FRAMEWORKS

2016

Schlechty Center

SCHLECHTY CENTER FRAMEWORKS FOR ANALYSIS, DIALOGUE, AND STRATEGIC ACTION

Schlechty Center

INTRODUCTION

We are in an era in which public education is being impacted by policies and initiatives that come from experts far away, experts who operate on biased assumptions that are often not accurate or useful. One of the consequences of this situation is a dependence on high-stakes testing, which is having a chilling effect on students and teachers, and on the culture of schools in general. We now see schools in which students are either taking a test or prepping to take a test for up to 40 days in a school year.

In addition, teacher and principal evaluations are, at least in part, determined by how students perform on standardized tests. Recently a parent reported that when she asked her daughter why she was crying before school, her daughter responded that they were taking tests that day and she wanted to do well so that her teacher could keep her job.

Even if one accepts this preoccupation with measuring and fixing people, does it not seem odd that no time or attention is given to measuring or assessing the capacity of the system to perform? With the guidance of Dr. Phillip Schlechty, staff at the Schlechty Center have spent almost 30 years developing frameworks and tools that school leaders can use to enhance the capacity of their organizations to support and sustain needed changes, especially those changes required in order for schools to be transformed from bureaucratic institutions into engagement-focused learning organizations.

At the Schlechty Center we believe in a different kind of accountability system, one that is focused on improving performance as opposed to ranking and punishing people and institutions. We support an accountability system that fosters rewarding innovation, not regulating it; that fosters creativity, not simply narrow courses; that fosters flexibility, not rigidity. Indeed, we support an accountability system that is built on trust. Our interest is in saving public education, not destroying it.

Such an accountability system takes into account the rapid changes and demands occurring in education today and calls on leaders to enhance the capacity of their organizations. This means there is clarity about values and direction. There is leadership commitment. Resources can be used flexibly, and an infrastructure for taking action is in place. All of this requires the creation of new assessment mechanisms, as using old metrics to assess new work is simply a return to the old way of doing things.

These new assessment mechanisms can be used to assess the conditions for learning as well as learning itself. According to Phillip Schlechty, such assessments are not going to come from the state or federal government:

> *To date, no state has come up with a standardized test that provides data on the power of schools or teachers to generate an environment where students become more creative than they might otherwise have been, more able to use technology than they were before attending the school, more adept at solving real problems, or even more disciplined in the way they approach problems.*
>
> *Leading for Learning: How to Transform Schools into Learning Organizations*
> *p. 170*

The purpose of the Schlechty Center Frameworks for Analysis, Dialogue, and Strategic Action is to support the work of leadership and design teams, as well as other groups, as they seek to strategically identify and support organizational capacity building. It is our hope that the frameworks will be useful to those who seek to move beyond strategic planning to create a strategic change agenda, one that results in an accountability system that is responsive to local communities and that is based on trust.

IMAGES

2016

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USING IMAGES OF
SCHOOL TO INTRODUCE
TAKING STOCK

USING IMAGES OF SCHOOL TO INTRODUCE TAKING STOCK

While the need for transformation is frequently mentioned in education today, there is little clarity about what it means, why it is needed, or how to lead it. The Images of School chart on the next page can be used to illustrate the need for transformation. The highly-engaged school and classroom are stifled in bureaucratic organizations. According to Phillip Schlechty, who created the chart, leaders of transformation must have a clear image of what is going on in the schools they are trying to change:

> *Certainly the metaphors I use are not the only possibilities. However, taken as a set, they illuminate many of the important features of school life and help to make even clearer why bureaucracy is not now and never has been an appropriate form of schooling and why the idea of the school as a learning organization points the way to a brighter future for democratic education.*

Leading for Learning: How to Transform Schools into Learning Organizations
p. 68

What the Schlechty Center means by *transformation* is that schools and school systems need to be transformed from organizations that are bureaucratic institutions into organizations that are more like learning organizations.

The Images of School chart is a very useful framework for various audiences, including leadership and design teams, to use in determining where they are and where they want to be.

Analysis, dialogue, and strategic action result from having mixed-role groups respond to questions such as the following:

Core Business of School
- Which of the descriptions of core business best describes how our school district defines (at the current time) its core business?
- Which of the descriptions of core business best describes how teachers and other key role groups on the Images chart would define the core business?

Leadership Roles
- Which of the role descriptions most closely describes the district view or belief about each role group?
- Which of the role descriptions most closely describes how each individual role group would respond to how its role is defined?

Strategic Action
Based on the responses to the questions above, what actions should leaders provide time and attention to in order for the organization to become more like a learning organization?

USING IMAGES OF SCHOOL TO INTRODUCE TAKING STOCK

Images of School

Core Business	Student as:	Parent as:	Teacher as:	Principal as:	Supt. & CO as:	School Board as:	Likely Classroom Profiles	Level of Student Learning Bloom's Taxonomy	Guiding Metaphor
Designing Engaging Academic Work for Students & Leading Them to Success in That Work	Volunteer & Knowledge Worker	Partner & Member of the School Community	Leader, Designer, & Guide to Instruction	Leader of Leaders	Moral and Intellectual Leader & Capacity Builders	Community Builders & Advocates for Schools	Highly Engaged	Create, Evaluate, Analyze, Apply, Understand, Remember	Learning Organization
Diagnosis, Prescription, & Treatment	Client	Guarantor & Questionable Ally	Professional Performer & Presenter, or Clinician & Diagnostician	Chief of Staff	CEO & Technicians and Support Staff	Board of Directors	Well Managed	Analyze, Apply, Understand, & Sometimes Remember Long Term	Professional Service Delivery Organization
Testing, Remediation, & Reporting	Raw Material & Product	Supply Source & Determinant of Product Quality	Skilled Worker	Shop Foreman	Plant Manager & Inspectors and Supervisors	Owners & Advocates	Passive Congenial	Understand, but Unlikely to Remember Long Term	Factory
Labeling, Categorizing, Placement, & Recording	Excess Inventory	Primary Shipper & Receiver	Clerk & Keeper of Records	Midlevel Bureaucrat & Keeper of the Keys	Property Manager & Directors of Maintenance, Shipping, and Personnel	Safety Inspectors & Fire Marshals	Threatened	Learn Little	Warehouse
Containment, Monitoring, Corrective Action, & Punishment	Inmate	Distrusted Visitor	Guard	Warden	Bureau Chief & Department Directors, Hearing Officers, and Parole Officers	Hearing Officers & Parole Board	Conflict Habituated	Students Develop Negative Attitudes Toward Disciplined Learning	Prison

SYSTEM CAPACITY STANDARDS

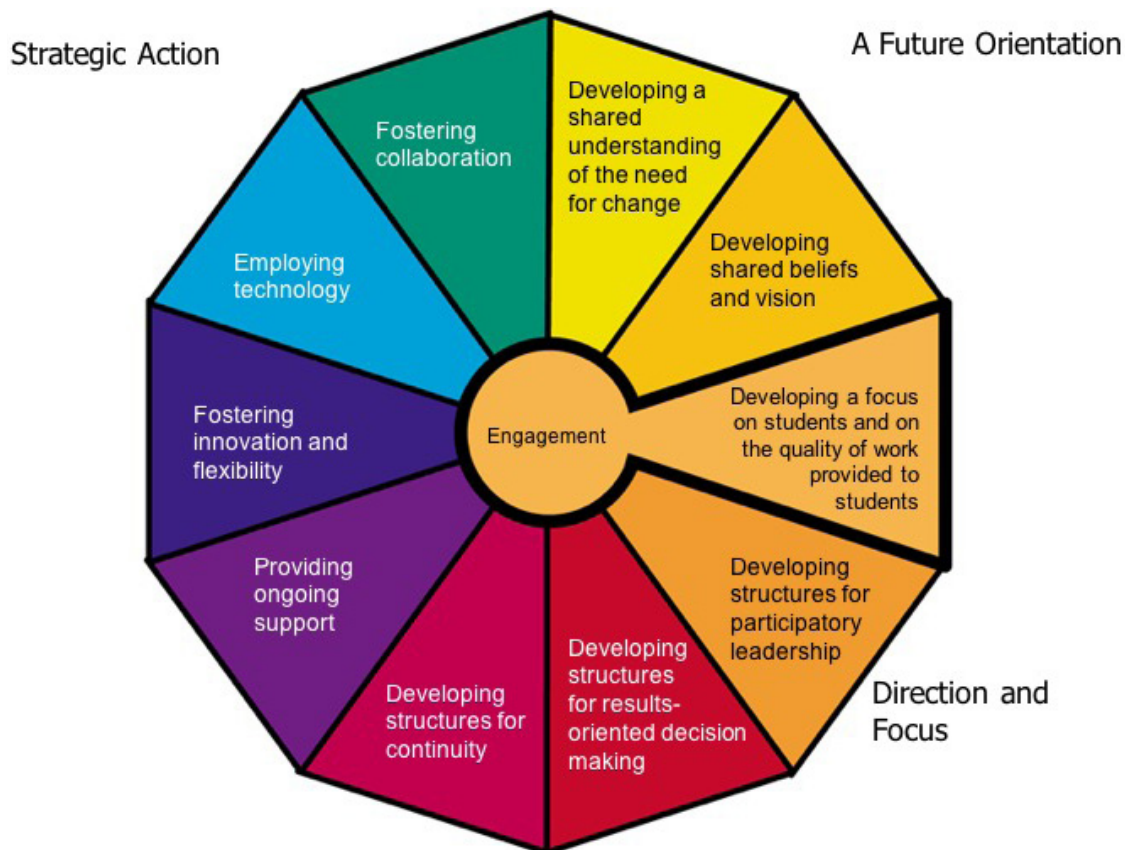## USING SYSTEM CAPACITY STANDARDS TO TAKE STOCK

2016

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USING SYSTEM CAPACITY STANDARDS TO TAKE STOCK

Phillip Schlechty differentiates between standards that are used to set direction and standards that are used as a source of control:

> *The intent of most of those who advocate the use of standards as a base for school reform is to use the standards as a source of direction. But because standards are usually installed in the context of a bureaucratic structure, they most often constrain creativity and impose external controls.*

> *Leading for Learning: How to Transform Schools into Learning Organizations*
> p. 241

While most of the attention about standards has been on academic standards themselves, it is essential for school districts to possess or develop the capacities and systems needed to support all students and staff in meeting academic standards. One of the frameworks that the Schlechty Center uses to assess system performance is built around 10 System Capacity Standards. These standards are organized around three capacities that relate to the ability of the school district to support and sustain systemic change. The three capacities and the 10 System Capacity Standards are depicted in the graphic below.

USING SYSTEM CAPACITY STANDARDS TO TAKE STOCK

STANDARD 1: DEVELOPING A SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF THE NEED FOR CHANGE

The members of the board of education, the superintendent, central office staff, principals, teacher leaders, leaders of parent organizations, and key community leaders (e.g., civic leaders, business leaders) have a common understanding of the nature of the problems and opportunities that confront the school district and base their discussions of these issues on a common body of fact and information.

STANDARD 2: DEVELOPING SHARED BELIEFS AND VISION

The school district and its community develop within the local context a compelling vision of what schools can be and how schools should be related to the community—a vision capable of earning wide support in the school district and in the community and consistent with a set of well-articulated beliefs regarding the nature of schools and the schooling enterprise.

A Future Orientation

STANDARD 3: DEVELOPING A FOCUS ON STUDENTS AND ON THE QUALITY OF WORK PROVIDED TO STUDENTS

Throughout the school district there is a clear focus on students and on the quality of the work provided to students—work that students find interesting, challenging, and satisfying and that results in their learning what is expected by schools, parents, and the community.

STANDARD 4: DEVELOPING STRUCTURES FOR PARTICIPATORY LEADERSHIP

The school district develops patterns of leadership and a structure of relationships such that teachers are leaders, principals are leaders of leaders, and all school district-level activity is focused on providing direction and support for schools.

STANDARD 5: DEVELOPING STRUCTURES FOR RESULTS-ORIENTED DECISION MAKING

The school district develops a results-oriented management system and a quality-focused decision-making process that are consistent with the beliefs that guide the system and that ensure that the measures of quality conform with the requirements of those who provide support to students and the schools.

Direction and Focus

STANDARD 6: DEVELOPING STRUCTURES FOR CONTINUITY

The school district provides for stability in leadership, structure, and culture over time, including support for innovative efforts that produce desired results.

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USING SYSTEM CAPACITY STANDARDS TO TAKE STOCK

Strategic Action

STANDARD 7: PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

The school district provides systems of training and development, incentives, and social and political support for those who are committed to the district's beliefs and vision and widens support for the pursuit of the beliefs and vision among all members of the community.

STANDARD 8: FOSTERING INNOVATION AND FLEXIBILITY

The district develops a policy environment and management system that foster flexibility and rapid response; that encourage innovative use of time, technology, and space; that encourage novel and improved staffing patterns; and that create forms of curriculum organization that are responsive to the needs of students.

STANDARD 9: EMPLOYING TECHNOLOGY

The school district and community display a common understanding of the transformational nature of changes in information-processing technologies, and the district provides all students and adults who work in the schools the tools required for quality work.

STANDARD 10: FOSTERING COLLABORATION

The school district encourages and supports the creation of relationships within the school district, between schools and parents, and among those agencies and groups that provide service to children and youth, in order to ensure that each child has the support needed to succeed in school and in the community.

USING SYSTEM CAPACITY STANDARDS TO TAKE STOCK

The 10 System Capacity Standards are often referred to as *results for the system*. They describe the attributes of a system that looks like a learning organization or a highly-engaged school. The Schlechty Center encourages the use of these standards as a framework for assessing the capacity of the system to support and sustain needed change. This assessment can be an in-depth process in which a district team, perhaps a design team, goes deep into each of the standards, or a district may choose Taking Stock, usually a two-day process and often referred to as a *capacity audit*. In the case of both the in-depth assessment and Taking Stock, it is desirable to include diverse audiences with varying perspectives. As a result of the assessment, patterns will emerge and it will become clear what processes a district has in place that either enhance or inhibit organizational capacity. After teams have completed their assessment, they should work through the chart below. Each team should reach consensus on where to place a tack for each System Capacity Standard, with "1" representing little capacity and "5" representing a high level of capacity.

Assessing District Capacity

Area of Capacity

Evidence of Capacity

	1	2	3	4	5

Focus on the Future

1. Developing a Shared Understanding of the Need for Change

2. Developing Shared Beliefs and Vision

Maintain Direction

3. Developing a Focus on Students and on the Quality of the Work Provided to Students

4. Developing Structures for Participatory Leadership

5. Developing Structures for Results-Oriented Decision Making

6. Developing Structures for Continuity

Act Strategically

7. Providing Ongoing Support

8. Fostering Innovation and Flexibility

9. Employing Technology

10. Fostering Collaboration
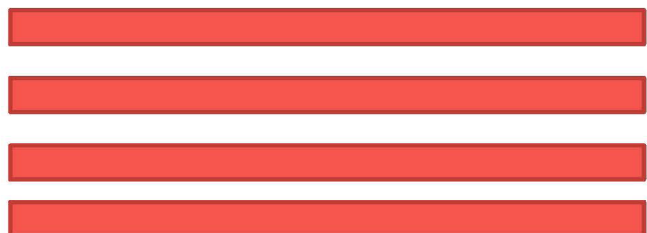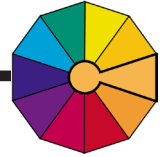
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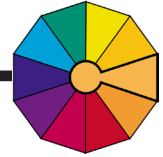
USING SYSTEM CAPACITY STANDARDS TO TAKE STOCK

Schlechty Center System Capacity Standard 1

Standard 1

DEVELOPING A SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF THE NEED FOR CHANGE

The members of the board of education, the superintendent, central office staff, principals, teacher leaders, leaders of parent organizations, and key community leaders (e.g., civic leaders, business leaders) have a common understanding of the nature of the problems and opportunities that confront the school district and base their discussions of these issues on a common body of fact and information.

■ The school district has organized factual information, including patterns and trends that impact education in the community, in ways that facilitate building a common understanding about the problems and opportunities that confront the school district.
- ❏ We are not sure.
- ❏ Yes, but the information is difficult to interpret.
- ❏ The information is easy to understand but is not used.
- ❏ The information is very useful.
- ❏ Other (Describe)

■ Key audiences both inside the district and in the community share a common understanding of the problems and opportunities that confront the school district.
- ❏ We are not sure.
- ❏ There is a lot of denial.
- ❏ There is a common understanding, but no one knows what to do.
- ❏ There is a common understanding and strategic action.
- ❏ Other (Describe)

■ There is a sense of urgency for change in the district and community.
- ❏ We are not sure.
- ❏ There is definitely not.
- ❏ In the district there is, but in the community there is not.
- ❏ Yes, there is, both inside the district and in the community.
- ❏ Other (Describe)

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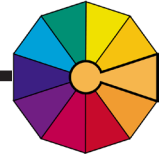
USING SYSTEM CAPACITY STANDARDS TO TAKE STOCK

Schlechty Center System Capacity Standard 2

Standard 2

DEVELOPING SHARED BELIEFS AND VISION
The school district and its community develop within the local context a compelling vision of what schools can be and how schools should be related to the community—a vision capable of earning wide support in the school district and in the community and consistent with a set of well-articulated beliefs regarding the nature of schools and the schooling enterprise.

■ The district has developed a set of well-articulated beliefs.
- ❏ No/we are not sure.
- ❏ Yes, but they only hang on the wall.
- ❏ Yes, but they are not acted upon.
- ❏ Yes, and they do drive action.
- ❏ Other (Describe)

■ The vision for our school district helps paint a picture of where we are going.
- ❏ No/we are not sure.
- ❏ Our vision is the state's vision.
- ❏ Our vision is compelling but is not shared.
- ❏ Our vision is compelling and deeply shared.
- ❏ Other (Describe)

■ The school district is clear about direction and what is to be accomplished.
- ❏ No/we are not sure.
- ❏ Our district follows state directives.
- ❏ Our district has a direction, but it is not shared.
- ❏ Our direction is clear and is shared throughout the district.
- ❏ Other (Describe)

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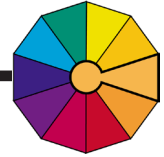
USING SYSTEM CAPACITY STANDARDS TO TAKE STOCK

Schlechty Center System Capacity Standard 3

Standard 3

DEVELOPING A FOCUS ON STUDENTS AND ON THE QUALITY OF WORK PROVIDED TO STUDENTS
Throughout the school district there is a clear focus on students and on the quality of the work provided to students—work that students find interesting, challenging, and satisfying and that results in their learning what is expected by schools, parents, and the community.

■ There is a clear focus on students throughout the district.
  ❏ No, the focus is on adults.
  ❏ We see students as test-takers.
  ❏ It depends on who the students are.
  ❏ We see students as the center of all school district activity.
  ❏ Other (Describe)

■ The role of student in the district is viewed as that of volunteer and knowledge worker.
  ❏ We view and treat students as products and raw material.
  ❏ We view and treat students as excess inventory.
  ❏ We view and treat students as clients.
  ❏ We view and treat students as volunteers and knowledge workers.
  ❏ Other (Describe)

■ There is a clear focus throughout the district on improving the quality of work that is provided to students.
  ❏ We are not sure how to do that.
  ❏ It is the student's responsibility to do work assigned.
  ❏ We provide incentives for students to do work assigned.
  ❏ We provide students with work that is worth doing.
  ❏ Other (Describe)

■ Students find the work provided to them interesting, challenging, and satisfying, and the work results in their learning what is expected in the community.
  ❏ We don't know because we don't ask.
  ❏ We must provide them with that kind of work, because they do well on tests.
  ❏ We are starting to listen to student voice.
  ❏ We are committed to providing students with quality work.
  ❏ Other (Describe)
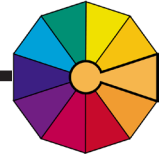
USING SYSTEM CAPACITY STANDARDS TO TAKE STOCK

Schlechty Center System Capacity Standard 4

| Standard 4 | **DEVELOPING STRUCTURES FOR PARTICIPATORY LEADERSHIP** The school district develops patterns of leadership and a structure of relationships such that teachers are leaders, principals are leaders of leaders, and all school district-level activity is focused on providing direction and support for schools. |

■ There are structures in place that support the distribution of leadership throughout the district.
   ❏ Hierarchy defines leadership.
   ❏ Leaders are those in management roles.
   ❏ There are efforts to develop and support leaders at all levels.
   ❏ Leadership is valued and supported from the classroom to the boardroom.
   ❏ Other (Describe)

■ It is clear what should be centralized and what should be decentralized in the district.
   ❏ We lack clarity.
   ❏ It is clear—all top-down.
   ❏ We are gaining clarity.
   ❏ We are clear on how both centralization and decentralization are important.
   ❏ Other (Describe)

■ Teachers are viewed and treated as leaders, designers, and guides to instruction.
   ❏ The teacher's role is to present what is needed for kids to pass tests.
   ❏ The teacher's role is to ensure students get needed services.
   ❏ We are working on this; the role of teacher is being redefined.
   ❏ Teachers are treated as and see themselves as leaders, designers, and guides to instruction.
   ❏ Other (Describe)

■ The role of principal is to lead leaders.
   ❏ The principal's role is to manage the school and ensure targets are met.
   ❏ The principal's role is to supervise teachers.
   ❏ The principal's role is to serve as advocate and liaison for central office programs and initiatives.
   ❏ The principal's role is to create conditions that support a focus on student and staff engagement.
   ❏ Other (Describe)

Standard 4

DEVELOPING STRUCTURES FOR PARTICIPATORY LEADERSHIP
The school district develops patterns of leadership and a structure of relationships such that teachers are leaders, principals are leaders of leaders, and all school district-level activity is focused on providing direction and support for schools.

■ The superintendent is seen as a moral and intellectual leader.
- ❏ Our superintendent has to spend a lot of time with the board.
- ❏ Our superintendent sees his/her role as ensuring targets are met.
- ❏ Our superintendent is like a CEO, ensuring that the district is managed properly.
- ❏ Our superintendent is beliefs-driven and is a learner who encourages others to learn.
- ❏ Other (Describe)

■ The role of the central office is to enhance the capacity of the district to support our direction.
- ❏ Some departments function well; others do not.
- ❏ Our central office is more about managing programs and monitoring their implementation.
- ❏ Our central office is about supporting schools through service delivery.
- ❏ Our central office sees its collective role as supporting those who work in schools and on building the capacity of the school district.
- ❏ Other (Describe)

■ The role of the board of education is to build and lead the community.
- ❏ The board spends a lot of time with special interests.
- ❏ The board seems to function more like owners and managers.
- ❏ Our board is mostly concerned with compliance issues.
- ❏ Our board is about leadership in the community.
- ❏ Other (Describe)

■ School leaders see themselves as leaders in the community as well as inside the school district.
- ❏ School leaders are seen as outsiders in the school community.
- ❏ Little effort is made to develop relationships with community leaders.
- ❏ School leaders call on the community when they need something from the community.
- ❏ School leaders are viewed as community leaders.
- ❏ Other (Describe)
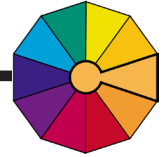
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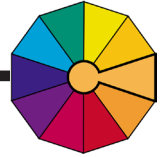
Schlechty Center System Capacity Standard 5

Standard 5

DEVELOPING STRUCTURES FOR RESULTS-ORIENTED DECISION MAKING

The school district develops a results-oriented management system and a quality-focused decision-making process that are consistent with the beliefs that guide the system and that ensure that the measures of quality conform with the requirements of those who provide support to students and the schools.

- There is clarity about what we hope to accomplish.
  - ❏ We are unclear about results.
  - ❏ We are confused as there are so many goals.
  - ❏ We are clear but not sure we have the capacity to accomplish what we hope to.
  - ❏ We are clear, and we have structures and processes in place to help us accomplish what we hope to accomplish.
  - ❏ Other (Describe)

- There is a direct connection between our beliefs and values, and decisions that are made.
  - ❏ It seems that the squeaky wheel gets the most attention.
  - ❏ Decision-making processes are not formal.
  - ❏ We are making progress in walking our talk.
  - ❏ Decisions are a clear reflection of our beliefs.
  - ❏ Other (Describe)

- There is understanding of and consideration for those impacted by decisions.
  - ❏ Decisions support what the state needs.
  - ❏ Decisions support the particular interests of special interests.
  - ❏ The needs and interests of those affected by decisions are understood and considered.
  - ❏ For the most part, decisions are driven by the needs of those we serve.
  - ❏ Other (Describe)

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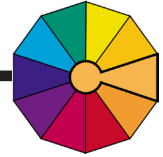
Schlechty Center System Capacity Standard 6

Standard 6

DEVELOPING STRUCTURES FOR CONTINUITY
The school district provides for stability in leadership, structure, and culture over time, including support for innovative efforts that produce desired results.

- Planning for succession is expected at all levels of the district.
  - ❏ We operate in fits and starts.
  - ❏ New leadership equals a new direction.
  - ❏ Succession planning is commonplace.
  - ❏ Succession planning is part of our culture.
  - ❏ Other (Describe)

- The district values and builds capacity to support continuous innovation.
  - ❏ Innovation is not valued.
  - ❏ Innovation happens but not frequently.
  - ❏ Innovation is valued and encouraged.
  - ❏ Innovation is sustained over time.
  - ❏ Other (Describe)

- Employment decisions, including promotions, are based on an individual's contributions to the life of the organization.
  - ❏ We are not sure how these decisions are made.
  - ❏ Credentials and experience are the main drivers in these decisions.
  - ❏ Our beliefs, values, and desired results are considerations in these decisions.
  - ❏ Our beliefs, values, and desired results are the determinants in these decisions.
  - ❏ Other (Describe)

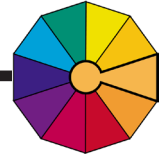## Schlechty Center

USING SYSTEM CAPACITY STANDARDS TO TAKE STOCK

Schlechty Center System Capacity Standard 7

Standard 7

PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT
The school district provides systems of training and development, incentives, and social and political support for those who are committed to the district's beliefs and vision and widens support for the pursuit of the beliefs and vision among all members of the community.

■ The district supports the development of staff at all levels of the organization.
❏ Professional development is limited.
❏ Professional development is random and episodic.
❏ Professional development is more about providing support than it is training.
❏ Professional development is ongoing and of high quality.
❏ Other (Describe)

■ Professional development is focused and customized for the audience to whom it is directed.
❏ Most, if not all, professional development is state-mandated.
❏ Most professional development assumes we all need the same thing.
❏ Professional development experiences consider different audience segments.
❏ Professional development is customized to meet different needs of staff.
❏ Other (Describe)

■ There is protection for staff who take risks and who are learning new ways to do their work.
❏ Risk-taking is not valued.
❏ Risk-taking is valued as long as there are no mistakes.
❏ Protection is provided for those who seek new ways to work.
❏ Protection is provided and there is celebration for those who take risks.
❏ Other (Describe)

■ Incentives are aligned with direction.
❏ Incentives support our old direction.
❏ Incentives support the state's direction.
❏ There are efforts to align incentives with direction.
❏ There are incentives in place, including recognition, involvement, support, and collegiality, for those committed to the direction.
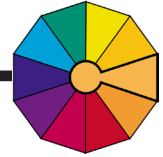❏ Other (Describe)

Standard 8
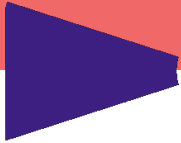
FOSTERING INNOVATION AND FLEXIBILITY
The district develops a policy environment and management system that foster flexibility and rapid response; that encourage innovative use of time, technology, and space; that encourage novel and improved staffing patterns; and that create forms of curriculum organization that are responsive to the needs of students.

- The use of resources such as time and space is determined by desired results.
  - ❏ These resources are fixed and non-negotiable.
  - ❏ There is moderate flexibility in how time and space are used.
  - ❏ There is recognition that some efforts need more time and space flexibility than others.
  - ❏ The people closest to the work have autonomy to use these resources as needed.
  - ❏ Other (Describe)

- There is sufficient flexibility in how staff is allocated and organized to ensure a focus on engagement and achievement.
  - ❏ People are allocated and organized based on rules and job descriptions.
  - ❏ People are organized to serve the needs of adults more than the needs of students.
  - ❏ People are allocated and organized based on what is needed to increase student engagement and achievement.
  - ❏ Staff have autonomy to adjust how they organize themselves in order to meet student needs.
  - ❏ Other (Describe)

- Information is viewed as a flexible resource and is accessible to those who need it in order to make decisions and design learning experiences.
  - ❏ Information is hoarded.
  - ❏ Access to information is determined by bureaucratic rules.
  - ❏ Information can be accessed when needed (24/7).
  - ❏ Organizing information in ways that meet student needs is promoted.
  - ❏ Other (Describe)
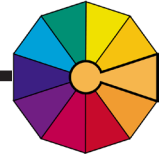
USING SYSTEM CAPACITY STANDARDS TO TAKE STOCK

Schlechty Center System Capacity Standard 9

Standard 9	EMPLOYING TECHNOLOGY The school district and community display a common understanding of the transformational nature of changes in information-processing technologies, and the district provides all students and adults who work in the schools the tools required for quality work.

- The school district and community display a common understanding of the role of digital technology in twenty-first-century learning and engagement.
  - ❏ We view digital technology as a trend.
  - ❏ We view technology as a separate instructional tool.
  - ❏ Our district has embraced technology, but our community has not.
  - ❏ Digital technology is a natural extension of how we work.
  - ❏ Other (Describe)

- Digital technology is seen as a part of our seamless technology design and has an equal, integrated role in the design of work, whatever that work is.
  - ❏ There is a lack of understanding regarding seamless technology.
  - ❏ The use of digital technology is tightly restricted.
  - ❏ Technology is seamless but is not integrated in the design of work.
  - ❏ Appropriate technologies support the design of schoolwork.
  - ❏ Other (Describe)

- Staff throughout the school district understand the needs and interests of students, staff, and parents who are growing up or who have grown up in a digital world.
  - ❏ There is resistance as students have more knowledge about technology than adults do.
  - ❏ There exists a lack of access to the tools needed.
  - ❏ There is increasing understanding of the need to be responsive to the various constituencies we serve.
  - ❏ We routinely use digital resources to design work and respond to various audiences.
  - ❏ Other (Describe)

- The use of digital technology in classrooms is determined by developmental appropriateness, the design of work to be done, and the results to be accomplished.
  - ❏ Technology decisions are made at administrative levels, resulting in a one-size-fits-all approach.
  - ❏ Using digital technology is more about fashion than substance and is often used to do old work in new ways.
  - ❏ Teachers have a lot of autonomy in the tools they choose to use, and they receive some professional development support.
  - ❏ Using digital technologies to design engaging work is the norm.
  - ❏ Other (Describe)

Schlechty Center

Standard 9

EMPLOYING TECHNOLOGY
The school district and community display a common understanding of the transformational nature of changes in information-processing technologies, and the district provides all students and adults who work in the schools the tools required for quality work.

- An infrastructure to support the expanded use of digital technologies is designed, implemented, and sustained.
  - ❏ The district cannot provide adequate hardware, software, or infrastructure for a working twenty-first-century learning environment.
  - ❏ Some capacity for bandwidth and access points exists, but it is so limited that digital work is very frustrating for students and teachers.
  - ❏ Adequate capacity exists, but stringent rules restrict access.
  - ❏ Adequate bandwidth, access points, and permissions are available for students and teachers to create, consume, and curate digital work.
  - ❏ Other (Describe)

- Digital citizenship is embraced as an integral part of the overall desired district and community norms of citizenship and character.
  - ❏ The district does not have a character education curriculum.
  - ❏ The district deals with this on a case-by-case basis.
  - ❏ Digital citizenship is treated as a separate, add-on program only necessary because of the inherent danger of Internet use.
  - ❏ Digital citizenship is an integrated part of the school's character education curriculum.
  - ❏ Other (Describe)
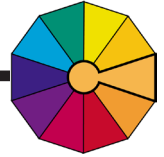
USING SYSTEM CAPACITY STANDARDS TO TAKE STOCK

Schlechty Center System Capacity Standard 10

Standard 10

FOSTERING COLLABORATION
The school district encourages and supports the creation of relationships within the school district, between schools and parents, and among those agencies and groups that provide service to children and youth, in order to ensure that each child has the support needed to succeed in school and in the community.

- Structures are in place to support collaboration at all levels of the school district.
  - ❏ We work in silos.
  - ❏ We are most comfortable when we work with others who do similar work and who share our interests.
  - ❏ We are collaborating more than ever but are restricted by our structure.
  - ❏ Collaboration is intentional at all levels of the district, and new structures are in place to allow for it.
  - ❏ Other (Describe)

- Parents are seen as partners and members of the school community.
  - ❏ Parents are distrusted.
  - ❏ Parents are trusted but need to stay in their place.
  - ❏ Parents are seen as valuable allies.
  - ❏ Parents are viewed as key partners whose support we must have.
  - ❏ Other (Describe)

- Collaborative relationships and strategic alliances with community agencies and groups are in place and are continuously nurtured.
  - ❏ Schools and community groups work in their own respective silos.
  - ❏ We cooperate with community organizations when requested.
  - ❏ We see alliances with community organizations as a critical strategy to ensure student success.
  - ❏ We have formalized strategic alliances through resolutions, partnerships, and the like.
  - ❏ Other (Describe)

SOCIAL SYSTEMS

USING CRITICAL SOCIAL SYSTEMS TO BUILD CAPACITY

2016

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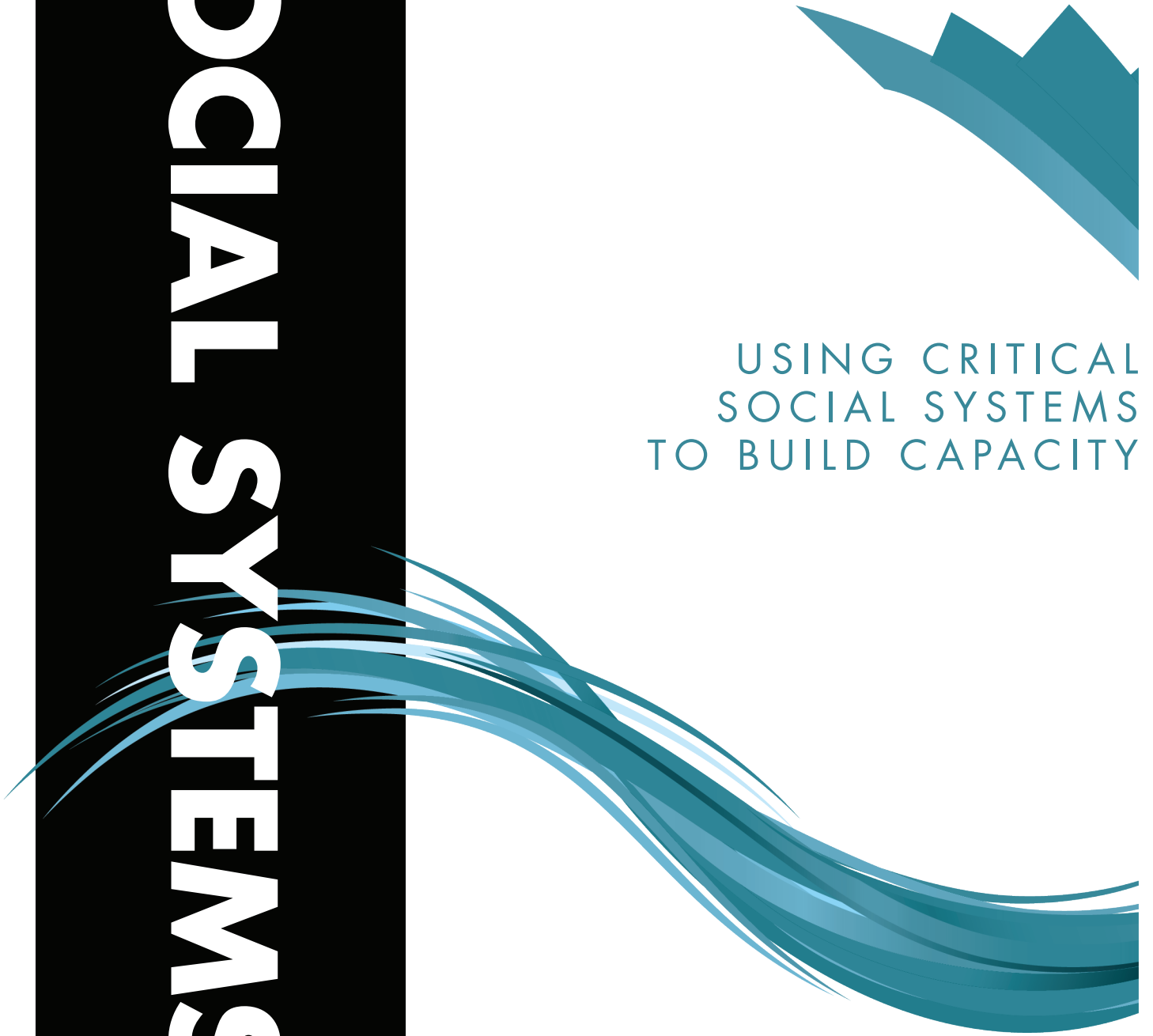
USING CRITICAL SOCIAL SYSTEMS TO BUILD CAPACITY

The purpose of assessing capacity, or Taking Stock, is to inform school leaders what systems need to be worked on (redesigned) in order to build capacity, especially capacity to support transformation. Most often, when educational leaders refer to *systemic change* they are referring to operating systems that define the work flow of the organization.

Operating systems are part of larger social systems:

> *Social systems define the cultural and structural context within which operating systems must carry out their tasks. Operating systems define how work is done; social systems define the meaning of the work, the values that are attached to the work and its outcomes, the ends toward which the work is aimed, the manner in which authority is assigned, the knowledge that is honored, and so on.*

Leading for Learning: How to Transform Schools into Learning Organizations
p. 26

Formal organizations like schools have at least six critical systems:

The *Directional System*, which includes those systems through which goals are set, priorities are determined, and when things go awry, corrective actions are initiated.

The *Knowledge Development and Transmission System*, which includes those formal and informal systems that define the means by which knowledge related to the moral, aesthetic, and technical norms that shape behavior in schools and school districts is developed, imported, evaluated, and transmitted.

The *Recruitment and Induction System*, which includes those systems through which new members are identified and attracted to the organization and brought to understand and embrace the norms and values they must understand and embrace to be full members of the organization.

The *Boundary System*, which includes those systems that define who and what are inside the organization, and are therefore subject to the control of the organization, and who and what are outside the organization, and are therefore beyond the reach of the systems that make up the organization.

The *Evaluation System*, which includes those systems through which measures of merit and worth are assigned, status is determined, honor is bestowed, and the method and timing of negative sanctions are set.

The *Power and Authority System*, which includes those systems that legitimize the use of sanctions, define the proper exercise of power, and determine status relationships.

USING CRITICAL SOCIAL SYSTEMS TO BUILD CAPACITY

Building on what you learned from Taking Stock (using the Images of School chart and the System Capacity Standards), consider which of these Six Critical Systems are in need of attention, especially to support transformation. As you consider, please refer to the charts on the following 13 pages and make any notes on the bottom of this page.

Notes:

USING CRITICAL SOCIAL SYSTEMS TO BUILD CAPACITY

The Directional System

(From Phillip Schlechty's *Leading for Learning: How to Transform Schools into Learning Organizations*)

Bureaucracies

Rules and policies rather than beliefs and values define all operations, and compliance with these rules is enforced through the application of sanctions that are more likely to be punishments than rewards.

Only top-level officials are expected to understand the direction that has been set for the school district. For most employees, including most teachers, their commitment to the system is largely contractual and carries no obligation beyond that specified in the operating job description.

Standards are used as a means of assessing compliance with rules and as a means of distributing rewards and administering punishments.

Relationships with groups and agencies outside the school or school district are limited, and when such relationships are perceived to be necessary, leaders try to structure them in a way that ensures that control will not be lost to some other agency or group.

Goals are set with an eye toward the past rather than a focus on the future. For example, what is referred to as a strategic goal often turns out to be nothing more than a tactical solution to a pressing problem and a possible way to relieve some existing tensions created by existing policy or courses of action.

Establishing strategic direction, to the extent that there is such a direction, is highly centralized, and goals are usually set without much input from employee groups.

Learning Organizations

The beliefs, values, and images that guide operation in the school are clear, well understood, consistent, and embraced by most who participate in the life of the school and school district.

Teachers, principals, central office staff, the superintendent, and members of the board of education share a common understanding of and commitment to the direction that has been set for the school district. They are expected by those who participate in the life of the school district to behave in ways that are supportive of that direction.

Standards are used as indicators of direction and benchmarks of progress rather than as expressions of power and indicators of compliance.

The school district has established relationships and structures that promote collaboration and cooperation with other organizations that have an interest in the direction of the school district, such as the teachers' union, parent organizations, civic organizations, and business groups, endeavoring thereby to increase civic capacity and decrease adversarial behavior.

Goals are set with careful attention to the prospect that they will capitalize on emerging opportunities and make optimal contributions to the realization of the vision that guides the district. Moreover, goals are designed to ensure that the means by which they are to be achieved will be consistent with and supportive of the beliefs and values that are intended to guide behavior in the district and in each school.

Strategic goals are set at the district level, but each school establishes operational goals that take local circumstances into account.

USING CRITICAL SOCIAL SYSTEMS TO BUILD CAPACITY

The Directional System (CONTINUED)

Bureaucracies	Learning Organizations
The installation of innovations that require changes in structure or culture seldom occurs, and when it does, the innovations are more likely to be rejected over time or modified to fit the existing system, thereby diminishing their effects.	When the pursuit of goals requires the introduction of innovations, the power and authority system, the evaluation system, and the boundary system are adjusted to accommodate needed changes in the knowledge development and transmission system and the induction and recruitment system.
The maintenance needs of the system typically overwhelm developmental needs, and resources officially committed to improvement and development are usually co-opted in support of maintaining the status quo. Performance goals are often displaced by maintenance goals.	Mechanisms are in place to ensure that resources are allocated in ways that are consistent with official goals and expectations. When resources are not available, goals are adjusted to reflect this fact.
Policies and procedures are more likely to focus on internal matters than issues emerging from changes in the external environment.	Policies and procedures are in place to ensure the continuous assessment of progress toward achieving goals, and clear points of accountability are identified.
Those who set goals frequently have little contact or interaction with those who are expected to take the actions needed to achieve the goals, and those who are expected to carry the primary responsibility for action often see little relationship between what they are doing and the goals they care about.	Those who have primary responsibility for achieving goals have a voice in shaping these goals, especially in determining the way these goals are to be achieved.

USING CRITICAL SOCIAL SYSTEMS TO BUILD CAPACITY

The Knowledge Development and Transmission System

<table>
<tr><th>Bureaucracies</th><th>Learning Organizations</th></tr>
<tr><td>

Knowledge regarding practices and procedures is codified in formally adopted programs and policies. These policies often have their origins outside the school or school district to which they are applied. For example, as state and federal bureaucracies have become increasingly intrusive, much that is critical to the operation of schools is determined in bureaucratic offices far removed from the schools affected by these decisions.

Central office staff and building principals assume that their primary role is to ensure compliance with programs, policies, and procedures specified by district officials.

Direct supervision of performance, rather than management by results, is typical.

Rules, policies, and procedures, rather than values, commitments, and shared beliefs, serve as standards against which performances are judged. These standards are more likely to be based on the codification of past practice than on research, though this codification process is often called "research."

Electronic networks are established primarily to facilitate top-down communication. Management by memo is still the style, though the memo may come by e-mail.

State-of-the-art data management systems may have been installed, but their use is more likely to be for management purposes (for example, tracking students) than for instruction or development.

</td><td>

In each school and at the district level, there exists one or more teams, organized as learning communities, that center attention on questions such as the following:

■ How can schools and classrooms be organized to most effectively support teachers in creating engaging work for students and to encourage students to become engaged in the work they are provided?

■ How can engagement be identified, measured, and differentiated from compliance produced by the promise of extrinsic rewards or the threat of unpleasant consequences?

■ What are the elements of schoolwork that teachers control, and how can teachers ensure that these elements are built into the tasks they assign to students or the activities they encourage students to undertake?

■ What evidence is there that students who do tasks because they are engaged develop more profound understanding of what they learn than do those who are simply compliant? What evidence is there that engaged students learn more and retain what they learn longer than those who are simply compliant?

■ What do teachers and school principals need in order to ensure that they can and will focus effectively on creating engaging work for students and on creating school environments that encourage student engagement in academic tasks?

Central office staff and building principals assume that a part of their role is to provide members of learning communities with opportunities to develop the skills needed to conduct action research, as well as opportunities to gain access to cutting-edge information that might bear on the questions they are pursuing—that is, opportunities to attend conferences, conduct and participate in seminars, and so on.

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USING CRITICAL SOCIAL SYSTEMS TO BUILD CAPACITY

The Knowledge Development and Transmission System (CONTINUED)

Bureaucracies	Learning Organizations

Bureaucracies

It is assumed that the knowledge requirements of higher-level positions are greater than the knowledge requirements of lower-level positions. Therefore it is assumed that the judgment of superordinates is almost always better than the judgment of subordinates. This applies to the relationship between principals and teachers as well as the relationships between teachers and students and between principals and superintendents.

Policies aimed at controlling teaching and learning are based on the assumptions that learning is simple and predictable and that behaviorist psychology should guide classroom practices.

Knowledge is as likely to be evaluated by its source as it is by its basis in fact and analysis. In a bureaucracy, the research most likely to be valued and adhered to is whatever research superordinates endorse.

Training and development of employees has a low priority in the district, and the training that is provided is more likely to be concerned with the clarification of policy, the remediation of perceived deficiencies, or the introduction of newly adopted programs than it is with the continuation of the growth and development of individual staff members.

Opportunities to make presentations to audiences outside the school and the local community are generally limited to those who occupy higher-level positions, and even then little is done to encourage off-site visits or attendance at conferences. Indeed, conference attendance, especially by teachers and principals, is likely to be discouraged on the basis that such activity is an unwarranted interruption of the "real" work that must go on.

Learning Organizations

All the learning communities in the district share a common framework and vocabulary to facilitate discussion and analysis. Members use these frameworks and this language in a disciplined way. (An example of such a framework can be found in the theory of action presented in Chapter Twelve.)

Electronic networks are established to facilitate the communication of information.

State-of-the-art data management systems have been installed, and the range of data available from these systems is wide and varied. It includes student test score data but is not limited to such data.

It is assumed that every person employed by the school district, regardless of title, is a teacher and a learner. It is further expected that each teacher-learner has a clear understanding regarding his or her obligations as a teacher. For example, it is assumed that school board members understand that one of their primary obligations is to educate their constituencies about the condition of education generally, as well as to shape the direction of schooling in the local community. Similarly, it is assumed that the superintendent and central office staff members understand that part of their role is to support the board in carrying out this external educational function as well as to work to ensure that those with whom they work in the school district get the training and support they need to be effective in their roles.

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USING CRITICAL SOCIAL SYSTEMS TO BUILD CAPACITY

The Knowledge Development and Transmission System (CONTINUED)

Bureaucracies

Most craft knowledge is imported from outside the organization and usually through persons who have considerable bureaucratic authority (for example, curriculum specialists). Locally developed knowledge (for example, information derived from action research) is rare and gets little support from superordinates.

Learning Organizations

The central office staff works to ensure that all staff members are made aware of literature (books, articles, and so on) relevant to broadening and deepening the understanding staff have of their roles and of the problems and prospects of public education. For example, central office staff members should constantly interact with various learning communities in the district and make sure that others in the district are made aware of what these groups are learning and of the kinds of resources they have found to be most useful.

The district and the community provide all school employees with rich cultural opportunities, including participation in seminars and classes that deal with art, music, contemporary literature, and so on, as well as educational experiences directly related to the academic disciplines.

Efforts are made to identify and celebrate creativity among staff members and to celebrate contributions staff members make to the common good and to the common store of knowledge.

Staff members are encouraged to make presentations to audiences outside the school and the local community, and they are provided support to ensure that these presentations are of the highest caliber.

USING CRITICAL SOCIAL SYSTEMS TO BUILD CAPACITY

The Recruitment and Induction System

Bureaucracies	Learning Organizations
Job descriptions clearly specify tasks to be carried out, duties assigned, and procedures for accountability. Beyond that required by law (for example, the requirement of a teaching license), usually little attention is given to standards of employment for entry-level positions. Frequently employment is as much dependent on insider sponsorship as it is on actual qualifications. This is especially true for noncertified positions. The career structure for teachers is flat; the only real promotion opportunities involve promotion out of the ranks of labor into the ranks of management. Management personnel are more likely to receive opportunities to participate in training opportunities than are members of lower-level employee groups. The content of early induction programs tends to place emphasis on classroom discipline and preferred strategies for ensuring student compliance with formal performance expectations. New employees usually have little awareness of what they will be expected to do once employed. Indeed, it is not uncommon for a new teacher to be hired by a central office functionary and informed about placement after the formal commitments have been made. Entry into employment requires little evidence of prior commitment, and when the demand for employees exceeds the supply, standards of employment are modified to make entry easier.	The individual qualities and characteristics that make it most likely that new employees and future leaders will embrace the values and roles defined by the norms of the district are clearly identified. When new employees are recruited, the qualities and characteristics specified as critical are systematically used in the making of employment decisions. The content of early orientation and induction experiences is clearly centered on developing an understanding of and appreciation for ideas like the following: the core business of the schools is providing students with engaging schoolwork; teachers are leaders and designers of schoolwork; principals are leaders of leaders; and students are viewed as volunteers. Induction experiences are especially attuned to developing among teachers those attitudes and habits of mind needed to ensure a continuing commitment to the cultural ways of the school and to developing the skills needed to continuously improve the quality of the schoolwork they provide to students. The recruitment process is used as a means of communicating expectations to new employees and to those seeking advancement, and it is also used as a means of ensuring an adequate supply of new members and persons qualified for promotion. Initial employment, advancement, and continuing employment require evidence of commitment to the core values of the school as well as demonstration of skill. Entry and full status in the organization are carefully staged, and there are clear patterns of promotion and advancement.

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USING CRITICAL SOCIAL SYSTEMS TO BUILD CAPACITY

The Recruitment and Induction System (CONTINUED)

Bureaucracies	Learning Organizations
Stages of entry are vague and largely undifferentiated. For the most part, teachers are treated as interchangeable parts of a well-oiled machine. Time in grade and seniority, at least as much as past performance, determine access to the few perquisites available. For example, beginning teachers are more likely to travel from room to room and receive low-status assignments than are experienced teachers. Each new employee is treated as a separate case, and there is little effort to build group cohesion or identity. Little formal attention is given to making new employees aware of the culture of the school, the events that define the style of the organization, and so on. Isolation and segmentation typify the system. Training, rather than development, is the key element of the induction system, and on-the-job training is the primary means of training. To the extent there is a preferred training model, it is likely to be based on an apprenticeship model, but usually whatever instruction is provided comes from supervisors or specially designated technicians. New employees, like most other employees, are usually isolated from their peers, and to the extent that they have formal work-related conversations, these conversations are more likely to be with superordinates than with peers or colleagues. Punishment rather than reward characterizes the system. For example, gaining tenure is not likely to be celebrated and the reasons for granting tenure are not likely to be specified, but nonrenewal is likely to be associated with elaborate procedures and processes.	Identification with entry cohorts (for example, the entry class), collegial support, and team building are encouraged, and initial job assignments and training experiences are designed to support these intentions. Induction experiences are designed in a way that develops awareness of defining events in the life of the school district and the schools, as well as knowledge about the myths, lore, traditions, and rituals that define the culture of the school district. Staff development opportunities intended to develop the language and concepts needed to ensure a systematic approach to the design and assessment of schoolwork are made available. Intensive evaluation and feedback are provided during the initial stages of entry into the district or into a new position. The presence of strong peer support is ensured through the integration of new employees into established learning communities and the assignment of mentors who provide mature models of the performances and attitudes expected. Learning communities are purposefully used as a means of communicating norms, values, commitments, and operating styles. New employees and new appointees are provided many opportunities for structured conversations, with a wide range of people positioned to provide feedback on performance. These conversations are supported through the use of protocols and similar activities that ensure disciplined conversations regarding progress and problems. Clear milestones are established, and meaningful acknowledgement and celebration are provided when inductees pass each milestone.

USING CRITICAL SOCIAL SYSTEMS TO BUILD CAPACITY

The Boundary System

Bureaucracies

Membership is carefully defined and boundaries are aggressively defended, both within the school and between the school and the external environment.

External groups and agencies are often perceived as threats to internal control and organizational boundaries. A great deal of energy is invested in boundary maintenance activities.

Insider status is defined by official status in the school system and the presence of one's name on a payroll. All others, including parents and students, are defined as outsiders, with some being "more outside" than others.

There is typically considerable tension between those operating at the building level (principals and teachers) and central office personnel, who are viewed, for the most part, as extensions of an impersonal bureaucracy with origins far beyond the community served. That is, the central office is perceived as an extension of government bureaucracy.

School board members perceive themselves either as separated from and superordinate to the school district leadership or as community representatives charged with controlling the work of functionaries in the schools.

Policies and procedures are determined by agencies outside the control of local personnel (for example, the state and federal government), and representatives of local constituencies (for example, the board of education) frequently view these external agencies as boundary threats.

Leaders of the district struggle to maintain a monopoly of control over all educational services, and they are constantly seeking ways to expand services into other agencies where educational functions are provided.

Learning Organizations

Decisions regarding membership are situational and dependent on need and willingness to contribute.

Leaders at the district level and the building level aggressively seek to develop alliances and formal relationships with groups external to the school, and they work to ensure that these relationships are mutually beneficial and do not distract from the direction that has been set for the district.

Parents and students are defined as insiders in the school organization and are more likely to be treated as partners and members than as clients and products.

The local school board, rather than the state or the federal government, is the primary forum in which discussions of issues related to goals and objectives occur.

School board members see themselves as insiders in the district, who are therefore expected to contribute to the pursuit of goals, rather than as outsiders who simply monitor the way others pursue goals. In effect, the school board is central to the learning community around which the larger community is organized and from which the community learns about educational matters.

The local board of education has considerable discretion in the way funds are expended, rewards are distributed, and goals are established; the board exercises this discretion in ways that are consistent with the vision that has been set for the school district—that is, the vision of the school district as a learning organization.

USING CRITICAL SOCIAL SYSTEMS TO BUILD CAPACITY

The Boundary System (CONTINUED)

Bureaucracies

Learning Organizations

Community groups and agencies, as well as families, are invited to provide educational experiences for students, and school leaders allocate resources to support these efforts. In a school organized as a learning organization, the school not only provides educational experiences, but also supports others outside the school who provide such experiences. The tendency to separate "home schooling" from "school schooling" has no place in the world of the school as a learning organization. Home-based education, conducted cooperatively with the school, is as much a part of the learning organization as is community-based education.

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USING CRITICAL SOCIAL SYSTEMS TO BUILD CAPACITY

The Evaluation System

Bureaucracies	Learning Organizations
Preference is given to operating standards that can be assessed through direct observation and measured in standardized ways. Standards are usually stated as minimums rather than as expectations of high quality—what will be tolerated rather than what is to be desired, encouraged, and expected. The means by which data is collected and used are those that are least susceptible to variability introduced by the "human factor." Thus, objective tests are likely to be preferred over essays, and standardized tests over "authentic" evaluations. The evaluation system gives emphasis to instrumental values, such as reading, writing, and arithmetic and is less concerned with and less focused on expressive values, such as those found in the arts, literature, and so on. Evaluations, whether of personnel or programs, are aimed primarily at ensuring conformance with minimum performance standards and properly labeling the performance capability being assessed. The expectations supported by the evaluation system are generally of more concern to persons outside the school (for example, employers, colleges, and universities) than they are to teachers and students. Indeed, teachers and students may be antagonistic to these standards and only comply with them to the extent necessary to avoid punishment.	Operating standards as well as performance standards are clear and derive from the beliefs, values, and vision that are intended to guide life in the school district and the schools. Assessment of performance and operations is data-based, continuous, and rigorous. The means by which data are collected and used are transparent to those whose performance or programs are involved, and, when the assessments reveal deficiencies, all those involved in the assessment assume responsibility for ensuring that corrective action is taken. The evaluation system takes into account the moral and aesthetic values supported by the schools, as well as the technical norms and instrumental ends that are being pursued. Evaluations, whether of personnel or programs, are aimed at continuous improvement rather than documentation of mastery or inadequacy. The expectations that are supported by the evaluation system are widely known and accepted as legitimate, and the performances or results that are being evaluated are perceived to be performances or results that are important and over which control is possible. When performance targets are not met and results are not achieved, the reasons for these shortcomings are presented, and the subsequent analysis leads to corrective action. The evaluation system makes clear distinctions between what happened and why it happened—that is, a distinction between description and analysis.

USING CRITICAL SOCIAL SYSTEMS TO BUILD CAPACITY

The Evaluation System (CONTINUED)

Bureaucracies

Learning Organizations

When performance targets are not met and when results are not achieved, considerable effort is made to conceal these facts. When concealment fails, effort is expended in placing blame on forces or parties outside the control of individuals who are assigned responsibility for successful completion of the task. Elaborate myths and fictions are created and shared to explain away failures.

Distrust, factionalism, and adversarial relationships abound, including adversarial relationships between labor and management and competitive relationships between and among departments and other sub-units (for example, between and among schools in the same district).

When evaluations are used as a means of exercising formal authority (for example, disciplinary action or the abandonment of a program), the basis for the evaluation is usually couched in highly technical terms and designed as much as to protect the system from legal action as to ensure the quality of the product or service.

Evaluation is used more as a tool for the exercise of authority than as a means of giving direction to improvement efforts.

There is an attitude of trust, mutualism, and common interest among those conducting evaluations and those people whose performances or programs are being evaluated.

When evaluations are used as a means of exercising formal authority (for example, disciplinary action or the abandonment of a program), the basis for the evaluation is transparent and the sources of data are visible to those being evaluated as well as to the evaluator.

USING CRITICAL SOCIAL SYSTEMS TO BUILD CAPACITY

The Power and Authority System

Bureaucracies	Learning Organizations
Power is treated as a tool for ensuring uniformity and compliance and is likely to be assigned to positions.	Power is treated as a resource for getting work done and is more likely to be assigned to people and tasks than to positions and levels in a hierarchy.
Position-related power is the basis of directing and controlling activity, and the way this power is used is legitimized by elaborate sets of rules and procedures.	The use of position-related power as the basis of directing and controlling activity is limited. For the most part, authority is assigned on an ad hoc basis in response to perceived need rather than on a basis related to formal position.
Decisions regarding how resources will be used (time, people, space, information, and technology) are typically made at the central office, and whatever decision-making autonomy teachers and principals have is clearly specified in job descriptions. The exercise of such autonomy is carefully monitored.	Decisions regarding how resources will be used (time, people, space, information, and technology) are typically made within the context of operating units (schools, departments, and learning communities), though direction and priorities may be set centrally with input from operating units. For example, district policy might require that equity guidelines be followed in making employment decisions, but local school principals and faculties, working within these guidelines, have autonomy regarding who will be hired.
Administrative directives, adopted programs, and threats of punishment for noncompliance serve as the primary means of ensuring direction and control.	
Individuals develop increasing amounts of influence as they demonstrate their willingness to be compliant with directives and supportive of the decisions made by superordinates.	Dialogue and discussion, rather than directives, serve as the primary means of ensuring compliance with intended direction.
Rewards are distributed based on willingness to comply with directives.	Individuals develop increasing amounts of influence as a direct result of the contributions they make to solving important problems and to maintaining the ability of the group and organization to function as a continuously improving organization.
Gaining seniority and tenure, and avoiding mistakes are highly valued.	Rewards are distributed based on contributions to the achievement of goals.
Informal relationships between superordinates and subordinates are discouraged, thereby reducing the ability of superordinates to influence the behavior of subordinates without resorting to the threat of formal sanctions. (This results in a tendency to vacillate between inattention or noncompliance and extreme formal sanctions as dismissals and disciplinary furloughs are applied.)	

USING CRITICAL SOCIAL SYSTEMS TO BUILD CAPACITY

The Power and Authority System (CONTINUED)

Bureaucracies

Rules aimed at codifying precedents and preventing the worst-case scenario are the norm.

Bureaucratic scapegoating and strategic deviancy are commonplace, because the rules seldom take human variability into account. Indeed, one of the things that makes bureaucracies viable is the willingness of participants to violate the rules, even when they place themselves at risk for doing so.

Informal networks frequently emerge that are designed to offset, sabotage, or mitigate the way formal authority is used and to redefine the rules in ways that are more responsive to local conditions.

Most participants in the organization are ignorant about or do not believe in many of the rules and procedures they must adhere to, and therefore have little commitment to them. Moreover, rules, once established, are often separated from the results they are intended to produce, sometimes to the point that enforcement of a rule becomes more important than the attainment of the intended result.

The results of decisions and actions are often unclear and the locus of authority is often ill defined, thereby encouraging more attention to the study of decision-making than to the making of decisions, and more attention to fixing blame rather than to fixing the system.

Learning Organizations

The primary means by which control is maintained is self-control, and from time to time informal sanctions are applied by peers. The application of formal sanctions is rare, and when it does occur, it is generally seen as a signal that something has gone wrong with the induction and recruitment system or the knowledge development and transmission system.

The processes and disciplines (that is, the codified means) of arriving at decisions are well articulated and include specific attention to such matters as "what we know about teaching, learning, and schools, and how we know that what we know is so" and to ways to address issues of personal taste and values.

For the most part, participants in the organization understand, support, and believe in the decisions made. When they do not, they feel they have access to a means of ensuring that their contrary views are heard and taken into account. Furthermore, even when this accounting does not result in a changed decision, critics feel their views have been heard and honored.

Each member of the group accepts responsibility for the decisions of every other member of the group and trusts that these decisions are, or are intended to be, consistent with the values shared by the members of the group and the disciplines they have agreed to apply to their decisionmaking process.

The results of decisions and actions are made transparent through systemic attention to specifying and measuring intended results.

Processes are in place for evaluating the consequences of decisions. When these consequences do not prove to be those that are expected or needed, a means has been specified for analyzing why this is the case and then taking corrective action.

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USING CRITICAL SOCIAL SYSTEMS TO BUILD CAPACITY

The following chart depicts two ideal types of organizations, the bureaucracy and the learning organization. On each side of the chart, the critical systems that require time, attention, and emphasis from leaders in the ideal type are listed. All six critical systems are important in each type of organization, but the drivers in a learning organization are the Directional, Knowledge Development and Transmission, and Recruitment and Induction systems. In a bureaucracy, the drivers are the Power and Authority, Evaluation, and Boundary systems.

Bureaucracy

- **Power & Authority System**
- **Evaluation System**
- **Boundary System**
- **Recruitment & Induction System**
- **Knowledge Development & Transmission System**
- **Directional System**

Learning Organization

- **Directional System**
- **Knowledge Development & Transmission System**
- **Recruitment & Induction System**
- **Boundary System**
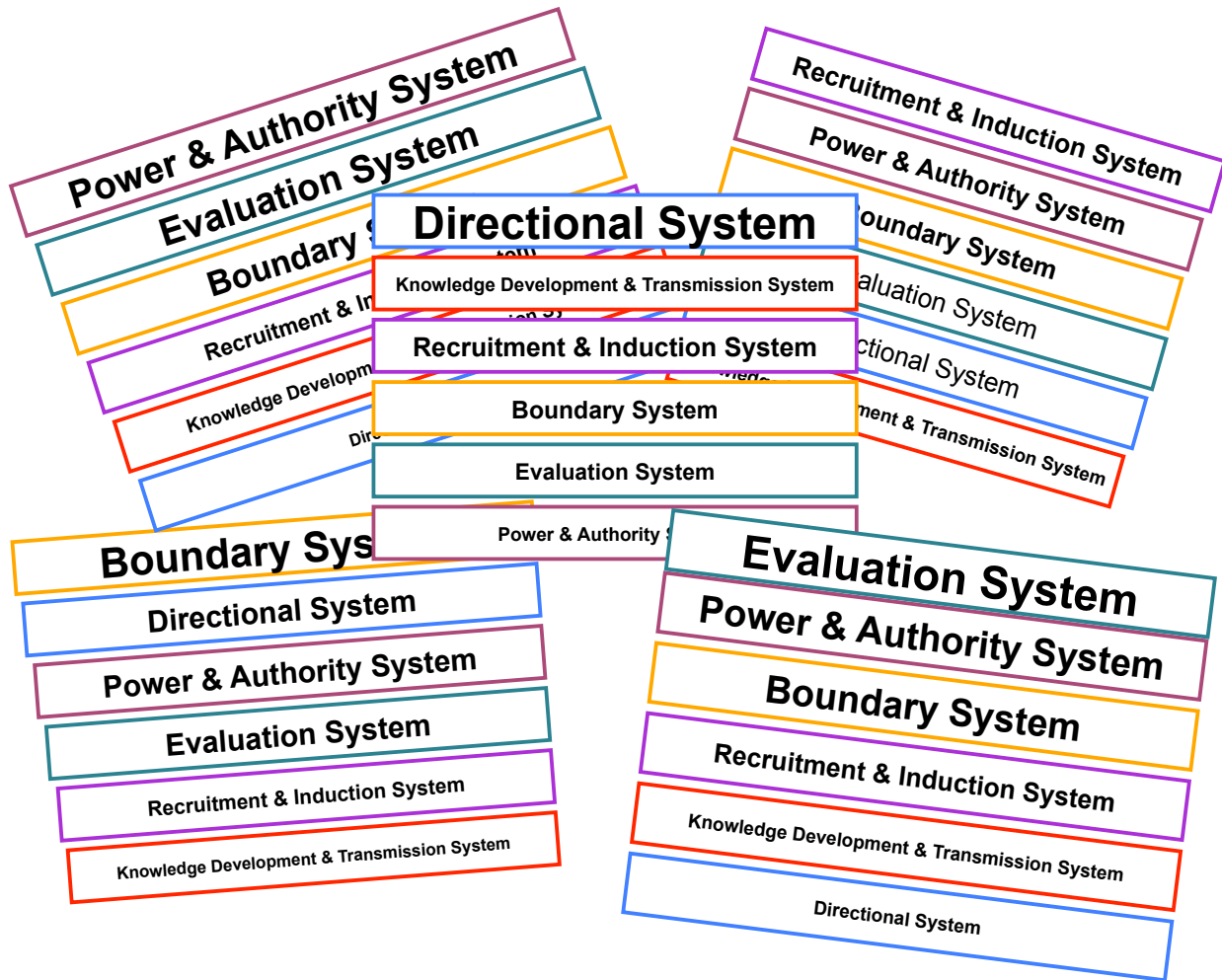- **Evaluation System**
- **Power & Authority System**

Leading for Learning: How to Transform Schools into Learning Organizations
p. 46

Critical systems are what leaders work on. This means that in their efforts to transform an organization from a bureaucracy into a learning organization, leaders would spend a great deal of time working on and placing emphasis on direction, knowledge development and transmission, and recruitment and induction.

Since in the real world of schools and school districts it is not likely that either ideal type truly exists, how would you determine which critical systems are currently receiving the most attention in your organization? One way is for a design team, leadership team, or professional learning community to respond to this question: Which of the critical systems currently receive the most emphasis in your school or district? The word "emphasis" is key here. It is possible to spend a great deal of time on the Directional System, but if staff feel fearful of negative consequences that result from tests and performance evaluation, it may be that the Evaluation System is receiving the most emphasis. The same could be true for the Power and Authority System in a situation in which top-down mandates are prevalent.

USING CRITICAL SOCIAL SYSTEMS TO BUILD CAPACITY

Write the name of each critical system on a sentence strip. Ask your team to reflect on your organization and then reach consensus regarding how you would rank the six critical systems in the order of which ones receive the most emphasis.

Power & Authority System

Evaluation System

Boundary System

Recruitment & Induction System

Knowledge Development & Transmission System

Directional System

Directional System

Knowledge Development & Transmission System

Recruitment & Induction System

Boundary System

Evaluation System

Power & Authority System

Recruitment & Induction System

Power & Authority System

Boundary System

Evaluation System

Directional System

Knowledge Development & Transmission System

Boundary System

Directional System

Power & Authority System

Evaluation System

Recruitment & Induction System

Knowledge Development & Transmission System

Evaluation System

Power & Authority System

Boundary System

Recruitment & Induction System

Knowledge Development & Transmission System

Directional System

STAFF PROFILE ELEMENTS

A FRAMEWORK TO DESCRIBE AND DISCUSS STAFF ENGAGEMENT

2016

Schlechty Center

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PROFILE ELEMENTS: A FRAMEWORK TO DESCRIBE AND DISCUSS STAFF ENGAGEMENT

The Profile Elements have historically been used by Phillip Schlechty to describe the relationship that learners have with the work provided to them. These same elements are useful in describing the relationship that employees have with their jobs and their employers—in this case, the school or district.

The Schlechty Center uses these Profiles Elements and indicators to describe staff engagement, compliance, and alienation.

Profile Elements

Indicators of Engagement

- The employee is morally engaged—committed to the beliefs, values, and direction of the organization.
- The employee is committed to his or her work and finds it interesting, satisfying, and challenging.
- The employee is committed to his or her colleagues, seeking collaboration and collegiality focused on creating an engagement-focused organization.

Indicators of Strategic Compliance

- The employee is doing the work because it is lucrative or brings prestige, not because he or she is committed to the beliefs, values, and direction of the organization.
- The employee allocates only as much time, energy, and resources as are required to get a promotion or reward.
- The employee sees the work as a stepping stone to a more desirable position and does little to contribute to creating an engagement-focused organization.

Indicators of Ritual Compliance

- The employee is just putting in time, doing the minimum as required by contractual obligations and job assignments.
- The employee does only those things that must be done, doing the minimum to avoid approbation or correction by a supervisor.
- The employee's emphasis is on minimums and exit requirements, and he or she is constantly seeking other activity to pursue, often out of sync with the direction of the organization.

Indicators of Retreatism

- The employee is alienated but so disengaged from his or her own work as to not even rebel.
- The employee is disengaged from the values of the organization and does very little or nothing unless forced through direct supervision.
- The employee sees little relevance in the work, often employing strategies to conceal his or her lack of commitment and involvement.

Indicators of Rebellion

- The employee is proactively alienated, unhappy, and spreading discontent.
- The employee is detached from the organization and overtly refuses to comply with the requirements of the work.
- The employee often sabotages the work, seeing no value in contributing to the beliefs, values, and direction of the organization and therefore making it difficult for others to do their work as well.

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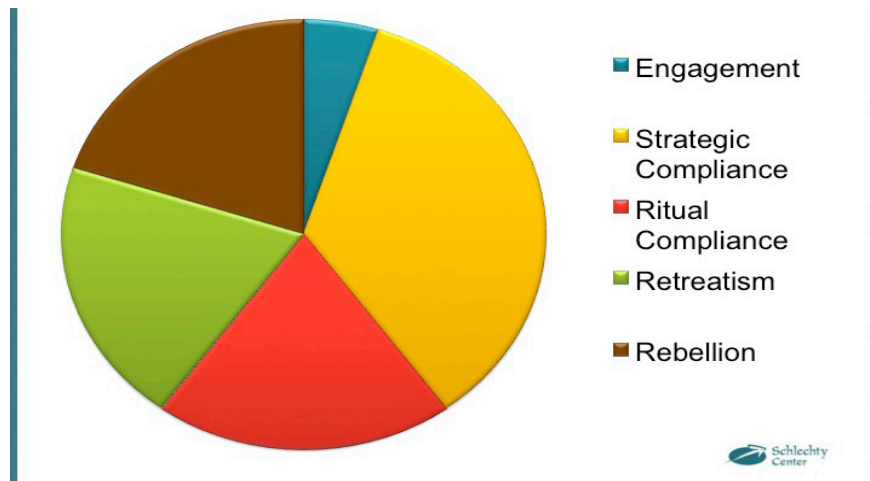## PROFILE ELEMENTS: A FRAMEWORK TO DESCRIBE AND DISCUSS STAFF ENGAGEMENT

An effective strategy to increase student engagement is to increase staff engagement. Ideally, all employees should be engaged. However, the ideal is seldom, if ever, the reality. At the Schlechty Center we believe that an organization with an **engaged staff** is one in which most of the staff are engaged in the work and the life of the organization, as depicted in the chart below.
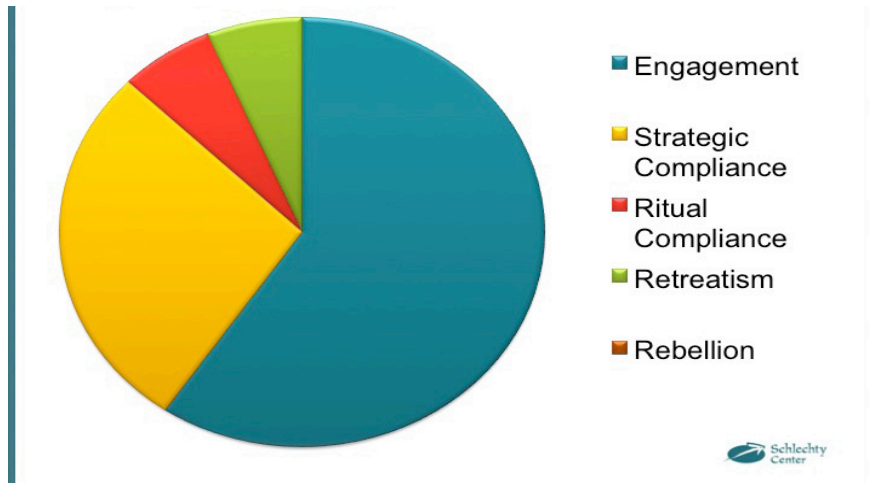
The chart below depicts the organization with mostly **compliant staff**.
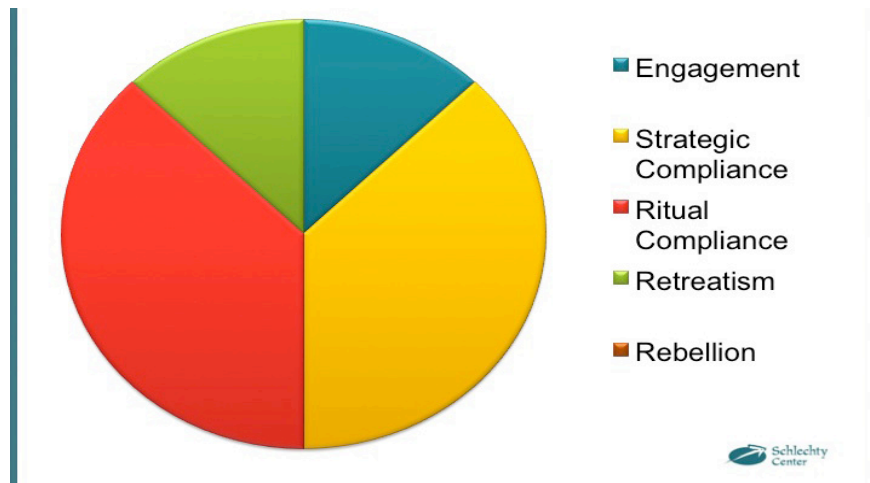
The chart below depicts the organization with mostly **alienated staff**.

PROFILE ELEMENTS: A FRAMEWORK TO DESCRIBE AND DISCUSS STAFF ENGAGEMENT

Analysis of and Dialogue About Staff Engagement

Suppose you are part of a Design Team, leadership team, or professional learning community that is interested in determining which of the engagement profiles most closely describes your school or organization. How would you know? What evidence would you provide to make the case that, in your school, most of the staff is engaged, compliant, or alienated?

At some point the team could decide to use surveys, focus groups, interviews, or other strategies to actually assess staff engagement. The team may first explore its own assumptions using statements such as the ones below.

Engagement
- We are clear about and committed to the values and overall direction of our school.
- There is a culture of trust in our school; we can all count on one another.
- As a staff we work well together.
- There is a sense of collective passion for our work.

Strategic Compliance
- We do what is required because we are motivated by rewards.
- We do what we do because we want our school to be recognized as exemplary.
- We receive a lot of recognition for meeting and exceeding requirements.
- Our evaluation includes a process whereby we are rated.

Ritual Compliance
- Too many of our colleagues do only what is required of them.
- Expectations of staff must be spelled out in job descriptions.
- We work to the rule in our school.
- Performance is dependent on monitoring and supervision.

Retreatism
- It is easy to fly under the radar in our school.
- We have a high rate of staff absenteeism.
- Some employees just seem to avoid doing what they are supposed to do.
- Colleagues seem reluctant to talk about our direction.

Rebellion
- There is too much conflict on our staff.
- Our culture is one of fear.
- Some staff members speak disparagingly about our school in the community.
- You can cut the air with a knife.

PROFILE ELEMENTS: A FRAMEWORK TO DESCRIBE AND DISCUSS STAFF ENGAGEMENT

Using your responses to the statements above, draw a pie chart to depict staff engagement in your organization.

Profile Elements

SCHOOL BOARD PROFILE ELEMENTS

A FRAMEWORK TO DESCRIBE AND DISCUSS SCHOOL BOARD ENGAGEMENT

2016

Schlechty Center

PROFILE ELEMENTS: A FRAMEWORK TO DESCRIBE AND DISCUSS SCHOOL BOARD ENGAGEMENT

The Schlechty Center uses its Profile Elements in a variety of ways. Mostly, they are used as a framework to describe the differences among engagement, compliance, and alienation. They are also used to describe the relationship that students have with the work provided to them. Finally, they are used to describe how employees of the school or district view their jobs.

Profile Elements

At the Schlechty Center, we believe that a focus on engagement should reach from the boardroom to the classroom. To that end, we offer the Profile Elements as a framework for school boards to use in describing the work of the board. We believe that the role of the board is to build community and subsequently lead the community to have a greater understanding of the challenges and opportunities that confront the school district. In order for the board to build community, it must function as a community. Since the board is viewed as a collective group, the image of the board is based on how well it functions as a collective team working in concert with one another and with the superintendent. Our belief is that the more the board is engaged in its work, the more committed the board members will be to both setting and building support for the direction of the district. This does not mean that board members have to agree on all matters; it does mean that they have to be agreeable and serve as a model of community for all to see. A board and superintendent seeking to determine if the board is engaged, compliant, or alienated will find the use of these Profile Elements helpful.

Indicators of Engagement

- The board member is morally engaged and committed to the work of the board.

- The board member finds the work of the board interesting, satisfying, and challenging, and has a desire to learn more about the work in the district so that he or she can perform his or her role better.

- The board member is committed to seeking collaboration and collegiality with fellow board members and the superintendent.

Indicators of Strategic Compliance

- The board member does even more than required but does so in order to gain prestige and recognition.

- The board member sees his or her role as a stepping stone to a more desirable public position.

- The board member is proactive in all matters that are of special interest to the constituents who got him or her elected and seeks recognition and/or credit for action taken.

Indicators of Ritual Compliance

- The board member is just putting in time, doing the minimum as required.

- The board member complies with the work of the board but does not find board work very interesting, meaningful, or satisfying.

- The board member is only interested in matters that are of special interest to the constituents who got him or her elected.

Indicators of Retreatism

- The board member is alienated but so disengaged from the work of the board as to not even rebel.

- The board member sees little relevance in the work, often employing strategies to conceal his or her lack of commitment and involvement.

- The board member either abstains from or is absent from board work.

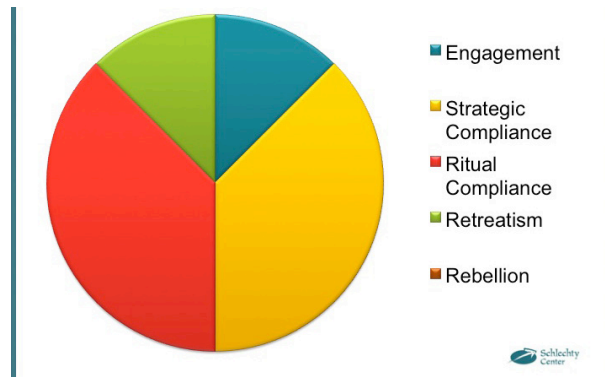## PROFILE ELEMENTS: A FRAMEWORK TO DESCRIBE AND DISCUSS SCHOOL BOARD ENGAGEMENT

Indicators of Rebellion

- The board member is proactively alienated, unhappy, and spreading discontent.
- The board member is detached from the board and overtly refuses to comply with the board's guiding principles.
- The board member often sabotages the work of the board and/or district, making it difficult for others to do their work.

An effective strategy to increase student and staff engagement is to increase board engagement. Ideally, all employees should be engaged. However, the ideal is seldom, if ever, the reality. At the Schlechty Center we believe that an organization with an **engaged board** is one in which most of the board members are engaged in the work and the life of the organization, as depicted in the chart to the right.
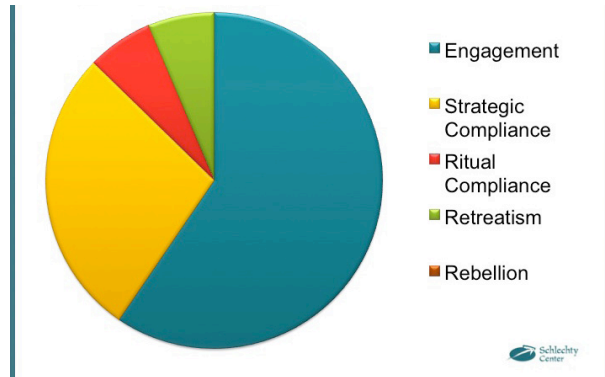
This chart to the right depicts the organization with a mostly **compliant board**.

The chart to the right depicts the organization with a mostly **alienated board**.
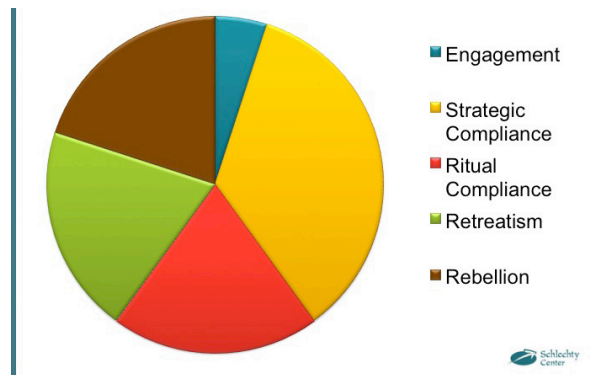
PROFILE ELEMENTS: A FRAMEWORK TO DESCRIBE AND DISCUSS SCHOOL BOARD ENGAGEMENT

Analysis of and Dialogue About Board Engagement

Suppose you are interested in determining which of the engagement profiles most closely describes your board. How would you know? What evidence would you provide to make the case that most of your board members are engaged, compliant, or alienated?

At some point the board could decide to use surveys, focus groups, interviews, or other strategies to actually assess board engagement. The board may first explore its own assumptions using statements such as the ones below.

Engagement
- We are clear about and committed to the values and overall direction of our school district.
- There is a culture of trust on our board; we can all count on one another.
- As a board we work well together.
- There is a sense of collective passion for our work.

Strategic Compliance
- We do what is required because we are motivated by rewards.
- We do what we do because we want our school district to be recognized as exemplary.
- We receive a lot of recognition for meeting and exceeding requirements.
- Our evaluation includes a process whereby we are rated.

Ritual Compliance
- Too many of our colleagues do only what is required of them.
- Expectations of board members must be spelled out in job descriptions.
- We work to the rule on our board.
- Performance is dependent on monitoring and supervision.

Retreatism
- It is easy to fly under the radar on our board.
- We have a high rate of absenteeism.
- Some board members just seem to avoid doing what they are supposed to do.
- Board members seem reluctant to talk about our direction.

Rebellion
- There is too much conflict on our board.
- Our culture is one of fear.
- Some board members speak disparagingly about our school district in the community.
- You can cut the air with a knife.

PROFILE ELEMENTS: A FRAMEWORK TO DESCRIBE AND DISCUSS SCHOOL BOARD ENGAGEMENT

Using your responses to the statements above, draw a pie chart to depict board engagement in your organization.

Profile Elements

SIX INDICATORS

SIX INDICATORS OF CAPACITY

2016

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SIX INDICATORS OF CAPACITY

The Need to Build Capacity

It is common to hear school staff say, "This too shall pass," when a new initiative or innovation is introduced. This is especially true when the change is not supported by, and in fact threatens, the existing culture and structure of the organization. While there is often criticism that schools don't change, in reality school change is frequent but rarely sustained. In *Shaking Up the Schoolhouse*, Phillip Schlechty says that schools are prone to change but are inept at sustaining change:

> When changes are started in systems that are without the capacity to sustain them, the changes are unlikely to outlast the tenure of the change agent and may indeed hasten his or her departure.
>
> **p. 40**

We at the Schlechty Center have seen this pattern over and over again. A new leader in an organization usually means a new direction and new programs and initiatives to go along with that direction. These new initiatives are often installed into a system with little consideration given to the capacity of the organization to support and sustain the new work. The fact that existing programs and initiatives are rarely abandoned only compounds the problem.

Imagine a farm that has a new farmer every three years, each with his or her own preference of crops to grow. While having no use for the previous crops, the farmer is hesitant to abandon them because many who work on the farm or live in the community depend on those crops for survival. So, the new farmer has the new seeds planted alongside the old ones, in the same field. This is what often happens in schools with programs, projects, and initiatives—a problem compounded by state and federal mandates.

According to Phillip Schlechty in *Leading for Learning,* capacity building is "both the end and the means of school transformation" (p. 224). Without capacity, schools' improvement potential is limited to improvements that can be accomplished in the existing system, primarily because schools are organized as bureaucracies. This is why it is so important that schools be transformed into learning organizations, a transformation that cannot occur without attention to building capacity. To this end, the Schlechty Center has created frameworks that are useful in assessing organizational capacity. The System Capacity Standards are used for taking stock or for an in-depth assessment. Both of these processes require significant time, commitment, and resources. In the meantime, how do school leaders know if an initiative that is being considered will be disruptive? Is there a better way to predict trouble ahead than going through it? Further, how can leaders ensure that an initiative will be sustained over time, beyond the tenure of the change agent who introduced it?

SIX INDICATORS OF CAPACITY
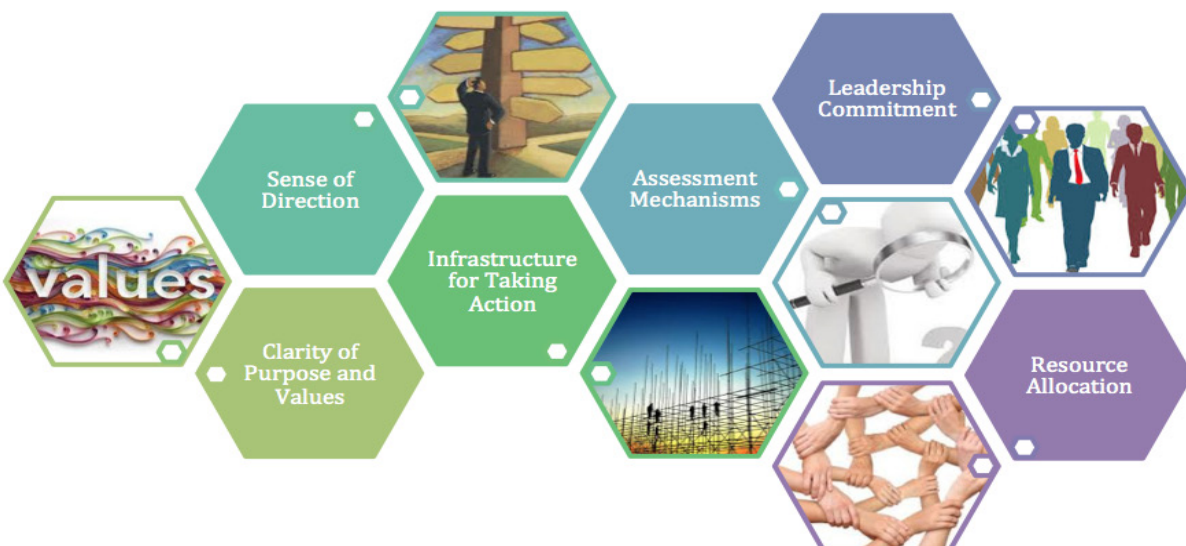
Three Types of Change

There are three types of change that are important for school leaders to understand. The first is procedural change, which requires only minor changes in the system. Procedural change is about changing the way the job is done. Technological change—having to do with changing the means by which a job is done—is the second type. The third is structural and cultural change, which requires attention to the properties of the systems of the organization.

While procedural and technological change do put some stress on the culture and structure of an organization, it is structural and cultural change that is most disruptive and that requires serious attention to building the capacity of the organization. Failure to attend to capacity building will result in one of the following outcomes relative to the proposed change:

• The initiative will be domesticated so that it fits the current organization

• The initiative (along with its advocates) will be expelled from the system

• The initiative will be abandoned

The six indicators of capacity can be a resource for school leaders to use with a design team, leadership team, or professional learning community. Ideally, this resource should be used in advance of the adoption of a new program, project, or initiative. The following pages contain questions that are intended to focus conversation and result in wiser decisions about where capacity needs to be enhanced.

Six Indicators of Capacity

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SIX INDICATORS OF CAPACITY

Clarity of Purpose and Values

Assumes there is clarity about …
- the purpose of education
- the current context
- the core business
- the conditions that impact learning
- the role of student, parent, and all school district staff
- the norms and/or guiding principles of the organization

Questions to Consider

1. Which of the assumptions or guiding principles of the initiative are consistent with those of the organization?

2. In what ways is the purpose of the initiative consistent with the core business of the organization?

3. In what ways does the current context support the initiative?

4. What barriers or challenges in the current context will inhibit the success of the initiative?

SIX INDICATORS OF CAPACITY

Sense of Direction

Assumes that the organization is clear about its direction and about those whose support is required in order for the direction to be shared. There exists a future orientation and capacity to maintain the direction over time. There exists …

- a common understanding of problems and challenges that confront the organization
- a compelling vision of the future
- a clear mission
- clarity about results to be accomplished
- an understanding of whose support is needed in order for the mission to succeed

Questions to Consider

1. How will the initiative serve to maintain the direction of the organization?

2. In what ways is it likely that the new initiative will cause the organization to move in a different direction?

3. Will those who are advocates for the initiative be able to make valid arguments that the investment will help the organization accomplish its mission and goals? What are the arguments?

4. Will this initiative compete with or complement state and/or federal mandates? How so?

5. Is it possible that other programs or initiatives that are underway in the organization will overwhelm or be overwhelmed by this initiative? How so?

6. Are there initiatives that should be abandoned prior to beginning a new initiative? Which ones in particular?

SIX INDICATORS OF CAPACITY

Leadership Commitment

Assumes that leadership is distributed throughout the organization and does not rest only with those who have power and authority. Such leaders are clear about …
- the importance of followership as well as leadership
- the importance of strategic and tactical thinking
- the importance of differentiating between decisions that have short-term or long-term impact
- the importance of earning commitment as opposed to mandating compliance
- the importance of "leading up"

Questions to Consider

1. Whose support will be needed in order for the initiative to be successful?

2. How will it be determined if those whose support is needed have the same sense of urgency about the initiative as those who introduced it?

3. How will it be determined if it is likely that these individuals will be supportive and committed to ensuring the success of the initiative?

4. What are the reasons to anticipate commitment, as opposed to simply compliance, from those who serve in positions of power and formal authority (board, cabinet, principals, teacher union or association, PTA, etc.)?

5. On what basis can it be predicted that key advocates for the initiative will rely on their leadership as well as their positions of formal authority to gain commitment and support?

6. What will be the basis for determining if there is sufficient political support for this initiative?

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SIX INDICATORS OF CAPACITY

Assessment Mechanisms

Assumes that new work requires new measures and that change efforts require reporting progress as well as outcomes. New measures provide …
- qualitative as well as quantitative data
- measures of process (those things that can be controlled) as well as inputs and outcomes
- stories and testimonials
- strategies to report progress to internal and external audiences
- celebrations of "small wins"

Questions to Consider

1. What is the picture of success for this initiative?

2. What evidence will be used to make the case that the initiative has been a success?

3. What new measures will need to be created in order to make the case for success?

4. How will it be ensured that metrics used are aligned with the beliefs and values of the organization?

5. How will it be ensured that the voices of those most impacted by the initiative will be considered as part of the assessment process?

6. What tools are available to assess the capacity of the organization to determine what actions are needed for strategic action?

7. How will progress be determined and reported?

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SIX INDICATORS OF CAPACITY

Infrastructure for Taking Action

Assumes that infrastructure includes culture and organizational structures (rules, roles, and relationships) as well as adequate facilities and access to technology. Infrastructure also means …
- a commitment to training and development
- an environment of political support
- a flexible policy environment

Questions to Consider

1. What barriers may get in the way of successful implementation of the initiative?

2. What structures are in place that will support successful implementation of the initiative?

3. How will the roles of those on whom the initiative's successful implementation depend need to be redefined?

4. In what ways will this initiative require training and support for those involved?

5. In what ways will this initiative require increased collaboration, and what structures are in place that will support it?

6. Are there bureaucratic structures that inhibit successful implementation? If so, what, in particular?

7. Is a new or improved infrastructure needed in order to support the use of technology required for implementation? How so?

8. If this initiative requires innovation, creativity, and risk-taking, how will the culture and structure of the organization support it?

SIX INDICATORS OF CAPACITY

Resource Allocation

Assumes that the people closest to the work of the organization have flexible access to the resources needed for success. It is also assumed that the use of resources is determined by the work to be done, as opposed to the other way around. Resources include …

- time
- people
- space
- information
- technology

Questions to Consider

1. Are there programs and/or initiatives that are not consistent with the current direction and that are competing for the time and attention of those whose support is required for the success of the new work? If so, what?

2. How will it be determined whether or not those who are depended on for successful implementation of the initiative have flexible use of the resources needed to succeed?

3. How will it be determined whether or not this initiative requires more customization or more standardization throughout the organization?

4. Will this initiative depend on flexible or fixed allocation of resources? How so?

5. If more collaboration is called for, how will policies, procedures, and rules that inhibit collaboration be identified?

6. Which incentives currently in place might serve as dis-incentives given the new work required?

7. Will those who will be charged with successful implementation have flexible access to the information needed for success? How will this be determined?

8. In what ways will this initiative require the use of technology, especially transformational technologies?

9. Is there needed space and the flexibility needed to use the space such that this initiative can be implemented with fidelity? What evidence is there that this is so?