

Why waste your time at another District Leadership Team meeting?



This digital learning series is designed for individuals or groups who wish to increase their professional learning about educational topics. This module, Introduction to District Leadership Teams (DLTs), begins with a question to ponder as the starting point for learning and conversation. Each area has resources and thinking tasks to help guide the learning. By the end of this module, you will be able to articulate the roles of each member of a functional DLT and the importance of having each team member engaged with transforming teaching and learning within the district.

"Learning is essential to change and change is essential to improvement." School districts must be held to the standard of providing a superior educational experience for students. In order to provide that experience, school districts must be willing to transform to meet the needs of their students. This transformation must be articulated, but also embodied in the hearts, minds, and actions of each person involved in the school system. District Leadership Teams lead and guide this transformation. District Leadership Teams should include superintendents, district personnel, principals, teacher leaders, and other district stakeholders. DLT members work as a team to design, lead, and facilitate standards-driven learning aligned with the Kentucky Standards for Professional Learning. Data must drive the decisions of the District Leadership Teams. DLT members must understand their role in helping adults in the district have a greater effect on student learning. DLT members set and reinforce expectations through their thoughts, actions, and the ways they engage others in learning. Recognizing that learning is central to all change and improvement efforts, DLT members must ensure that professional learning is at the forefront of the work of each adult working in the district.

[Responsibilities of the District Leadership Team Survey](#)

[Assumptions of DLT Meetings](#)

Before We Learn

Click the links provided in the boxes to access support resources for pre-meeting preparation and learning. You may need to right click and open the hyperlinks.

[Optional Resources](#)

[Learning Teams and the Future of Teaching](#)

[The Benefits of Learning as a Team](#)

Facilitator Notes:

Pre-thinking and studying prior to learning is a key discipline to engaging productively. Before the team gathers, print out the “Responsibilities of the District Learning Team Survey” and distribute to learning team members. Independently, each member should reflect on the statements and arrive to the study session having responded to each statement.

Once the study session is underway, facilitate a discussion allowing all members to share their responses, questions, or rationales regarding each statement. During a hearty discussion, document statements and notes as part of data collection.

The purpose of this discussion is to uncover assumptions and understandings the group may have, and/or to challenge current beliefs and practices. The facilitator should reiterate the value of having frank discussions in effort of refining and calibrating collective understandings of effective DLTs and add to the teams’ learning.

The Responsibilities of the District Leadership Team Survey



WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Teacher leaders, school leaders, and district leaders in our district understand the relationship between adult learning and student success.

STRONGLY AGREE AGREE NO OPINION DISAGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

All of our teacher leaders, school leaders, and district leaders see themselves as leaders of learning in their schools and use data to monitor results.

STRONGLY AGREE AGREE NO OPINION DISAGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

Our teacher leaders, school leaders, and district leaders advocate for effective professional learning and understanding of how to create the systems and structures necessary to support it.

STRONGLY AGREE AGREE NO OPINION DISAGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

Our district has leadership standards and an evaluation system that clearly define the teacher leader, school leader, and district leader roles in supporting effective teaching and learning.

STRONGLY AGREE AGREE NO OPINION DISAGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

Our district ensures that every teacher leader, school leader, and district leader continuously engages in high quality professional learning.

STRONGLY AGREE AGREE NO OPINION DISAGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

Our district views leadership as a shared responsibility among all district and school level staff.

STRONGLY AGREE AGREE NO OPINION DISAGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

Our district has a culture of shared accountability for continuous student progress.

STRONGLY AGREE AGREE NO OPINION DISAGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

Our district has established a district leadership team with broad stake holder representatives including superintendent, district leaders, school leaders, and teacher leaders.

STRONGLY AGREE AGREE NO OPINION DISAGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

What assumptions do we currently have about District Leadership Team Meetings?

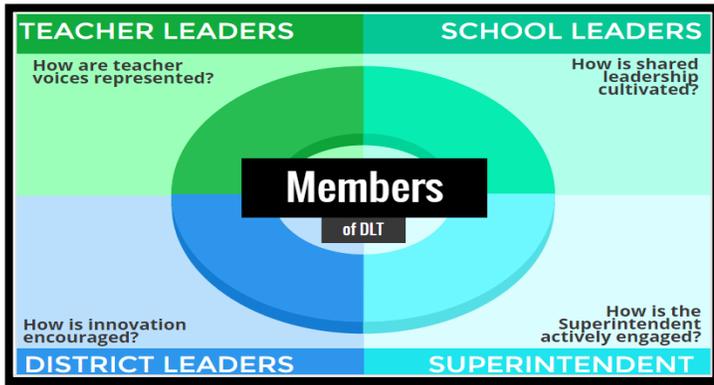
After each member of the learning team has an opportunity to share/discuss their initial responses from the District Leadership Team Survey, provide this handout to each member to promote further conversations.

Individual Thinking: List common assumptions about District Leadership Team Meetings.

(2 minutes)

Group Thinking: Share individual lists and compile a collective top Ten Assumptions list.

Which of the top ten assumptions are big time-wasters? Identify the biggest time wasters from the list above and highlight them. We will return to these later.



We Learn

Chapter 1

“The Power of Beliefs and Assumptions”

Becoming a Learning System

Roles and Responsibilities of DLT Members

Graphic Organizer

Facilitator Notes:

Have each team member read "The Power of Beliefs and Assumptions" from the text *Becoming a Learning System*. – After everyone has read.... Spend a few minutes with the reflection questions on page 17 of the text focusing on question 2 and question 6.

The next step is to learn about the roles of each DLT member. Each team member read the infographic, and the handout *Roles and Responsibilities of DLT Members* (from the links above) and focus on the following sections:

- Teachers read principal's responsibilities
 - Principals read district leaders' responsibilities
 - District Leaders read superintendents' responsibilities
 - Superintendents read teachers' responsibilities.
1. Each team member synthesizes bulleted list of responsibilities on the Graphic Organizer
 2. Create a collective list on chart paper:
3 - 5 Most Important Responsibilities for each role
 3. Share/Discuss
 4. Group creates "It is important for _____ (role) to be represented in our DLT because _____" statement about each DLT member.
 5. What may be a consequence of not having all team members engaged with the DLT?
 6. Group creates the district's own common agreements on DLT Role Responsibilities on the 4 Square Graphic Organizer (see next page)

Roles and Responsibilities: District Leadership Team Members

Superintendent Roles and Responsibilities

- Use the cycle of continuous improvement to lead professional learning;
- Advance collective responsibility for all students' achievement;
- Set high expectations for all;
- Focus on performance outcomes;
- Model learning by actively participating in individual, team, school, and district professional learning;
- Lead school boards to value, support, adopt, and advocate for professional learning by applying Kentucky's Standard for Professional Learning to their work;
- Foster learning communities in all schools;
- Develop the capacity to give and receive feedback;
- Build leadership throughout the organization;
- Develop a support system for school leaders that includes coaching;
- Align resources to ensure adequate support for professional learning;
- Use data effectively to assess the effect of professional learning on changing educator practice and increasing student learning;
- Expect learning and advance the Kentucky Standards for Professional Learning; and
- Inspire others and advocate for children, education, and professional learning.

District Leader Roles and Responsibilities

- View leadership as a shared responsibility among all district and school level staff;
- Create a collaborative culture among district and school leaders, believing all to be self-motivated;
- See professional learning as fundamental to student performance;
- Apply the cycle of continuous improvement with fidelity to lead professional learning;
- Model collaboration and culture of high expectations, collective responsibility, mutual respect, and trust;
- Establish program evaluations, including evaluations of professional learning, to gather data about program effectiveness and adjust as needed;
- Engage in professional learning in order to develop expertise in specific areas of responsibility and ensure that the best research, practices and protocols, and systems for learning are made available to students and staff;
- Are deeply knowledgeable about Kentucky's Standards for Professional Learning and experts in adult learning and its design;
- Guarantee parents and students a rigorous, relevant, viable curriculum;
- Differentiate support and service systems based on school needs;
- Hold school communities accountable for results while ensuring adequate service and support that allow schools to achieve their goals;
- Share authority for decisions with school leaders, expecting the best from everyone, presuming positive intent, and using inquiry and problems of practice to overcome issues and barriers schools face;
- Inspire others, encourage innovation, highlight positive deviance, and recognize and celebrate progress and achievement

Principal Roles and Responsibilities

- Model and cultivate courageous leadership;
- Have an intense, zealous, and persistent focus on student learning;
- Develop systems that support students and adults;
- Build a sense of collective responsibility for the learning of all students;
- Use a compelling moral purpose to build shared vision and values that pave the way for accelerating staff and student learning;
- Know the importance of skillful, precise work on curriculum, assessment, and instructional design and implementation;
- Value professional learning as the means to increase teacher effectiveness and student learning;
- Develop others' leadership skills;
- Advocate for professional learning;
- Lead change processes and create support systems;
- Distribute responsibility for people, data, and processes that nurture a culture of continuous improvement and empowerment;
- Regularly monitor, recognize, and highlight progress, and celebrate successes.

Teacher Leader Roles and Responsibilities

- Model the district's moral purpose;
- Support staff in learning to collaborate effectively to achieve individual, team, school, and district goals;
- Assess the school culture to gauge the quality of individual, team, school, and district wide interactions;
- Establish systems and structures for effective professional learning;
- Have an intense, zealous, and persistent focus on student learning;
- Build a sense of collective responsibility for the learning of all students;
- Know the importance of skillful, precise work on curriculum, assessment, and instructional design and implementation;
- Value professional learning as the means to increase teacher effectiveness and student learning;
- See themselves as leaders of learning in their schools and use data to monitor results;
- Understand the relationship between adult learning and student success;
- Model and promote reflective practice;
- Develop trusting and reciprocal relationships.

Sources: Learning Forward. (2013). *Standards into practice: School system roles Innovation Configuration maps for Standards for Professional Learning*. Oxford, OH: Author. Hirsh, S., Psencik, K., & Brown, F. (2014).

Becoming a learning system. Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.

Kentucky Teacher Leadership Framework

Roles & Responsibilities of DLT Members: Common Agreements

Teachers read principal responsibilities; principals read district leader responsibilities; district leaders read superintendent responsibilities, and superintendents read teacher responsibilities. Synthesize bulleted list in appropriate organizer below.

Superintendent Roles & Responsibilities "It is important for the superintendent to be represented in our DLT because"	School Leader Roles & Responsibilities "It is important for school leaders to be represented in our DLT because"
District Leader Roles & Responsibilities "It is important for district leaders to be represented in our DLT because"	Teacher Leader Roles & Responsibilities "It is important for teacher leaders to be represented in our DLT because"

Learning Continues...

Facilitation Notes:

DLT members work as a team to design, lead, and facilitate standards-driven learning aligned with the definition of the Kentucky Standards for Professional Learning

A link to the Professional Learning Standards Module can be found HERE.

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Introduction to
Innovation
Configuration Maps

Washington State
IC Map

If our DLT is
wildly
successful...

NEXT STEPS

Facilitation Notes:

Using the Innovation Configuration (IC) Maps

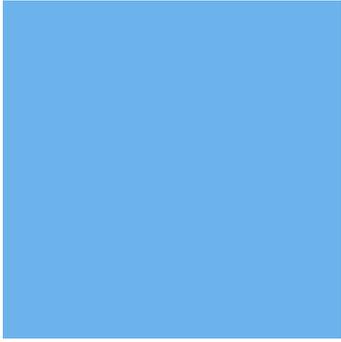
As the facilitator, be familiar with the Introduction to Innovation Configuration Maps . This IC map refers to the “Cycle of Continuous Improvement”. We have provided a handout for more information on the Cycle of Continuous Improvement if desired.

Make copies of the Washington State IC Map for team members to share. An IC Map is a tool for assessing and strengthening the actions of individuals to achieve the ideal practices associated with an innovation. Specifically, an IC Map...

- provides a clear delineation of what it means to implement the innovation by specifying the ideal behaviors of those who are responsible for the innovation ;
- offers a means for identifying current practices related to the innovation;
- guides individuals to identify what actions to take to move closer to ideal practice; and
- supports ongoing assessment of progress toward ideal practices.

For this session, focus on the specific professional learning standard and its specific section of the IC Map that your team felt confident about. Lead the learning team in discussion about how to use the IC Map and then invite team members to highlight areas on the IC Map where they feel the DLT currently stands and share their thinking with the group. In your next DLT meetings you may want to explore the IC Map further.

Collectively agree on the level of implementation and current practices of the DLT. Here are possible questions that may help assist in guiding the discussion:

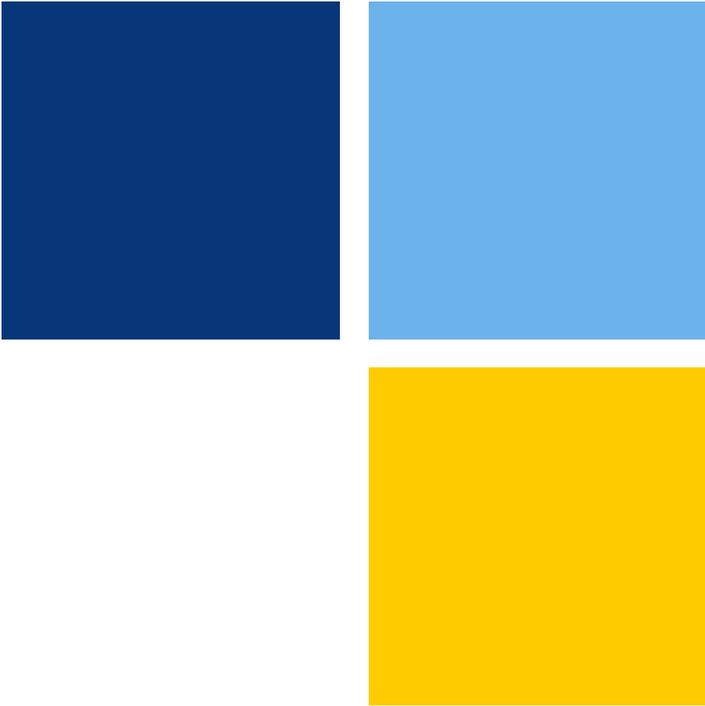


- Where are we?
- What do we need to do to reach Level 1?
- What do those bullets mean for OUR team?

REFLECTION

Facilitation Notes:

1. As you completed the first page of the graphic organizer, complete the graphic organizer in the link above “If our DLT is wildly successful”.
2. Return to the DLT Responsibilities Survey and have team members consider revisions to their initial responses.
3. Return to the highlighted list of DLT meeting assumptions and time-wasters. Invite team members to spend time turning the challenges of time wasters into possibilities for improvement. Share/record thoughts and ideas.



How We Learned

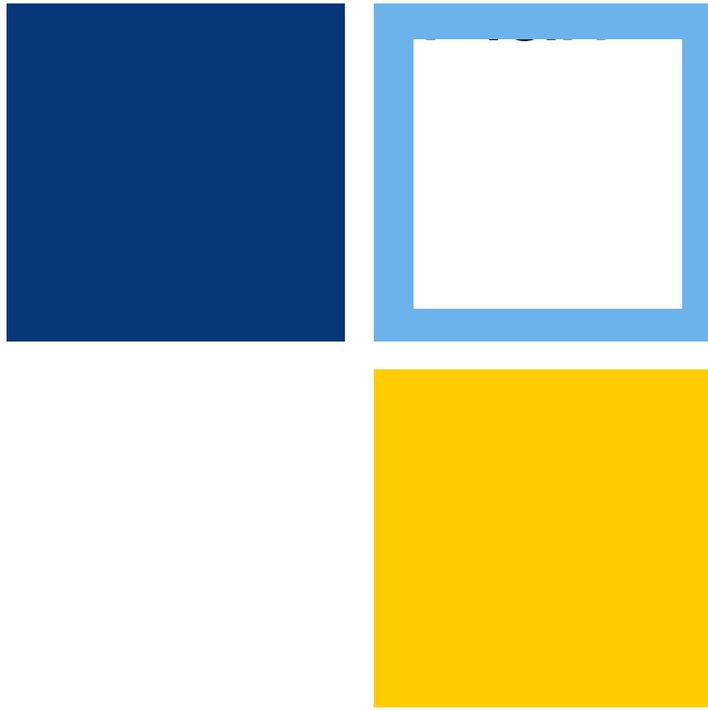
Facilitator Notes

As educators we accept that student learning should be rooted in metacognition and critical thinking, then isn't it equally accepted that those who work with students also be metacognitive and critical thinkers as well? In this section, learning teams will reflect on the experiences throughout this session that assisted members to move forward in their thinking and learning.

Individually, ask members to use the following questions as a guide for their reflection:

In this study session, what learning designs did I experience that:

- Clarified the learning intentions of this module?
- Engineered effective discussions, both in my own mind and with others?
- Allowed for feedback—both to me and others?
- Activated the capacity of members of this team to rely on one another as resource in our learning?
- Made my team and me owners of our own learning?



How We Share

Facilitator Notes

Messaging and planning for next steps in professional learning is a key step as teams work together for the good of the organization. Work together to consider the following questions:

- Before I/we share our learning with others, what concepts do I/we need more time to learn and consider? What are aspects am I strong, and which need further learning?
- What intentional message should we craft in order to share the purpose of our DLT? Scale and sustainability of this work? Identify and clarify:
- What is the main message or key understanding to be conveyed?
Who needs this learning and to what degree?
Who and how this learning should be shared/facilitated/messaged (Board of Ed, other shareholders?)

COMMENTARY

Learning Teams and the Future of Teaching

By Tom Carroll & Hanna Doerr

Learning is no longer preparation for the job, it *is* the job. In a world in which information expands exponentially, today's students are active participants in an ever-expanding network of learning environments. They must learn to be knowledge navigators, seeking and finding information from multiple sources, evaluating it, making sense of it, and understanding how to collaborate with their peers to turn information into knowledge, and knowledge into action.

What does this mean for teachers? It means that they should be constantly learning with and from accomplished colleagues and experts in the field, modeling for their students the collaborative learning and knowledge construction that is at the core of 21st-century competencies.

Yet according to the most recent **MetLife Survey of the American Teacher (2009)**, today's teachers work alone—they spend an average of 93 percent of their time in school working in isolation from their colleagues, and they continue to work alone during their out-of-school hours of preparation and grading. Their day-to-day work is disconnected from the efforts of their colleagues, and their pullout professional development is fragmented and poorly aligned with their students' learning needs.

This fragmentation prevents any substantial education reform from gaining traction, because teachers are not given the support they need to collectively build a coherent body of knowledge and practice to improve student achievement. Today's new teachers are eager to work with their accomplished colleagues, but they find themselves working alone in self-contained classrooms where they are bound to the teaching practices of the past. Faced with a choice between working in the last century or the 21st century, they "vote with their feet": The young people we are counting on to teach for the future are leaving our obsolete schools at an alarming rate.

It is time to change this picture. Today's teachers want to team up to teach for the future. In survey after survey, teachers who are most satisfied with their careers and the contributions they are making to their students' lives are more likely to work in schools with higher levels of professional collaboration.

To expand on these survey findings, the **National Commission on Teaching and America's Future**, with the support of the Pearson Foundation, has conducted an extensive review of research reports and practitioner case studies to document the specific learning-team principles and practices that improve teaching effectiveness and student achievement. Based on our findings, we have concluded that the nation has a pressing need, and an unprecedented opportunity to improve school performance by using learning teams to systematically induct new teachers into a collaborative learning culture—teams that embed continuous professional development into the day-to-day fabric of work in schools that are constantly evolving to meet the needs of 21st-century learners. This calls for a cultural shift in schools, a shift that is gaining momentum across the country.

NCTAF's review identified six learning-team principles and practices that are most effective in improving teaching and student achievement, described in the report "Team Up for 21st Century Teaching and

[← Back to Story](#)

Learning.” While there is no magic formula, we found that highly effective learning teams have the following:

Shared Values and Goals. The team members have a common vision of student learning needs and a well-defined understanding of how their collective teaching capabilities can be orchestrated to meet those needs. They clearly identify a learning challenge around which the team can join forces to improve student achievement.

Collective Responsibility. Team members have appropriately differentiated responsibilities based on their experience and knowledge levels. They hold themselves mutually responsible for each other’s success, and they are collectively accountable for improving the achievement of every student served by the team.

Authentic Assessment. Team members hold themselves personally and professionally accountable by using assessments that give them real-time feedback on student learning and teaching effectiveness. These assessments are valuable to them—not because they are linked to high-stakes consequences, but because they are essential tools to improve the team’s teaching effectiveness, as measured by student learning gains.

Self-Directed Reflection. Highly effective learning teams establish a reflective feedback loop of goal-setting, planning, standards, and assessment that is driven by the learning needs of the students and the corresponding professional-development needs of the teachers.

Stable Settings. Highly effective learning teams do not function within dysfunctional schools, but they can transform low-performing schools into successful learning organizations if they are given dedicated time, space, resources, and leadership for their collaborative work. Even the best teachers in the world can’t turn around a low-performing school by working alone.

Strong Leadership Support. Highly effective learning teams are supported by school leaders who build a climate of openness and trust that empowers team members to make decisions on how to improve teaching effectiveness that are directly linked to student needs. This support must be balanced with appropriate, positive pressure to continuously increase school performance with improvements in teaching effectiveness that are explicitly linked to specific student learning needs.

Transforming American education is the rallying cry heard throughout the country today. The Obama administration has focused the nation’s vision for education in 2020 on two basic goals: assuring that every student is college- and career-ready, and closing the achievement gaps for low-income students and children of color.

NCTAF is answering this call by creating “learning studios” for teaching the STEM subjects of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics that are based on the documented effectiveness of these six principles. Similar to architectural-design studios, these STEM Learning Studios enable learning teams composed of digital-age teachers, tech-savvy youths, veteran educators, and skill-based volunteers to develop innovative responses to complex learning challenges. Learning studios improve student achievement, increase teaching effectiveness, and amplify the impact of community resources.

NCTAF developed its first such learning studios in two Maryland school districts, with a grant from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, in partnership with the Goddard Space Flight Center. We then launched a STEM Learning Studio expansion with the Albuquerque, N.M., public schools and Lockheed Martin/Sandia National Laboratories. Learning studios, we have found, keep veteran teachers



engaged and improve novice teachers' effectiveness by teaming them with industry and government professionals. The studios deploy volunteers in inquiry-based learning projects with teachers and students in a way that calls on their professional skills and experience. They work with students on authentic learning challenges, and work with teachers to help them model for their students the collaborative inquiry, knowledge construction, and innovation that are at the heart of 21st-century competencies.

This kind of teaching and learning represents ambitious goals. Making it happen will require changes that go beyond tinkering with today's schools. If all we do is to give today's students a better factory-era school, with stand-alone teachers who continue to deliver monolithic instruction in self-contained classrooms, the future is already over. It is time to team up to teach for the 21st century.

Tom Carroll is the president of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, in Washington. Hanna Doerr is a program manager at the commission.

