



A framework for collective leadership

Leadership development initiatives and pathways traditionally focus on the capacity of individual leaders within school, district, and state teams. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) suggest that such human capital investments are only one element in creating real and lasting impact within schools, and our experiences in the SC CLI pilot and elsewhere bear that out. The degree to which schools enjoy supportive and engaged district administration, flexible scheduling and budgeting, presence of collegiality and trust among educators, and regular engagement of both administrators and teachers in making and executing on decisions all contribute to more successful implementation of CLI approaches and greater traction on improvement efforts.

Put another way, individual *leaders* have limited impact unless they operate in a system in which cultural and structural supports for placing the *leadership work* accomplished by the team over the roles of any *leader* or leaders. To capture both the systemic and individual components of collective leadership, we've defined a set of *core practices demonstrated by collective leadership teams* and a set of *systems conditions that support effective collective leadership practice*. These draw on research around leadership oriented to support school improvement, prior work on leadership competencies, and the experiences of educators and collective leadership teams CTQ has supported over the past few years.

Systems conditions

Vision and strategy for improvement and innovation are clearly defined, communicated, and used to guide work.

Supportive administration at all levels provides visible, formal support for collectively-led efforts.

Capacity and resources such as existing staff, funds, physical space, and leadership expertise are allocated flexibly and effectively.

Work structures support collective efforts that allow staff to align schedules for regular collaboration, observations of one another's practice, and pursuit of shared innovation and leadership work.

Supportive relationships and social norms foster a trust-based, transparent culture.

Shared influence among formal and informal leaders allows people throughout the organization to decide and do.

Orientation toward improvement at all levels of the system supports inquiry and risk-taking in the name of innovation and growth.

Core practices

De-siloed work allows educators to learn from and with each other so that effective practice is shared and amplified.

Reflection and analysis draw on a range of formative and summative indicators to inform improvement and innovation work.

Action orientation translates insights generated from data-informed reflection into clear next steps for the team—including stopping approaches that aren't working.

Clear challenges, flexible solutions ensure that teams develop leadership capacity for key challenges and opportunities that require mindset shifts, not technical work to implement programs or “plug and play” solutions.

Shared responsibility promotes mutual accountability for accomplishing learning and impact.

Shifting roles based on work maximizes collective impact by engaging each team in a scope of work that aligns her particular leadership strengths and competencies with critical tasks. Regardless of her formal role or title, every leader is engaged in some aspect of both decision making and execution.

Articulation of challenges, successes, and learning allow team members to build will for sustaining and scaling the work.

Networked practice supports transparent instructional and leadership practice among individuals within teams; regular connections across teams, departments, or schools keep work coherent and aligned.