

Activity Directions: Creating Community Norms for a Collaborative Culture

For more information about how to use this activity to Design Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), see the [Action Overview: Strengthen PLCs](#).

Norms are important collective agreements that help teams function together and engage in common work to improve instruction and increase student achievement. Teams need to have both light/behavior and heavy/functionality norms to ensure successful collaboration. Light norms are focused more on professional courtesy and getting along with others while heavy norms are those that ensure the team gets work done. PLCs which create both heavy and light norms capture the commitments, actions and behaviors of the group.

Learning Objective

Set norms for teams to use as a guide.

Activity 1: Setting Norms to Guide Teams

Time 15-20 minutes

Preparation

1. Collect poster paper, post-its, markers and pens
2. Label six posters with the following topics: Time and Structure, Listening and Speaking, Confidentiality, Decision Making, Expectations, Participation
3. Hang the posters around the meeting room
4. Give each team member a set of post-its.
5. Make copies or give participants access to handout.
 - a. [Handout: Establishing Norms](#)

Directions

1. Explain to the team the importance of norms and use the handout to explain light and heavy norms and why both are important.
2. Each person in the group writes their norms (rules of engagement) on post-its. One norm per post-it.
3. Each person places their post-its on the appropriate poster.
4. Assign two team members to a poster(s). Each pair will use the post-its to combine ideas and rewrite the norms. It is possible that one norm may address all the post-its on the poster.
5. Read each of the proposed norms to the group. Discuss each norm to determine if the group can support it. Norms may need to be rewritten or deleted if the group cannot support it. Use fist of five to vote.

Fist to Five

Indicator Level	Level of support
Fist	No support--will work to block proposal. <i>"I need to talk more about the proposal and require changes for me to be comfortable with it."</i>
One Finger	No support, but won't block. <i>"I still have strong reservations and want to discuss certain issues and suggest changes that should be made, but I agree not to block the proposal if approved as is."</i>
Two Fingers	Minimal support <i>"I am moderately comfortable with the proposal as is, but would like to discuss some minor issues."</i>
Three Fingers	Neutral <i>"I'm not in total agreement but feel comfortable to let this decision or proposal pass without further discussion."</i>
Four Fingers	Solid support <i>"I think it's a good idea/decision and will openly support it."</i>
Five Fingers	<i>"It's a great idea, and I will do all I can to promote it."</i>

6. Once the norms have been agreed to, rewrite them on a poster that will be displayed during the meeting. Norms should be revisited at each meeting. Over time, norms may need to be revised.