

Trust & Collaboration Reflection

I experienced a situation that simultaneously built and lost trust during this school year's first semester. I was on a team of four teachers, and I was the one with the least experience (this is my second year). We met briefly at the beginning of the year and decided to run this course together, which was a net positive since, to my knowledge, this instance was the first time such an agreement was reached. We initially agreed to assign the same homework problems and run the same quizzes and tests using a universal pacing guide. These responsibilities were delegated, and I was tasked with making all tests. By the end of the term, we realized that there was an odd person out who did not run the same quizzes and tests. Realizing this, the people who ran the same assessments compared notes, and although we found small deviations, the essence of each assessment was preserved (i.e., similar questions that assessed an agreed-upon standard). This ultimately built trust. However, seeing what the other teacher did was seen as a betrayal of the team's initial agreement, which eroded trust.

This experience speaks to how teams can build trust and resilience because there are strategies that I could have incorporated at the time and have been confirmed or expanded upon by the learning from this module. For example, at the beginning of the term, we communicated and established expectations (Aguliar, 2019), but did not discuss our hopes for certain outcomes. However, there was a pre-existing structure to build connections and establish norms, but I could have done more to collaborate with everyone, *not* necessarily select individuals (Makelky, 2021). Shoring up these deficiencies would have created greater trust and resilience within the team, which would have positively impacted all students taking the course because any teacher could have provided support when necessary. Despite these initial challenges, I believe the groundwork

has been laid for future iterations, and now, I can apply this learning to help cultivate a positive climate in future teams.

I believe this resilience deficiency led to the initial defection that could have been prevented through validation. Instead of saying, “Oh well, I guess they are going to do their own thing,” I could have approached this person and sincerely raised a concern and asked if there was anything lacking that needed to be adjusted. Raising this concern sooner might have ultimately provided enough validation to keep this person aligned with the team by enabling opportunities for more frequent collaboration. This would have been difficult due to differences in teaching philosophy. Still, I think I could have been more empathetic by showing a willingness to listen, considering a different perspective, and finding common ground.

Through this experience, I learned that I have the potential to lead a team because the issues were apparent enough for me to identify and potentially solve in time. I mention this because I understand that trust is built over years of history and positive interactions throughout. Additionally, I learned that building trust is possible, even with people who have wildly differing teaching philosophies. There is always *something* that two people can find in common when building a professional working and trusting relationship.

References

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