



The Leadership Team: Ground Rules

Careful planning will help meetings run smoothly. By ensuring a cross-representation of stakeholders in the process, the Leadership Team increases its ability to look more deeply at areas of potential success gaps. However, because topics participants raise during team conversations can be sensitive, it is important to acknowledge that team member(s) representing certain groups may have more or less agency and power in society and schools. This imbalance of agency and power can affect how team members interact with one another. Therefore, it is crucial before, during, and after each meeting to ensure all voices are heard and valued, especially those representing the group(s) of children and youth being discussed.

Careful planning not only sets the tone for a productive meeting but also ensures equity of voice which will make it easier for everyone to participate. Simple steps, like arranging seating in a circle, and providing multiple ways for participants to voice their thoughts beyond speaking up in the meeting (e.g., providing options for discussing first with a partner or small group, or adding their thoughts anonymously to an online group document) can make it easier for everyone to participate. As this is a team that will meet repeatedly, it may be valuable to spend time developing terms of reference, which also includes establishing norms of behavior (i.e., group norms, ground rules).

- ◆ Terms of reference refers to decisions regarding how a group of people agree to work together (e.g., interact, communicate) to accomplish common goals.
- ◆ Norms of behavior are guidelines that describe specific actions and behaviors that team members should take to promote collaboration.

At a minimum, setting group norms together can help set the tone for productive meetings. Teams do not need a lot of established norms to work well together, but having agreed-upon expectations that the team applies consistently can significantly improve how your team solves problems and makes decisions. While the team lead and meeting facilitator may sketch out initial plans for the work, the team may choose to develop these agreed-upon norms together. Creating expectations together helps the team promote a shared responsibility for ensuring team members adhere to the agreed-upon norms during each meeting.

Possible Areas to Consider When Creating Norms of Behavior

What constitutes respectful behavior toward other team members?

- ◇ What are the expectations regarding attendance, agendas, and boundaries of time?
- ◇ Do all team members use the same words to mean the same thing?

How do team members fully engage in the meeting?

- ◇ What discussion style (e.g., structures vs. unstructured, case study) is appropriate for this meeting?
- ◇ Should the facilitator call on a person before he or she speaks?

How do team members communicate before, during, and between team meetings?

- ◇ What information should members receive before a meeting?
- ◇ Are interruptions OK? What about side conversations?

Adapted from: O'Hara, N., Munk, T.E., Reynolds, H., and Collins, T. (2021, August). *Success Gaps Toolkit: Addressing Equity, Inclusion, and Opportunity*. IDEA Data Center. Rockville, MD: Westat.