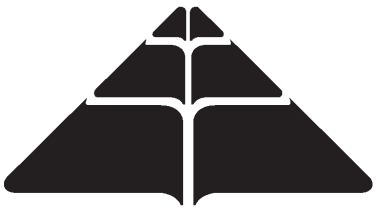
Collaborative Tools for Learning Teams in a PLC at Work

William M. Ferriter

b.link/2023collabtools

Solution Tree Author and Associate | Career Classroom Teacher
wferriter@outlook.com
buildingconfidentlearners.com



Solution Tree

Action Planning Guide for Breakout Presentation

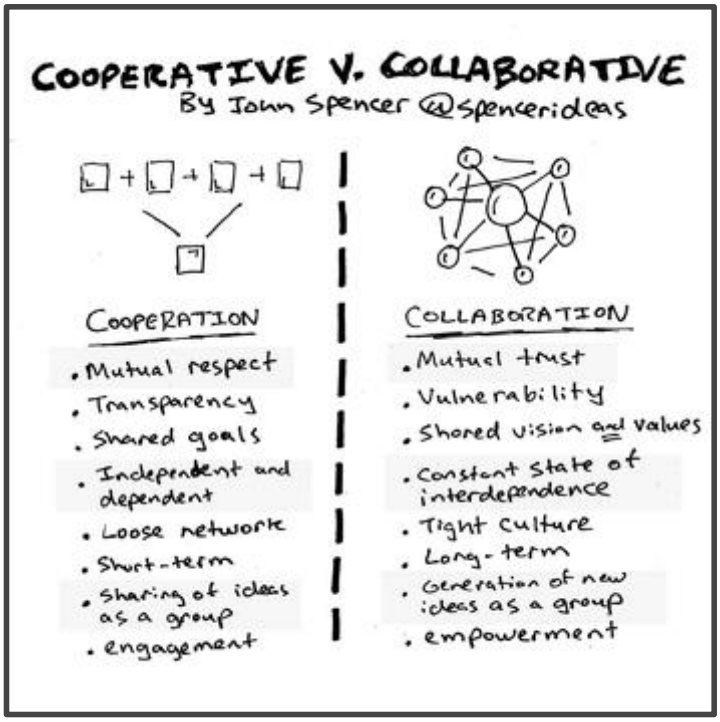
The focusing statement for this keynote presentation is: “I wonder how we can create structures to help our team function more efficiently and effectively.” Throughout this presentation, record “what if we tried” statements that describe action steps that might be worth considering in your schools.

Focusing statement: I wonder how we can create structures to help our team function more efficiently and effectively.	
Action statements: *Always begin action statements with the phrase, “What if we tried …”*	**Additional details:** *How will this move your school forward? Have you tried this before? How will your colleagues respond? What will you have to do to build their capacity to do this work?*

© 2023 Ferriter • SolutionTree.com
Reproducible.

Task 1: Is Your Team *Cooperative* or *Collaborative*?

School change expert John Spencer once argued that there is a clear difference between teams that are *cooperative* and teams that are *collaborative*. Use this handout to reflect on your team's current reality.



Question	Your Response
What is the difference between respecting your peers and trusting your peers?	
Can you complete your most important work ***alone***, or does your most important work ***depend on contributions*** from your team?	
Do you ***share* ideas** with one another or ***generate* ideas** together?	

© 2023 Ferriter • SolutionTree.com
Reproducible.

Task 2: Understanding the Impact Personalities Have on Collaboration

Session presenter Bill Ferriter argues that you can't collaborate with one another in a meaningful way until you have a better understanding of the impact that your personalities have on one another. Use this handout to think through the role that personalities are playing on your current learning team.



Question	Your Response
Which tool would be a good metaphor for your personality? Why?	
What is it about your personality that moves your learning team forward?	
What is it about your personality that can hold your learning team back?	

© 2023 Ferriter • SolutionTree.com
Reproducible.

Sample Answers

Tool	Strengths	Weaknesses
Saw	• Cuts away extra ideas • Cuts to the main point quickly • Divides big tasks into manageable pieces • Can find small points hidden in bigger ideas • Doesn't waste time	• Can be rough around the edges • Can sometimes work too fast • Can sometimes cut the wrong stuff • Can't fix their mistakes • If not careful, it can sometimes hurt people's feelings.
Drill	• Breaks through barriers • Speeds up group work • Makes the most of group efforts—a little work goes a long way • Targets very specific ideas accurately and carefully • Can look past the surface and get to the hidden ideas underneath	• Can be a little bit "old-fashioned" • Not always the "coolest tool" in the box • Can't fix their mistakes • If not careful, it can sometimes hurt people's feelings. • Prefers to keep things simple
Wrench	• Tightens up loose parts of a group's work • Brings people together • Connects the separate parts of a group • Strengthens the weak parts of a group • Helps to repair "broken parts" of a group	• Can only work on one type of part • Is very rigid and hard; not flexible at all • Struggles with doing careful or delicate work • Doesn't like to "undo" their work • Can sometimes rub other pieces the wrong way
Pencil	• Is a very creative tool. You can design anything with a pencil. • Can do very careful work if sharpened • Is a common tool that everyone enjoys and knows how to use • Has an eraser—Is willing to start over again • Can be used to communicate • Good at many tasks	• Can break easily • Doesn't necessarily make bold decisions • Is somewhat ordinary—doesn't always see new exciting opportunities • Can get "lost" easily
Hammer	• Is a bold and brave tool • Can do the difficult work—heavy lifting • Can get to the bottom of things quickly • Can fix some of their mistakes • Brings "the point home" • Is probably the most frequently used tool when you're building something	• Can do a lot of damage if you're not careful • Can break things easily • Sometimes damage done can't be fixed • Not particularly good at doing careful work
Screwdriver	• A persistent tool; doesn't stop working until the job is done • Stays focused on one task at a time • Keeps working even when it meets resistance • Joins other things together	• A slow tool; takes a while to get jobs done • A somewhat "old-fashioned" tool; not necessarily interested in newer ways of doing things • Can only do one task at a time
Ruler	• A very precise and careful tool • Can be used to measure things exactly • Tends to follow "rules" • A smart tool—does the thinking for projects. • Measures how well you are meeting your project goals	• A slow tool—wants to work super carefully • Struggles to be creative; not designed to make new things • Instead, designed to see how new things "measure up" against expectations

© 2023 Ferriter • SolutionTree.com
Reproducible.

Tool: Establishing Team Roles

High-functioning teams are defined by their ability to generate and test new ideas with one another. Generating and testing new ideas efficiently and effectively depends on having a clearly defined set of roles that individual members fill for one another. Use this worksheet to identify individuals on your learning team who are uniquely suited to fill each of those roles.

Name of Role	Description of Role	Skills Necessary for Filling Role	**Members Suited for Filling This Role** *(List all members who have the skills to fill this role. That way, you can easily rotate roles or divide larger work assignments.)*
Team Leader	❑ Organize agendas for weekly meetings. ❑ Address conflict between team members. ❑ Lead consensus-building conversations. ❑ Keep team focused on yearly goals.	❑ Strong relationship builder ❑ Good sense for the overall direction of both the team and the school ❑ Willingness to listen to all perspectives ❑ A commitment to seeing everyone move forward together	
Team Challenger	❑ Challenge the current practices of the learning team. ❑ Bring and brainstorm new alternatives and approaches worth considering. ❑ Constantly ask, "What if we tried _____?" when a team is working to generate new ideas.	❑ Strong professional knowledge base and learning network to draw ideas from ❑ Good sense for the professional strengths and weaknesses of the learning team ❑ Ability to look at data summarizing the team's current reality and offer logical suggestions for next steps	
Team Producer	❑ Take notes during meetings. ❑ Develop a logical system for organizing team's shared documents. ❑ Produce first drafts of shared documents for team's review. ❑ Find ways to accurately communicate team decisions.	❑ Skilled with all kinds of document creation—Google Docs, PowerPoints, PDFs, etc. ❑ Logical thinker with strong organizational skills ❑ Good at listening to and summarizing ideas generated in group conversations ❑ Able to participate in conversations and create content at the same time	
Team Encourager	❑ Provide words of encouragement	❑ Generally optimistic; skilled at	

© 2023 Ferriter • SolutionTree.com
Reproducible.

REPRODUCIBLE

	and affirmation both during and beyond weekly meetings. ❏ Move teams forward during moments of stagnation or apathy. ❏ Monitor the attitudes and workload of individual members and provide support when necessary.	finding things worth celebrating regardless of the circumstance ❏ Has strong relationships with—and genuine concern for—all members of the team ❏ Always willing to find time to lend a hand when others need help	
Team Realist	❏ Evaluate team decisions against the current workload of the team. ❏ Question team decisions that seem unrealistic or impossible to pull off. ❏ Give voice to concerns that might otherwise go unspoken.	❏ Ability to understand the work capacity of the learning team ❏ Strong sense of all of the different projects and initiatives that a team is currently tackling ❏ Can express skepticism, concern, or doubt in a professional way	

Questions to consider:

1. Are there any roles that your team will have no trouble filling? How will that help your team?

2. Are there any roles that will be difficult for your team to fill? How might that hurt your team?

3. Do you think that rotating team roles is important? Why or why not? How would rotating team roles help your team? How would rotating roles hurt your team?

© 2023 Ferriter • SolutionTree.com
Reproducible.

REPRODUCIBLE

Tool: Developing Team Norms

One of the most important steps that highly functioning learning teams take is developing a clear set of team norms. *Norms* are the common patterns of participation that define the shared work of any group. Developing a clear set of norms is essential for ensuring that a group functions in a way that meets the individual needs and expectations of each of its members. When teams fail to develop clear norms, members can feel frustrated during the time that they spend collaborating with others.

For learning community expert Daniel Venables (*The Practices of Authentic PLCs*, 2011, Kindle Location pp. 661–675), developing norms can be done in two steps:

> **Sharing pet peeves and essential traits:** Venables recommends that teams begin their norm-setting process by allowing members to share both the kinds of behaviors that drive them crazy while working in groups and the key traits that others will notice about them while working in groups. He calls those our "peeves and traits." Sharing our peeves and traits early in a norm-setting process can help to make individual needs and expectations transparent to everyone.
>
> **Brainstorming four to six norms:** After identifying the peeves and traits of individual members, Venables recommends that teams brainstorm a list of four to six expectations that will govern the shared work of a learning team. Limiting a list of norms to less than six expectations accomplishes two goals: It forces teams to prioritize the behaviors that they hope to see out of one another and it makes it easier for individuals to adhere to the expectations of their colleagues. Longer lists of norms quickly become irrelevant and ignored because they are impossible to remember.

Use this worksheet to guide your team as you develop norms that define common patterns of participation for your collaborative work.

© 2023 Ferriter • SolutionTree.com
Reproducible.

Tool: Developing Team Norms

Use this worksheet to guide your team as you develop norms that define common patterns of participation for your collaborative work.

Step One: Sharing Our Pet Peeves and Essential Traits
Each member should share one pet peeve that they have while working in groups with others and one essential trait that others will notice while working in a group with them. These peeves and traits will be used to develop norms in step two.

Team Member	Pet Peeve That I Have While Working in Groups With Others	Essential Trait You Will Notice While Working in Groups With Me
Sample: *Bill Ferriter*	*It drives me nuts when people are on their devices while we are engaged in important conversations.*	*I make decisions quickly and am almost always ready to move on. That can drive people who need more think time than me crazy.*

Additional questions for consideration:

What patterns in your own behavior are likely to bother other members of your learning team? Why?

What patterns in the behavior of other team members are likely to bother you? Why?

What are some common actions will we need to take if we are going to make sure that our meetings feel productive to all of our individual members?

© 2023 Ferriter • SolutionTree.com
Reproducible.

Step Two: Brainstorming Our Norms

Now, brainstorm four to six norms that will govern the work of your learning team. Remember that norms are explicit statements that describe how your team will act in individual situations. If followed, norms should create environments that address the peeves and traits of individual members of your learning team detailed in step one.

Team Behavior and Process	Our Norms
Making Shared Decisions ***Sample**: We will use our "fist-to-five" rating tool to give everyone the opportunity to express their level of agreement with shared decisions.*	
Handling Disagreements ***Sample**: We won't move forward with important decisions until everyone has had the chance to be heard and to offer alternatives to the ideas we are considering.*	
Showing Respect to One Another ***Sample**: We will be active contributors in every meeting—adding thoughts, offering suggestions, sharing our opinions.*	
Structuring Our Meetings ***Sample**: We will have a clear agenda for every meeting that includes no more than three items.*	

Additional questions for consideration:

Which of our group's norms will be the easiest for you to follow? The hardest?

Based on our team's unique set of peeves and traits, which of our group's norms will be the most important to ensuring that our collaborative work feels productive for everyone?

How will we hold each other accountable for adhering to our team's norms? How will we celebrate moments when team members are following our team's norms?

© 2023 Ferriter • SolutionTree.com
Reproducible.

Tool: Essential Standards Chart

What Do We Expect Students to Learn?					
Grade: 8	Subject: Science	Unit: Evolution of Landforms and Lifeforms	Team Members: Joyce, Bill, Katelyn		
Description of Standard	**Example of Rigor**	**Prerequisite Skills**	**When Taught**	**Common Assessments**	**Extension Standards**
What is the essential standard to be learned? Describe in student-friendly vocabulary.	*What does proficient student work look like? Provide an example or a description.*	*What prior knowledge, skills, and vocabulary are needed for a student to master this standard?*	*When will this standard be taught during our unit?*	*What assessments will be used to measure student mastery? Link to them here.*	*What will we do when students have already learned this standard?*
I understand how both landforms and lifeforms have evolved over time. This means I can summarize the evidence (geology, fossils, comparative anatomy) used to classify living things and to support the theory of evolution by natural selection. This also means that I can explain the relationship between genetic variation and an organism's ability to adapt to its environment.	Explain how natural selection would have led to the development of giraffes with long necks as opposed to giraffes with short necks.	To master this concept, students will need to already: • Know the meaning of the word *evolve*. • Be able to give examples of evolution beyond the natural world—things like improvements in technologies, changes in personalities, etc. • Know what fossils are and how scientists collect them. • Know the meaning of the word *adapt*. Prerequisites Pretest.	This instruction should happen during the last three weeks of our unit on evolution.	Evolution Quiz Study Guide: Evolution and Natural Selection Quiz Relative and Absolute Dating Quiz Evolution Myths Edpuzzle	Tiered Task Card on Fossils **Extension question to answer:** Evolution involves a change over time. The way humans communicate has evolved. Certainly, telephones have changed over time. The first telephone was the size of a shoebox. Today, a telephone can fit in the palm of your hand and can send images and sound. Explain how the evolution of the telephone could be compared to the evolution of a species over time in nature.
Additional instructional materials to consider: *Student Unit Overview Sheet* | Reading: Blood Amber | Evolution All Around You Activity | Evolution Quizizz | Edpuzzle: Darwin's Theories | Slides: Evolution and Natural Selection					

Source: Adapted from Buffum, Mattos, & Weber, *Simplifying Response to Intervention,* 2012

© 2023 Ferriter • SolutionTree.com
Reproducible.

REPRODUCIBLE

Tool: Fist-to-Five Rating Tool

Each time our team comes together to make important decisions, we will ask each member to rate their level of agreement with our team's direction on scale from one to five. Use the following descriptors to decide on the rating that you will give to each decision.

Rating	Descriptor
5	**Why didn't we make this decision sooner?** This idea is great, and we've got the capacity to make it happen without investing a ton of new effort. I've fallen in love with this idea and I'm willing to lead any efforts to make it become reality.
4	**This is a decision that I completely support**. I really believe that it aligns well with our school's mission and just know it is going to help our students to succeed. I'm willing to move forward and am also willing to put some time, energy, and effort into helping to make this happen.
3	**I believe in this decision, but question our timing.** I think this is a great idea and definitely worth pursuing, I'm just not sure that this is the right time to move forward. I'm excited to see where this decision goes, but I think we should set it aside for now. I won't be opposed if others invest energy into making this happen, but I can't promise that I'll help.
2	**I'm not totally comfortable with this decision, but I can see it has merit.** I'm willing to move forward with the decision as it currently stands—and I won't put any barriers in our team's way as we work to make this happen—but I'm probably going to need some practical and philosophical support before I'll completely embrace this action.
1	**This is a decision that I have strong reservations about.** While I can see some potential in taking this action, there are several things that we need to consider before I can be comfortable with this. Can we do a bit more talking before moving forward, please?
0	**There is no way I could possibly support this decision.** In fact, I think that supporting this decision would be irresponsible because it doesn't align with our school's mission and may even harm our students. We shouldn't even consider this action.
Note to teams: If any member rates a decision a three or less, **you haven't reached consensus yet**. When that happens, you must continue your conversations with one another. The member with concerns should be ready to articulate them to the team. The remaining members should be ready to take those concerns into account and to make changes to your team's decision.	

Additional questions to consider:

1. **Are there members of your team who feel hesitant about this decision?** How do you know? What will you do to elicit their thinking and to honor their positions?

2. **What changes would you be willing to make to your own position around this issue?** Remember that flexibility is a key trait to building consensus.

© 2023 Ferriter • SolutionTree.com
Reproducible.

Tool: Building a Common Formative Assessment

Common formative assessments are fundamental to the work of professional learning teams. It is impossible to relentlessly question the value of instructional practices without collecting reliable evidence on the impact that those practices are having on learners. Use this template to develop three potential assessment questions for one of the essential learning targets that your team has decided to teach to your students.

Essential Learning Target to Be Assessed			
DOK Level of Target *(circle one)*	**Best Strategy for Assessing This Target** *(circle one)*	**Percentage of Questions on District Benchmarks/ Standardized Tests That Cover This Target**	**How Important Is This Target for Future Success in and/or Beyond School?**
❑ Recall and Reproduction ❑ Skills and Concepts ❑ Strategic Thinking ❑ Extended Thinking	❑ Selected Response ❑ Constructed Response ❑ Performance Tasks ❑ Other:	❑ 0%–5% ❑ 6%–8% ❑ 9%–13% ❑ More than 13%	❑ Not important ❑ Somewhat important ❑ Very important ❑ Essential
Potential Assessment Questions			
Question		**Expected Answer**	**Common Mistakes We Might See**

Three important common formative assessment reminders:

1. A good CFA will cover no more than three essential learning targets. Limiting the length of a CFA makes it possible for teachers to analyze and then act on data collected in a timely manner.
2. A good CFA should include at least three questions for each learning target that is being tested. That protects data sets against the impact of questions that are poorly written.
3. The complexity of a question should align with the complexity of the learning target it is designed to measure. That means performance tasks are unnecessary for lower order learning targets but essential for higher-order learning targets.

© 2023 Ferriter • SolutionTree.com
Reproducible.

Reflect on This: What Is Your A-Ha, Amen, and Now What?

Spend a minute thinking about what you have learned so far during this session. While thinking, record an a-ha, amen, or now what in the chart below:

	Your Response
My A-Ha: An idea that you hadn't considered before, but that makes a ton of sense to you	
My Amen: An idea that validates something that you are already doing in your work	
My Now What: An idea that you are going to take back and begin using immediately	

© 2023 Ferriter • SolutionTree.com
Reproducible.

Tool: Learning Team Quarterly Reflection

Leadership expert Dan Rockwell argues that groups interested in driving positive change should regularly answer four simple questions together: 1. What should we keep doing? 2. What do we need to improve? 3. What do we need to stop doing? 4. What do we need to start doing? To strengthen the work of your learning team, use this reflection template to answer those questions four times a year.

What do we need to *keep* doing? Why? What evidence do you have that these efforts are making a difference for teachers? For students?	**What do we need to *improve* on?** Why? What evidence do you have that these efforts could make a difference for teachers or students with a bit of tweaking?
What should we *stop* doing? Why? What evidence do you have that these efforts aren't worth the time and energy that we invest in them?	**What do we need to *start* doing?** Why? How would these new actions make a difference for teachers or students? How are they better than the work we have been tackling?

© 2023 Ferriter • SolutionTree.com
Reproducible.