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Date: March 18, 2024
Team being evaluated: 8th Grade Core Team

Part I. Description of Team

I am currently a part of an eighth grade core team at my current school. My school is a Pre-K through eighth grade system that has grade level teams. Our purpose as a team is to work collaboratively together to create an immersive and vigorous curriculum, fun and educational experiences, and look out for the well being of our students both inside and outside of the classroom. This purpose is implied across the team as we are all working towards the same goal to create a well balanced educated young adults that are prepared to enter high school since we are a sending school and send students to multiple different high schools in the surrounding area.

Our group norms were made explicit in the beginning of the year when our group was first formed but have become more implicit as the year has progressed. We have a shared belief of open and shared communication, asking questions when needing clarification, shared roles in completing tasks, and having a good sense of humor. Since our team has many new team members this year, we have been able to function well with our created norms because we all have the same shared vision and mission and are able to collaborate well together.

Our core team is composed of an ELA teacher, math teacher, social studies teacher, and science teacher. We also collaborate with a special educator, paraprofessionals, math and literacy interventionists, an educational coach, technology specialists, dean of students, curriculum coordinator and principal. On a daily basis, it is usually just the four core teachers collaborating on day to day operations, but we do

have a weekly meeting in which most, if not all, of the members previously stated get together to discuss current and upcoming events, student concerns, and academic goals. We have a shared google document that has an agenda template for each meeting. It is a living document that everyone on the team has access to at any given moment. We often put in discussion topics that we think of during the week that need to be brought up to the larger team to discuss at our weekly meetings. We project the agenda on the board so it is visible to everyone and we are all able to see what needs to be discussed during our meeting. We also review previous agendas to circle back to old topics to see if there has been closure or if we need to put other supports in place. Our decisions we make as a group are often consensus-based. We usually talk about different avenues in which we can approach a situation and we collectively pick the best outcome for everyone involved. There are some exceptions when a decision is made by our administration team in which we have to comply with what they need done. This is rare because our administration team often works with us if a situation arises to get other opinions. When we are not in our weekly meeting, we often communicate face to face when we are at school or via email or text message. We are often communicating to one another multiple times within any given school day.

Part II. Rating the Team
Presence of Defining Characteristics of Collaboration

- The team has at least one **commonly agreed upon goal**

1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Strongly Disagree	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree

Evidence: We all agree that we are working towards preparing our students to enter high school. We are preparing them to be successful in their academic courses as well as helping them become well rounded citizens.

- Interactions among team members demonstrate **parity**, in terms of the value placed on the input of all team members;

1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Strongly Disagree	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree

Evidence: We have improved in parity throughout the school year. In the beginning of the year, we let our veteran returning teacher take a lot of leadership positions while we were still learning the system. Currently, we are all seen as equal in the decision making process.

- The team's **belief system embraces the unique expertise of all members**

1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Strongly Disagree	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree

Evidence: As we have gotten to know each other throughout the school year, we have learned what our strengths are both within and outside of our content area. We use these strengths when dividing the workload between team members in order to have the best outcomes.

- The team demonstrates **trust and a sense of shared responsibility in decision-making**

1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Strongly Disagree	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree

Evidence: When our team is making a decision, we are able to talk openly about what is going on and everyone's beliefs on what approach to take to have the best outcome. When the decision is made, we always present as a united front and all stand behind our decision as one.

Evidence of Use of an Effective Collaborative Teaming Process

Face-to face interaction

The team demonstrates **face-to-face interaction, characterized by:**

Regular opportunities to meet

1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Strongly Disagree	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree

Evidence: We have a formal meeting once a week but we talk on a daily basis in person or via email or text.

- **Appropriate group size**

1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Strongly Disagree	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree

Evidence: Our group size is kind of flexible. We have the four core teachers who work together daily but we do not always have all team members at our weekly meetings. When we have everyone in attendance, it sometimes can feel like too many cooks in the kitchen.

- **Effective communication systems**

1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Strongly Disagree	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree

Evidence: I believe that we have effective ways of communicating. We are always in contact through face to face interactions, email, or text. We also keep our meeting information in a shared agenda that is available to everyone to access.

Positive Interdependence

The team demonstrates **positive interdependence, characterized by:**

- **Clearly stated team goals**

1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Strongly Disagree	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree

Evidence: We talked about team goals in the beginning of the year with the four core teachers but not as a whole group. I believe that the goals are intuitive to us but we do not have them explicitly written somewhere.

- **The use of distributed leadership functions: (e.g., distribution of resources, roles, and tasks)**

1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Strongly Disagree	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree

Evidence: I believe our team does a good job distributing roles, resources, and tasks based on our given strengths. I believe there is room for growth in taking different roles that we may not be as comfortable with and be more explicit on sharing roles within our meetings.

Articulation of common rewards and celebrations of accomplishments

1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Strongly Disagree	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree

Evidence: Our school uses the PBIS method and we have individual celebrations, but we have not collaborated on doing a shared celebration. We do work together when giving out awards to make sure different students are being recognized.

Interpersonal Skills

Team members use effective **interpersonal skills, characterized by:**

- **The use of clearly identified group norms**

1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Strongly Disagree	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree

Evidence: I believe that we follow the group norms we talked about in our first meeting but we have not explicitly stated them anywhere. I feel like we do a good job communicating and we know our boundaries.

- **The use of effective social skills among team members** (e.g., listening, clarifying, summarizing, conflict resolution, problem-solving)

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree

Evidence: As a team we are always talking and actively listening to each other. We work together to resolve conflict and we give everyone space to share their thoughts and feelings. We do not have many disagreements and if we do, we talk through them in a sensitive way where everyone feels validated.

Monitoring and Processing of Group Functioning

Team members **monitor and process group functioning, as evidenced by:**

- **The establishment and use of regular time to process**

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree

Evidence: We effectively use our weekly team meeting to process different events happening in the school. We also often process during our shared planning time when things come up on the spot.

- **The use of a variety of methods for processing** (e.g., round robin, appointed observer, written observations/evaluation)

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree

Evidence: I feel like we do not use a variety of methods since we are always communicating and no not have many events that we need to process through thoroughly. I feel like we take different methods based on the situation at hand.

Individual Accountability

Team members demonstrate **individual accountability, promoted by:**

The use of agendas to promote completion of tasks

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree

Evidence: We have a shared agenda that we use at our formal weekly meetings. When we talk about topics outside of our formal meetings, we often share the topics on the agenda to circle back to. We also occasionally go back and review old agenda topics to make sure they have been covered or if they need to be revisited again.

- **The use of minutes specifying action items and "to do" lists**

1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Strongly Disagree	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree

Evidence: Our agenda is effectively our to do list. We have it broken down by topic, notes, and who is completing the task. We go through each discussion point each week and create individual "to do" lists in order to complete what we need to get done.

Part III. Scoring Summary

Underlying Principles: **Average Score: 15/16 = 94%**

- Commonly agreed upon goal 4
- Parity in interactions 3
- Belief in expertise of all members 4
- Trust and shared responsibility 4

Characteristics of Effective Teaming **Average Score:39/48 = 81%**

- Face to Face Interaction 11/12 = 92%
- Positive Interdependence 7/12 = 58%
- Interpersonal Skills 7/8 = 88%
- Monitoring and Processing 6/8 = 75%
- Individual Accountability 8/8 = 100%

Team's average score across all categories: **54/64 = 84%**

Part IV. Summary and Evaluation

It was very insightful to break down the five elements of effective teaming and analyzing how my team is functioning. When looking at my team, I have always felt like we are extremely well functioning, but through this analysis, it is clear that there are

elements of teaming that we need to work on. I believe that our strengths are face to face interaction and individual accountability. This is because we always carve out time to meet and talk every day along with our scheduled weekly meeting. We also all believe that communication is important in being an effective team in order to complete our tasks at hand. We also do well at individual accountability because we all feel comfortable in our strengths and roles in order to get the task at hand completed. We often make check lists and agendas to keep us organized and to ensure that we have completed each task or that we have circled back around to topics that need extra attention.

Some of our weaknesses are in positive interdependence as well as monitoring and processing. As for positive interdependence, we do have shared goals and distribute roles. The reason I did not score it higher is because we do not have our goals clearly stated anywhere and we all often gravitate to the same roles. I believe we could improve by being more explicit and transparent about our shared goals and beliefs as well as explicitly taking on different roles that we may not be as used to. As a team we could also work on monitoring and processing of group functioning. Even though we find regular times to meet, we do not use a variety of methods for processing. We do not usually have big situations that we need to break down and discuss, but it would be helpful to try different group processing methods in order to have everyone's voices feeling heard and validated. I do think there are some institutional factors that influence our areas of strengths and weaknesses. Our school has built in a lot of time in the schedule in order for our team to have time to communicate and work together. This has allowed us to have strong connections and

communication skills that have helped us learn our strengths and weaknesses. I think one of the factors that is influencing our weaknesses is that we have all worked in teams at schools before and our group's mission and purpose is predetermined by our school. The shared goals we have are generic to the grade level team and we don't talk about our specific goals because it is often seen as an unspoken rule.

I believe my team's current stage of group development is between a stage three and four. I can see characteristics that put us in the norming/ forming stage as well as the performing/ fermenting stage. Wheelan describes that in stage three, teams are “characterized by more mature negotiations about roles, organization, and procedures. It is also a time when members work to solidify positive relationships with each other” (Wheelan, 99). Wheelan also mentions that this is when teams become less dependent on their leaders but sometimes have to revert back to looking for a leader for direction. I feel like my team fits this stage since our goals and roles are not written down and solidified. We have some structure with our agendas and to do lists but we could be operating better if we are able to remind ourselves of our shared mission and goals. Also since this is our first year together, we still go back sometimes to rely on our veteran teachers and professionals in our group when we are unsure on the procedures. I also feel like we can also exhibit traits of a stage four team, but we are not always there. As a team we strive to “encourage high performance and quality, expect to be successful and encourage innovation” (Wheelan, 105). Our team is often given a lot of feedback that we are always producing high quality work and we have been successful in our approaches and we are doing it in fun and innovative ways. I do believe that we have been able to be progressive and get a lot of positive work done

this year, but I do not believe that we work at this high of a caliber at all times. I believe as we have more time together as a team, we will be able to solidify our goals and norms so we can be functioning as a stage four team the majority of the time.

Given that this team has not been together for a very long time, there is a lot of space for improvement. I do believe it is remarkable that our team has been very successful in a short amount of time but it does give me a lot of hope for the future. I believe the biggest thing that will help my team is to spend more time together creating our norms and shared goals. I believe it will be beneficial for us to revisit these goals at the beginning, middle and end of each school year. It will allow us to check in and monitor how we are doing towards those goals and evaluate where we may need to reign it in or put some extra effort in. I also believe that we need to work on roles within our team meeting in order to all be actively involved in the meetings. I also believe that it would be a good idea to try different group processing protocols when we discuss topics that we have different opinions on. Overall, I believe the team is personable and operates well together and can be productive and produce good quality work, but I do believe that we will benefit from a little more structure in order to help keep us on track and accountable across the board. I am looking forward to where this team is going to go and accomplish in the future!