



Strategies to Support a Positive School Climate

Collaboration

Collaboration refers to 'connections between and among people and groups to share interests and concerns, and create visions for the future' (Todaro, 2005, p. 137). A key component of collaboration that has positive implications for employees is participation in decisions that have a direct impact on their role or working environment.



Why is it important?

- Collaborative leadership styles contribute to positive organisational change (Harris, 2012).
- Participation in school-level decision-making is a predictor of organisational commitment (Ingersoll & May, 2012).
- Collaborative school environments can support improvements in student learning (Moolenaar, 2012).

In Practice

A collaborative school culture entails employee participation in discussions and decisions that directly impact them or the school environment. Employees should have involvement in the decision-making processes and, ultimately, a say in decisions that are made.



What can schools do?

- Create shared mission and vision statements that unify staff towards a common set of goals and philosophies.
- Develop a sense of community, where everybody understands and respects each other's unique expertise and the role that plays in problem solving.
- Create an environment where staff are regularly consulted as part of a formal decision-making process by developing both formal and informal channels to solicit feedback.
- Create methods for staff to share detailed information on both existing and newly created school policies and procedures (e.g., working documents, plans and resources).
- Provide transparency around any changes that result from staff input (e.g., in meetings and reports).
- Facilitate the structure and expectation for a collaborative work environment by establishing small collaborative teams that must work regularly together on shared assignments or problems.

By following these suggestions, over time, schools will develop formal procedures for a collaborative decision-making process.



Leader Reflection

Empower staff by involving them in every step of the decision-making process.

- Model a climate of open communication and collaboration by implementing an open-door policy or setting aside regular office hours to discuss staff concerns.
- Set regularly scheduled meetings, with well-defined agendas, to review goals, discuss roadblocks and share potential solutions.
- Collectively establish a team charter which outlines a set of norms meant to guide interactions during the decision-making process (e.g., being a respectful listener).
- Develop a central online hub for relevant documentation (e.g., Google Folder) and broadly communicate that this shared material is available to all key stakeholders.
- Create opportunities for distributed leadership, building further capacity through a shared willingness to lead colleagues through decision-making and consensus building.
- Use online survey tools designed to gather formal feedback related to staff concerns (e.g., TTFM Staff Survey).

References

- Harris, A. (2012). Distributed leadership: Implications for the role of the principal. *Journal of Management Development*, 31(1), 7-17.
- Ingersoll, R. M., & May, H. (2012). The magnitude, destinations, and determinants of mathematics and science teacher turnover. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 34(4), 435-464.
- Moolenaar, N. M. (2012). A social network perspective on teacher collaboration in schools: Theory, methodology, and applications. *American Journal of Education*, 119(1), 7-39.
- Todaro, J. B. (2005). Community collaborations at work and in practice today: An A to Z overview. *Resource Sharing & Information Networks*, 18(1-2), 137-156.