

PROJECT SUCCESS NOVEMBER GATHERING NOTES

Putting Our Foot in the Door

But not to sell anything

What has become clear to you since we last met? *Benjamin Franklin*

One thing that is clear: we are poised on the precipice of profound change.



It's scary but we also have an opportunity to shape that change – to design the future.

All we have to do: Decide what matters. Do it.

We have already agreed that collaboration (finding time to think, learn, work together effectively) matters to us. We have already agreed that our goal is success for each child.

But, poised on the precipice, we need to reconfirm – **what is success?** When we look through the lens of our vulnerable learners, what defines success? Is our work, this year, ensuring success? And how do we know?



Because if school isn't moving students toward success that is meaningful, what is our purpose, as Deb Meier puts it, for incarcerating the children of SD68? (See the video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aBFzz2HAjH0>. For a lively and very interesting blog, check <http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/Bridging-Differences/> with Deb Meier and Diane Ratvitch.)

Coming back to our (perennial) question – what is success? We agreed on a number of ideas.

It's important to talk/argue/debate/rehash/revisit this question with your team because if we don't know what we're looking for, how will we know if what we're doing is working? And if we want, for example, confident, engaged students who take risks and are resilient, is what we're doing going to move them toward that? (And how will we know.)



But **do we need to collaborate to ensure success?** Are we sure? Because many people (even us on our tired days!) are choosing to close their doors. Maybe that's just the way it is!

Deb Meier says, "We can't say that's the way it is, what can I do about it. My school runs this way....there is always a little crack somewhere that you can widen."



Behind the door is stuff! Strengths. Passions. Gifts. And gaps. (We all have gaps. How can we know it all?)

Why don't we leap at the chance of collaboration?

Perhaps because too often the people at the door don't want to learn from us or with us; they want to "fix" us by "selling" us a better way that we need to "buy into."

So **what are the criteria for powerful collaboration** and some strong example so we can build toward effective practice? Here is a list from our brainstorm. (See our wiki for our examples and non-examples.)

- Respect for professional autonomy
- Each person contributes and each contribution is valued

- Time to have enough thorough and deep conversations (along with flexible quick check-ins)
- Check points (reflection) with goals (How are we doing? How do we know?)
- Well defined purpose
- Well defined structure for collaboration (flexible, but clear)
- Relevance: value here and now
- Safe learning environment (trust, respect, welcoming) to take risks, to try and fail, to wonder and figure out.
- Measures that create information that increases our capacity to meet our goals

Technique and technology are important, but adding trust is the issue of the decade. *Tom Peters*

The foundation of collaboration is trust. In our trust survey, almost all the surveys identified two statements as **not yet** happening in our schools:

- I believe that everyone on my team makes meaningful contributions to our work.
- I believe that everyone on my team is pulling in the same direction.

Can you imagine how much more powerful we'd be together if these statements were true for all of us? See wiki for our trust building ideas. (Survey: http://files.solution-tree.com/pdfs/Reproducibles_BPLC/thetrustonourteamsurvey.pdf.)

There is another challenge in the way of effective collaboration: **we want to get an "A"**. We do the work ourselves so it's "right." Of course, we lose – first, because we wear ourselves out and also because we don't benefit from the rich diversity around us. The other challenge: we don't want to share until everything is "perfect." Of course, a perfect product doesn't need a team – it's finished. Only our not-yet-perfect ideas need a team. Also, although we have ideas, we worry that they are "obvious." But we shouldn't worry: our "obvious" ideas are amazing to others: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xcmI5SSQLmE>.



To collaborate effectively, **we need to continue to share our obvious, not-yet-perfect ideas** with each other. But we also have to give and receive feedback to develop our ideas, deepen our work, and impact learning. Real feedback. Feedback that will help us learn. (See our wiki for notes from our sharing/feedback session.)

To be effective, feedback must provide a recipe for future action.
Dylan Wiliam

Like it or not, all teams are potentially dysfunctional. This is inevitable because they are made up of fallible, imperfect human beings.
Patrick Lencioni

But feeling safe to hear feedback that isn't "good job" can be difficult! We are back to trust! That's why we should begin with "norming" exercises. Because without norms, it's like thinking we can read each other's minds! If you are having regular team meetings (I hope you are!!), then you might want to try this: http://files.solution-tree.com/pdfs/Reproducibles_LBD2nd/developingnorms.pdf. And check out the norms we developed for our meetings on the wiki.

Innovation is fostered by information gather from new connections; from insights gained by journeys into other disciplines or places; from collegial networks and fluid, open boundaries. *Margaret Wheatley*

We have the information we need - everything from the small things that make a big difference to big things that make your head spin. All we have to do is open the door to the treasures within our community.

If each of us is a connector to share the information, to put our foot in the door to find new stories, then we'll create the conditions to create the future we desire.

What will you share? Who will you share with?
What's ONE thing that you can do tomorrow to make things a bit better?

A REMINDER:

I am creating portfolios for your school. The more information, the more we can learn!
Send me your obvious and not-yet-perfect stuff!
All our notes and information can be found at <http://workingtogether.pbworks.com/Success>

