

# The Professional Learning Communities at Work™ Continuum: Building a Collaborative Culture Through High-Performing Teams

**DIRECTIONS:** Individually, silently, and *honestly* assess the current reality of your school's implementation of each indicator listed in the left column. Consider what evidence or anecdotes support your assessment. This form may also be used to assess district or team implementation.

We are committed to working together to achieve our collective purpose of learning for all students. We cultivate a collaborative culture through the development of high-performing teams.

Indicator	Pre-Initiating	Initiating	Implementing	Developing	Sustaining
<p>We are organized into collaborative teams in which members work interdependently to achieve common goals that directly impact student achievement. Structures have been put in place to ensure:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Collaboration is embedded in our routine work practice.</li> <li>2. We are provided with time to collaborate.</li> <li>3. We are clear on the critical questions that should drive our collaboration.</li> <li>4. Our collaborative work is monitored and supported.</li> </ol>	<p>Teachers work in isolation with little awareness of the strategies, methods, or materials that colleagues use in teaching the same course or grade level. There is no plan in place to assign staff members into teams or to provide them with time to collaborate.</p>	<p>Teachers are encouraged but not required to work together collaboratively. Some staff may elect to work with colleagues on topics of mutual interest. Staff members are congenial but are not co-laboring in an effort to improve student achievement.</p>	<p>Teachers have been assigned to collaborative teams and have been provided time for collaboration during the regular contractual day. Teams may be unclear regarding how they should use the collaborative times. Topics often focus on matters unrelated to teaching and learning. Some teachers believe the team meeting is not a productive use of their time.</p>	<p>Teachers have been assigned to collaborative teams and have been provided time for collaboration on a weekly basis during the regular contractual day. Guidelines, protocols, and processes have been established in an effort to help teams use collaborative time to focus on topics that will have a positive impact on student achievement. Team leaders are helping lead the collaborative process, and the work of teams is monitored closely so assistance can be provided when a team struggles. Teams are working interdependently to achieve goals specifically related to higher levels of student achievement and are focusing their efforts on discovering better ways to achieve those goals.</p>	<p>The collaborative team process is deeply engrained in the school culture. Staff members view it as the engine that drives school improvement. Teams are self-directed and very skillful in advocacy and inquiry. They consistently focus on issues that are most significant in improving student achievement and set specific, measurable goals to monitor improvement. The collaborative team process serves as a powerful form of job-embedded professional development because members are willing and eager to learn from one another, identify common problems, engage in action research, make evidence of student learning transparent among members of the team, and make judgments about the effectiveness of different practices on the basis of that evidence. The team process directly impacts teacher practice in the classroom, helping each teacher clarify what to teach, how to assess, and how to improve instruction.</p>

Indicator	Pre-Initiating	Initiating	Implementing	Developing	Sustaining
<p>We have identified and honor the commitments we have made to the members of our collaborative teams in order to enhance the effectiveness of our team. These articulated collective commitments or norms have clarified expectations of how our team will operate, and we use them to address problems that may occur on the team.</p>	<p>No attention has been paid to establishing clearly articulated commitments that clarify the expectations of how the team will function and how each member will contribute to its success. Norms do emerge from each group based on the habits that come to characterize the group, but they are neither explicit nor the result of a thoughtful process. Several of the norms have an adverse effect on the effectiveness of the team.</p>	<p>Teams have been encouraged by school or district leadership to create norms that clarify expectations and commitments. Recommended norms for teams may have been created and distributed. Norms are often stated as beliefs rather than commitments to act in certain ways.</p>	<p>Each team has been required to develop written norms that clarify expectations and commitments. Many teams have viewed this as a task to be accomplished. They have written the norms and submitted them, but do not use them as part of the collaborative team process.</p>	<p>Teams have established the collective commitments that will guide their work, and members have agreed to honor the commitments. The commitments are stated in terms of specific behaviors that members will demonstrate. The team begins a review of the commitments to remind each other of the agreements they have made about how they will work together. They assess the effectiveness of the commitments periodically and make revisions when they feel that will help the team become more effective.</p>	<p>Team members honor the collective commitments they have made to one another regarding how the team will operate and the responsibility of each member to the team. The commitments have been instrumental in creating an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. They have helped members work interdependently to achieve common goals because members believe they can rely upon one another. The commitments facilitate the team's collective inquiry and help people explore their assumptions and practices. Members recognize that their collective commitments have not only helped the team become more effective, but have also made the collaborative experience more personally rewarding. Violations of the commitments are addressed. Members use them as the basis for crucial conversations and honest dialogue when there is concern that one or more members are not fulfilling commitments.</p>