

Quincy School District Collaboration

Attempts at school/district improvement cannot be individual and fragmented but rather must be embedded in collaborative practices that address the day-to-day needs of students (Louis & Marks, 1996).

Collaboration Goal:

All staff working together in teams of two or more for the purpose of improving instructional practice and increasing student achievement.

Collaboration Focus: Student Achievement

- **What do we want students to know?** *What knowledge, skills and dispositions must all students acquire as a result of this grade level, this course, and this unit we are about to teach?*
- **How will we know if they have learned it?** *How can we check for understanding on an ongoing basis in our individual classrooms?*
- **What will we do if they have not learned it?** *What steps can we put in place to provide students who struggle with additional time and support for learning in a way that is timely, directive, and systematic.*
- **What will we do if they have learned it?** *How can we differentiate instruction so that the needs of all students are being met?*

Participant Expectations:

- All staff will attend and actively participate in planned team activities each week
- Participants will support team decisions
- Staff will take responsibility for team/building instructional practices and outcomes

Collaboration Guidelines:

- Schedule/focus is developed in advance by site leadership teams and/or department/teacher leaders and agendas distributed prior to collaboration to all participants as well as building principals and central office administrators
- Schedules are developed to provide a continuity of focus/activities in a timely/sequential manner
- Focus is on quality implementation of fewer initiatives rather than frequent, new initiatives.
- Agendas/plans are part of a coherent school improvement plan and are structured with clearly mapped goals and objectives
- Time is spent focused on strengthening instructional practice and meeting school-wide/district-wide achievement goals.
- Collaboration activities may include time to implement training in teams of two or more.
- Decisions are made by consensus
- There are clearly defined goals, outcomes and/or product expectations
- There are clearly defined roles and responsibilities
- There are clearly defined team norms
- All staff members are organized into high-performing collaborative teams
- Common agenda frameworks are established for all collaborative teams; collaborative teams may be made up of teachers, paraeducators and/or support staff.
- There is an identification and ongoing use of common student-level data across all collaborative teams and within specific content teams

Examples of Specific Activities that Focus on Student Achievement:

- Frequent examination of student data and instructional/intervention planning based on the data
- Routine use of data to understand how student achievement is impacted by changes to instructional practice
- Sharing of successful instructional/intervention strategies
- Frequent review of student work
- Identification and implementation of common instructional practices related to school/district goals
- Student learning needs discussed and shared, reviewed, and feedback provided on instructional practices that address these needs

COLLABORATION LEADERSHIP

Key Elements of an Effective Team Meeting

- A very “tight” agenda is followed that includes standardized, district-wide elements
- Agenda is distributed to participants sufficiently in advance (generally by Thursday before a Monday collaboration meeting with a copy to the principal)
- Participant roles are defined and assigned (facilitator, recorder, time keeper, participant)
- Participants review agenda and come prepared
- Meeting/Group Norms are established and followed – sample provided if needed
- At meeting, the agenda/focus for the next meeting is collaboratively developed
- Minutes/meeting summary are prepared and distributed (include specific work products and when possible make available to all staff in building)

Collaboration Meeting Focus and Activities

- Student data is examined frequently and used to guide instructional/intervention plans
- Student data is used routinely to understand how student achievement is impacted by changes to instructional practice
- Participants share and develop successful instructional/intervention strategies
- Student work is reviewed frequently by teams
- Common instructional practices are identified and developed to help reach school and district goals
- Student learning needs are shared, discussed and reviewed to provide feedback on instructional practices intended to address those needs

Effective Leadership to Assure Implementation of Defined Collaboration Activities with Fidelity

- **Superintendent:**
 - Provides clearly communicated expectations and guidelines
 - Assures that framework for district-wide collaboration calendar/schedule is set annually with input from District Leadership Team
 - Establishes regular feedback and reporting system for principals to share results as well as challenges
 - Trains, coaches and supports principals, where needed, in how to implement effective collaboration practices with their building teams
- **Principals:**
 - Provide clearly communicated expectations and guidelines to all team members
 - Actively engage with team leaders and others in selecting and shaping the focus for collaboration meetings
 - Train, coach and support team leaders and participants, where needed, in how to lead and participate in team meetings
 - Establish regular feedback and reporting system for team leaders to share results and address challenges
 - Regularly circulate and observe, monitor or participate with collaborative teams during the full collaboration time
 - Keep superintendent and other district administrators informed in advance weekly regarding planned collaboration activities
 - Model effective collaboration meeting practices when leading staff/team meetings
- **Team Leaders:**
 - Refine and disseminate team meeting agendas prior to meetings
 - Assure that “Key Elements” listed above are evident in team meetings
 - Establish regular feedback and reporting/communication system for team members
 - Assure that meeting minutes and other meeting artifacts are regularly and promptly forwarded to the principal