

Building Capacity for Collaborative Teaming



Tennessee TSC
Tiered Supports Center



Effective teams are formed to focus more on data-based decision-making and less on planning and preparation. This brief describes elements that should be in place to ensure teams are impactful, efficient, and successful in achieving goals.

To see an example of these structures in practice, view the Building Capacity for Collaborative Teaming videos.

- [View Building Capacity for Collaborative Teaming scene one](#)
- [View Building Capacity for Collaborative Teaming scene two](#)
- [Review supplemental resources](#)

Define the Team's Purpose

Teams who are committed to a common purpose accomplish goals. Having a purpose for the team's work serves as a compass that can recenter and motivate the team to persevere through any challenge.

Key Tips

When creating a purpose statement as a team, consider the following questions:

- Who are we serving?
- How are we adding value to our school?
- What are our priorities and goals?
- How do we accomplish them?
- Is there anyone missing that we should invite to the table?

Set Regular Meetings

When looking to meet students' academic and behavioral needs, teams have an extensive set of tasks to undertake. Educators' schedules can become quickly filled; therefore, it is best practice to set a regular schedule for meetings at the start of the school year. Meeting regularly helps to ensure fidelity of instruction is evaluated and allows time for making data-based decisions to meet student needs.

Key Tips

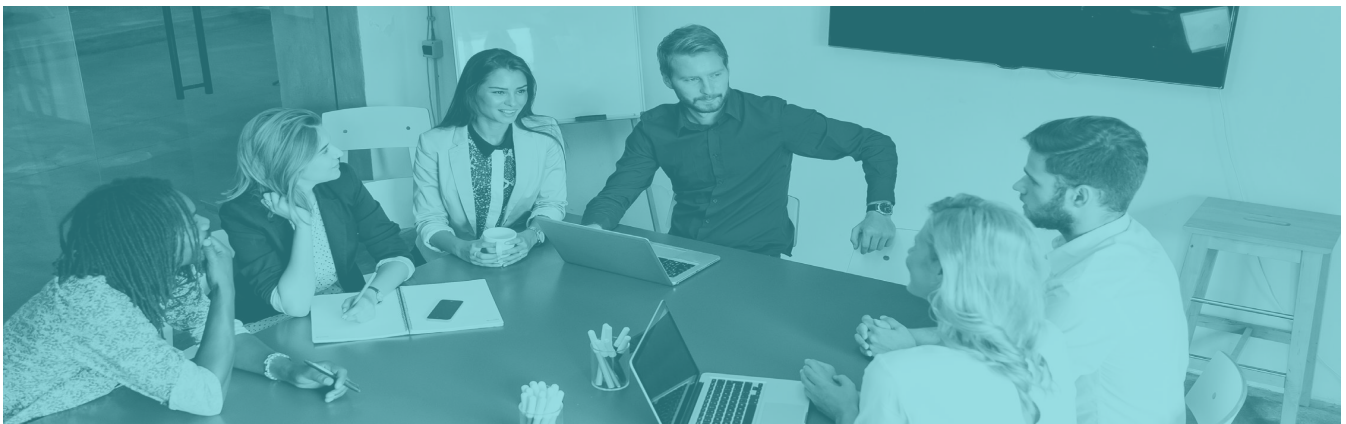
- Meet monthly, at a minimum.
- Schedule all meetings at the beginning of the year, keeping in mind key events (e.g., academic benchmarks; ongoing professional development and coaching; evaluating the effectiveness of instruction at a specific tier; grouping an intervention planning, etc.)
- Stick with a consistent day and time of the week.
- Take attendance.

Use a Structured Agenda

Teams that meet without a game plan tend to lose sight of their purpose and are less likely to produce results. To improve meeting efficiency, use a structured agenda to maintain accountability and integrity of this coordinated time.

Key Tips

- Create an agenda template.
- Develop sets of recurring agenda items that reflect the common decisions that repeat throughout the year. Incorporate these recurring items based on a meeting's objectives.
- Share the agenda with the team at least 24 hours in advance.
- Display the agenda while taking meeting minutes as a visual aid.
- Begin with celebrations.
- Discuss data during the first five minutes meetings.
- Embed a problem-solving process.
- Maintain an active action plan.



Identify Team Norms

Norms are clear and agreed-upon expectations for how a team will collaborate, communicate, and support one another to achieve the team's tasks, goals, and overall purpose. Norms are designed to protect the team's work and can help build trust when members collectively support one another in adherence to the norms.

Key Tips

- Collectively brainstorm positively stated norms and consider including norms that address potential barriers to productive teaming.
- Come to a consensus on the top three to five norms that the team feels are the best fit
- Have norms posted in the meeting room and at the top of each meeting agenda for quick reference and team reflection
- Review norms and consider updates annually or when there is a new team member.
- As a fidelity check, some teams will rate their effectiveness in using their norms at the end of each meeting.

Review Team Membership

Teams should be composed of people from diverse backgrounds and experiences to bring different thoughts, perspectives, and expertise to the group. Ideally, team members are representative of your student demographics.

These teams are comprised of a core group of individuals that can include:

- an administrator,
- a school psychologist,
- a behavioral interventionist,
- an academic interventionist, and
- a classroom teacher.

These teams also include an expanded group of individuals invited as needed. The expanded group may consist of:

- an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher,
- an instructional coach,
- a special education teacher,
- a school counselor, and
- other key collaborators as necessary.

Establish Team Roles

High-functioning teams distribute work equitably. This is done by establishing the perspective that each member is a leader and is critical in helping the team fulfill its purpose.

Key Tips

- Consider additional roles depending on the purpose of the meeting.
- Determine if your team will have set or rotating roles.
- Identify which team member will serve as backup person for each role.

Example role and function:

Team Lead	Will create the agenda, facilitate the meeting, and follow up on action items.
Recorder	Will share the agenda, record and disseminate the meeting minutes.
Timekeeper	Will maintain the meeting pace and keep the team on topic.
Data Coordinator	Will prepare data and graphs to share and lead the data discussion.
Active participant	Will share input, review agenda, and complete assigned tasks.

Define Consensus

The decision point in a discussion is the point that separates thinking from action. Teams need a way of reaching consensus and knowing when a decision has been made. Different decision-making methods can have different effects on the group's behavior. Everyone should be a part of the decision-making process. When team members feel their voices are heard, they will be more likely to work toward mutual understanding.

Methods or Reaching Consensus

Majority Voting – teams adopt the majority preference. This method can be efficient, but a member could feel their perspective is not heard or valued which may undermine group cohesion.

Full Consensus Method – teams discuss an issue until everyone agrees. This method allows everyone to be heard but may be inefficient when full consensus is difficult to achieve.

Agreement Gradient Method – teams discuss an issue until everyone can agree to support and implement the decision, even if they do not fully agree. This method allows everyone to be heard and helps a team move forward with difficult decisions. Examples include:

Fist to Five – team members indicate how they feel about a decision along a number scale, by holding up their fingers:

- Disagree and cannot support
- Disagree but will support
- Mixed feelings but will support
- Agree with reservations
- Endorse

Thumbs-Up Approach – team members display their vote. Thumbs up indicates approval, thumbs down indicate disapproval, and sideways thumb indicates the member does not support the action but will not prevent the motion from going forward.

Key Tips

- Consider different methods for establishing consensus, and as a group select one.
- Determine the decision-making process at the beginning of the school year; this will help prepare the team before making difficult decisions.
- Ensure everyone knows the method for reaching a consensus.



Evaluate the Effectiveness of Meeting

Evaluating the effectiveness of meetings is critical as this ensures team members feel heard, that meetings are productive, and that action steps are achieved. When evaluating the effectiveness of meetings, teams should consider goal clarity, focused communication, and team effectiveness during meetings.

Considerations When Evaluating Meetings:

Goal Clarity: Did all team members understand the importance of issues discussed in the meeting?

Focused Communication: Did team members adhere to the issues on the meeting agenda?

Team Effectiveness: Did the team engage in completing tasks, developing quality partnerships, and fulfilling the meeting outcomes?

(Bang et al., 2010)

Key Tips

At the end of a meeting, the team can self-assess the effectiveness of their meeting. This can be done by asking a few simple questions and having the team answer “yes,” “so-so,” or “no”.

- Did we follow our expectations in the meeting today?
- Did we focus on our team’s purpose in our meeting today?
- Did we do a good job of completing the tasks we agreed on at previous meetings?
- In general, are the completed tasks having the desired effects on student outcomes?
- If any ratings are “so-so” or “no,” the team should discuss how they can improve.

(McIntosh & Goodman, 2016, p.178)



Endnotes Citations

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