

Working Towards Coherence

Tip Sheet

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Building a Shared Purpose

Leaders can establish a shared purpose by first engaging interest holders in articulating their personal reason for doing the work they do.. Leaders should look for opportunities of alignment, overlap, or complementary aspects across people’s “whys.”. These areas are the boundaries of shared purpose. From there, teams can string their work together on common ground. And in areas of difference, can rely on each other for their unique expertise.

However, to be successful in this process, leaders should be willing to engage as learners, and take the lead of others. Part of building a shared purpose is a sense of agency and ownership over the process. So the more that leaders can use participatory design to develop a shared vision, that is iterative, and reworked by those involved – the better. This can look like:

- Leading listening tours across departments
- Holding focus groups that purposefully include diverse perspectives
- Gathering data about the context of successful change
- Stepping back on projects so non-traditional (non formal) leaders can step up

These examples of practices are ways to engage participants in setting the direction through collaboration. A shared purpose also indicates a shared responsibility. The principles of the California English Learner Roadmap all require a shared commitment of all levels of the education system. Without this shared commitment across levels of the education system, inconsistent pockets of success and teacher burnout create inequitable educational experiences.

Structures and Practices for Collaboration

In community schools, inter-agency partnerships are supported by human-centered structures and practices.

PRACTICES CAN INCLUDE:

- Following a template for agendas
- Orienting teams to the desired outcomes of each meeting
- Summarizing meetings for those who may have been absent
- Following up on assignments
- Regularly asking for input for next steps from those who are closest to the work
- Check in about individuals’ confidence to carry out next steps, and provide support if necessary
- Highlight partner successes

Leaders can use their structures for collaboration as a form of strategic planning by asking for partners' insights about how they might be impacted by changes.

Deep Learning as an Iterative Process

Deep learning happens when learners see the relevance of the material to issues they care about in the world. In order to be engaged in the material, learners can practice a set of competencies that grow from personal to systems awareness (Fullan & Jordan, 2024). These competencies are also known as the 6Cs: character, citizenship, collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking (McEachen, Quinn, & Fullan, 2017).

Effective teams engage as learners together regardless of their organizational positionality by drawing on these competencies. Learning communities might build community agreements that reflect these competencies. They might include agreements like:

- Showing up with self-regulation and integrity (character)
- Having compassion and empathy for others (citizenship)
- Commitment to resolving team dynamics and challenges (collaboration)
- Considering audience first, before designing a communication (communication)
- Using an inquiry mindset to reframe issues (creativity)
- Sharing in progress monitoring, reporting, and projection (critical thinking)

These practices can be honed to scale, meaning they can develop to have impact on a systems level, but likely need to be harnessed through self-awareness, awareness of others, and system awareness.

From Responsibility to Accountability

Focusing on internal accountability for a team builds a collective sense of responsibility. Instead of top-down leadership that assigns responsibilities, teams can promote agency and ownership by having individuals identify their own goals, and monitor and report on their progress in a team setting. This shifts the focus from the performance of work for others to see, to a self-determined deliverable that individuals are proud to share and claim ownership of. This shared ownership is what enables other practices of coherence-making.

- Leaders can engage in accountability conversations through strategies like:
- Progress monitoring conversations
- Data dives highlighting successful problem identification and change planning
- Documenting cycles of inquiry and changing contexts
- Make sure all interest holders are invited to learn and discuss (The Dialogue about ELs at my School/District)

For formal leaders, this can also inform state and policy accountability systems. Many accountability systems are designed to be vertical communication channels that are responsive to real-time needs while giving directive (and informed) expertise. As educators engage in accountability with those external systems, they too begin to change their priorities and vision for the purpose of education.