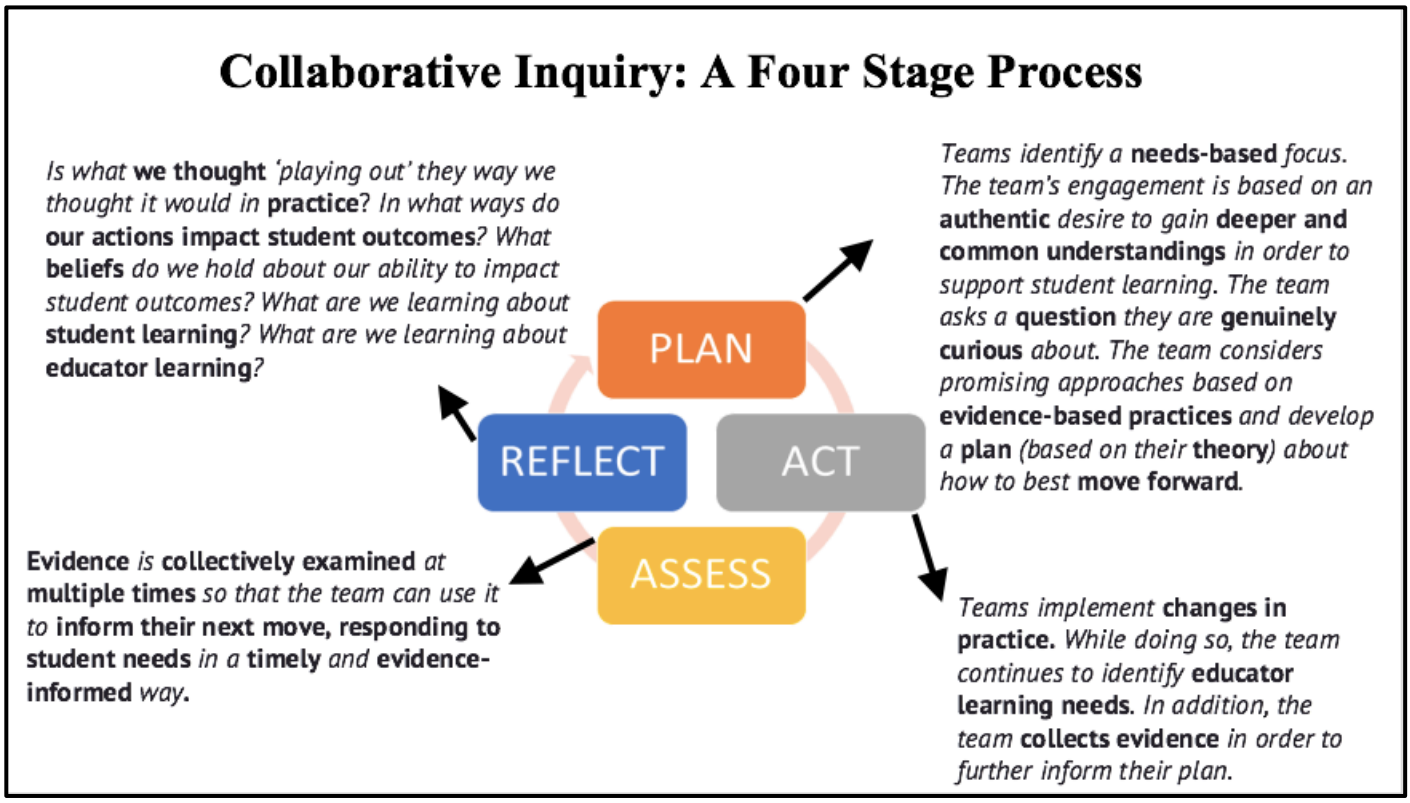
Success lies in what team members *believe what sufficient progress means for all students in the school***.** Confidence in each other's abilities and the belief in the impact of the team's work are key elements that set successful school teams apart. Publicly seeking evidence of positive effects on student learning does not happen serendipitously or by accident and neither does a sense of psychological safety. School leaders much work to build a culture designed to increase collective teacher efficacy, which will affect teachers' behavior and student beliefs. The power and promise of collective efficacy is that it can be influenced within schools, so focusing on it as a change point is a viable path to greater student achievement, greater commitment to learning, and seeing school as an inviting place to come and learn.

The greatest power that principals have in schools is that they can control the narrative. If the narrative is about bus timetables, tweaks in the curriculum, test schedules, this percolates through the school as the purpose of schooling – compliance to procedures. In such schools, students think learning is coming to school on time, sitting up straight, keeping quiet, and watching the teacher work. But if instead the narrative is about high expectations, growth in relation to inputs, what it means to be a 'good learner' in various subjects, and what impact means, then teachers and students will think about learning in a different way. They will believe that learning is about challenge, about understanding and realizing high expectations, and that setbacks are an opportunity to learn. Students will also believe that coming to school means investing energy into deliberate practice. The secret is the critical nature of collaboration and the strength of believing that together, administrators, faculty, and students can accomplish great things. This is the power of collective efficacy.

Donohoo, J., Hattie, J., & Eells, R. (2018). The Power of Collective Efficacy. *Educational Leadership*, 75(6), 40-44.

Collaborative Inquiry:

What can you **infer** about **collaborative inquiry** based on this graphic?



Consider the possible purposes, processes and outcomes that are articulated by this graphic.

Collaborative Inquiry

	What it is	What it is not
1	a high-quality professional learning design	experimental research design
2	a cyclical and iterative process for improving student learning and teaching practices	linear or lock step a checklist of actions
3	based on issues related to the learning needs of the students of the participating educators	based on topics that determined/prioritized by someone other than the classroom educator
4	driven by a central question - in which the answer is unknown to participants	based on a topic mandated by administrators or central office staff
5	adaptive in nature as new knowledge is generated amongst team members	the transmission of knowledge from central office personnel or outside experts
6	steered in a direction determined by participants	directed by outside experts
7	facilitated from within - by members of the team	facilitated by outside experts
8	decisions are informed by evidence, research on promising practices, and/or the advice of experts	'cherry picking' teaching approaches
9	the deep implementation of new and different approaches to classroom instruction	more of the same while expecting different results
10	gathering a variety of evidence - collectively examined at multiple points (not excluding pre-test, post-test data)	pre-test, post-test data - examined at the beginning and end of the semester or at the beginning and end of the school year
11	a mindset - a way of thinking - a belief that what we do matters and that we need to evaluate the effects of our actions on student learning and achievement	a mindset - a way of thinking - a belief that no matter what we do, we can not reach all students - having no appreciation for self-assessment
12	risky, rewarding, empowering	risk-free nor unhelpful
13	sometimes a 'muddy' process	a clearly laid out path

Donohoo, J., & Velasco, M. (2016). *The Transformative Power of Collaborative Inquiry: Realizing Change in Schools and Classrooms*. Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Potential Pitfalls of Collaboration: There are a number of pitfalls that can occur when educators come together to collaborate. Have you or your team fallen victim to one or more of the pitfalls? Share your experience with others at your table. Use the space at the bottom of the table to describe one or two pitfalls of your own.

Pitfall	Definition
Diffusion of Responsibility (Katz, Earl, & Ben Jaafar, 2009)	This happens when teachers are *less* likely to take responsibility because they are in the presence of others rather than working alone. Essentially, people are less likely to assume responsibility if they believe that someone else might do so.
Cascade Effect (Sustain & Hastie, 2015)	This happens when team members follow the statements and actions of those who spoke first or acted first, even if those statements and actions lead the group in the unfortunate or wrong direction.
Culture of Nice (MacDonald, 2011)	Polite conversations remain superficially focused on sharing stories of practice rather than probing more deeply into issues related to learning and teaching. Sustain and Hastie (2015) refer to this as 'happy talk'. Technical questions are asked but more critical questions about how approaches are impacting students' understandings or what evidence the teacher has to support a claim of effectiveness are avoided.
Lack of Evidence-Based Dialogue (Nelson, Deuel, Slavit, & Kennedy, 2010)	Educators are inexperienced with evidence-based dialogue. Every student deserves a years' growth for a years' input however, when teachers do engage in discussion about student results, it is often framed in reference to a*chievement* rather than *progress*. Also, teachers' observations of student learning are often shared in general terms rather than specifics and often observations are unsupported by evidence (e.g. "The students were much more engaged").
Contrived Collegiality (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012)	'Bureaucratic' type procedures that are put into place to increase joint planning and other forms of working together. Administrative contrivances that get collegiality going in schools where little or none existed before. However, when imposed with degrees of inflexibility become artificial and short-lived.
We Don't Want to Expose our Vulnerabilities (Katz & Dack, 2013)	Educators want others to see only their strengths and not their weaknesses. As a result, teachers keep their questions to themselves. They also feel a need to appear knowledgeable and that sometimes manifests itself in a stubbornness around 'being right.'
Polarization (Sustain & Hastie, 2015)	This happens when teams end up in more extreme positions in line with the pre-deliberation tendencies of their members – for example when a group included toward cynicism becomes more cynical as a result of internal discussions.
Quality Control (Katz, Earl, & Ben Jaafar, 2009)	Ideas spread when educators collaborate. However, when assumptions are left unquestioned and strategies are not based on evidence, sometimes ideas not worthy of sharing become widely spread.

Enemies of Learning

1. Being unable to admit we don't know (don't want to look stupid).
2. Having the pretense of knowing--(e.g. I already do that, know that, have heard that).
3. Not granting permission to others to teach you anything (e.g. I'm a professional, I don't need this training)
4. Needing to look good (low tolerance for mistakes, incompetence).
5. Being blind to your cognitive blindness (don't know we don't know; can't see own biases).
6. Needing too much clarity--show me "HOW"-- (low tolerance for complexity, uncertainty).
7. Not having time (impatience; need to see immediate relevance; short-term, detail focus).
8. Making and taking attitude (not willing to dive deeply; theory discounted).
9. Being overly serious and self-important (I have the answer; I'm the only one who really cares; this is so important there is no room for playful inquiry).
10. Being trivial/cynical--(everything is a joke, unimportant, whatever, it won't matter anyway, this too shall pass.)
11. Confusing obedience with knowing (wanting approval, tendency to comply without question—"My boss told me to. It is the policy.")
12. Confusing knowing with learning (not wanting to inquire into, want to be "right").
13. Confusing learning with gathering information (credentials vs. wisdom).
14. Excluding emotions from learning (e.g. I hate math. I'm nervous whenever I have to share.)
15. Excluding the body from learning (e.g. I'm hungry; have a headache).
16. Lacking questions about our questions--(What is the hidden assumption? Why have we always done it this way? What about this really matters?).
17. Taking the obvious for granted (not questioning what is right in front of us, tradition).
18. Being addicted to novelty--(unwilling to dwell, rigor).
19. Living in permanent assessment (assessing everyone and everything all the time— more assessing without action or enough time for that action to yield results).
20. Thinking "I have to do this by myself" (not knowing when/how to seek assistance; not giving oneself permission to ask for help).
21. Believing in independence (what I do is separate from and not impacted by others).
22. Judging yourself as you attempt to learn (self-conscious, inhibited).
23. End-gaming (jumping to the goal without taking the necessary steps in the process— leads to superficial learning).
24. Being unaware of our own stories (the things we tell ourselves; our models of reality).
25. Confusing our model of reality with reality.

Lucy West, adapted from talk given by Julio Olalla; Newfield Network

Reflection for Facilitators

Facilitator Skills and Approaches	Plus/Delta
1. Builds in norm of discomfort within a safe environment.	
2. Ensures all voices are heard.	
3. Regularly builds in habit of reflection.	
4. Keeps equity and student achievement at the forefront.	
5. Seeks public commitment for action when appropriate.	
6. Helps group develop the habit of making controversy public.	
7. Values and uses awareness of group development.	
8. Builds mutual accountability and is accountable to group.	
9. Engages group in reflection regarding values and practice.	
10. Adjusts time as needed.	
11. Uses participant experiences, work samples, dilemmas as material for examination.	
12. Uses varied and appropriate structures to maximize participation and ensure that all voices are heard.	
13. Persists in the face of group discomfort – focuses on it during reflective periods.	
14. Addresses conflict when it arises.	
15. Is transparent about reasoning behind many decisions made by facilitator.	
16. Maintains norms.	
17. Is a good listener/good questioner.	
18. Is assertive about the need for facilitation in effective groups.	
19. Helps others assume leadership and facilitation roles.	
20. Transparently solicits feedback on facilitation.	

Adapted from: National School Reform Faculty: New York: Facilitation Standards