

Introduction

Tools That Get Results

Four years of public school teaching—and ten years as a principal—convinces me the nature of relationships among adults who inhabit a school has more to do with a school's quality and character, with the accomplishments of its pupils and the professionalism of its teachers than any other factor.

—Roland Barth (2001, p. 105)

PURPOSE FOR THIS BOOK

For years, staff development was something we gave or did to teachers instead of actively engaging them. We did not get the sustained results or behavior changes that really affect student learning. As well, we failed to satisfy adult learning principles and what we know about how the brain operates. We know these things are best for learning with our students. Why won't we model them with educators so that they too learn optimally?

Dialogue matters. Teachers who have the opportunity to reflect and perfect their practices get better student results. Teachers often say they need more time to talk with colleagues, but fewer than half (46%) say that their overall professional development often or very often promotes collaboration. Teachers (36%) report that their staff development often recognizes and builds on their knowledge and experience. Only 26% of California teachers report that their professional development is often sustained over time, with ample participant follow-up and teacher support (Shields et al., 1999). Teachers and administrators who develop teams that support their learning needs as professionals find the stresses of change and accountability easier to manage. We tend to accomplish what we commit to, what we are clear about, what we value, and what we create. Therefore, the more we engage teachers in creating and deciding on actions, the more commitment they have to improve student growth. Thus, we are seeing results from teams who have taken on the ownership and leadership in our buildings. We can't mandate what matters. Teachers must own the changes. Thus it is essential that we come together to focus our attention on student learning. Whether we call it collaboration, teacher teams, or professional learning communities, the importance is the quest for student success in our schools. Throughout this book, we use the terms synonymously.

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT ADULT LEARNING

Professional learning teams should tap into the brain's five natural learning systems (Given, 2002).

Social Learning System

"All of us prefer to interact with those whose presence increases the brain's feel-good neurotransmitter brain levels, resulting from feelings of comfort, trust, respect, and affection" (Panksepp, 1998). A system in place at birth relates to paired relationships. The other system progresses toward group relationships (Harris, 1998). It is a human basic need to feel that we belong and are accepted and included. The feelings of comfort, trust, respect, and affection increase the brain's feel-good neurotransmitter brain levels (Panksepp, 1998). As a member of a team that influences our natural tendencies and responses, we create more fertile conditions for our own learning and risk taking. Michael Fullan (2002) suggests that information only becomes knowledge through dialogue and meaning making. The use of cooperative group learning is essential in a classroom not only to allow the social system to flourish but also to help students achieve academic goals as well as social skills. It would provide the same for adults. Also, modeling and engaging in cooperative group learning will help teachers design successful group work in the classroom.

Emotional Learning System

People need to feel safe and supported to take risks. Adults also need challenging tasks with a minimal level of threat or risk to learn new skills. Emotions have a huge effect on the ability to focus and learn. It is endorphins and norepinephrine (the feel-good neurotransmitters released in the brain during positive experiences) that contribute to learning as well as good health (Pert, 1993).

The emotional system is embellished in schools

- Where educators and students believe all students will learn
- Where teacher differences are honored
- Where teachers connect the learning to students' lives
- Where teachers provide multiple ways for students to show what they know
- Where teachers continue to challenge students appropriately at their level
- Where the climate is supportive, inclusive, and predictable
- Where students and teachers celebrate the gains toward targeted standards
- Where students and teacher can laugh and celebrate together
- Where intrinsic motivation and pride in a job well done is fostered
- Where teachers celebrate incremental gains toward purposeful goals
- Where teachers' intrinsic motivation is fostered through goal setting and reflection

Physical Learning System

Active problem solving supports our physical needs. Interaction, movement, and creation of products are ways to develop a problem-solving orientation to learning. The physical system also demands movement to lower stress (adrenalin and cortisol, stress hormones in the bloodstream) and supply more oxygen and glucose to the brain. Adults feel purposeful when they are empowered to find or create solutions to problems and situations

that matter to them. Physically being involved in learning new skills and practicing them taps into the physical learning system. Being actively involved in new experiences and models of teaching, assessment increases retention of the processes and greater increases the understanding and transfer into the classroom setting.

Cognitive Learning System

Conscious language development and focused attention increase memory. People need to use all senses to process new information. Facilitating learning by providing information in a novel way that stimulates all senses including the visual, auditory, and tactile senses, as well as taste and smell if appropriate, is what good teachers do. No less is necessary for adults. The emotional, social, and physical systems seem more greedy for attention, and if their needs are not met, people will not be able to focus on the learning, thus the cognitive system cannot work optimally. If all system needs are met, people tend to be more attentive and engaged in the learning process and ultimately are more successful in their learning. Allowing adults to read, view, process, and dialogue about new knowledge and skills creates multiple conditions for diverse learners to continue learning.

Reflective Learning System

This intelligence includes “thinking strategies, positive attitudes toward investing oneself in good thinking, and metacognition—awareness and management of one’s own mind” (Perkins, 1995, p. 234). Damasio (1999) notes that the reflective system involves the interdependence of memory systems, communication systems, reason, attention, emotion, social awareness, physical experiences, and sensory modalities.

Metacognition, questioning, analysis, reaction, and goal setting all help us reflect on what we do and the results we get. It has been said that we learn from experience only if we reflect on the experience. We will not be able to sustain new learning without this type of reflective practice and dialogue. Teachers are making in excess of 2,500 decisions a day and need to reflect on what went well, should be changed, and done differently next time. We hone our craft and improve learning for students through considering our practice and making the changes necessary.

The reflective system allows us to

- Revisit and analyze situations
- Explore and react
- Create plans
- Facilitate progress toward goals

Teams who tap into all five “theaters of the mind” engage more diverse learners and increase the active processing of new information and skills in a variety of ways, thus increasing the chances of improving practice and behavior.

BRAIN BITS

If we advocate brain-compatible learning for students and then do not model the same strategies with adults, we send conflicting messages. Over the past 20 years, the emerging

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research and findings on how the brain operates have caused us to rethink student and adult learning (Buzan, 1991).

Certain factors help us meet and support the brain-based learning needs of people:

1. People need to feel safe: If we are asking people to risk, they need to do so in trustworthy environments. Building community is important.
2. People need to learn in a state of relaxed alertness: As with students, adults need high expectations with adequate support, encouragement, and feedback in a trusting environment.
3. People need learning that allows an emotional effect: Adults need a personal connection, need to satisfy an urge “to know,” and need to know that their learning makes a difference for students.
4. People need social relationships: Adults crave validation and acceptance from colleagues. Collaboration creates the “pressure and support” needed for change to happen.
5. People need to form patterns, seek meaning and relevance, and set goals: Adults need to connect prior knowledge and experience to new ideas and to integrate the new learning with the old.
6. People enjoy an active learning environment that is engaging: Adults as students need to construct their own meaning from new knowledge and skill in a form that makes sense to an adult learner.
7. People need learning that supports multiple pathways to memory: Adults need variety and multisensory approaches to meet individual processing and learning needs. (adapted from Gregory & Parry, 2006)

ADULT LEARNING PRINCIPLES

Adult learning principles help us plan for the type of professional dialogue and interaction that supports learners who have years of life experiences to draw on. Adult learning principles interact with recent brain research. Our students have a variety of learning experiences that they bring to our classrooms. Adults are not different and the following four principles support all learners whose experiences shape how they create meaning and relevance and adapt their reasoning to both known and unknown circumstances.

<p>Experiential:</p> <p>Adults need to connect new ideas or actions to what they know and do well.</p>	<p>Self-Directed:</p> <p>Adults need choice and opportunities to prioritize the work.</p>
<p>Life Applicable:</p> <p>Adults need learning that has real life use and is transferable to their unique circumstances.</p>	<p>Performance Centered:</p> <p>Adults like learning that is hands on, engaging, or gives them an opportunity for reflection.</p>

Adapted from: Research from the study of adult learning (Barker, 1992; Bridges, 1991; Brookfield, 1988; Dalellew & Martinez, 1998; Knowles, 1980).




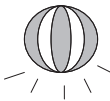
LEARNING STYLES

It has been said that education is a people business, a business about the diversity of people (Guild & Garger, 1985).

We face the issue of diversity in collaboration considering the various personalities or learning styles that are evident within the group.

For many years, experts have developed and shared a variety of theories that explain and identify people's learning styles. Learning styles indicate preferences those learners have in relation to how they acquire, process, and learn new information and skills.

We have used four analogies for the four learning styles that theorists and psychologists have identified. The objects not only typify the characteristics and preferences of the style but also are a helpful tool in remembering the four preferences. The following matrix shows the relationship between and among the different theories.

	<i>Gregorc (1982)</i>	<i>Kolb (1984)</i>	<i>True Colors (Lowry, 1979)</i>	<i>4MAT (McCarthy, 2000)</i>	<i>Silver/Strong/Hanson (Silver & Hanson, 1998)</i>
Puppy 	Abstract Random <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imaginative • Emotional • Holistic 	Diverger Values positive, caring environments that are attractive, comfortable, and safe	Blue Best in open, interactive environments where teachers add a personal touch	Type 1 Feel and reflect Create and reflect on experience	Interpersonal Appreciates concrete ideas and social interaction to process and use knowledge SF (Sensing-Feeling)
Microscope 	Abstract Sequential <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intellectual • Analytical • Theoretical 	Assimilator Avid reader who seeks to learn Patience for research Value concepts	Green Best when exposed to overall theory and interpretation	Type 2 Analytical Reflect and think Observers who appreciate lecture	Understanding Prefers to explore ideas and use reason and logic based on evidence NT (Intuitive-Thinking)
Clipboard 	Concrete Sequential <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task oriented • Efficient • Detailed 	Converger Values what is useful and relevant Immediacy and organizing the essential is important	Gold Best in well structured and clearly defined situations	Type 3 Common Sense Think and do Active, practical Make things work	Mastery Absorbs information concretely and processes step by step ST (Sensing-Thinking)
Beach ball 	Concrete Random <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divergent • Experiential • Inventive 	Accommodator Likes to try new ideas Values creativity, flexibility and opportunities	Orange Best in competitive situations especially with action	Type 4 Dynamic Creating and acting Usefulness and application of learning	Self-Expressive Uses feelings to construct new ideas Produces original or unique materials NF (Intuitive-Feeling)

What Different Learners Need

Beach balls. Beach balls respond to choice and options for experimentation and creativity. But we also must recognize that these learners need deadlines, guidelines, and boundaries or else they may have trouble focusing or completing assignments. Balancing their creativity and spontaneity with time management and “stick to it” skills can be very important for beach balls.

Clipboards. Clipboards like to have order, structure, and routine with clear guidelines and expectations. But life is not always predictable and organized. The unexpected occurs, and then what? Clipboards need to break out of the routine and learn to deal with ambiguity, spontaneity, and anomalies. Dealing with the unexpected is also a life skill.

Microscopes. Microscopes are more in-depth learners who like to analyze and investigate the truth they seek. They need sufficient time to go as deeply as they need for their learning, also recognizing that sometimes they have to move on. They also need help in working with others, developing collaborative skills, and seeing other people’s point of view.

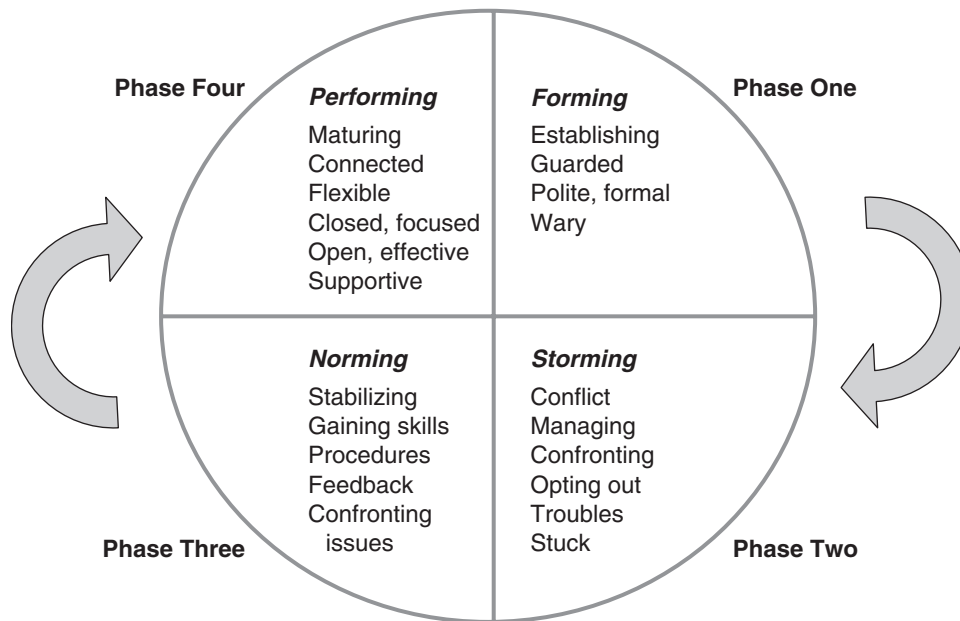
Puppies. Puppies are generally collaborative learners and enjoy partner and group work, yet they also need to develop independent skills and to take risks and learn to trust their own judgment and work alone in new areas.

Diversity, rather than being a problem in collaboration, is really a gift as we recognize the different strengths of various group members and capitalize on them. The awareness of styles and diversity in the group also helps each member to be cognizant and tolerant of the individuals and their contributions and limitations to the group process.

INITIAL GROUP DEVELOPMENT

Tuckman (1965) says that groups go through an evolution as they move toward collaboration and productivity as a team. It doesn’t happen overnight or without skillful facilitation. The evolution is unique to each team based on its composition, intentions, as well as conscious will and skill. The time spent at each phase is individual, and the process is recursive. Emotions and determination will vary as teams become frustrated or feel incompetent over time. However, working consciously at each phase of the evolution will help move the team to a higher functioning, efficient group.

TEAM ADVANCEMENT WHEEL



Relating Turnball to Strategies

Once we determine the phase a newly formed or existing group is at, we can select the strategies that help us move the group forward to the next stage. At each stage of the wheel, there are things the team members and leaders can do to help the evolution process in a positive way with less frustration and less time lost (Arbuckle & Murray, 1989).

PHASES OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT AND BEHAVIORS

<p>Establishing: Forming</p> <p>Strategies to use: Building Climate and Sharing Knowledge</p>	<p>Members may be very positive or very apprehensive as the group begins to work together. They need to feel connected and included. This is done through team building activities and ice breakers. Members need opportunities get to know one another and build trust and relationships.</p>
<p>Dissatisfaction: Storming</p> <p>Strategies to use: Building Climate, Problem Solving, and Determining Priorities</p>	<p>It is during this time that members become more frustrated because of the need for clarification, purpose, and roles. People need strategies for conflict resolution and methods of making decisions and solving problems. This is also the conscious process of discussing openly what the team needs to succeed and sometimes redefining the tasks.</p>
<p>Stabilizing: Norming</p> <p>Strategies to use: Determining Priorities, Creating Excellence, and Building Resilience</p>	<p>Clarity helps the team move forward. Skill development helps members feel more competent and efficacious. Personal satisfaction increases, and team feels like it is beginning to jell.</p>
<p>Production: Performing</p> <p>Strategies to use: Sharing Knowledge and Skills, Creating Excellence, and Sustaining Change</p>	<p>The team is working well together and demonstrates creativity and resilience. There is autonomy and interdependence. Leadership is shared, and the best of each individual is used by the team to help more students succeed.</p>

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The buzz around professional learning communities has been loud and strong. However, without the right processing, we frustrate and discourage the growth of our staff and the ability to sustain change. Thus, it is our intent to provide a framework to understand the aspects of working together for student success, as well as processes to help adult learning teams succeed. We will help you tie the selection of process strategies to your desired results.

BENEFIT OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Benefits for teachers who participate in high-quality professional learning teams include the following:

- Reduction of isolation
- Increased commitment to the school's mission and vision
- Shared responsibility for the total development of students
- Collective responsibility for student success
- Increased meaning and understanding of content
- Higher likelihood that teachers will be well informed, professionally renewed, and inspired
- More satisfaction, higher morale, lower absenteeism
- Significant advances in modifying teaching strategies
- Commitment to making significant and lasting changes.

The same research indicates results in the following specific benefits for students, if their teachers dialogue and interact with peers:

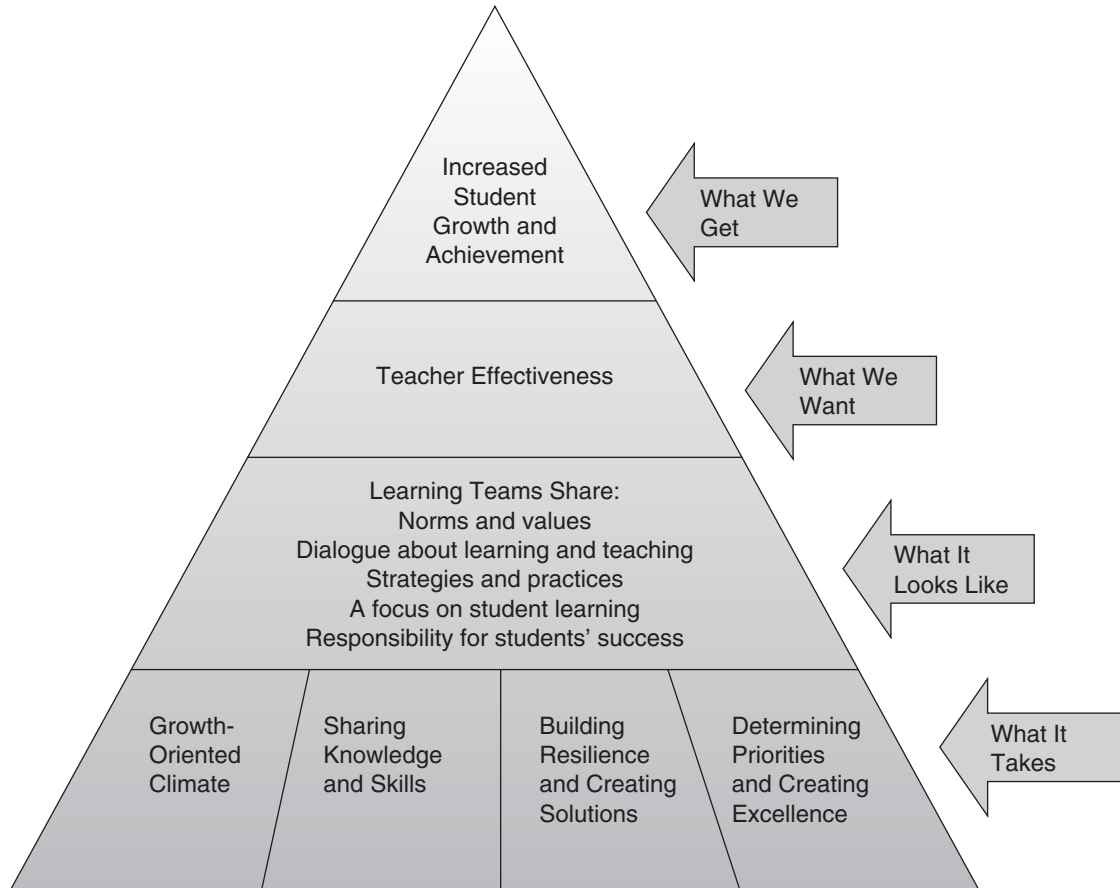
- Decreased dropout rate and fewer missed classes
- Lower rates of absenteeism
- Increased learning
- Greater gains in math, science, history, and reading
- Smaller achievement gaps between students from different backgrounds

Getting the maximum benefits from commitment, involvement, strong initiative, good inquiry, open advocacy, effective conflict resolution, solid decision making and extensive use of critique is what spectacular teamwork is all about.

—Blake, Mouton, and Allen (1987)

GETTING THE INTENDED RESULTS

The following model is our attempt to provide the organizational structure that illustrates the elements necessary to nurture and sustain your learning teams to accomplish results for students.



LEARNING TEAMS THAT GET RESULTS

What It Takes

Creating a growth-oriented climate, sharing knowledge and skills, building resilience, and determining priorities are essential to learning teams that get results. These four elements are foundational to provide the structure and purpose for teams to succeed. Without skills and processes to adequately nurture growth in these four areas, teams will flounder and participants will become frustrated. Frustrated teams abandon the work.

What It Looks Like

Successful learning teams share norms and values, continue to dialogue about teaching and learning, deprivatize strategies and practices, sustain a focus on student learning, and feel responsible for the success of all students.

What We Want





Ultimately, we want an effective teacher in every classroom who can reach and teach our diverse student population. We also need effective leaders at all levels; both administration and teacher leaders are necessary to foster and sustain change.

xxii TEACHER TEAMS THAT GET RESULTS**What We Get**

Our collaborative efforts will result in increased student growth and achievement. What an incredible model of lifelong learning this presents for students.

TOOLS TO SUCCEED AS TEAMS

Creating a growth-oriented climate, sharing knowledge and skills, building resilience, and determining priorities is no easy feat. Just because we want or hear about professional learning communities doesn't mean that they just happen when we meet. There needs to be deliberate and conscious planning to create highly effective teams that sustain themselves in the process of continual renewal and accountability. Sustaining learning over time requires that we know and can use strategies in job-embedded ways that help groups continue to move forward in learning and in getting results for students. The following chart lists the four elements and the purposes for each. In addition, a list of processes and strategies is provided to support the development and sustainability of each element of successful professional teams.

			
<p><i>Creating a Growth-Oriented Climate</i></p>	<p><i>Sharing Knowledge and Skills</i></p>	<p><i>Building Resilience and Creating Solutions</i></p>	<p><i>Determining Priorities and Creating Excellence</i></p>
<p>Purpose: Developing team Celebrating success Getting and giving feedback Communicating Building trust</p>	<p>Purpose: Expanding the toolkit Developing strategies Transferring Expanding options Impacting results</p>	<p>Purpose: Sustaining momentum Problem solving Unsticking Managing change Developing creative solutions</p>	<p>Purpose: Goal setting Tying data to practice Analyzing results Limiting initiative fatigue Determining excellence</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-2-1 • ABC Conversations • Appreciating Our Diversity • Birthday Months • Community Circle • Concept Formation • Find Someone Who • Four-Corners Processing • Give and Go • Mapping Our Journey • Nominal Group Process • Personal Interpersonal, Task Model • Processing Pause • Random Partners • Synectics • T Chart and Y Chart 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four-Corner Cards • Inside-Outside Circles • Jigsaw • Know, Want to Know, Learned • Perspective Lens • Pluses and Wishes • Plus, Minus, Interesting • Promissory Note • Right Angle • Round Robin, Round Table • Round the Room Brainstorming • Star Gazing • Think, Pair, Share • Wallpaper Poster 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Checking the Oil • Communication Matters • DIP Party • Double Up • Environmental Scanning • FLOW • Force Field • Gallery Walk • Graffiti Board • Hot Buttons • Journey Mapping • Musical Chairs • Parking Lot • Roadblock Removal • The Question Matters: Reviewing Student Work • Two Sides of the Story 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building on Success • Cause-and-Effect Planning • Celebrations and Next Steps • Current Snapshot • Data Chats • Four Squares for Creativity • Lesson and Unit Studies • Prioritizing the Impact of Solutions • Prioritizing Work and Learning • Probable and Preferred Future • Pros and Cons • SWOT • The Interview • The People Ladder • Think Abouts

NOTE: SWOT = Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats.

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GETTING RESULTS

Although we have placed each process or strategy in one column, many are useful in several elements of successful teams. The following matrix helps you select strategies that support multiple purposes.

<i>Elements of Successful Learning Teams</i>	<i>Creating a Growth-Oriented Climate</i>	<i>Sharing Knowledge and Skills</i>	<i>Building Resilience and Creating Solutions</i>	<i>Determining Priorities and Creating Excellence</i>
Strategy	Purpose: Developing team Celebrating success Building trust Communicating Getting and giving feedback	Purpose: Affecting results Developing strategies Transferring Expanding options Expanding the teaching and learning toolkit	Purpose: Sustaining momentum Problem solving Unsticking Managing change Develop creative solutions	Purpose: Goal setting Tying data to practice Analyzing results Limiting initiative fatigue Celebrating excellence Sustaining results
3-2-1	X	X		
ABC Conversations	X	X		
Appreciating Our Diversity	X	X		
Birthday Months	X			
Building on Success		X	X	X
Cause-and-Effect Planning			X	X
Celebrations and Next Steps		X	X	X
Checking the Oil			X	X
Communication Matters	X	X	X	X
Community Circle	X	X		
Concept Formation	X	X	X	X
Current Snapshot			X	X
Data Chats		X	X	X
DIP Party			X	
Double Up		X	X	X
Environmental Scanning	X		X	X
Find Someone Who	X	X		

<i>Elements of Successful Learning Teams</i>	<i>Creating a Growth-Oriented Climate</i>	<i>Sharing Knowledge and Skills</i>	<i>Building Resilience and Creating Solutions</i>	<i>Determining Priorities and Creating Excellence</i>
FLOW			X	X
Force Field			X	X
Four-Corner Cards	X	X		
Four-Corners Processing	X	X		
Four Squares for Creativity		X	X	X
Gallery Walk		X	X	X
Give and Go	X	X		
Graffiti Board		X	X	
Hot Buttons			X	X
Inside-Outside Circles	X	X	X	
Jigsaw	X	X		
Journey Mapping		X	X	X
Know, Want to Know, Learned	X	X		X
Lesson and Unit Studies		X	X	X
Mapping Our Journey	X	X		
Musical Chairs		X	X	
Nominal Group Process	X		X	
Parking Lot			X	X
Personal, Interpersonal, Task Model	X	X		
Perspective Lens	X	X	X	
Plus, Minus, Interesting	X	X	X	
Pluses and Wishes	X	X		X
Prioritizing the Impact of Solutions			X	X

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(Continued)

<i>Elements of Successful Learning Teams</i>	<i>Creating a Growth-Oriented Climate</i>	<i>Sharing Knowledge and Skills</i>	<i>Building Resilience and Creating Solutions</i>	<i>Determining Priorities and Creating Excellence</i>
Prioritizing Work and Learning			X	X
Probable and Preferred Future	X		X	X
Processing Pause	X	X		
Promissory Note	X	X	X	
Pros and Cons			X	X
Random Partners	X	X		
Right Angle	X	X	X	
Roadblock Removal	X		X	X
Round Robin, Round Table	X	X	X	
Round the Room Brainstorming	X	X	X	X
Star Gazing	X	X		
SWOT			X	X
Synectics	X	X		
T Chart and Y Chart	X	X		X
The Interview		X	X	X
The People Ladder		X	X	X
The Question Matters: Reviewing Student Work		X	X	X
Think Abouts		X	X	X
Think-Pair-Share	X	X		
Two Sides of the Story	X		X	
Wallpaper Poster	X	X		

NOTE: SWOT = Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats.

IN THIS BOOK

The next four chapters explore each of the elements and thoroughly describe how to use these 61 processes and strategies to support your efforts. We use the terms *teams*, *professional learning communities*, and *learning groups* interchangeably in this book. Our primary focus is to provide strategies for adults who gather to learn, share, and get better at their craft so that students are successful academically and socially.

For each process or strategy, we included the following:

- The source for each strategy or process
- A purpose for the technique
- Basic information about the process, such as room arrangements, logistics, and what the process supports in the way of brain research and adult learning principles
- Directions for using the strategy
- When to use this method
- Examples and uses
- Where applicable, we include a template and model of a completed template or diagram

In the final chapter, we are going to provide you with suggested adult learning experiences and contexts that show you how to put these tools into practice. Each educator is busy trying to meet needs from every direction. We want to show you how to embed this type of practice into your busy schedule and maximize the results from the time you spend with other professionals.

Hopefully, this book will provide you with the appropriate tools you need to accomplish your goals and design successful adult learning and professional communities. The potential benefit to students if you succeed is enormous. We hope these tools help you sustain your successes and expand your potential to meet the needs of all students.