COLLABORATING THROUGH COLLECTIVE EFFICACY CYCLES

ENSURING ALL STUDENTS AND TEACHERS SUCCEED

A PLAYBOOK

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TONI FADDIS
DOUGLAS FISHER
NANCY FREY

CORWIN
Fisher & Frey

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Collaborating Through Collective Efficacy Cycles.

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FIGURE 1.2 SELF-EFFICACY SELF-ASSESSMENT

QUESTIONS	THOUGHTS AND NOTES
Do you feel like you can handle problems that come your way? **YES** **NO**	
Are you confident in your ability to achieve your goals? **YES** **NO**	
Do you feel like you can manage unexpected events that come up? **YES** **NO**	
Are you able to bounce back fairly quickly after a stressful event? **YES** **NO**	
Can you manage yourself well when under pressure? **YES** **NO**	
Do you keep trying when things become difficult? **YES** **NO**	

If you answered *Yes* to many of the questions in the self-assessment, then chances are good that you have a fairly strong sense of self-efficacy. If you feel like your self-efficacy could use a boost, identify one of the statements in Figure 1.2 and a goal for yourself. Start with baby steps. You'll feel good when you accomplish the goal, so consider what is attainable so you can be successful. And remember, success breeds success.

COLLECTIVE EFFICACY

Similar to an individual's belief in his or her capabilities to ensure student achievement, collective teacher efficacy refers to a group's beliefs about their competence for successful student learning outcomes. Collective teacher efficacy, then, is an attitude shared by teachers: by working together, they can make a difference for students. This, too, is context specific because collective beliefs are shaped by teachers' perceptions about the staff's teaching competence, their perceptions of the challenges related to educating their students, as well as available supports to foster positive student outcomes (Goddard, 2001). Collective teacher efficacy is "associated with the tasks, level of effort, persistence, shared thoughts, stress levels, and achievement of groups" (Goddard et al., 2000, p. 482).

Schools are complex social organizations and the interactions between teachers, students, and administrators affect the culture of the organization. Culture develops and grows through an "accumulation of actions, traditions, symbols, ceremonies, and rituals" (Fisher et al., 2012, p. 6). Because of these interplays, people who work in a school may come to form and share certain perceptions. Collective teacher efficacy, then, develops based upon a staff's collective analysis of the teaching and learning environment and their assessment of their teaching competence (Pierce, 2019). This means that collective efficacy beliefs are malleable and can be shaped by intentional actions: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and affective states (Bandura, 1977). We'll explore each of these four sources of collective teacher efficacy in the following sections.

◀ **FOUR SOURCES OF COLLECTIVE EFFICACY**
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Collective Efficacy Source 1: Mastery Experiences

The most powerful source of collective teacher efficacy is acquired through mastery experiences. When teams experience success and attribute that success to dynamics within their control, their feelings of collective efficacy increase. With each success the team experiences, they come to believe and expect that they can repeat it. As they say, success breeds success.

The opposite is also true, as a series of failures tend to undermine a team's sense of efficacy. This can also be understood through the notion of the self-fulfilling prophecy. A self-fulfilling prophecy is when a belief or expectation about a future event comes true, even when we aren't consciously aware that we hold that expectation. In simpler terms, it's a prediction that comes true because our beliefs and

expectations have influenced our behavior at a subconscious level. Stereotype threat and the Placebo Effect are both examples of self-fulfilling prophecies.

We can see that self-fulfilling prophecies influence our thoughts and behavior—both good and bad. When we believe something about ourselves, we are more likely to act in ways that align with our beliefs, thus confirming our beliefs and encouraging the same behavior. Similarly, when we believe something about others, we may act in ways that reinforce those assumptions.

Self-fulfilling prophecies influence our thoughts and behavior—both good and bad.

It's important that teams are aware of their beliefs and the nature of their inter- actions. Do people use asset-oriented language when describing students or is the talk more deficit-based? To reduce cycles of negative thinking and behavior, we need to pay attention to our assumptions and interactions we have about our assumptions. For instance, a teacher who voices a statement such as "Those kids can't learn" or "They just don't care" sends messages to other educators that may be easily transferred into reality. Whether we're aware of it or not, our beliefs and expectations influence ourselves, but also seep into communications with oth- ers. As Henry Ford famously said, "Whether you think you can or think you can't, you're right."

Since negative talk can alter reality, it's important that teams are aware of their communication patterns and commit to monitoring them. In so doing, the team increases the likelihood that mastery experiences will occur. Mastery experiences include developing shared goals and collaboratively engaging in learning activities. As teams experience successes, their momentum continues and their confidence and resiliency as a collective also increase. Mastery experiences are often culti- vated when teachers work together in PLC+ teams.

Communication and Conditions That Build Mastery Experiences

We shouldn't assume that adults know how to work together effectively because they are part of a team. Teachers that are mandated to work together as a team, such as departments and grade levels, may feel these relationships are contrived by administrators. They may perceive a lack of emotional depth from team members. Teachers need to feel supported because of the "pervasively emotional nature of teaching" (Horn & Little, 2010, p. 197).

By paying attention to how we interact during collegial interactions, closer working relationships can be fostered, and the chances of participating in a mastery experi- ence increase. However, if teams are reluctant to share ideas or beliefs, there is lit- tle hope for mastery experiences, and consequentially, collective teacher efficacy, to emerge.

To systematically structure meetings that cultivate mastery experiences, wise teams gain an awareness of their current communication styles and determine improvements that support the team's functioning. Since tensions mount when groups communicate ineffectively, a self-review at regular intervals can prevent issues before they fester. Garmston and Wellman (1999) recommend seven norms of collaborative work to guide team interactions:

1. Pausing

2. Paraphrasing

3. Probing for specificity

4. Putting ideas on the table

5. Paying attention to self and others

6. Presuming positive intentions

7. Pursuing a balance between advocacy and inquiry

These are skills that anyone can use to improve communication in meetings and during interactions with others. These norms are deceptively simple, and most are skills that most people have. Garmston and Wellman (1999) say this is ironic because

> these seemingly simple behaviors are rare in many meetings. Pausing and paraphrasing are often missing, especially when things get tense. Probing for details is forgotten when members presume to understand others' meanings. This can lead to later confusion and complication. Presuming positive intentions prevents members from judging others. Interpersonal judgments spawn blocked thinking and negative presuppositions. Advocating and inquiring into the ideas of others increases the capacity for group members to influence each other. (p. 38)

Taking time and care to establish shared meeting norms is worth the effort. Doing so enhances the team's communication skills, promoting team members to interact in ways that cause mastery experiences to occur. When these norms of collaborative work become an established part of how your team operates, the cohesion, energy, and commitment to shared goals increase dramatically. The team's sense of collective efficacy grows.

Reflect on your current interpersonal and intrapersonal communication skills. Note these in Figure 1.3 and consider ways you might strengthen them to improve future relationships.

NOTES