



# Advisory

The Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE) is an advisory and consultative organization composed of the CEOs of each of the 72 District School Boards in Ontario; Public, Catholic and French Language.

“The more leaders focus their influence, their learning and their relationships with teachers on the core business of teaching and learning, the greater their influence on student outcomes.”

Robinson et al, 2009, quoted in *Ideas Into Action for School and System Leaders: Five Core Capacities of Effective Leaders*. (2009). Bulletin # 1. p.5

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/leadership/IdeasIntoAction09.pdf>



## Effective Senior Team and Collaborative Leadership

### What do I need to know about building a cohesive and collaborative team?

Effective leadership is essential to improving student achievement. System leadership has become much more complex, given the considerable changes taking place in the roles and responsibilities of the corporate board, supervisory officers, principals, and teachers.

Other current leadership realities include:

- learning impacts all aspects of our global society;
- principals and teachers expect to be involved in the decision-making, collaborative process; and
- social media connects us all.

As the pace of change increases, school boards are assuming more responsibility for societal expectations and Ministry programs.

The role of the director is changing. With the increased complexities and accountabilities inherent in the role, directors cannot expect to control all areas for which they have ultimate responsibility. It is imperative that today's directors build a cohesive and collaborative team to lead the system.

It is essential to involve educators in developing system direction and vision, and in implementing meaningful change. Research tells us that when individuals are not involved at the beginning of an initiative, they rarely develop the necessary level of commitment and ownership to effect successful change. When people are excluded from the change process, they often actively resist change.

## Collaborative Leaders are:

- willing to take risks
- eager listeners
- passionate for the cause
- optimistic for the future
- able to share knowledge, power and credit

Madeline M. Carter. (2006). "Common Qualities of Effective Collaborative Leaders". Center for Effective Public Policy. Department of Justice. p. 3

## Collaborative Team Leadership Competencies

- models integrity
- is aware of personal style impact on others
- listens empathetically and actively
- recognizes the contributions of others
- delegates leadership and responsibilities
- is approachable and accessible



Directors must be prepared to build teams and to delegate responsibility and ownership through distributed leadership: director to senior staff, director to principals with senior staff, and principals to teachers.

■ Formal, singular leadership leaves talents untapped and improvement unsustainable.

■ Being responsible for the learning of colleagues is central.

Lambert, Linda (2002). A Framework for Shared Leadership. *Educational Leadership*. May 2002, pp.37-40

■ "Distributed leadership draws change *from* the everyday knowledge and capacities of staff rather than driving reforms *through* them. Like community organizers, skilled educational leaders have to build social capital and leadership from the human resources already around them, taking a second look at the assets possessed by their staff that have not yet been mobilized and acted on."

■ "Distributed leadership is a crucial element of...*sustainable* leadership."

Hargreaves, Andy & Shirley, Dennis. (2009). *The Fourth Way: The Inspiring Future for Educational Change*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press. pp. 96-97

## What does the Ministry say about the role of the director with regard to collaborative team-building?

There are significant references to team-building in the Ministry's *Putting Ontario's Leadership Framework into Action: A Guide for School and System Leaders*. <http://resources.curriculum.org/secretariat/leadership/files/LeadershipFramework.pdf>

The Leadership Framework details the seven benefits for leadership practice. Examples include:

Benefit #3: "A platform for team-building and staff development". Leaders are encouraged to use the Framework to build a shared vision about leadership and to encourage all staff members to see themselves as leaders.

Benefit #4: "A shared context for leadership development". Leaders are invited to foster the use of the Framework in the development and implementation of professional learning linked to school and system improvement.

*Putting Ontario's Leadership Framework into Action: A Guide for School and System Leaders* provides a competency and practice expectation for both supervisory officers and principals.

Supervisory officers and principals are expected to build relationships and structure situations to professionally develop staff. This competency states that supervisory officers are expected to gain knowledge in promoting individual and

team development, and to demonstrate a positive attitude and commitment to effective teamwork. The requirement for teamwork, collaboration, and working toward strong and sustainable leadership for improved student achievement is evident in all Ministry documents.

## How can the director build a collaborative team?

Directors build effective, collaborative teams by developing and nurturing shared values and principles that are motivated by:

- sharing responsibility for student achievement;
- assuring all actions have a direct link to shared values and principles;
- accepting and responding to individual views and expertise;
- effectively communicating plans and vision;
- creating focused staff networks to promote student achievement;
- developing non-hierarchical teams to work on program and policy direction; and
- developing interactive “grass roots” solutions for issues that arise within the system.

Directors lead by example. When directors embrace the collaborative team model, their actions influence school administrators and impact the classroom.

## How can the director assist collaborative teams to move forward?

Building collaborative teams is a process and not an event. Directors have a key role in moving leadership teams forward. This can include senior teams, principal networks, and working groups. It is important for the director to:

- support the development of leadership competencies through team-building;
- encourage leaders to know themselves and understand how they relate to others through team-building processes;
- express and model a compelling purpose for collaborative leadership;
- share beliefs and demonstrate a positive and engaging attitude;
- structure leadership to include networks and project teams;
- communicate clearly-defined and shared purposes and goals; and
- affirm that team-building is important to the organization.

## Lessons for a Successful Collaborative Leader

- find the *personal* motive for collaborating
- find ways of simplifying complex situations for people
- understand you cannot partner with all people
- have the courage to act for the long term
- invest in strong personal relationships at all levels
- inject energy, passion and drive into your leadership style
- have the confidence to share credit generously
- continually develop your interpersonal skills, empathy, patience, and tenacity

Archer, David & Cameron, Alex. (2008). *Collaborative Leadership: How to succeed in an interconnected world*. Oxford, UK: Butterworth-Heinemann

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collaborative\\_leadership](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collaborative_leadership)



## Desired Outcomes for Leadership Teams:

- higher levels of trust
- better system alignment
- wider circle of communication
- sharp focus on student achievement
- ownership and empowerment
- connected stakeholders
- identified succession planning
- change processes understood

## Other References:

Fullan, Michael. (2005). *Leadership and Sustainability: System Thinkers in Action*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press & OPC

Tapscott, Don & Williams, Anthony D. (2006). *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything*. Atlantic Books.



## How will I know that I am building an effective team?

Effective school leaders work towards building genuine relationships with principals, teachers and the community. They take conscious steps through a variety of interactions to make a difference to student achievement.

Indicators of effective teams are:

- contributions of many are recognized and personal recognition is acknowledged;
- alternative solutions to issues are discussed, examined, and acted upon when appropriate;
- a culture that works together is valued;
- teams are built through a system belief that everyone can make a difference;
- staff within the system know and understand that effective and collaborative teams can impact student outcomes; and
- involvement is nurtured and efforts are made to engage all staff in the team process.

Team approaches to support, develop and enrich organizations are a necessity. How directors approach team-building and ensuring team effectiveness is an important skill and attitude for today's successful leader. Over the past few years there have been outstanding examples in a number of Ontario boards where team effectiveness and collaboration have made a difference to student achievement. The end goal is not the team. How directors make a difference for each student, each day, in each school, in each community, is our collective mandate.

## If as a Supervisory Officer I require more information, what should I do?

- Consult the Ministry website and Ministry policy and resource documents which support team-building.
- Attend team-building workshops available through boards and independent consultants.
- Actively participate in CODE and maintain good provincial networks.
- Speak with knowledgeable colleagues who have significant experience in collaborative leadership and building effective teams.