

# School Leadership Teams



## Intervention Overview

Principals cannot lead this wellbeing work alone. While most principals know that “improving an organization must take place within, and across, each level of the organization,” they are also keenly aware of their inability to personally meet the needs of all students, teachers, and teams” alone (Scribner, et al., 2007, p. 96). Even the 1:25 principal-to-teacher ratio in small schools presents a daunting task, not to mention the 1:120 ratio in large schools. “It isn’t humanly possible for one person to shoulder this responsibility” (Sweeney & Mausbach, 2018, p. 89.); principals don’t have “unlimited supervisory capacity [nor] all the time in the world to change teachers one at a time” (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012, p. 46).

Leaders must realize that “no one person, no matter how competent, is capable of single handedly developing the right vision, communicating it to vast numbers of people, eliminating all of the key obstacles, generating short term wins, leading and managing dozens of change projects and anchoring new approaches deep in an organization’s culture. Putting together the right coalition of people to lead a change initiative is critical to its success” (Kotter, 2010, p. 52). Unfortunately, “many schools may have teams, ... [but] few may constitute what we think of as authentic leadership teams. Rather than being imbued with leadership capacity, many school teams simply perform delegated administrative tasks” from the principal (DeFlaminis, Abdul-Jabbar, & Yoak, 2016, p. 157). A hand-picked team composed of school leaders, teacher leaders, and other educators working to support student and educators will likely have a much greater impact than a few “harried supervisor[s], running frenetically from teacher to teacher, giving advice” and trying to support wellbeing (Schmoker, 2005, p. 125).

Some schools seek to foster wellbeing by creating a wellbeing team, dedicated solely to the promotion, assessment, and development of wellbeing in the school. While there are certainly benefits to having a wellbeing team, sometimes such speciality teams are viewed by faculty as tangential or secondary, and not garnering the full support of faculty. If we want wellbeing to be a primary focus for the school, it must be led by the front-and-center team of the school, the school leadership team. A supporting wellbeing team can certainly be put into place to provide needed logistical supports that align with the schoolwide wellbeing mission and vision.

## Intervention Guide

Materials: Jensen, Boren, and Murphy (2019) wrote an article on leading effective leadership teams. It can be accessed here:

[The Why and What of the School Leadership Team](#)

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Duration: Two 30-60-minute sessions

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Implementation: **Before Session 1**

- Invite members of the current school leadership team to read the article listed above.
- Assign each member of the leadership team to specifically focus on one of the six “spokes” discussed in the article. Be sure each of the six spokes is assigned.

**Session 1**

- Come together as a team and allow members of the team to teach the rest of the team about their spoke.
- Invite examples and open discussion.
- Invite each member of the team to fill out the School Leadership Team Inventory on their own at the meeting. This inventory can be found at the end of the above article.
- Collect responses.

**In Between Session 1 and Session 2**

- Review and summarize responses.
- Find a clean and compelling way to share aggregate responses with the full team.

**Session 2**

- As a School Leadership Team, use a SOAR Analysis (Appreciative Inquiry) to review the results of the School Leadership Team Inventory.
    - Strengths: What is working for our SLT?
    - Opportunities: What are some untapped opportunities for our SLT?
    - Aspirations: What do we hope to become as a team?
    - Response: What are some of our best next steps? What resources or supports are needed?
    - Collaboratively develop plans for building on your strengths and improving the effectiveness of your school leadership team.
    - Revisit the School Leadership Inventory as needed and continue to make improvements.
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## Does it work?

Ken Leithwood and colleagues (2006) found that school leadership has a greater influence on schools and students when that leadership is distributed widely; schools with the highest student achievement partially attribute that success to the effective distribution of leadership throughout the school. The Wallace Foundation discovered that when principals share leadership with teachers, teachers' working relationships are stronger and student achievement is higher (2010). In addition to improving student learning, high functioning distributed leadership teams seem to bring a host of other desired outcomes. Supovitz and Riggan (2012) found overwhelming statistically significant differences in team outcomes between leadership teams that received ongoing training and support in distributed leadership and leadership teams that did not receive similar support. These enhanced outcomes included: higher sense of collective efficacy, higher leader efficacy, increased trust between team members, teacher satisfaction, and opportunities to learn. In addition, Boren and colleagues (2021) found that when principals effectively distributed leadership through a leadership team, their schools enjoyed higher levels of student, teacher, and administrator wellbeing. For a more comprehensive review and outline for effectively distributing leadership through a leadership team, please refer to *Distributed Leadership in Schools* by John DeFlaminis and colleagues.

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