The Skillful Team Leader: Maximizing the Impact of Your Teacher Team

Presented by Elisa MacDonald, author and educational consultant

Brought to you by Research for Better Teaching
Online Norms

- Questions
- Polls
- Text Box Discussions
- Seeing Each Other
Entry into Team Leadership
2,000 – 4,000 minutes per year collaborating in teams
What Collaboration Could Be…

“a catalyst for improvement”
(Judith Warren Little, 2012)

a means to generate “insight into teaching and learning”
(Judith Warren Little, 2012)

a way to “extend practice critically, searching for better alternatives in the continuous quest for improvement”
(Hargreaves, 1994)
What Collaboration Sometimes Is…

“organizational routine”
(Spillane, 2012)

“activity traps”
(Timperley, 2008)

strategy
smorgasbord
In This Webinar We Will:

- Refine our lens for assessing teams while learning indicators of a high-functioning, high-impact team

- Explore the four foundational tenets of a Skillful Approach to overcome hurdles

- Gain research-based and field-tested solutions for overcoming hurdles when leading teams
What We See When We Look at Teams
Which Team Might Concern You More?

**Team A:**
- Doesn’t keep norms.
- Team leader takes on all of the team roles.
- Can’t agree on a goal.
- Can’t stick to an agenda.
- Analyzes data in an unstructured way.

**Team B:**
- Keeps to norms.
- All members take turns with team roles.
- Reaches consensus on a goal.
- Sticks to an agenda.
- Routinely analyzes data using an agreed-upon protocol.
# Function

## How a Team Collaborates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team A:</th>
<th>Team B:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doesn’t keep norms.</td>
<td>Keeps to norms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team leader takes on all of the team roles.</td>
<td>All members take turns with team roles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can’t agree on a goal.</td>
<td>Reaches consensus on a goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can’t stick to an agenda.</td>
<td>Sticks to an agenda.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyzes data in an unstructured way.</td>
<td>Routinely analyzes data using an agreed-upon protocol.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Function
How a Team Collaborates

Team A:

Team B:
Which Team Might Concern You More?

**Team B:**
- Keeps to norms.
- All members take turns with team roles.
- Reaches consensus on a goal.
- Sticks to an agenda.
- Routinely analyzes data using an agreed-upon protocol.

**Team C:**
- Keeps to norms.
- All members take turns with team roles.
- Reaches consensus on a goal.
- Sticks to an agenda.
- Routinely analyzes data using an agreed-upon protocol.
Function

How a Team Collaborates

Team B:

Team C:
Which Team Might Concern You More?

Team B:
• Keeps to norms.
• All members take turns with team roles.
• Reaches consensus on a goal.
• Sticks to an agenda.
• Routinely analyzes data using an agreed-upon protocol.

Team C:
• Keeps to norms.
• All members take turns with team roles.
• Reaches consensus on a goal.
• Sticks to an agenda.
• Routinely analyzes data using an agreed-upon protocol.
Team B:
Keeps to norms.

We agree to start and end on time.

We agree to listen to all voices before making a decision.

Team C:
Keeps to norms.

We agree to commit to one action at the end of each meeting.

We agree to make decisions based on evidence.

Impact
What Effect Collaboration Has on Student Learning
Impact
What Effect Collaboration Has on Student Learning

Team B:
All members take turns with team roles.
Mrs. K is this week’s note-taker.
Facilitator: Keeps team on task. “Now let’s look at the data.”

Team C:
All members take turns with team roles.
Mrs. K is this week’s demonstration teacher.
Facilitator: Asks probing questions and surfaces assumptions. “Why might the students highlighted in red not be at benchmark?”
1. What norms and roles do you have in place to ensure your team functions well together?

2. What norms and roles do you have in place to ensure your team has the greatest impact on teacher practice and student learning?

3. What is getting in the way of your team attaining their desired impact on student learning and what norms and roles might you suggest for your team to help? Please, share a norm or role for impact in the chat box. *Note: A single norm could help both function and impact of a team (e.g. All share ideas without judgment.)
Team B: Reaches consensus on a goal.

By the end of the year 95% of all students in grade 8 will participate in the Spring theatre production. We will measure this goal using daily attendance sheets.

Team C: Reaches consensus on a goal.

By the end of the year 95% of students in grade 8 will be proficient at analyzing and interpreting a script and using that analysis to determine which elements of technical theatre to implement. Student progress will be measured by pre-, during, and post-production notebook entries, graded by a teacher-created rubric.
Team B: Reaches consensus on a goal.

By…we will hold 25 teacher-student writing conferences each week during core instruction. We will log the number of conferences in a notebook and display on a data wall.

Team C: Reaches consensus on a goal.

By…80% of students will get a 3 or higher in the category of writing with supporting details on the district rubric. 20% will grow by 1 point. We will use teacher-student writing conferences as one strategy to accomplish this goal as well as other strategies including think aloud…
Team B:

Sticks to an agenda.

Meeting Objective: Today we will discuss students who are struggling.

Team C:

Sticks to an agenda.

Meeting Desired Outcome: Today we will leave with a list of names of students who got a 2 or below on the number ID exit ticket and no less than two strategies that we will implement each day of support block this week.
Impact

What Effect Collaboration Has on Student Learning

Team B:
Routinely analyzes data using an agreed-upon protocol.

Each week teachers take turns bringing in whatever student work they choose and the team uses a protocol to discuss.

Team C:
Routinely analyzes data using an agreed-upon protocol.

Each week teachers take turns bringing in evidence of students’ mastery or non-mastery of the team’s student learning target.
Collaborative Inquiry

“a systematic improvement process where teachers work in data teams to construct their understanding of student learning problems and generate and test out solutions through rigorous and frequent use of data and reflective dialogue.”

From The Data Coach’s Guide to Improving Learning for All Students by Nancy Love, Katherine E. Stiles, Susan Mundry and Kathryn DiRanna. (Corwin, 2008)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Some Indicators of High Function</strong></th>
<th><strong>Some Indicators of High Impact</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Members craft agreements, <strong>NORMS</strong>, that keep the team on task and productive. <em>(E.g., We will start and end on time.)</em></td>
<td>Members craft agreements, <strong>NORMS</strong>, that foster conditions for team learning and achieving student learning goals. <em>(E.g., We will leave each meeting with a commitment to action.)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members take on <strong>ROLES</strong> to share responsibility for tasks. <em>(E.g., note-taker)</em></td>
<td>Members take on <strong>ROLES</strong> to share responsibility for tasks. <em>(E.g., lesson demonstrator)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members are invested in <strong>GOALS</strong> and achieve them.</td>
<td>Members are invested in SMAHRT <strong>GOALS</strong> aimed at having an impact on student learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members use teaming tools (<strong>AGENDAS, PROTOCOLS</strong>) to keep the team on task and productive. <em>(E.g., Today we will discuss struggling students.)</em></td>
<td>Members use teaming tools (<strong>AGENDAS, PROTOCOLS</strong>) to advance the team’s goals. <em>(E.g., Today we will leave with a list of student names for the intervention block as determined by the most recent assessment.)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members move through a process to use <strong>DATA</strong>.</td>
<td>Members intentionally move through a process to use <strong>DATA</strong> to make strategic, instructional decisions that advance the team toward their student learning goals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Adapted from The Skillful Team Leader by Elisa MacDonald, p. 156 (Corwin, 2013).*
Function and Impact

How a team functions

What impact a team has on student learning
Team Function, Impact Matrix

From The Skillful Team Leader by Elisa MacDonald, p. 31 (Corwin, 2013).
Matrix Key Reminders

• Function and impact vary over time.

• Impact on teacher practice is a means, not the end goal.

• Use as a continuum (e.g., moderate function, very low impact).

• Dialogue is more important than consensus.

• With skillful team leadership all teams can evolve into a high-functioning, high-impact team.
Questions, Wonderings, Aha’s
CARMEN leads a ninth-grade English team. They start every meeting on time, read the agenda for the day, and review group agreements. Teachers equitably rotate roles. Recently, their department head charged them with improving student readers’ response notebook grades. Teachers take a meeting to dig into the data and discover that only 40% of students were completing the required number of entries per day. Teachers agree that bumping that number up to 90% of students would be attainable and give themselves six weeks to get to that goal. Through data-driven dialogue the teachers determine that students aren’t completing their daily entries because they lack motivation. Teachers agree that raising the weight of the notebook grade would get more students to the team’s 90% student completion goal.

In today’s meeting, the team is doing a notebook check to see how students are progressing. Since the team began working three weeks ago, 20% more students are completing the required number of entries. Motivated by the gain, teachers collectively agree to use this meeting time to create a point system to incentivize the remaining students. They volunteer to work through lunch so that they can begin implementing right away. Carmen is inspired by her team’s commitment, yet is concerned when she reads what students are writing. She notices that students are not meeting the common core standard RL.9-10.1, “cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.” When she suggests that the team hold off on adopting the incentive system and instead reflect on how the team’s work is improving students’ ability to respond with evidence to text, teachers object, saying, “We don’t need to reflect; we are working great as a team.”

Another teacher adds, “We’ve been looking at the student notebooks and tracking kids’ progress in completing the required entries. The more kids who complete the entries, the higher those readers’ response notebook grades, which is what the department head asked us to do. He’s going to be thrilled! Let’s work on the new points incentive system—we’re getting so much done.”
Poll: Where would you place Carmen’s team?

1. High functioning, high impact
2. High functioning, low impact
3. Low functioning, low impact
4. Low functioning, high impact
Hurdles

“Regardless of who is leading or being led, every team seeking to improve student achievement comes up against hurdles.”

From The Skillful Team Leader by Elisa MacDonald, p. 4 (Corwin, 2013).
Reflect

Think about a recent hurdle you have encountered when leading a team or supporting team leaders.
Sample Team Leader Dilemmas

“How do I foster a high-functioning, high-impact collaborative team when we struggle to get along?”

“How do I foster shared leadership for learning when no one on the team has the authority to make decisions, including me?”

“How do I lead our team in data dialogue that impacts teacher practice and student learning when blame and excuses dominate talk?”

“How do I lead an action-oriented team when change is a mandate that no one wants?”
What distinguishes the skillful team leader from a less effective one is the approach she or he takes to overcome these hurdles.
A Skillful Approach

VALUES

MINDSET

TO IDENTIFY THE HURDLE
TO EXPLORE POSSIBLE CAUSES
TO RESPOND
TO NAVIGATE SCHOOL CULTURE

INTELLIGENCE

SKILL
A Skillful Approach

- Collaboration
- Shared leadership
- SMART goals
- Rigorous discourse
- Continuous improvement

Growth mindset about students, teachers, and leaders

Awareness and management of one’s own and others’ emotions

SKILL

TO IDENTIFY THE HURDLE
TO EXPLORE POSSIBLE CAUSES
TO RESPOND
TO CONSIDER SCHOOL CULTURE
Applying a Skillful Approach

VALUES

MINDSET

INTELLIGENCE

SKILL
TO IDENTIFY THE HURDLE
TO EXPLORE POSSIBLE CAUSES
TO RESPOND
TO NAVIGATE SCHOOL CULTURE
Identify the hurdle: What’s getting in the way of our success?

Explore possible causes: What could be causing this hurdle?

Respond:
- Proactive response: What could I have done to prevent this?
- In-the-moment response: How could I have responded the moment I noticed things were going wrong?
- Follow-through response: The meeting is over. What should I do now?
- School leadership team response: Are other teams coming up against similar hurdles?

Consider culture: What are our school’s beliefs and assumptions around collaboration?
CARMEN leads a ninth-grade English team. They start every meeting on time, read the agenda for the day, and review group agreements. Teachers equitably rotate roles. Recently, their department head charged them with improving student readers’ response notebook grades. Teachers take a meeting to dig into the data and discover that only 40% of students were completing the required number of entries per day. Teachers agree that bumping that number up to 90% of students would be attainable and give themselves six weeks to get to that goal. Through data-driven dialogue the teachers determine that students aren’t completing their daily entries because they lack motivation. Teachers agree that raising the weight of the notebook grade would get more students to the team’s 90% student completion goal.

In today’s meeting, the team is doing a notebook check to see how students are progressing. Since the team began working three weeks ago, 20% more students are completing the required number of entries. Motivated by the gain, teachers collectively agree to use this meeting time to create a point system to incentivize the remaining students. They volunteer to work through lunch so that they can begin implementing right away. Carmen is inspired by her team’s commitment, yet is concerned when she reads what students are writing. She notices that students are not meeting the common core standard RL.9-10.1, “cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.” When she suggests that the team hold off on adopting the incentive system and instead reflect on how the team’s work is improving students’ ability to respond with evidence to text, teachers object, saying, “We don’t need to reflect; we are working great as a team.”

Another teacher adds, “We’ve been looking at the student notebooks and tracking kids’ progress in completing the required entries. The more kids who complete the entries, the higher those readers’ response notebook grades, which is what the department head asked us to do. He’s going to be thrilled! Let’s work on the new points incentive system—we’re getting so much done.”
✔ Identify the Hurdle

Carmen’s team is in quadrant II (High functioning, Low impact)
✓ Explore Possible Causes

Please type in the chat box what you think might be contributing to the team’s struggle to get along and work productively.
✓ Respond

Type in the chat box one way in which Carmen could help her team have greater impact on student learning. Please use the abbreviations below to identify the type of response you are suggesting:

(P) Proactive response: What could Carmen have done to prevent this?

(IM) In-the-moment response: How could Carmen have responded the moment she noticed things were going wrong?

(F) Follow-through response: The meeting is over. What should Carmen do now?

(S) School leadership team response: If other teams in Carmen’s school are coming up against similar hurdles, what might the school leadership team do?
Sample Proactive Response

(P) Establish a vulnerability-based trust norm. “This is our learning space. We agree to make it safe to seek out teaching successes and failures.”
In This Webinar:

We set out to:

✓ Refine our lens for assessing teams while learning indicators of a high-functioning, high-impact team

✓ Explore the four foundational tenets of a Skillful Approach to overcome hurdles

✓ Gain research-based and field-tested solutions for overcoming hurdles when leading teams
Application to Your Own Practice

Reflect: Think about the hurdle you wrote about earlier. Does your team need to improve mostly in function, impact, or both? How might a Skillful Approach help your team move to quadrant I?

Type: Please complete one of the following prompts in your screen chat box:

• I used to think… Now I think…
• I’m going to try…
• I’m wondering…
The Skillful Team Leader: A Resource to Overcoming Hurdles to Professional Learning for Student Achievement (Corwin, 2013) by Elisa MacDonald

Chapter 1: A Skillful Approach

Chapter 2: Mindful About Mindset

Chapter 3: Alone Together: Overcoming Hurdles to Foster a High-Functioning, High-Impact Collaborative Team

Chapter 4: Not It: Overcoming Hurdles to Achieve Shared Leadership for Learning

Chapter 5: Seemingly SMART: Overcoming Hurdles to Set and Attain Impactful Goals

Chapter 6: Off-Course Discourse: Overcoming Hurdles to Lead a Team in Rigorous Discourse

Chapter 7: Inertia: Overcoming Hurdles to Lead an Action-Oriented Team for Continuous Improvement

To order book at discounted price call RBT at (978) 264-9449, ask for Publications, and mention code STL2014
Resources From Today

To access the PDF handouts referred to by Elisa MacDonald, please click on the following link:

http://rbteach.com/skillful-team-leader-handouts

For specific documents:

**Alone Together:**
http://rbteach.com/sites/default/files/stl_the_skillful_team_leader_pp._29_33.pdf

**Indicators of High Function and High Impact Teams:**
http://rbteach.com/sites/default/files/stl_indicators_of_high_function_and_high_impact.pdf

**Snapshot of a Team:**
Additional Resources


The Data Coach’s Guide to Improving Learning for All Students by Nancy Love, Katherine E. Stiles, Susan Mundry and Kathryn DiRanna. (Corwin, 2008)

Bruce Tuckman’s Stages of a Team
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-l64ihOGSM&list=PLbu6naAjG_K93h0wjyn1b1EHQl1Q2pH_y&index=9
Upcoming Webinar Series

The Skillful Team Leader, an upcoming fee-based webinar series for team leaders and those who support them, is offered through Research for Better Teaching and facilitated by Elisa MacDonald. Participants will virtually collaborate to apply a skillful approach to their own hurdles, such as mindsets that limit student and teacher growth, low-impact team discourse, and resistance that makes change efforts seem impossible.

Time: 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm
Dates: March 11 and March 25, 2015
Let’s Connect

Elisa MacDonald:
skillfulteamleader@gmail.com
elisamacdonald@gmail.com

For book orders:
Special Book Price for Webinar participants:
$34.95 (retail price $38.95)
To order, please call RBT at (978) 264-9449, ask for Publications, and mention code STL2014.