WHAT TEACHER LEADERS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT . . .

Creating norms

Any teams or groups that meet on a regular basis will have smoother working relationships if they begin by developing a set of operating norms or ground rules. This activity will walk you through the steps to create norms for a team or group.

PREPARATION:

Before the meeting, write the list of norms at the right on a sheet of chart paper and post on the meeting room wall. In addition, refer to the handout on Page 11 and create six more posters, one for each category:

- Time
- Listening
- Confidentiality
- Decision making
- Participation
- Expectations

Place these posters on the meeting room walls as well.

SUPPLIES: Chart paper, sticky notes, pens/pencils.

TIME: Two hours.

DIRECTIONS:

1. **Indicate** to the team that effective teams generally have a set of norms that governs individual behavior, facilitates the work of the team, and enables the team to accomplish its task.

Sample norms.

We agree to …

- Meet only when there is a meaningful agenda.
- Start and end on time.
- Allow everyone to contribute an agenda item.
- Post the agenda before the meeting.
- Avoid interrupting others when they are speaking.
- Dress comfortably but appropriately.
- Have healthy refreshments.
- Have a different facilitator and recorder for each meeting.
- Differentiate between brainstorming and discussion.
- Address only schoolwide issues.
- Express disagreement with ideas, not individuals.
- Feel responsible to express differing opinions within the meeting.
- Maintain confidentiality regarding disagreements expressed during the meeting.
- Reach decisions by consensus.
- Listen respectfully to all ideas.
- Conduct group business in front of the group.
- Conduct personal business outside of the meeting.
- Silence all cell phones during meetings.
- Avoid checking for or sending text messages or e-mail messages during meetings.
- Avoid personal grooming (brushing hair, applying make-up, cleaning fingernails) during meetings.

2. **Point out** the sample norms that are posted in the room. Point out the other six posters and the questions that are posed on each poster. *Time: 15 minutes.*

3. **Recommend** to the team that it establish a set of norms:
   • To ensure that all individuals have the opportunity to contribute in the meeting;
   • To increase productivity and effectiveness; and
   • To facilitate the achievement of its goals.

4. **Place a pad** of sticky notes on the table and give every person the same kind of writing tool. Ensure that all sticky notes are the same color.

5. **Ask each person** to reflect on and record behaviors they consider ideal behaviors for a group. Ask them to write one idea on each sticky note. *Time: 10 minutes.*

6. **Invite the team** members to place their ideas on the charts at the front of the room. Ask them to refrain from discussion while doing so.

7. **Read each norm** that has been suggested. Allow time for the group members to discuss each idea. As each recommended norm is read aloud, ask the group to determine if it is similar to another idea that already has been expressed. Sticky notes with similar ideas should be grouped together. *Time: 30-45 minutes.*

8. **When all of the sticky notes** have been organized, assign two individuals to work together to write the norms suggested under each heading. In some cases, there may be only one norm; in others, there could be several. Use the worksheet on Page 5 to record these norms. *Time: 30 minutes.*

9. **Read each of the proposed** norms aloud to the group. Determine whether the group can support the norms before the group adopts them. You could ask for a thumbs up to indicate support or find another way for each team member to indicate to the team his or her willingness to abide by these ground rules. *Time: 30 minutes.*

10. **When the team agrees** that it will abide by this norm, the facilitator writes the norm on a new sheet of chart paper with the label:
    _____ **TEAM NORMS**
    Leave that poster in the team's meeting room for future meetings.

11. **The facilitator should also transcribe** the norms onto an $8\frac{1}{2}$ by 11 sheet of paper and distribute to all team members.

12. **The facilitator should review** the meeting norms at the beginning of each meeting to ensure that participants are regularly reminded about the agreements they have made to each other. ◆

For more information about setting norms, see the Aug/Sept 1999 issue of *Tools for Schools* which is available in the members-only area of the NSDC web site.

Ask each person to reflect on and record behaviors they consider ideal behaviors for a group.

WHEN ESTABLISHING NORMS, CONSIDER	PROPOSED NORM	NSDC TOOL
TIME • When do we meet? • Will we set a beginning and ending time? • Will we start and end on time?		
LISTENING • How will we encourage listening? • How will we discourage interrupting?		
CONFIDENTIALITY • Will the meetings be open? • Will what we say in the meeting be held in confidence? • What can be said after the meeting?		
DECISION MAKING • How will we make decisions? • Are we an advisory or a decision-making body? • Will we reach decisions by consensus? • How will we deal with conflicts?		
PARTICIPATION • How will we encourage everyone's participation? • Will we have an attendance policy?		
EXPECTATIONS • What do we expect from members? • Are there requirements for participation?		